

**“TAKE IT AWAY,
SAM!”**

PAUL WING

"TAKE IT AWAY, SAM!"

*The Story of Sam Hubbard's
Career in Radio*

By
PAUL WING

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RENO NEVADA



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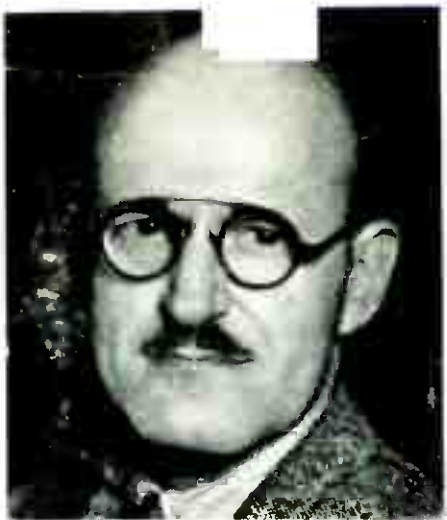
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"TAKE IT AWAY, SAM!"



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PAUL WING

was born at Sandwich, Massachusetts, of old American whaling stock. His family went to the Middle West when he was quite young. During his high-school days in Chicago he was "bitten by the theatrical bug." He "suped" at the old Studebaker, home of grand opera and Shakespearian repertory, and "played bit parts" with the Ben Greet players at Ravinia Park. He boasts that his first Shakespearian role was that of "the wind in the trees" in *King Lear*. He shook the bushes backstage! He began his dramatic writing in one-act vaudeville sketches, acting in some. While on tour he married and finally the Wing family came to live in Connecticut.

Paul Wing wrote his first juvenile stories for his own three children. These stories finally led to broadcasting radio plays for children—and also for grown people. Recently he has been conducting one of radio's most popular audience participation shows over the N. B. C. networks, Paul Wing's Spelling Bee, in addition to his writing and directing of dramatic shows at Radio City.

Sailing is naturally Paul Wing's favorite pastime. Each summer he cruises to Provincetown to lecture and direct plays at the Wharf Theatre School.

Paul Wing has written *TAKE IT AWAY, SAM! The Story of Sam Hubbard's Career in Radio* out of his own wide and vital experiences with the great National Broadcasting Company.

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT RADIO!

ALTHOUGH I've been around broadcasting studios for some years, I never knew anything about them. But that's all over now. Ask me anything you want to know and I'll snap right back at you with the correct answer. Why? Because I've read "*Take It Away, Sam!*"

The reason you never know anything about radio studios is that they are so big and complicated, and you are so busy either getting a job, or holding one, that all you can learn is that radio executives stay out three hours for lunch.

I know this because I've taken some of them to lunch. They're the heartiest eaters you ever let get hold of a menu card. And yet, taking them to lunch is the only way you can ever see them; because when you telephone, they're never in. I have known radio bigwigs to be out for years at a time. Sometimes I have the dark and troubled suspicion that they come around only on payday.

When you finally sell them a program and get it into rehearsal, what happens? Why, human beings you've never seen before come out of the soundproofed walls and the control rooms and tell you what's wrong with it. You start a rehearsal, and only a couple of radio men are there. Somewhere a tom-tom begins to throb, and pretty soon you see other radio men coming across the veldt and through the jungle, all heading directly toward you, sharp-

ening their spears. They listen to the rehearsal for a few minutes, then tell you your program is an insult to the public. Have you ever seen a radio man enthusiastic at a rehearsal? If you have, you're older than I am, Sam. You've seen history in the making!

When the heads of radio have you completely surrounded, one of them asks you, "What is the IDEA behind this sketch of yours?" You begin to hem and haw . . . and in ten minutes you are apologizing for having taken up their time.

Then they go off into the corner and whisper and look at you, and you shrink and try to crawl through the keyhole. Finally one of the men comes and says they'll continue the rehearsal, anyway. You get the idea that they're doing this merely as a favor to you.

Gloom hangs like Spanish moss from the ceilings and the microphones. You are the cause of the horrible mess you've gotten the studio into.

At last the big day comes—your program is on the air! To your astonishment the radio audience likes the show. In fact, it is a HIT. You go around feeling pretty good.

But the broadcast boys say it was probably a lucky fluke and that the next broadcast will tell the story. They tell you to go home and work as you never worked before. You do. You bring back another script. They shake their heads. Why! This is even worse than the first.

Well, your program gets going; and it builds; and finally becomes a minor success. The trade papers talk about it; the radio columnists hold it up as an example of good writing. Then what do the studio boys say?

. It embarrasses me to tell.

They say they knew from the start that it would be a hit.

That was about all I knew of radio until Paul Wing handed me his book manuscript to read. Now I know ALL about it; for I have followed Sam Hubbard into regions where no prudent Angel would dare to tread. Regions which, before, I used to catch only glimpses of when the clouds lifted. But now I know them as a blind man knows his garden path. I have followed Sam through the announcers' division, through the production department; trailed him into "continuity"; and walked hand in hand with him through the mysteries of the sound effects department.

My favorite character is "Doc" Martin, the Mr. Malaprop of engineers, whose speech is full of linguistic static. He is the Sam Goldwyn of the airways. I jotted down some of his remarks:

"I may be wrong, but I'm not far from it."

"That's just a pigment of your imagination."

"Getting a sponsor is like trying to put a thread through a camel's eye."

"He's a bull in a Chinese shop."

These are some of my favorites; but there are others. I'll let you have the pleasure of finding them.

So, if you want to learn about the mysterious labyrinths of radio, and at the same time be entertained by a pleasing story, then search no further. Here it is. Take it away, Reader!

HOMER CROY

Who always wondered about radio.

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CHAPTER I

"Sam Hubbard Speaking"

"CONFOUND it!" shouted Michael Cassidy. His telephone receiver snapped into place with a vicious click.

Displays of temper were unusual for the Chief of Announcers of the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company. His newest clerk, seated in the outer office, was on the point of asking Mike what the trouble was, when his own telephone bell jingled an insistent summons. He answered with his accustomed formula:

"Announcers' office; Sam Hubbard speaking."

At first the receiver at Sam's ear spluttered unintelligibly. The owner of the feminine voice at the other end of the wire was too excited to talk coherently. But Sam Hubbard recognized the distraught voice as belonging to the wife of Emmet Carson, one of Transcontinental's announcers.

"Just a minute, Mrs. Carson," Sam tried to make the words sound soothing. "I can't make out what you're saying. Just try to speak a little more slowly, will you?"

"Oh, Mr. Hubbard!" came the frantic reply. "I don't know what to do! They've just taken Emmet to the hospital! Emergency operation! Appendicitis, the doctor says!"

"That's a shame!" Sam sympathized. "But don't you worry; Emmet will come through all right. He's in too good condition for anything like that to harm him and, besides, they know how to handle it these days. Don't you worry about anything. I'll tell the boss about it, and if

there's anything Emmet needs—or you either—Mr. Cassidy'll see that you get it."

Then Sam learned the name of the hospital to which Carson had been sent, the name of the doctor who had him in charge, the fact that arrangements must be made for a special nurse, that Mrs. Carson hadn't a cent in the house, that her husband had intended to give her a check that very evening, before he left for his broadcasts—and then—this had happened—and what was she to do?

Sam told her to go to the hospital as she had planned, and then to sit tight; that Mike Cassidy would take care of everything. He always took care of everything for all of "his boys," didn't he?

But, as Sam replaced the receiver of his telephone, his mind was by no means so calm as his manner had been. He was too well aware that Emmet Carson's illness just at this time was a major disaster in the announcers' department: five of Mike Cassidy's eighteen men were on vacation; three were away on distant assignments; plus Gardner Strong, who had gone to Los Angeles to cover the cross-continent Air Derby, and wouldn't be back for another ten days.

That left nine men, of whom one had reported sick that very morning. Two others had this as their regular day off. Three were now at work in the studios, announcing commercial programs. Mike had sent Bradford Bevins out, not half an hour ago, to announce musical numbers for an orchestra which was broadcasting from an uptown hotel.

And now Emmet Carson! Steady old Emmet, whom Mike Cassidy always relied on to help him out of jams!

Well, it meant that Mike had just one man left to cover

all emergencies—Bill Dickson, one of the younger men on the staff. And Sam knew that one man was not enough. Not enough to provide a margin of safety. But Bill Dickson would have to do because he was all Mike had.

One of young Samuel Hubbard's duties as clerical assistant to the Chief of Announcers was to make out the assignment sheets, and see to it that every announcer knew where he was supposed to be, what he was to do there, at what time, and for how long—and then, what he was to do next. To keep this complicated schedule in perfect order, Sam worked from a series of big, equally complicated charts—seven of them—one for each day in the week. Across the top of each chart, heading eighteen columns, were the names of the eighteen men; and below each name were spaces for every one of the eighteen broadcasting hours in the day, divided into quarter hours.

As Sam rose to take the bad news to Mike Cassidy, he looked at his chart for that evening—and shook his head. "A nice lot of lines and spaces," he thought, "and no announcers' names to write into them. At least, none except Bill Dickson's."

He entered Mike's little inner office, where the latter sat at his desk, dashing off a memorandum.

"Say, this is a rotten shame, Mr. Cassidy."

Mike looked up and smiled. Apparently the annoyance that had caused him to bang down his phone a few minutes ago had passed. He looked his usual friendly self; benign, unhurried, assured and efficient.

"Yeah?" he questioned. "What's a rotten shame?"

As Sam told him, he could see Mike wilt.

"Great grief!" he exploded when he had the whole

story. "Why do these things all have to happen at once? It's not three minutes since Bill Dickson called me, long distance from New London, Connecticut, to say there's a bridge burned out on the New Haven, between there and Saybrook—and there's no way for him to get here before broadcasting will be over for the night. It'll take him five hours to drive in—and it's half-past seven now. He was due a half hour ago!"

But then Mike seemed to pull himself together. A half smile curved his lips. "Ah, well," he said, "this isn't the first jam I've been in; and I don't suppose it's the last—nor even the worst. But it's certainly a bad one."

"It sure is, Mr. Cassidy!" Sam agreed,

"Forget it," said Mike with a shrug; "it's just Life in the Radio Business—it's one emergency after another, and it always will be.

"And besides," he went on, "I'm a fine one to be complaining! Think of poor Emmet! He is the emergency we've got to take care of right now.

"Doggone, but I wish I could run over there to the hospital and see to it myself." Mike heaved a sigh. "But that's impossible with things in this shape. So you send a messenger boy in to me—tell the mail room he may be gone half the night—and then you get busy on the phone—"

And Michael Cassidy gave Sam a running fire of instructions, a list that would have staggered him three months ago, when he was new to his job: things to be done, and done quickly; messages to be delivered, accurately and without delay, even though he might have to cover half the town with phone calls to reach some of

the persons for whom they were intended.

"Phone Bertha Carson at the hospital. Tell her I'm sending some money over to her. Tell her Mrs. Cassidy will be right over. Tell her why I can't come—and say I'll be over as soon after midnight as I can get there. Then get Mrs. Cassidy on the phone.

"Call Blakeslie, in Boston, and Jamieson, in Philly. Tell them the hole we're in, and see if they can send us four men—for maybe five days. And if Blakeslie can, don't call Jamieson. But get me four men by morning. Try Washington and Cleveland, if you have to.

"Cancel all days off for tomorrow. Call the boys' homes and leave word for them. Do that first—right after you get Mrs. Carson. Then, when you're sure you'll have four relief men in the morning, reinstate the days off. Call 'em back, see?"

Sam nodded, making notes.

"Send word to the three announcers in the studios to see me before they go home tonight. And don't tell 'em why! Poor beggars! I hope they haven't got dates before midnight."

Michael Cassidy reeled off half a dozen more orders in rapid succession. Then, as Sam returned to his desk in the outer office to carry out his chief's instructions, Mike turned to his telephone once more, handling a myriad routine details and a host of special ones—caused by this emergency—as if all were a part of the day's work; as, in fact, they were.

For the chief announcer's earlier remark was no idle jest: the business of radio broadcasting, like every other branch of "show business," consists of one emergency

treading on the heels of the one before it—and having its own heels trod on by the one that follows.

And successful showmen are those who learn, as Mike Cassidy had learned years before, that every emergency must be taken in one's stride—and turned to account if possible; but never, under any circumstances, must accidents be allowed to interfere with the smooth presentation of the show. The audience must never suspect that anything out of the way has happened.

In his three months as Mike's chief clerk, Sam Hubbard had begun to develop this sixth sense of the true showman. He had begun to anticipate the unexpected, so that he never was surprised when the unexpected happened.

And don't think that Mike's watchful eye had not seen it developing. It was the first thing he looked for when he began to break in a new man. If the apprentice did not begin to show it very early in his experience, Mike would take him aside and explain that he thought the youngster would be happier, and have a better chance for advancement, in some other kind of work. Then he would help to get the misfit transferred to the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company's executive department, or to the sales department, or to some other kind of work to which his special talents seemed better suited.

But Mike liked Sam Hubbard. In three short months, he had watched Sam change from a raw recruit, just out of college, into a capable young assistant who wasn't in the least flustered by the sudden changes in plans and programs that supplied a large part of his work in the announcers' department.

CHAPTER II

"We Interrupt the Program—"

As Sam finished carrying out the last of Mike Cassidy's instructions, he thought back to his first week in this, his first job. Could it have been only a little more than three months since he had left the quiet campus of Ohio University?

He remembered how confident he had been when he called on the first few business men to whom he had carried letters of introduction. He remembered, with a blush, how he had handed his crisp, impressive-looking diploma to the first one of all—an old friend of his family whom Sam had not seen since the day of his father's funeral, seven years before.

After greeting Sam warmly and inquiring about his mother's health, the man had asked what brought Sam to New York; and what he could do for him. Sam had told him he was looking for a job and naïvely had handed him the treasured diploma.

"What's this?" his father's friend had asked; and then, seeing what it was, had rolled up the diploma with scarcely a second glance and had handed it back to Sam, unsuccessfully trying to conceal his lack of interest in it.

Sam recalled the incident with regret, for he had allowed it to make him angry. "Business men must be a mighty stupid lot, if that's the way they treat a fellow's university diploma!"

But now Sam was sorry for his anger, because he had been forced to realize, in the next few days, how good that business man's advice had been; and what a lot of embarrassment it had saved him.

"If I were you, Sam," the business man had said, as he handed back the diploma—"if I were you, I wouldn't show that to my prospective employers.

"Because," he had continued, "that isn't what employers are going to be interested in.

"They're going to want to know what experience you've had in their line of business; and college educations aren't of much use in a fellow's early years in business. Not unless he has specialized in a technical course that suits the job he's applying for."

Sam's disappointment and disgust must have showed in his face; because the other continued, hastily:

"Don't misunderstand me! College is a great thing later on. But you don't begin to cash in on it until you've found your niche and learned the rudiments of the business you're going to devote your life to—and *they're* learned only by experience.

"When I advise you not to show that diploma to anyone," he went on, "I don't mean that you mustn't let them know you've been to college. Tell them," he said, "but tell them sort of casually—offhandedly. They'll have more respect for your intelligence when they see that you don't take your diploma too seriously."

At the moment, Sam had been too angry to grasp the good sense in this advice. It wasn't until he thought it over afterward that he realized how intelligent it was.

"You didn't specialize in college, did you?"

Sam admitted that he had not.

"You took a straight academic course?"

Sam admitted that he had.

"Well then," said his adviser, "I'm afraid there isn't anything for you in our business. Because the only young college men we can employ are chemists.

"I'm mighty sorry, too." His regret sounded so sincere that Sam disliked him slightly less.

"I'm sorry," he said, "both because I like the cut of your jib, and because your father was one of the best friends I ever had. His death was a great loss to me."

Then he had called his secretary and dictated a letter for Sam to present to Michael Cassidy of the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company. He had said he thought Mike might have a place for a boy like Sam—and, if he had, he would be a great fellow to work for.

Sam remembered, almost with a chill, how close he had come to throwing that letter away, just after he left the office of his father's old friend.

He remembered the discouraging days that followed.

Days filled with call after futile call on business men who had no opening for a young college graduate. Most of them, he thought, hadn't even the time to turn him down courteously. A few even sent word to him that they were too busy to see him.

Those were days that had turned his confidence into fear, and made him certain that the whole world was united against him.

He had ceased to look for a position in keeping with the dignity of a college graduate. All he wanted was a job. *Any* job. Just a chance to place a timid foot on the lowest

rung of the ladder. And all these smug, busy people who already had jobs seemed to be conspiring against him consciously, to keep him from getting one.

He really knew that wasn't so; but he was so discouraged that he couldn't get the thought out of his mind.

Then came the day when he had presented the last of his letters of introduction. The very last. He had handed it in with a certainty that nothing would come of it. So he wasn't surprised when nothing did.

He had trudged disconsolately back to his room at the Y.M.C.A. and begun to throw his belongings into his bright, new pigskin bag, a graduation gift from his mother. He smiled a wry smile as he thought how important that piece of luggage had seemed when he had packed it to start for New York. And now he was leaving: going back to Athens, Ohio, probably to get a job as clerk in one of the local stores. He had wondered if he'd ever use the traveling bag again.

As he tossed the last piece into the bag, he glanced hastily around the room, just to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything. His eye was caught by an unopened letter on the chest of drawers. What was it? he wondered as he picked it up.

"To: Mr. Michael Cassidy," said the address. "In care of the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company." And, in the lower, left-hand corner, "Introducing Samuel Hubbard."

"What's the use?" Sam had thought. "It will be just like all the other interviews: 'Sorry, we have nothing for you.'"

But, after a moment of uncertainty, he had decided to take a chance and present the letter. It couldn't do him

any harm. And if he didn't present it, he would always wonder what would have happened if he had.

Sam's thoughts came back to the present. “Boy! Am I glad I *did* hand in that letter!”

He looked around the comfortable office where he had spent most of his waking hours during the past three months, and thanked his lucky stars that he hadn't given up.

What a lot he had learned in twelve short weeks! Things he could have learned in no way except by experience—by doing them himself and by watching other people do them.

Now he knew why an academic education is of so little value to a beginner in business. And, on the other hand, he began to appreciate how very important his education would be, later on.

But suddenly his reverie was shattered!

A jangling bell jerked him back to realities. And, at the same time, a red light showed over the door of Mike Cassidy's office.

The bell and the light were the double warning that an important message was about to arrive from the Press Radio Bureau, the department which transmits vital news flashes to the announcers' office.

Sam sprang to the corner where the telautograph stood—the amazing instrument that is able to deliver a message written in the press department, at the instant of its writing, to a dozen different offices in the building; in the very handwriting of the person who sends it.

Before Sam reached the machine, its little pencil was scribbling busily on the roll of paper before which it was

suspended.

As he began to read the message, he heard Mike Cassidy's exclamation from the inner office: "Ob-ob," said Mike, "here it comes!"

It was that sixth sense of Mike's, anticipating an emergency. He hadn't the least idea what the message was going to be; but already he was preparing to act.

"FOR IMMEDIATE BROADCAST," wrote the little pencil. That meant something urgent, Sam knew.

"News flash!" he called to Mike, who at once was on his way out to look over Sam's shoulder. Together, they watched as the frantic pencil jabbed out its startling syllables:

"The steamship *Atlantis*, now on a Caribbean cruise, was rammed in a fog by an unidentified tramp steamer, one hundred miles east of Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, this evening at six-forty-five Eastern Daylight time. The tramp steamer sank almost immediately with the loss of all hands, it is feared. The *Atlantis* was so seriously damaged amidships that she is unable to proceed under her own steam. She is listing so badly that she cannot launch her lifeboats; and a fire of dangerous proportions has broken out in her number three hold. In response to her S O S calls, all ships within communicating distance are hastening to her assistance. The nearest, however, is the freighter *Dog Star*, bound from Cayenne, French Guiana, for Paramaribo. The *Dog Star* is approximately seventy-five miles from the *Atlantis* at this time. It is estimated that she cannot reach the *Atlantis* in less than seven hours. Extreme fear is expressed for the liner's 876 passengers and her crew of 272. The passenger list includes many Americans, among whom are:

Homer S. Agnew of the State Department and his wife; also Miss Dagmar Davenport, the movie star, and her husband, Henry T. Carmichael, the financier. Also among the passengers are Gascoine Vrillon, famous French novelist, and his wife, Mlle. Simone Meridonne, the actress.

"More expected later.

"FOR IMMEDIATE BROADCAST." The busy pencil finished its message by repeating its urgent first words.

There was news! News of the first importance, Sam knew. For, quite aside from the fact that a major marine disaster always is news, this one involved an American ship carrying eight hundred and seventy-six passengers, mostly American. And that number of persons probably had nearly a hundred thousand relatives and friends scattered all over the country, who would be vitally interested.

Mike had decided what to do.

"I haven't a man to put this on the air," he said, "so I'll have to run up to one of the studios and do it myself. You cover the office, Sam, until I can get back."

Sam nodded. Mike started for the door—then paused.

"No," he said, turning back. "That won't do. As sure as I leave you here alone, something will break that you don't know about.

"That's nothing against you, Sam," he half apologized, as Sam was about to remonstrate, "but no one could learn, in three months, how to handle all the pesky details that are constantly bobbing up here.

"No, Sam—you'll have to broadcast this news flash. I'll stay here. Can you do it?"

Sam was thrilled! Of course he could do it! And he said so.

"Do you know how to push the buttons?" Mike asked.

Sam hesitated; for on the announcer's desk in each of the studios was a row of little buttons, each with a light over it. They were simple enough—if you knew which ones to press, and in what order. But Sam didn't know. And he realized if he did not press the right buttons in the right order he probably would be broadcasting the news flash "to dead air"—talking to a microphone without electricity in it.

"Never mind about that," Mike reassured him. "You take this to studio 8-E. There's no program there right now. Doc Martin's up there inspecting the equipment. I'll call him on the phone and tell him you're coming. He'll press the buttons for you and you can broadcast from right there. Do you know how to sign on and sign off?"

That much, Sam was sure he did know. But, as he rushed out of the office, Mike called after him:

"Don't forget that you'll be breaking in on the middle of a commercial program!"

Sam sprinted for the staff elevator, which shot him up to the eighth floor. He ran into studio 8-E and found Doc Martin, one of the company's oldest engineers, waiting for him.

"Got to get this news flash on the air quick!" he shouted at Doc, breathlessly, as he dashed into the room.

"Hunh!" Doc grunted. "You ain't choosin' a very good way of gettin' ready to do it."

"This is important!" Sam told him. He was impatient with the slow-moving, ungrammatical Martin. Didn't the man understand the urgency of Sam's errand?

"Sure, sure—I know," drawled the engineer. "Mike Cas-

sidy rung me up an' tole me all about it. But, lookahere, son, you hadn't oughta ran all the way up here. You're so outa breath right now that you couldn't talk on no mike to lose your soul!"

Doc Martin was right. Sam hadn't thought about that as he hurried to the studio. He was wondering what to do about it when Doc set his mind at rest:

"Jest you set down in that there chair an' take it easy, while I call Master Control an' tell 'em to switch this studio onto the network when I punch the button—I gotta do that anyways, so you ain't losin' any time."

Sam did as he was told, glad of the chance to catch his breath.

Doc Martin glanced over his shoulder at Sam as he dialed Master Control's number on his private telephone. "The trouble with you youngsters is that you're always gettin' the cart on top of the horse. You better be thinkin' how you're goin' to interduce that news flash."

That was good sense, thought Sam. He'd better be thinking how he was going to sign off, too, after he finished reading the dispatch. While Doc gave his instructions to the Master Control room, Sam thought.

"Let's see—what were Mike Cassidy's last words? Oh yes: 'You'll be breaking in on the middle of a commercial program.'" Sam remembered what he had heard the announcers say so often under similar circumstances. Then he recalled how they usually finished off such reports as this one he was about to read. When Doc Martin motioned him to step up to the microphone, he was ready for his big moment. He braced himself and took a deep breath.

"Hold on now, till I give you the go-ahead," said Doc.

Then, it seemed to Sam, there was an interminable pause while Doc stood with an earphone pressed to his ear. He was listening to the commercial program that was going out over the network from another studio—the program Sam was about to interrupt.

"Gee whiz!" Sam urged him, "hurry up!"

"Can't break in on talk," was Doc's rejoinder—"least-wise, not when they're going to start a musical number in just a second. 'Cause it sounds a lot better to cut in on music: the change ain't so abrupt."

Then, of a sudden, Doc became alert. "Now, stand by!" he said. "The music is goin' to begin—then Master Control will fade it out, and I'll give you the go-ahead."

There was another wait. The moments when you are waiting at a microphone for the signal to start broadcasting are the longest moments in the world. Sam began to perspire.

Then he saw Doc's finger go to one of the buttons on the announcer's desk. Over the button it poised. And then—

"Take it away, Sam!" Doc murmured; and pressed the button.

But Sam *couldn't* "take it away."

It was a terrible moment!

There was Sam.

There was the microphone.

There, in Sam's hand, was the news he wanted to broadcast.

But, for the life of him, he could not make the words come out of his mouth.

At last, just when he was sure he was going to fail, he heard himself speaking. It was as though he were stand-

ing off, listening to someone else; but the sentences sounded quite calm and intelligible.

Sam had experienced his first—and only—case of “mike fright.”

“Through the courtesy of its sponsors, we interrupt the program you are listening to,” Sam heard his own voice say, “to bring you an important news bulletin from the Press Radio Bureau.”

Then he read from the paper in his hand:

“The steamship *Atlantis*, now on a Caribbean cruise . . .”

He read steadily through to the end of the dispatch; and when he had finished, added:

“Keep your radio tuned to this station for later bulletins. This news comes to you from the Press Radio Bureau. For further details, see your local newspaper. We now return you to the program to which you were listening.”

Doc Martin calmly pressed another button on the announcer’s desk, and turned to Sam. The ordeal was over. Beads of perspiration stood out on Sam’s forehead.

“Well, son,” said Doc Martin, “I thought you was never goin’ to get started—but, when you did, you done a danged good job; and don’t let nobody tell you so, neither.”

Sam’s heart warmed to the other’s praise. Perhaps he had been hasty in his judgment of this rough-spoken fellow who seemed to do his work with so little fuss—and so efficiently. Doc Martin might twist up the English language into pretzels, but certainly he did not twist up the thousand and one details of his complicated job. He knew exactly what to do and when to do it.

“Thanks for the kind words, Mr. Martin,” said Sam; “and thanks for your help, too; because I’d have made a

flop of it without you to press the buttons.”

“Oh, you’ll learn to appreciate us engineers,” Doc replied. “You’ll find out that we’re not just a bunch of woofs in cheap clothing!”

“And, as for that Mr. Martin business—you can just call me Doc, the way everybody else does,” he said. “Whenever you get into no trouble, you come to me—I’m the Doctor.”

Sam laughed. “Thanks, Doc,” he called back as he started for the door.

CHAPTER III

Paramaribo

ALL the way down to the announcers' office on the second floor, Sam felt a pleasant glow of satisfaction from Doc's compliment. He knew it was sincere. Perhaps his delay in starting to read the dispatch hadn't been so noticeable, after all.

He hurried directly into Mike Cassidy's inner office and found Mike just on the point of ending a telephone conversation. As he hung up the receiver, Mike looked up and smiled.

Sam stood in front of his desk. "Was it—did I do it all right, Mr. Cassidy?"

"To tell you the truth, Sam," Mike replied, "I was on the phone. I didn't have a chance to listen."

The glow of Sam's spirits turned to a chill. He had done a job that Doc Martin had said was a good job—and his own boss hadn't even heard him!

"Oh," he said, barely audibly.

Then Mike laughed.

"Of course I heard you!" he chuckled. "I was just kidding you, Sam."

Up bounded Sam's mercurial spirits.

"I wouldn't have missed your first broadcast for anything," Mike continued. "You did it very well. You got me out of a nasty hole, son; and I want you to know how much I appreciate it."

That was praise that amounted to something! From the man who had it in his power to give Sam a better job in the announcers' department. Why! If Mike felt that Sam had handled such a difficult assignment so competently, he might even be willing to give him a job as a full-fledged announcer!

Sam could feel his vest buttons straining at their moorings. Perhaps now would be a good time to ask Mike for advancement. "Strike while the iron is hot," so to speak. What would be the best way to strike? he wondered. He began to make up nice-sounding sentences with which to broach his request. But before he had an opportunity to start, things began to happen that made Sam rush to the outer office and kept Mike Cassidy busy in the inner one.

One routine duty after another occupied Sam's attention for more than an hour.

Then the press department's bell and red light called him to the telautograph once more. It was another news flash on the *Atlantis*—a more encouraging one, this time. The Captain of the liner had reported that the fire had been confined to cargo hold number three; that it was not gaining headway. By shifting cargo and ballast, the ship had been restored to an even keel, so that he would be able to put the passengers off in the lifeboats if that became necessary.

As he and Mike read the good news, Sam thrilled to the expectation of his second opportunity to broadcast. But just as the telautograph's little pencil came to rest, one of the three announcers who previously had been busy in the studios, came into the office.

Sam looked expectantly at Mike. But that busy man,

without so much as a glance in his direction, tore from the instrument the part of the roll of paper that bore the penciled bulletin and handed it to the regular announcer, with instructions for its immediate broadcast.

What a break! If that fellow only had stayed out of the room for a few more moments, Sam would now be telling that cheering news to millions of eager radio listeners. It meant so much to Sam, too—and to the announcer, it was nothing but another part of the night's work.

Oh, well! Such was luck! Sam shrugged his shoulders and went back to his job.

During the evening, the other two regular announcers finished their work on the commercial programs which, earlier, had kept them in the studios; and by eleven o'clock, the tension of half-past seven had been forgotten as completely as though it never had existed. Mike Cassidy now had three experienced, dependable men on hand—enough to handle any emergency that might arise.

Sam already had arranged with the studios in Boston and Philadelphia to lend him four men, who would be on hand first thing in the morning. Bill Dickson would be back then, too. So the early-evening strain was a thing of the past.

There came a welcome lull in the rush of orders and assignments. The persistent telephones seemed to have gone suddenly dumb. Sam leaned back in his chair in a comfortable, yawning stretch. That was radio for you—either a feast or a famine: either so much to do that you couldn't possibly get it all done—or nothing at all.

Mike Cassidy evidently was enjoying a respite also, for he came strolling leisurely out of his office as though he

hadn't a care in the world. "Ha!" thought Sam. "Now's the time to brace him for an announcer's job!"

"Well, youngster," said Mike, before Sam had a chance to speak, "you've had a pretty hectic night, haven't you?"

"Oh, I don't mind a bit, Mr. Cassidy," Sam replied. "They can't come too busy to suit me."

Mike chuckled. "Good! That's the way to feel about your work. It's the attitude that makes work fun, and not drudgery.

"But now that the rush is over," he continued, "I think you'd better knock off and go home. It's almost eleven o'clock."

Sam objected.

"Why, I'm not supposed to leave until midnight."

"I know that—and I know how often you *don't* leave until one-thirty or after—but—" Mike Cassidy hesitated; and then—"but I've got to ask you to do something special for me in the morning." He seemed reluctant to put his request into words.

"Oh, sure," Sam said, "anything at all!"

"I hate to ask you to do this." Sam wondered what was coming. "Because I know you're not due here until five o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

"But I may not get away from the hospital until all hours tonight. And besides, there may be things I'll have to do for Emmet Carson, in the morning, that will keep me away from here until fairly late."

"You want me to come in early? Why, of course!" Sam assured him.

"And I mean EARLY! You'll have to be here when broadcasting starts tomorrow morning—at half-past seven." He

explained the necessity of having in the office someone who could show the Philadelphia and Boston men the ropes—for some of them might be unfamiliar with the New York studio layout—and to explain their morning assignments.

“Why, certainly!” Sam said. He would have insisted just as eagerly if Mike had asked him to be in the office at half-past five, because, while Mike had been talking, Sam had been thinking up those pretty sentences that were to lead to an announcer’s job.

When he had received all Mike’s instructions for the next morning, he cleared his throat.

“Mr. Cassidy,” he said, “there is something I’d like to talk to you about, if you have time—”

“Why, sure, Sam. What is it?” Mike Cassidy detected a slightly strained note in Sam’s voice. “You aren’t in any trouble, are you?”

Well! That couldn’t have been a very good start, Sam thought. He assured his boss that there was no trouble at all. But the unexpected question was a little disconcerting. It drove all the pretty phrases out of his head. So he just babbled out his request. It was pretty clumsy, he thought.

“You—uh—that is, you said I broadcast that news bulletin—uh—all right—didn’t you?”

“You certainly did, Sam. You rose to the emergency in fine style.” What could the boy be driving at, anyway?

“Well, then—I mean, I wondered if I couldn’t do—things like that for you—once in a while—uh—I mean right along.”

Oh! So that was it! Sam had tasted the thrill of performing; and he liked it. A case of microphonitis, thought Mike.

“Why, of course you can! I’ll watch out for oppor-

tunities—when you're not too busy with your regular work.

"I'll send you into the studios with some of the boys, now and then."

That wasn't Sam's idea, at all! But he didn't want to seem ungrateful.

"Well, thanks, Mr. Cassidy, but—I mean—that is—"

"Just what do you mean, Sam?"

"Couldn't I have a regular announcer's job?" There! He had got it out!

There was no answer. For what seemed ages, Mike just stood looking down at Sam. "I might have guessed something of this kind was coming when he was so anxious to stay later tonight—and to come in early tomorrow," he thought.

Sam sat at his desk, smiling expectantly. Mike was thinking it over, he supposed. Well, that was all right. Let him take his time. He certainly couldn't refuse so reasonable a request.

But the pause lengthened into a wait. It lasted too long. One can't keep on just sitting and smiling indefinitely. Sam's expectant smile congealed into a merely frozen one. He became conscious of it; and suspected that he must be looking rather silly. Perhaps he had better "strike" again. Possibly the iron wasn't as hot as he had thought.

"I could still keep right on doing my regular work—as long as you needed me to."

Mike continued to stand, regarding him thoughtfully.

"I wouldn't expect a—raise in salary—"

Sam considered the size of his modest pay check. It sounded a little foolish to dignify it by calling it a "salary."

"I mean a raise in pay. . . . That is, not until you were sure I'm a good announcer."

At last, the other spoke.

"Sam," he said, "you did do a good job with that bulletin tonight. Under the circumstances, a very good job. You helped me out a very great deal."

Sam wondered what he meant by "under the circumstances." But Mike went right on talking.

"You did it so well that I don't want you to feel hurt or discouraged by what I'm going to say to you now."

Suddenly Sam felt as though there were an undigested dumpling at the pit of his stomach.

One reason why Mike Cassidy was so successful in his job was that he had a very shrewd way of handling his men. He could be pretty blunt and brusque. With some of his men, he was. With others, he was suave and diplomatic. And with others, kindly and gentle.

He had watched Sam closely during his three months in the announcers' office. He knew Sam was sensitive; and perhaps inclined to be moody. He felt that it might ruin his future in radio to plunge him into a depression just now—just when his first experience before the microphone had raised his spirits to the clouds and his hopes to the impossible. And yet he knew that, for his own sake, Sam must be made to see the ridiculousness of his request; knew that he must tell him the truth.

"I listened to you tonight—and I think you have a good voice and personality for the radio. I think, if you'll take things slowly and keep your eyes and ears open, you may be able to carve out an important niche for yourself. But—"

That's the trouble: there's always a "but," Sam thought.

"But you're not ready for an announcer's job.

"That's nothing to feel discouraged about," Mike added hastily. "In the length of time you've been here, no one

could be ready."

"But, Mr. Cassidy!" Sam's voice was pleading. "You said, yourself, that I read the bulletin well! And Doc Martin said I did a swell job with it!"

"Sam," said Mike, "I'm going to have to tell you some things about your broadcasting of that bulletin that I'm afraid you won't like:

"In the first place, you didn't know how to punch buttons, did you?"

Sam made no reply. There was none to make.

"There are countless combinations of hookups that depend on pressing the buttons properly. That is something every announcer must know intimately—so intimately that he won't make mistakes. And remember, he has no Doc Martin on hand to help him out.

"Then, before you can hope to be an announcer, you'll have to work in many different divisions of the program department in order to be thoroughly familiar with the work of all of them. Announcers do not do the work of other divisions; but they must understand it thoroughly, or they are sure to make serious mistakes as announcers.

"And then—now don't let this hurt your feelings—in your broadcast tonight, you mispronounced three important names."

"I did!" Sam was aghast.

"And that is something that an announcer must *not* do.

"P-a-r-a-m-a-r-i-b-o is not pronounced Pă-ră-mă-rēē'bō; it is pronounced Pă-ră-mă-rĩ-bō."

"What else?" Sam asked. The dumpling felt heavier than ever.

"Well, Monsieur Vrillon pronounces his name as though it were spelled, V-r-ee-o-n-g, and his wife's name is Mer-

rydun, as if the last syllable were spelled with a short u—not with a long o.”

French pronunciation had been Sam’s *bête noire* all through high school and college. He told Mike so.

Mike nodded. “I suspected that,” he said. “But don’t you see, Sam, that that is an admission you didn’t make the most of your opportunity at college?”

“You’ll have to go back to studying French pronunciation—and before you’ll be ready to become an announcer, you’ll have to conquer it!”

“But, gee whiz, Mr. Cassidy!” Sam wailed. “Those are three names that nobody ever heard before!”

“Don’t you believe it, Sam! Both Monsieur Vrillon and Mademoiselle Meridonne have very large followings in this country. And as for Paramaribo: ever since the beginning of Pan-American airplane service, it has been mentioned frequently and prominently in the news.”

“Well, anyway,” Sam growled—he was beginning to lose his temper—“anyway, French is a silly way to speak any language!”

Mike Cassidy threw back his head and laughed. He was grateful for the unconscious witticism; for it was just what was needed to relieve the uncomfortable situation.

Sam laughed, too, when he realized what he had said. But his was not a very mirthful laugh. His heart was not in it.

“You go on home now, young fellow,” counseled Mike. “Think over what I’ve said to you, and you’ll begin to see that it makes sense.

“You can go a long way in the broadcasting business. But you’ll have to take it in easy stages. You can’t jump to the top in one kangaroo leap.”

And with that, Mike Cassidy turned and walked quickly into his own office. Very definitely, the interview was at an end.

Sam's first effort to better his job had been, distinctly, not a success.

He was about as discouraged as a twenty-two-year-old can be. He was in no condition to "think over" what his boss had said. He was too angry: angry at himself for having "foozled" those pronunciations; angry, unreasonably, at Mike for having told him about them; angry at the world for being the kind of world it is.

He reached for his hat, pulled it low over his eyes, and started for the door. But as his hand touched the doorknob, he paused. He didn't want to go home. He feared to face the loneliness of his room at the Y.M.C.A. He wanted someone to talk to; someone with sympathy and understanding, who would help him to pull out of the black mood he was in.

He turned back to his telephone and dialed a number. In a moment he heard a pleasant feminine voice at the other end of the wire. Merely hearing it was of *some* help to Sam.

"Hello, Helen. . . . Gee, Helen, I'm glad I caught you at home. . . . I didn't wake you up, did I? . . . That's good. . . . Yeah, I thought you'd be just about getting home from the office—that's why I called. . . . Well, look, Helen—may I come down to your place? . . . Yes. Tonight. Right now. I want to talk to you. May I? . . . What? . . . Ham and eggs, did you say? Great! I think that's exactly what I need. . . . I'll be right down. G'by."

CHAPTER IV

Sam Decides to Make a Change

HELEN CHAMBERS had been a brilliant student in Ohio's School of Journalism during the four years that Sam had spent on his academic education. Long before she graduated from high school, Helen had planned to be a writer. She was one of those lucky people who know, very early in life, just what their capabilities are, just where they are going and just how they are going to get there.

At least, Sam had thought Helen lucky. It was a long time before he began to suspect that her "luck," if it was luck at all, lay in her possession of a level head, an analytical mind and the determination to stick to her course.

Because she was so attractive and so popular, the Dean of the School of Journalism had considered her brilliance a paradox. Her social activities and her outside interests never had interfered with lectures, nor with her thoroughness in handling every class assignment that came her way.

Sam had thought Helen lucky when she landed her job on the *Intelligencer*—with the very first letter of introduction she had presented. As he thought the matter over, though, he could see that the ease with which she had secured her cub reportership had been due to the fact that she had prepared herself for it.

Helen had specialized in college. Sam had not. Helen had been an excellent student in her chosen subject. Sam never had been especially outstanding in any subject. Helen

had gone straight to the one place in New York that was best able to use her talents. Sam had not—because there wasn’t any best place for him. And he realized now that *he* had been the lucky one—lucky to get any job at all. It all fitted in with what his father’s old friend had told him: “. . . college educations aren’t of much use in a fellow’s early years in business, unless he has specialized in a course that suits the job he is applying for.”

These things were going through Sam’s troubled mind as the Fifth Avenue bus carried him downtown toward Helen Chambers’ Greenwich Village apartment. They were kaleidoscopic thoughts, following one another in illogical disorder and getting all mixed up with his disappointment over Mike Cassidy’s refusal to make him an announcer.

“Darn it! I did a good job with that bulletin. Doc Martin said so.”

“I wish I had specialized in college. Why didn’t I?”

“What if I *did* mispronounce those three names? He could have told me about it, and I wouldn’t have done it again.”

“I wish I had paid more attention to French pronunciations in school.”

“But, doggone it! If he really had any confidence in me, Mike could give me the job right now—and I could be studying up on the things I need to know, while I was learning to be an announcer!”

That wasn’t very logical; but it’s hard to be logical when you’re gazing up at life from the depths of the slough of despond.

He wondered whether there was any use of his trying

to get ahead with Mike Cassidy as his boss. Perhaps he would be wiser to quit and look for a job elsewhere.

No. That wouldn't do. He couldn't do that, because he needed his meager salary to continue living in New York.

He knew what he'd do! He would find another job first. Then, when he had it, he would go to Mike Cassidy and give him a week's notice. That was the way to get even with him: make him search, in a hurry, for someone to take Sam's place. In his discouraged, bewildered mood, this all seemed very right and sane to poor Sam.

As he left the bus at Washington Square, he had made up his mind. He would tell Helen his decision this very night.

He walked westward on Fourth Street toward Barrow, where Helen and her roommate, Lucille Wayman, had their snug little three-room apartment. It began to rain—a nasty, drizzling rain; the kind of rain that makes a big city seem twice as big as it is, and twice as unfriendly. “Fine!” thought Sam. “This just suits the way I feel! I'm all wet anyway; what difference can it make if I get a little wetter?”

By the time he pressed the button in Helen's vestibule, little drops of mist clung to his brows and lashes; and his hat, coat and trousers were covered with a fine veil of it.

He must have looked quite as woebegone as he felt when Helen opened the upstairs door for him, with her finger on her lips, signaling him to silence.

She beckoned him to follow to the apartment's little kitchen, whispering that Lucille already was asleep. Quietly, she closed the kitchen door behind them.

"Well!" she laughed aloud. "You look like something the cat dragged in!"

"The way I feel," said Sam, "no self-respecting cat would have anything to do with me."

"Oh, dear," wailed Helen, "I was hoping you'd be a little ray of sunshine! Because I wanted to cry on your shoulder. That's one reason I was so glad you called up."

Sam asked her what the trouble was.

"Oh, nothing, really," she told him. "It's just that I've had a disappointment tonight."

"Here—read this while I fix the ham and eggs. And then I'll tell you all about it." She handed him a three-page manuscript and set about the preparation of their mid-night meal.

Little as Sam wanted to read a manuscript—or to hear about someone else's troubles—there was nothing else for him to do. He knew it would be useless to try to talk to Helen while she was intent on the frying of ham and eggs. He began to read.

The farther he read, the more captivated he became with Helen's brisk, humorous style of writing, with the delightful suspense she had created and with her easy manner of leading her reader from paragraph to paragraph.

The story was a human-interest yarn about a queer old gentleman whom she had seen on the subway, carrying home a live rooster in his bare hands, untied and unwrapped. She told of the rooster's noisy objections to the indignity of the subway ride; compared his feelings to those of the human passengers who, she was sure, didn't like the subway any better than he did; told how he escaped from the old gentleman's grasp and led him a

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lively chase from one end of the train to the other, assisted by all the other passengers and two of the guards; how the rooster had sped through the car door at a downtown station with the owner and several passengers in hot pursuit, flown up the exit stairway, led his pursuers through more than a block of city traffic; and finally, how he had been captured by a burly Irish policeman who said that he, himself, raised chickens and understood them, and that he didn't in the least blame the rooster for objecting to his subway ride.

Helen had captioned the story, "Yoicks! The Cop!"

In spite of his depression, Sam chuckled as he read it. Combined with the savory aroma of frying ham and eggs, the rooster's escapade had gone a long way toward restoring his good spirits.

"That's a honey of a story, Helen," he said.

Helen was setting his supper before him on the kitchen table.

"You bet it is!" she replied. "It's the best thing I've ever written—the best newspaper story, anyway. And what do you suppose happened to it?"

Sam had not the slightest notion.

"Nothing!" said Helen. "And that's what I'm mad about.

"I expected that they'd give me at least a half column on it, with a by-line—you know: By Helen Chambers."

"You mean they didn't even print it?" asked the amazed Sam.

"They not only didn't print it. They didn't even tell me they were sorry they couldn't. Nobody even mentioned it to me."

"The big dopes!" Sam sympathized between mouthfuls

of ham and eggs.

Helen laughed. "Oh, Sammy, you're taking it more seriously than I am. I know why they didn't print it—there wasn't room; too much big news broke all at the last minute. What with local primary elections and the adjournment of Congress and everything, they had to leave out whole columns of stuff they wanted to put in."

"But the editor might have said something about it to you, at least."

"My dear boy!" Helen explained, "the editor never even sees things like this unless they get in. He's much too busy with more important things.

"And as for the city desk, I'm not surprised that nobody mentioned it—because, just at the wrong moment, there was a lot of excitement about a cruise ship that was in collision in a fog off the coast of South America."

"Oh, yes!" Sam almost exploded. She needn't tell him anything about that!

Helen misunderstood his vehemence. She thought it was still on her account.

"Now calm down, Samuel," she counseled. "I really wasn't in the least angry. It was just hard luck; and I wanted to cry to someone about it."

"Yeah. It's tough." His voice probably was not so sympathetic as he would have liked it to be, for the mention of the *Atlantis* affair had brought surging back to the surface all the bitterness and dejection Sam had felt as he walked through the rain from Washington Square.

By her next remark, Helen let herself in for a long, sad story. "Now tell me," she said, "what's been happening to *you*."

Sam needed no prompting.

Beginning with the crisis that had threatened the announcers' department at seven-thirty that evening, he gave Helen an account of events which, for sheer impetus of narration, would have done credit to a Balzac or an O. Henry. He omitted no slightest detail. He spun her a yarn that led interestingly, if not logically, up to his decision to start looking for another job the very next day.

Helen was all sympathy.

"That certainly was tough! I don't blame you for feeling discouraged! And I don't blame you a bit for feeling like quitting your job."

Although she had not had so much experience as Mike Cassidy had, either with life or with men, Helen, herself, was no slouch as a psychologist. Like Mike, she felt that it wouldn't be wise to smash Sam's illusion too suddenly.

Without the slightest hint that she thought it foolish for him to leave Mike Cassidy's employ, gently and gradually she led the talk around to the kind of a new job Sam should look for.

Well, he didn't quite know. That was a little detail which he hadn't considered.

But he had a sudden, spur-of-the-moment inspiration: how about the newspaper business?

"*You're* in the newspaper business. Do you think I'd fit there?"

Helen did *not* think so.

"My goodness, Sam!" she said. "What kind of work would you do in a newspaper office?"

"Remember that I've spent four years in preparing for journalism. And, even at that, I'm not *in* the newspaper

business,' as you say. I'm only hanging on to the end of its tail, by one hand—and struggling to get a hold, a little higher up, with the other."

She pointed out that, in all likelihood, the best Sam could hope for in a newspaper office would be a lowly job as copy boy—or, worse still, as errand boy, where he wouldn't even come in contact with the editorial staff or its work. The pay, she said, probably would be much less than he was earning at present.

Patiently, she went over the prospects with him in one business after another which he suggested. She even made a few suggestions, herself. But always, they came back to the same sorry conclusion: Sam was unfitted for any but the most poorly paid jobs in whatever business they discussed; and most businesses already were overcrowded with young and ambitious talent.

"Well," said Sam, at last, "I guess I'm hooked. It looks as though I'd have to stay where I am, whether I like it or not."

That was the admission Helen had been waiting for. Before she could speak, however, Sam added:

"But I'll tell you one thing: I'm going to keep my eyes open just the same. And if I see anything that will give me a chance to get away from the broadcasting business—I'm going to grab it, quick!"

"That's all right," Helen agreed. "But before you make any move, be sure to come and talk it over with me.

"Or," she said, "with someone who can give you an outsider's viewpoint."

That seemed little enough to promise, so Sam said he would.

Then the wily Helen got him to talking about his work at Transcontinental. She got him to repeat to her what Mike Cassidy had said about his prospects in broadcasting: “. . . I think, if you’ll take things slowly and keep your eyes and ears open, you may be able to carve out an important niche for yourself.”

She maneuvered him into telling her many of the interesting and exciting things that had happened to him since he had become Mike Cassidy’s assistant.

Forgetting himself, under the spur of her encouragement, Sam became enthusiastic. It was more than an hour past midnight when he began to “run down.” Helen had had to stifle several yawns—but faithfully she stuck to her role of attentive listener.

At last she burst into a gale of laughter.

Sam wanted to know why. What was there so funny about what he had been saying?

“Samuel,” said Helen, none the less earnestly in spite of the twinkle in her eyes, “Samuel, I believe you like your job. I don’t believe you want to quit at all! I think you’d be the unhappiest person in the world if you even tried to do any other kind of work.”

Sam was silent, thinking.

“Now confess! Wouldn’t you? . . . What would you say if I told you that there was a cub reporter’s job waiting for you at the *Intelligencer*, tomorrow morning—I mean, *this* morning?”

Sam laughed sheepishly. He thought for a moment.

“I’d tell you to take your job, and jump into the Hudson River with it,” he said, at last. He began to see what Helen had been up to. But his anger was spent. He didn’t

mind. On the contrary, he was grateful to her.

"That's what I'd tell you," he said, looking at his watch. "But thanks for the ham and eggs—ohmigosh! I didn't know it was so late!" He reached for his hat.

Silently, Helen piloted him through the hallway and let him out the front door. Through a crack in the doorway he heard her whisper, "There isn't any job for you at the *Intelligencer*. You'd be a *terrible* reporter!"

The door closed, softly.

CHAPTER V

A Change Is Made—but Not by Sam

SAM did a lot of thinking as he rode uptown on the elevated that early morning—he chose the el because it was faster than the bus.

He thought hard and fast as he undressed and got into bed.

And he awoke a scant five hours later, still thinking.

His first impulse, when he entered the announcers' office a few minutes before seven o'clock, was to call Helen Chambers on the telephone. He knew, though, that he mustn't do it; for Helen wouldn't be awake before nine or half-past. (She usually got to her desk at the *Intelligencer* at about half-past one in the afternoon.) So he stifled his inclination and buried himself in his early-morning duties.

By seven-thirty he had met all four of the emergency announcers, given them their assignments and guided them through the labyrinthine halls of the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company. Broadcasting had started for the day.

The next couple of hours he gave over to his assignment charts for that night. He had finished the day assignments the night before.

He took the responsibility, which really belonged to Mike Cassidy, of assigning announcers to the different evening programs. He knew Mike would be rushed from the

moment of his late arrival and he wanted to do what he could to lighten his labors. And, if Mike disagreed with any of Sam's decisions, it would be an easy matter to change the assignments on his charts and orders.

Then came a long telephone conversation with the supervisor of engineers, who called to give Sam instructions for the announcer on a "nemo job"—a remote pickup, away from the studios. In this case, the Transcontinental microphone was to be set up on the pier of an incoming liner which was bringing a famous British statesman to this country on a diplomatic mission of great importance.

Sir Cedric Branscombe was to broadcast to the American people from the pier, directly on disembarking from his ship. But the broadcast wasn't quite so simple as just that. For the fifteen-minute program was to be opened by the Premier of Great Britain, broadcasting by short wave from London—and simultaneously, by long wave, speaking to the radio listeners of the British Isles. He was to introduce Sir Cedric to the American radio audience. Sir Cedric would then explain his mission and would be welcomed to America by a representative of the State Department. This gentleman, in turn, was to return the program to London, where it would be closed by a few remarks from the Premier.

The voices of all three men, and of the British and American announcers, would be short-waved across the Atlantic and long-waved to listeners in their own countries simultaneously.

That meant that the voices from London, when picked up by Transcontinental's short wave receiver, far out on Long Island, would be converted into long wave and

broadcast directly from there to the listeners of Transcontinental's New York station, WTRA. But, at the same time, they would be carried by telephone wire to the Transcontinental studios in New York City and, from there, still by wire, to every one of the stations on the Transcontinental's great network—from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Canada to the Gulf.

But—

The London voices also must be heard on the steamship pier in New York, so that the New York announcer would know when to give Sir Cedric the signal to begin speaking. To take care of this, a special telephone connection (called a "feed back") was to be made between the New York studios and the pier, where it would terminate in two pairs of headphones—one to be worn by the New York announcer; and the other, by the engineer who would accompany him to the pier.

And that was not all:

The New York announcer's voice and Sir Cedric's, which would travel by wire to the New York studios, and thence to all the stations on the network—and to the Long Island transmitter of WTRA—when they reached this last point, must be converted into short wave, sent across the Atlantic to the British receiver, reconverted into long wave, and broadcast to British listeners.

The supervisor of engineers gave Sam complete instructions for the switches, from London to the New York pier—and back to London again. These instructions included the "cues," the last words that were to be spoken by each person participating in the broadcast.

Near the beginning of the program, when the British

Premier spoke the words, ". . . and so, I commend His Majesty's representative, Sir Cedric Branscombe, to your American hospitality," on the word "hospitality" the New York announcer must signal Sir Cedric to start speaking. When he finished, he would be greeted by the State Department representative, who must end his remarks with the words, ". . . who, once again, will speak to you from London." The instant the engineers in New York, Long Island and London heard these words, they would switch the circuits so that the voice of the British Premier would be heard again.

Sam got the instructions all straight and transmitted them to the announcer who was to handle the New York pier end of this complicated nemo job. Merely transmitting them was quite a long process.

So it was midmorning before he had time to call Helen at her apartment.

"Wake me up?" she laughed, in response to his first question. "I should say not! I've been at my typewriter since nine o'clock, working on the great American novel!"

"Well, that's good," said Sam. And then, "Say, listen, Helen, I just had to call up to tell you that I realize what a sap I was last night and—"

Helen interrupted, hotly jumping to his defense against his own accusation. He wasn't a sap at all, she insisted. His reaction had been perfectly natural. There would have been something wrong with him if he *hadn't* felt exactly as he did. She had felt almost the same about her story which the *Intelligencer* had not printed. And moreover, "he was not to go and get an inferiority complex on her," because there wasn't a thing in the world for him to feel

inferior about.

“Don’t worry,” Sam told her. “What I’ve got isn’t an inferiority complex—I just want you to know that I appreciate the advice you gave me last night.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Helen replied. “I didn’t give you any advice. You reasoned the whole thing out yourself.”

“All right—I reasoned it out myself. But *you* made me do it; and I had to call you up and thank you for it.”

Helen laughed.

“You’re welcome, you simpleton—and now, go back to work, as I’m going to do.” The receiver clicked in Sam’s ear. She had rung off, still laughing.

Sam felt a lot better for having got his confession off his chest. He was just wishing that Mike Cassidy would come in, so he could tell him that he now realized the unreasonableness of his request, when the door opened and there Mike was.

After learning that Emmet Carson’s operation had been a success, Sam told Mike as straightforwardly as he could what he had just told Helen.

As he talked, a delighted smile spread over Mike’s face.

“Sam,” he said, “you couldn’t have pleased me more if you had handed me a certified check for a thousand dollars! Because now I *know* you’ve got the stuff in you to go places in this business. . . . I knew how disappointed you were last night—and I was afraid you might be hurt by what I had to say to you. But I guess I needn’t have worried. . . . I guess you’ve got a sense of proportion.” He put his hand on Sam’s shoulder. “*You’ll do,*” he said.

Sam recalled a principle in physics which says, “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” He

began to suspect that that applies also to one's feelings. For, at Mike's words, Sam's spirits took a leap into the stratosphere which would have made Professor Piccard green with jealousy. After his despondency of the night before, this was certainly an equal and opposite reaction! He wanted to whistle and shout and throw his hat into the air.

However, all he said was, "Thanks, Mr. Cassidy!"

Then he showed his boss the evening's assignment sheets; and explained that he had made the assignments as he believed Mike, himself, would have made them.

"That's using your head," Mike commented. And to Sam's delight, he didn't make a single change in the schedule.

From the moment when Mike Cassidy went through the door into his inner office until the end of Sam's long day, the two had no further opportunity to talk with each other—except as the necessities of their work required. But, between them, it seemed to Sam, there was a bond of sympathy that made their relations different from those of the last three months—and pleasanter. It was as though they had ceased to be "boss" and "employee," and had become two associates on an equal footing, sharing the same problems and working for the same ends.

It was great! Sam liked it fine!

At five o'clock that afternoon Mike sent him home, despite Sam's insistence that he was not tired, and that he would like to stay through until midnight—his regular hour of departure.

When we reached his room, though—after dining on the way uptown—he had to admit that he *was* tired. Noth-

ing seemed quite so desirable as bed. His head struck the welcome pillow—and he knew no more until he awakened with a start, long after noon the next day.

Well! He had been even more tired than he had realized!

There was just about time for a leisurely bath, shave and breakfast before starting his evening's work. He thought he'd get to the studios a little before five o'clock so that, if Mike had any special instructions for him, he could give them without making himself late in leaving for the day.

As Sam entered the Y.M.C.A. cafeteria he smiled at the thought of "breakfast" at half-past three in the afternoon. All his life, up to three months ago, he had been used to breakfasting at seven in the morning. This nighttime job certainly had turned his manner of living upside down—though, of course, his customary breakfast hour was not quite so late as this: usually it was somewhere between nine and ten.

He breakfasted luxuriously for him—for the long sleep had made him extra hungry—and then set out for the Transcontinental Building.

He had no idea of the surprise that was in store for him as he walked into the announcers' office just before four-thirty.

"I'm glad you came in early," said Mike. "Something has happened that I want to talk to you about."

There was nothing sinister in his tone. But Sam didn't like the sound of those words: "Something has happened . . ." He had the uncomfortable feeling of wondering what he had forgotten to do—at the same time, being

sure that he had forgotten nothing.

Mike did not give him long to ponder.

"Cal Murphy came in to see me earlier this afternoon."

Cal Murphy? What could *he* have to do with Sam? Sam wondered.

Murphy was the head of Transcontinental's sound effects department, about which Sam knew little, but in which he was greatly interested. In his frequent excursions into the studios with last-minute instructions for one or another of the announcers, he had been vastly entertained to notice that natural-sounding noises rarely were made by the things you would expect to make them. The sound effect of a hot and crackling fire, for instance, was made by crumpling, in the hands, a large sheet of cellophane—the very same transparent stuff which manufacturers use to wrap and protect perishable merchandise.

Sam waited for Mike Cassidy to continue.

"Cal wanted to know," said Mike, "if I would be willing to release you for a job in his department."

Mike paused.

Sam's first feelings were of elation: "Oh, boy! A chance to get away from clerical work; actually to have a part in the making of radio shows!" To meet actors and actresses whose names, until now, had meant nothing to him except great reputations. To meet and to work under the direction of Transcontinental's production directors—whom he thought of as mighty beings upon whose shoulders rests the final responsibility for every detail of every radio program that is broadcast over the Transcontinental network.

What an opportunity!

But, after the first flood of jubilation, Sam had a misgiving or two.

It would mean leaving Mike Cassidy, with whom, only yesterday, he had established a relationship which he would miss greatly—and one that could not be quickly or easily replaced.

And, worse than that perhaps, would be the “change”—that bugaboo of mankind that means cutting off familiar relationships and assuming new ones; learning new things; doing unaccustomed jobs, in unfamiliar surroundings.

“What do you say? Do you want to make the shift?” Mike queried.

“I do,” said Sam—“and I don’t.”

Mike laughed. “You’re going to be a bit difficult to satisfy.”

Sam told him how he felt. It was easy, now, to share his feelings with his boss—but it was mighty hard to put his conflicting emotions into understandable words.

“If that’s all that is worrying you,” said Mike, “I’d advise you to accept Cal’s offer.”

Because of his own indecision, Sam was inclined to let Mike settle the matter for him. But Mike would have none of that. Sam would have to make up his own mind, he said.

All *he* could do would be to tell Sam what seemed, to him, the advantages of the change.

Sam would learn a part of broadcasting which would be valuable to know, no matter what branch of the business he eventually landed in. Working in the studios would give him a chance to watch the work of other persons, doing other things, all of which, combining and dovetail-

ing with each other as accurately as the parts of a fine watch, went to make up perfect shows.

"You said, night before last, that you wanted to be an announcer."

Sam nodded.

"In this job of Cal's you'll be able to watch my boys in action; learn to punch the buttons; see the kinds of unpredictable emergencies that announcers are always being forced to meet; and you'll get to know all the other people, in all the other jobs, that announcers have to work with."

Long before Mike finished, Sam's mind was made up. He saw how shortsighted it would be to refuse this advancement.

He saw, too, that Mike was highly pleased with his decision.

Then, and not until then, did he think what the change would mean to Mike. He was ashamed of his selfishness. Mike would have to break in a new clerical assistant. And Sam couldn't help much, because Cal Murphy wanted him to begin in Sound Effects on the following Monday—and already, it was Wednesday.

Sam remembered what a lot of time Mike had had to spend with *him*, when he was new to the job—even though his predecessor had worked with him for two full weeks.

But Mike Cassidy quickly set his mind at rest.

He had been so sure of Sam's decision that he had already arranged to have one of the errand boys in the mail room take his place. All that remained was for Mike to tell the head of the mail room, definitely, that he wanted the new clerical assistant to report for work on Thurs-

day morning. That would give him three days to work with Sam.

Sam offered to come in on Sunday, so as to stretch the three days into four.

“Oh, no,” said Mike. “You take Sunday off—and rest up for your new job. . . . I’ll teach this new chap anything he doesn’t learn from you.”

Mike’s last words were these: “In this new job, Sam, keep your eyes open—and keep in close touch with me, so I’ll know what you’re doing and what you’re learning.” Then, with a wave of the hand, Sam was dismissed.

“Phew!” he thought as he walked out to his own desk. “I didn’t think I was so unimportant around here that I could be replaced on three days’ notice—and by an errand boy, at that!”

What he didn’t know until the next morning was that the errand boy, like himself, was a college graduate—and that, like himself, the errand boy was doing his best to get a foothold in the exceedingly smooth and slippery surface of the world of business.

On his way home that Wednesday night, Sam pondered the events of the past three days. What a lucky thing it had been that he had not acted on the first impulse of his disappointment, on Monday night. Why! If he had quit his job on the spot, as he had wanted to, his exit from the announcers’ department scarcely would have caused a ripple. His departure merely would have been another minor emergency in the life of that master of emergencies, Michael Cassidy.

CHAPTER VI

Horse Sense—as Taught by Cal Murphy

BETWEEN Wednesday and Sunday Sam was so busy at teaching his successor the complications of his job that he hadn't even time to call on Helen Chambers, to tell her of his promotion.

He didn't want to tell her over the telephone, because he wanted to see her face when she heard the news. So he called her at the *Intelligencer* office on Saturday and arranged for a Sunday walk up the West Shore of the Hudson River—with a picnic luncheon which Sam insisted on bringing, himself.

Sundays out of doors had become quite a regular thing with Sam and Helen during the summer. Sometimes they had gone to one of the Long Island beaches; sometimes they had played tennis at one of the public courts of which there are so many in New York; and sometimes they had taken long walks in the country—over the rolling sand dunes at the distant eastern end of Long Island; or through the rocky, wooded hills of Connecticut or the less rugged ones of near-by New York State or New Jersey, across the Hudson.

Sam liked the walks best of all. The quiet of the countryside and the nearness of nature seemed to be just what he needed after a strenuous week in the city. For, much as he loved the excitements of his work at Transcontinental, it *was* exhausting; and it *did* use up a surprising amount

of nervous energy.

Helen always had provided the lunches for these delightful outings, Sam sharing the cost of the food with her—or so Sam thought, at any rate. Actually, because she realized the smallness of Sam's income in comparison to hers, Helen had borne a generous three-quarters of these expenses.

But *this* day Sam wanted to do the whole thing, himself. His new job, little as it would add to his immediate income, gave him the privilege of splurging.

And splurge he did!

Manlike, he went to one of the swankiest delicatessens in one of the swankiest sections of the city; and manlike, he bought more food than four persons could have eaten; and manlike, too, he was amazed at the cost of the delicacies. But Sam didn't mind.

Helen, anxious that he should not suspect her unequal division of the costs of their previous lunches, said, "That's just like a man! Not to realize how much cheaper it is to buy things at the grocery store and put them up yourself! And you *would* go to the most expensive place in town!"

But Sam just laughed at her. And when lunchtime came, her enjoyment repaid him for all the luxuries had cost.

Not one word did he say about his new job until the luncheon was finished and the surplus food packed up to be taken back to the city for supper.

Then, as they sat at the very edge of the beautiful Palisades, almost five hundred feet above the sparkling surface of the Hudson River, he told her about his advancement.

And Sam was glad he had waited until then to tell her. Her delight was all he could have hoped for. She was as happy as if it had been her own good fortune instead of his.

And best of all, Helen didn't say a word about how thankful he ought to be that he had not quit his job in a huff six days before. Sam noticed this especially. There wasn't a hint of I-told-you-so in Helen's reception of the good news.

On the long return walk down the Palisades and all the way across the Yonkers ferry to the city, Sam babbled on about his new work and about his plans for the future—how he was going to make this job a stepping stone to a better one; and the better one to a still better one, until he had earned the right to go back to Michael Cassidy and demand—well, at least, *ask for*—a full-fledged announcer-ship. That was his goal.

Helen only smiled encouragement and listened. She couldn't have got a word in edgewise, even if she had wanted to.

After a trolley trip through Yonkers, they boarded the subway at 242nd Street. And still Sam did not run down. He was going strong as they walked from the downtown subway station to Helen's apartment on Barrow Street.

Even after their supper, shared with Helen's roommate, Lucille Wayman, Sam would have stayed on and talked more about his plans for the rosy future, if the wise Helen hadn't insisted that he trundle along to his room and get a good night's sleep in preparation for his first day in the sound effects department.

Next morning, Sam was glad she *had* insisted. His

months of late rising during the time when he had been working from five in the afternoon until midnight had put him sadly out of the habit of getting up early—and his new job required him to be in the studios at eight o'clock in the morning. (New sound effects men were assigned to the daytime shift until they had had enough experience to handle more complicated, nighttime programs.)

Sam liked the department from the moment he entered it. He liked the easy camaraderie of the fifteen men who made up the staff.

Especially, he liked Cal Murphy, his new boss. He had heard a great many stories about Cal: about his genius at inventing gadgets for making sounds that other persons just couldn't seem to produce at all. An elusive sound, to Cal, was a challenge. The more difficult it was to make, the more delight he took in finding a way to make it. Yet, despite his reputation, Sam found Cal Murphy to be one of the least self-important persons he had ever met. If you hadn't known that he was the head of his department, you'd never have guessed it.

The newest member of the sound effects department was greatly disappointed to discover that, during his first day, he was not to be permitted to make a single sound. Not so much as the sound of a knock on a door. Not so much as the sound of a pin dropped.

He was to spend his entire first day, Cal Murphy said, just browsing around among the gadgets in the sound effects room and getting acquainted with them; discovering what sounds they were designed to produce, and learning how they worked.

“I'll be in here most of the day, to show you what-

ever you want to know about; and when I'm not, one of the other boys will be.

"But," he cautioned, "don't try to work any of the mechanical effects yourself until you know exactly how they operate, because some of them are pretty complicated and easy to get out of kilter."

His warning was wasted on Sam, for the contrivances which met his eye, as he looked around the great room, were of a complexity that almost terrified him.

Sam never had had a flair for things mechanical. And the variety of machines, engines, gadgets and doohickeys that lined the walls made him think of nothing but a Rube Goldberg cartoon. He would no more have tried to operate one of them without being told how it worked than he would have tried to fly off the top of the Empire State Building with the wings of Icarus.

But it wasn't only the complicated mechanical devices that interested him. He was quite as entertained by the simple, everyday, familiar things that were used to make some of the commonest sound effects.

For instance, in one of the huge bins that lined the walls, he found a collection of several dozen ordinary rubber force pumps—exactly the kind he had seen the plumber use, back home in Athens, to clear out stopped-up drains.

Sam picked up two of these and took them over to Cal Murphy to find out what they were for.

Cal laughed. "Oh," he said, taking them in his hands, "this is Dobbin.

"Turn your back, so that you can't see what I'm doing," he said.

As Sam turned, he heard an amazingly true-to-life sound

of a horse's hoofs. First the horse was walking; then the walk merged into a canter; and finally, the canter broke into a full gallop.

Sam moved round so that he could see what Cal was doing: he had one of the force pumps in each hand, with its hollow end toward him, and he was beating them against his chest in the rhythm of a galloping steed. The effect was startlingly realistic: "Clump, putty-clump, putty-clump," came the sound, in the peculiar three-beat cadence of a gallop.

Sam was unable to suppress a snort of amusement—Cal looked so seriously intent on his work. A grown man beating rubber force pumps against his chest to make the sound of a galloping horse!

Cal smiled. "Come over here," he directed, leading Sam to a table on which lay a number of loose wooden slats and a sizable slab of marble.

"What kind of a road would you say the horse was running on, when I was beating on my chest?" he asked.

"Why," Sam considered. "Why, not on any kind of a road. He was running on fairly hard ground maybe; but if he was on a road at all, it was a dirt road. Not a paved one, anyway."

Cal nodded. "Now listen."

He began to use the force pumps, hollow ends down, on the marble slab.

Unmistakably, the horse was walking on a hard-surfaced road—on brick pavement, perhaps. Or on concrete.

Dobbin broke into a trot once more. And then, without losing a single beat, Cal moved the force pumps so that they were striking the loose wooden slats. He kept them

there a few moments and then transferred them back to the marble.

"Well, I'll be darned!" Sam exclaimed in admiration. "He went across a wooden bridge, and back onto the concrete, didn't he?"

"Sure," Cal agreed.

As he listened, Sam had the uncanny impression that he actually was listening to the real hoofbeats of a real horse. It was his first insight into the vital importance of good sound effects. He saw at once how very greatly they could add to the realism of a dramatic program; just as he was about to see, a moment later, how *bad* sound effects could wreck that realism, hopelessly and completely.

Cal Murphy handed the force pumps to him. "You try it," he suggested.

So Sam did.

It seemed to him that he was beating the force pumps on his chest exactly as Cal had beaten them on his own.

But the result! How different!

The sound he heard was like nothing in the world except the sound of a man beating his chest. The individual "clops" were not those of a horse's hoofs; and the cadence was all wrong. The horse wouldn't walk; he wouldn't canter; he wouldn't gallop.

It was Cal's turn to laugh.

Then, patiently, he showed Sam what was the trouble with his horse.

He mustn't strike the force pumps flatly on his chest, because a horse's hoofs do not strike the ground flatly; he puts them down rather sloppily, striking first with the tips of his hoofs. Sam must strike himself unevenly, just

as the horse strikes the ground. And he must hold the pumps loosely in his hands; not rigidly, as he had started to do.

The peculiar cadence, Cal said, was something that Sam would have to practice on. He showed him the rhythms of the walk, the trot and the gallop.

“But,” Cal added, “those rhythms may be something you never *can* learn; because, to learn them, you have to have a *sense* of rhythm. And some persons just haven’t got it.

“I certainly hope you have, though; because it’s an awful handicap to a noisemaker not to be able to be a horse: it seems as though radio writers just can’t resist the desire to put their characters on horseback.”

Then Cal went back to his work and left Sam to continue his tour of the department.

He didn’t devote much more time to horses’ hoofs just then; but, in the days that followed, he took every opportunity to practice the art of being a good horse. And, finally, to his great delight, he mastered it.

This morning, there were too many other things to see.

There were half a dozen kinds of “wind machines” for making the sounds of half a dozen kinds of winds, varying in intensity from a gentle breeze rustling in the trees to what the sailors call a “full gale.” Most of these were electrically controlled; machines in which the spinning of electric motors was cleverly converted into the sound of rushing wind. One of them, though, was a hand machine with which the operator, by turning a big crank rapidly or slowly, could imitate the sounds of gales of differing severity.

There was the rain machine, an invention of the in-

genious Cal Murphy that had solved one of the toughest sound effects problems radio had ever known.

Cal's rain machine, as big as a telephone booth, was an intricate combination of motors, endless belts and screens that enabled its operator to make the sound of every conceivable kind of rain, falling on every imaginable kind of roof—or ground—or sidewalk—or road—or of rain pattering or falling in torrents through the leaves of trees.

Complicated as it looked, Sam was delighted with its simplicity when one of the other men showed him how it worked. You filled a tank, or hopper, at its top, with *poppy seeds* of all things! Then, when you turned on the electricity, its motors and belts allowed the seeds to fall in a thin layer that was very much like a curtain—it was so even, so regular. The falling curtain of seeds could be made to strike on any one of twelve or fifteen different kinds of surfaces, depending on the kind of rain you wanted to make.

There was a surface of paper, and one of cardboard, and one of tin—*that* one was for a tin roof; and several kinds and weights of window screening, each of which made its own special sound when struck by the millions of falling poppy seeds.

But the thing about it that interested Sam most of all was the way the fallen poppy seeds were picked up automatically from a tank at the bottom of the machine, and returned to the tank at the top—so that you could have any kind of rain you wanted—*for as long as you wanted it*. So long as the electricity didn't fail, no tropical monsoon could shed more rain, or shed rain more persistently than Cal Murphy's rain machine.

As he went from sound effect to sound effect, and

learned the uses of them all, Sam was impressed again by the fact that most of the sounds which the radio audience hears are not made by the things you would expect them to be made by.

That was true of Dobbin, who was nothing but a pair of force pumps. It was true of the wind machines—and the rain machine. It was true of the sound of surf pounding on the seashore—made by moving a stiff-bristled brush around over a tightly stretched drumhead.

And the sound of the footsteps of an army of marching men! That was as much of a surprise to Sam as anything else in the department. For he discovered that the sound of marching feet was made by tapping on a table with a hundred little blocks of wood that were suspended by strings, in a frame, so that they could be lifted and lowered all at the same time. The hundred little taps sounded like a thousand men, putting their feet down as nearly in time as they possibly could.

While he was experimenting with this “marching army,” one of the other sound effects men came into the room with a new problem for Cal Murphy. One of the program directors was producing a dramatic program that had a skating party as a part of its plot. The sound effects man had tried everything he could think of, but to save his life, he couldn’t find a way of making the sound of skates striking the ice. He said he had even tried to make it by holding a pair of skates in his hands and striking and sliding them on a block of salt. But the director wasn’t satisfied. Even that didn’t sound like skates on ice. What could Cal suggest?

Cal thought a moment. Then he went to a cupboard and returned with a fencer’s sword—what fencers call a “foil”

—and a piece of steel about the size of a carving knife. He tapped the foil with the steel, sliding it all the way down the length of the blade immediately after each tap. After two or three experimental strokes, he started to swing his body in imitation of a skater's motion, in order to give himself the right timing, and then he made one stroke of the steel with each swing of his body. The result was a sound that was miraculously like that of a skater on the ice.

"Take someone else with you if it's a skating party," he told the grateful sound effects man. "Two of you doing that will sound like twenty skaters."

For an instant Sam hoped that *he* might be the someone else; that this would be his first chance actually to work in the studios. But another man was chosen.

Only a few days before, Sam had felt terribly disappointed and mistreated when a similar thing had happened to him in the announcers' department—when he had not been permitted to broadcast the second news dispatch about the steamship *Atlantis*. Today, however, he didn't mind a bit when the other man was chosen. After all, he thought, this was his first day as a sound effects man. Cal Murphy's plan of having him get acquainted with everything in the department was probably the best way in the world for him to start.

Sam was learning more than radio routine. Mike Cassidy would have been greatly encouraged about Sam's future if he could have known the workings of his mind.

Back to his sound effects he went, learning, experimenting, asking questions about everything he didn't understand. And, before he knew it, his first day in the department was over and he was back in his room, tired but

happy, with a mind full of ideas and plans.

“One thing is certain,” he thought as he got ready for bed. “I am never going to let a tricky sound effect lick *me!* Never, as long as I’m in sound effects, will I take a problem like that skating thing to Cal Murphy. I’ll solve *my* problems, myself!”

After he had turned out the light, in those few moments between wakefulness and oblivion, the happenings of the day paraded themselves before him. Of them all, the one that kept coming back, refusing to be dismissed, was Cal Murphy’s demonstration of Old Dobbin, the pair of rubber force pumps. It’s funny, he thought, how a little thing like that keeps repeating itself to you. How easy it had looked when Cal was making the “horse effect”; and how difficult it had been when Sam had tried to imitate him.

Then it flashed over him—the idea that he had been trying to get hold of: the most skillful people always make the most difficult tasks look simple and easy.

It had taken so trivial a thing as the sound effect of a horse’s hoofs to make him put the thought into words, although he had had examples of it right under his nose all his life.

Why, the best example of all was Helen, who had gone through high school and college, always an honor student, and yet always having time to spare for more outside activities than anyone else he knew.

It was an idea that was to impress itself upon Sam more and more forcefully as his experience brought him into closer contact with artists, actors and musicians: the greater they were, the more accomplished in their arts, the more simple and effortless they made their work appear.

CHAPTER VII

A Noisemaker Who Made No Noise

NEXT day, Cal assigned Sam to the job of assisting one of the other sound effects men, Jem Waters.

Jem, Sam thought, was one of the drollest persons he ever had known. He had what the comedians call a "deadpan face." He so completely lacked any kind of expression that you expected him to be as dull-witted as he looked. Merely to hear Jem speak at all was a distinct shock. So his sage, satirical comments about anything that happened were all the more amusing because they were so surprising. He never was at a loss for a pat remark.

As he and Sam entered the studio where Sam's introduction to actual broadcasting was to take place—his baptism of fire—Sam asked Jem what kind of a program it was that they were working on.

"Hearts and Flowers," was the laconic reply.

If Jem had read the entire "script" to Sam, he could not have told him any more clearly what to expect. For Sam knew at once, from the "Hearts and Flowers" description, that Jem meant the show was one of the sentimental tear-jerkers that nine out of every ten Americans like to listen to—even many of the ones who think they are the most matter-of-fact and practical-minded.

The sound effects men were first to arrive in the studio. So, while they awaited the coming of the dramatic director and the actors, Sam and Jem began to familiarize them-

selves with the script.

Sam thought it extremely dull as they read it. It seemed to him like so much twaddle. But he made no comment.

All the sound effects in the script were printed in capital letters to make them stand out from the spoken words, which were printed in small letters. Jem showed Sam how to mark the sound effects with red-penciled symbols that would insistently call them to his attention; so that, when an actor spoke a line which was to be followed by a sound effect, Sam wouldn't "miss his cue," as Jem said, or come in late with the sound.

Each, however, marked only the sounds which he, himself, was to make. And, to Sam's disappointment, Jem was going to make practically all of them. The only one he left to Sam was one which came into the script at a time when Jem was busy making others.

Sam felt rather unimportant—standing around for three hours of rehearsal and fifteen minutes of show on the air—just to smash a thin wooden peach box in his hands when the hero broke through the rotted steps of the house he was entering.

Sam hadn't yet discovered that every show, whether on the radio or the stage or the screen, is composed of a myriad tiny details that must fit together, smoothly and perfectly—and that the least important sound effects man or the humblest stagehand is quite as essential to the performance as the most important actor or actress.

"Don't ever complain in this business about not having enough to do," Jem advised. "Just wait until you have to do a three-man show all by yourself because there's nobody available to help you out!"

At about that time, the director and his actors began to arrive and the rehearsal got under way in earnest.

The first time the actors read the script through, it sounded just as bad to Sam as he had thought it when he read it. But then something began to happen. The actors stopped *reading*, and began to *live* the characters they were portraying.

And, as Sam heard these competent craftsmen speaking the lines assigned to them, he found himself becoming really interested in the story and the characters; the story which, only a little while ago, he had thought was twaddle. He was glad he hadn't said what he thought.

The director frequently interrupted the actors to make suggestions—sometimes about the way the lines were being spoken; sometimes about pauses; and sometimes about what he called "pace."

And though, at first, Sam did not understand the director's instructions, he began to feel the play coming to life. He ceased to *hear words* as the actors spoke, and began to *see pictures*. That, as he soon realized, was exactly what the director was striving for. Suddenly the *reason* flashed upon him: *radio is the art of presenting a show to a blind audience*. It was a great revelation to Sam, because he never had thought of it that way before.

By the end of the second reading, Sam's imagination was completely caught up by the plot of the play. He was amazed to find himself sympathizing with the heroine in her misfortune. He almost felt a lump in his throat!

He was ashamed that this sham sentiment could touch him. But he needn't have been either ashamed or amazed, because, as he was to learn by his later experience in show

business, sentiment has an almost universal appeal.

His whole experience on this first show was teaching him another useful bit of knowledge: that some of the shows which sound least interesting when you read them make the very best shows of all when the scripts are placed in the hands of able actors and a good director.

On the third time through the script, the director called for sound effects. Before that, Sam and Jem had just sat and listened. Or at least, *Sam* had. Jem, without Sam's realizing it, had been studying the play and deciding just *when* and *how* to make each sound effect blend with the actors' conversation. How to make each one add to the audience's illusion of reality.

The director went into the control room with the engineer, where, through a loud speaker, he could hear the show just as the radio audience would hear it in their homes, when it was broadcast. Through a big double-glass window, he could watch what went on in the studio; and he was able to talk to those in the studio through the control room speaker, called the "P.A."—short for "Public Address System."

The third rehearsal went very nicely. The actors were at home in their parts by this time. Jem's sound effects came in smoothly, naturally. Not once did the director interrupt until it came time for Sam to smash his peach basket.

Then his voice came booming through the P.A.

"No! No! No! You must allow time enough after that last speech, for Archer to get to those steps. Pause after his speech, while you count two." (Archer was the name of the character who was supposed to break through the

steps.)

"Now go back to the top of that page and let me have it again," he instructed.

They went back.

They "let him have it."

But still he wasn't satisfied with Sam's "crashing steps."

"I said, 'Count *two*.' I didn't say, 'Count *sheep*.' Can't *you* make that effect, Jem?"

"Gee whiz!" Sam thought. "Is my *one* sound effect on my first show going to be taken away from me?"

Jem Waters' reply reassured him, however.

"Sure I can make it," said Jem — "but not if you want to hear the record of the motorcar just before it, and the record of the distant train effect just after it.

"Who do you think is going to operate these turntables while I'm smashing the peach basket?" he inquired. "Or are you going to graft another pair of arms and legs on me?"

Sam added a new word to his vocabulary of radio jargon: "turntables," he observed, meant the felt-covered revolving disks of phonographs, on which the records are placed when they're to be played. He soon learned, too, that records rarely are called "records." In radio, they're "platters."

"All right, all right," came the voice from the P.A. "Try it again from the top of the page, Bill."

"Who's Bill?" Sam wondered for an instant. Then he guessed that the director was speaking to *him*.

He leaned over to the sound effects microphone and said, "My name is Hubbard."

The instant response from the control room taught him

never again to interrupt a rehearsal for any reason that wasn't directly concerned with the show.

The voice of Claude Montour, the director, came through the P.A. in tones of honeyed sweetness: "Thank you *so* much, *Mister* Hubbard; but when you're working for me, your name is George or Frank or Bill or Percy—or anything else I happen to call you; and if you can't give me that crash effect the way I want it, you will not require any name at all on my programs, *Mister* Hobart."

There was a suppressed snort of amusement from one of the actors and throttled snickers from others. Sam saw red. In that split second he felt for Montour such a hatred as he never had experienced before in his life. He swallowed, hard.

"Take it easy, kid," advised Jem Waters, under his breath.

Sam did. And forever after was heartily glad that he had; for he found, by experience with Montour, that his suave, biting sarcasm was merely his way of getting what he wanted in a show. At first, Sam thought it was a very poor way; but the answer was that, with Montour, it worked. It worked so well that it wasn't many months before Sam, like everyone else in Radio, respected Claude Montour as one of the ablest of all directors. And outside the studios, he became one of Sam's very pleasant acquaintances.

But never, in all the years Sam was to know him, did he ever call him "Sam." It was always "Joe," or "Pete," or "Mark," or "Clarence," or any name but his own.

"Now then," said Montour, "from the top of the page. And this time, count two before the crash."

Sam concentrated on the script. His cue came. He counted, silently, "One—pause—two." Then—crash!

As he heard the voice from the P.A., Sam wanted to wince. But he need not have.

"Fine!" was Montour's comment. "Stick a pin in that."

The compliment had a very peculiar effect on Sam. His angry hatred of a few seconds before gave place to a warm glow of satisfaction: he had achieved the effect that the show required! His feeling didn't seem to be connected with Montour, at all. He felt no friendliness, just then, for the fellow who had stung him so painfully.

It was the thrill—Sam's first—of seeing the show come together; of having a part, however small, in making it jell. It was another tiny lesson in his education in showmanship.

The balance of the rehearsal went smoothly and easily except that, a short eight minutes before broadcasting time, the director came out of the control room and announced that the show was fifty seconds too long.

"Take these cuts," he said—and began rattling off page numbers and lines he wanted eliminated at such a rate that Sam became hopelessly confused and finally gave up in despair.

"Don't worry," Jem whispered; "I'll cut your script for you. Most of the cuts come after your business, anyway, so they don't affect you."

In the last five minutes before the fateful instant when he knew the show must go on the air, it seemed to Sam that the studio became a maelstrom of confusion. Almost every person in it was doing something that had nothing whatever to do with anything anyone else was

doing. The announcer came in and, through his microphone, began talking with the engineer in the control room. Montour was giving last-moment directions to various members of the cast. Jem was cutting Sam's script, without missing a single word Montour was saying—because some of those instructions to the cast might make a difference in the way Jem would have to produce some of the sound effects.

Poor Sam was trying to watch and listen to everything at once. The whole studio was in utter chaos. He didn't see how the program could possibly be broadcast. He began to perspire—from sheer nervousness. He felt as though the entire responsibility for the whole show rested on him—on him and his little peach basket!

Into his bewildered mind came the memory of Mike Cassidy's advice—"Keep your eyes open. . . . Watch my boys at work." Above all else, Sam wanted to watch the announcer—but in trying to watch everything, he was failing to watch anything.

And then, with two minutes to go, two of the actors walked out of the studio!

"I've got to have a drink of water," one of them explained. And, "Me, too," said the other.

As they were opening the studio door to leave, two porters came in, making as much noise as only porters *can* make. They were dragging a platform behind them. They shoved some of Jem's sound effects out of their way, away from the sound effects mike. They disarranged the cast mike in setting the platform where they wanted it. And nobody seemed to object!

Sam didn't know it, but the platform was for one of

the actors, a little girl, to stand on. She was too short to reach up to the mike without it. Claude Montour had telephoned for it, from the control room, some time before; but it had been in use on another program until just now.

Sam felt as though the sword of Damocles, suspended by its single hair, was hanging over his head—and the hair would break in only a few more seconds, at the instant when the program must start.

"One minute!" called the announcer.

And, like a rabbit out of a magician's hat, order emerged from confusion.

The two actors returned. The porters replaced the microphone and all of Jem's sound effects. The babel of voices suddenly hushed. Montour casually strolled into the control room.

The second hand of the studio clock pointed to twenty-five seconds before the hour.

"Quiet, please!" called the announcer.

No sound was to be heard. So great was the contrast with the recent bedlam that the silence almost hurt Sam's ears.

The announcer held one of a pair of headphones to his ear—the other phone dangling crazily off in the air.

Sam noticed each of these little details. His attention, now, was riveted on the announcer.

A green light flashed on the announcer's table.

The clock said fifteen seconds before the hour.

The announcer cleared his throat. His leisureliness made Sam fidgety.

Then he punched a button—or maybe two buttons. Sam couldn't be sure.

“WTRA, New York,” he said, with studied distinctness.

More button punching. All the lights on his table, except the green one, winked out.

More waiting.

Again his leisurely clearing of the throat.

And still the clock said five seconds *more* to wait!

Only once before had Sam ever known seconds to pass so slowly; and that was the night (it seemed very long ago) when he had awaited Doc Martin’s signal to begin his broadcast of the *Atlantis* disaster.

At last, the announcer punched a button marked, “PROG” (for “program”), pointed dramatically at an organist sitting at the console of a studio organ—and the show was under way. The organist started to play.

How he got into the studio, Sam will never know. He had not seen him enter, nor had he noticed him before, sitting at his keyboard.

Now Sam followed Mike Cassidy’s advice with a vengeance; he kept his eyes open. He watched every slightest detail of the show.

Finally, after the musical introduction and the opening announcement, the waiting actors walked nonchalantly up to their microphone and began the part of the show with which Sam already was familiar.

He was familiar with it—and yet it seemed different this time. It was several weeks before he appreciated what this difference was: the subtle difference between the smoothest of dress rehearsals and the show *on the air*, when the actors know their audience is listening in.

Sam became so engrossed in watching them work that

he was completely oblivious of everything else. He was captivated by the casual manner with which they *played to* one another, each making it easy for the following speaker to seem natural and conversational in what he had to say.

Jem's sound effects, too, fell upon his ears with a naturalness that made him forget that he was listening to a piece of play acting. It seemed to him more as though he were eavesdropping on the private affairs of real people.

Minutes passed. The show was almost half over.

Sam heard the sound of an approaching motorcar. He heard the car come to a brake-squeaking stop. He heard its door open and slam shut.

Then he heard the character, Archer, bidding good-by to the driver of the car.

Suddenly something clicked in Sam's brain!

The next speech was the cue for the crash of his peach basket!

And he had become so lost in the realism of the play that he hadn't even been turning the pages of his script!

He grabbed the script. What page was it on?

Too late to find it now! What were the last words of the speech, anyway! What was the exact cue! His mind was a blank! To save his soul he could not think of it.

Where was the peach basket? He had had a lot of them handy only a moment before the show went on the air. Where! Oh, where!

As he heard Archer speaking the very words he had been trying to remember, Sam suffered a cataleptic stroke: he couldn't move; he couldn't think; he couldn't even feel!

Archer spoke the last word.

"One—pause—two," Sam's subconscious counted for him,

but his paralyzed muscles did not even twitch.

“Crash!” he heard, in perfect time with the character’s “fall” through the broken steps.

And, out of the corner of his eye, he saw that Jem Waters, with each of his hands on one of the controls of the turntables, and with a wind whistle in his mouth, had reached out with one foot and smashed the peach basket that Sam had left on a chair directly under the sound effects mike.

It had been a prodigious stretch. But Jem had made it!

Sam was numb. He heard no more of the show. He merely waited in agony for the moment, after the show, when Claude Montour would certainly come out of the control room.

If he had been sarcastic during the rehearsal, *what* would he be now!

An eternity passed—and the show was over.

The studio once again was abuzz with conversation.

But no one spoke to Sam; and Sam spoke to no one.

The director entered the room. “You gave me a grand show,” he said to everyone in general. “Thanks.”

Then he turned to Sam.

Sam braced himself. “Here it comes!” he thought.

Montour spoke. “Your crashing steps were swell,” he said. “One of the best effects on the show.”

Sam stammered. “W-w-well—” he began—and felt a violent pinch in the small of his back. He heard Jem Waters’ voice:

“Sure, Claude. He’s going to be a first-class noisemaker.”

“You’re all right, Oscar,” Montour said. “Don’t mind

what I said to you in rehearsal."

He turned on his heel and walked out of the room, leaving Sam in a daze.

Jem laughed. And then explained the mystery: "Claude had his back turned on that peach-basket cue—he didn't see who smashed the basket."

An actor, pulling on his coat to go, smiled broadly at Sam—and winked.

When they were alone, Sam started to tell Jem how much he appreciated what he had done for him; and how sorry and ashamed he was of his own failure.

But Jem motioned him to silence.

"Forget it, Sam," he said. "I expected you to do that. Everybody has a right to do it once. I was ready for it—that's why I pulled that chair over close enough so I could reach it with my foot."

Sam's gratitude was overwhelming.

His humiliation was complete.

CHAPTER VIII

Sam Hubbard Walks with Royalty

It is amazing in how short a time a novice can become accustomed to all the complicated details of a new job.

Within two or three weeks after Sam's first missed cue (and his last!) he was handling sound effects like a veteran.

Not that it wasn't hard work. It was. Many a time he practiced for hours on a new effect with which he was not familiar—hours which he would have liked to spend in his room, reading; or at a movie; or having a late supper with Helen Chambers, after she had finished her work for the next morning's paper.

It *was* hard work, at first, and nerve-racking work; but in no time at all, Sam lost the feeling of utter confusion that engulfs every novice in the last minutes before a radio show "takes the air." Though each person in the studio might seem to be doing something totally different from what every other person was doing, he soon saw that all these apparently unrelated bits of activity fell together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, to produce a smooth and polished performance.

He learned the knack of attending to the details that concerned only himself, without missing anything that anyone else was doing that might also have an influence on *his* work, on the air.

And then, to his great delight, Cal Murphy began to

assign Sam to shows of his very own. He became a regular member of the staff—no longer an apprentice.

Soon after that, he was to get one of his first big thrills; and one of his greatest surprises.

For, ever since Mike Cassidy had told him of the opening in the sound effects department, Sam had looked forward with some awe to the day when he would be permitted to work on shows with some of the great personages of the stage, or of radio, or of the screen.

One Sunday morning he walked into one of the studios for an all-day rehearsal of a full-hour program that was to be broadcast that night. There he found the director (it was Claude Montour again) in conversation with a tall, rather distinguished-looking fellow whom Sam never had seen before.

Sam asked Montour a question or two about some of the effects on the show, and how he wanted them made; and then the three, Montour, Sam and the stranger, waiting for other members of the cast to arrive, fell into conversation.

The stranger proved to be a thoroughly delightful person with the most musical voice and the most charming manner Sam had ever known. His easy acceptance of Sam as someone who, like himself, had a part in the play that was to be produced pleased Sam immensely and made him feel agreeably important.

So later, when Montour went into the control room, Sam followed him and asked who the fellow was.

"Oh," said the director, "didn't I introduce him to you? That's Cecil Merriman, who's playing the lead in this show."

Cecil Merriman! Cecil Merriman? whose name Sam had seen, in lights, on Broadway? This simple, casual person? Cecil Merriman?

Sam couldn't have told you what he had expected of so famous a figure of the theater, nor how he had expected him to differ from ordinary mortals; but he certainly *had* expected him to be different. Aloof, perhaps. Not to be talked to as you might talk to any member of your own class, back on the Ohio University campus at Athens.

He remembered the time, in his freshman year, when he had tried to draw into conversation the star fullback of the Ohio Varsity—how superciliously his advances had been met. That was before he had learned the strict etiquette that governs the social relations of freshmen with upper-classmen—especially those whose athletic fame places them on pedestals far above the common herd.

That collegiate social code, Sam was to discover, was stricter and more artificial than any other, save perhaps the code that rules the relations between royalty and commoners—a code more rigid than Sam ever would meet in later life.

Royalty! That was it. That was what Sam had expected great actors and actresses to be like.

And, as a matter of fact, Cecil Merriman *was* like royalty. He had all the poise and easy assurance that could have been expected of any princeling—and yet, he was completely without airs and graces; quite lacking in the imperiousness that Sam always had associated with royalty.

To his everlasting pride in his profession, all his experience in show business taught Sam that this is an almost invariable mark of the truly great personages of the show

world.

Of course, he met a few exceptions to the rule; but for the most part, the bigger the artist was, the simpler, kindlier and easier to work with. And, contrariwise, most of the ones who put on airs and *acted* great did so to cover up their lack of real artistry.

In the rehearsal that followed, Sam found that he could learn a great deal by watching and listening to this past master of the drama. The relation between spoken words and sound effects did not seem to be a very close one. And yet, as he listened to Merriman's conversations with the other actors in the play, he saw that a sound effects man must learn to be just as sensitive to pauses and *ways* of making his effects as any actor is sensitive to ways of speaking his lines.

By an infinitesimal pause between two sentences, Merriman would give needed emphasis to the words that followed; or would make it easy and natural for another actor to reply to what he had just said.

As the hours passed, Sam began to *feel* these things rather than to think about them consciously. And it was then that he began to be a real showman. For the length of a pause cannot be calculated. It must be as instinctive as breathing, or it will not be natural.

In the play they were rehearsing, Cecil Merriman and one of the other actors entered a log cabin after a long walk through the woods. The weather was supposed to be bitterly cold; and their manner of speaking the lines actually made it seem so.

Merriman's first act, after entering the cabin, was to kindle a fire on the hearth.

Sam saw that the author's purpose was to create a feeling of hominess and warmth—to “set the stage” for the scene which followed.

Merriman spoke the words that disclosed his intention of lighting the fire.

Without realizing that he was pausing, Sam did pause before striking a match in front of the microphone, just about long enough for Merriman to have reached into his pocket for a matchbox. (The sound of striking a match is one of those rare sounds in radio which actually is made by the thing you would expect to make it.)

In his split second's pause, Sam heard Merriman make a slight straining sound—exactly the kind of unintelligible sound a man makes during the contortion of lifting his shoulder to put his hand in his pocket in search of a matchbox.

And, as the match flared with a hiss, he heard Merriman grunt—as though he were kneeling in front of the hearth.

There were no words in the script to indicate these sounds, but the actor had sensed how he could add to the realism of the scene by making them. So, as a matter of course, he made them.

Sam knew that Merriman had enhanced the value of the sound effects immeasurably by these little, uncalled-for things that a lesser actor would not have thought of. Had he but known it, Merriman didn't *think* of them, either. He simply was *living his part*—and not merely reading the speeches which the author had written for him.

Immediately after the instruction, **SCRATCH OF MATCH**, in Sam's script, were the words, **CRACKLING**

OF FIRE. But after he had allowed the match to flare, he had a feeling that it would not sound natural for the fire to crackle at once. So, with some doubts, he delayed the next effect.

Again Merriman came to the rescue.

"Ah-h-h!" Sam heard him say. "This is going to feel great!"

Here again, the words were not in the script, but the actor felt the need for *something*. And what he said gave Sam exactly the pause he needed before making the crackling of the fire.

He picked up a large sheet of cellophane and, holding it a foot or so from the sound effects microphone, crumpled it in his hands.

The effect was amazing. No listener could have heard that crackle without practically *feeling* the warmth of an open fire.

And surely, thought Sam, no listener could have heard the next sound effect called for in the script without experiencing the pangs of hunger; for Sam's next duty was to make a sound like the frying of bacon.

As he heard the cue for the frying bacon, he picked up a shallow pan with a wooden handle and held it about a foot from the microphone. The bottom of the pan was covered to a depth of half an inch or so with ordinary sewing-machine oil. With his free hand, he grasped the handle of a hot electric soldering iron which he had plugged in at the start of the rehearsal—in preparation for this moment. Then, as the exact instant came for the frying sound, he stuck the point of the soldering iron into the oil. The oil sputtered, sizzled and spat in such a realistic

fashion that the odor of its acrid fumes was a shock to Sam's sense of smell—subconsciously he expected the odor of frying bacon.

“That's great, Horace!” said Montour's voice, from the control room. “It even makes *me* hungry.”

Which was Praise from Sir Hubert, indeed!

The long hours of the rehearsal wore on. Sam and Montour and the cast took time out for lunch and then returned to go over and over the more difficult parts of the drama, polishing this bit, changing the pace of that one, altering speeches here and there to make the play seem more real and natural.

Montour's skill at picking out these weak spots was uncanny. His judgment was unerring as to how they could be strengthened. His ability to analyze minute details, without ever losing his perspective on the story as a whole, earned Sam's sincere admiration.

At last, late in the afternoon, the director was satisfied. He came out of the control room into the studio.

“Stick a pin in that,” he said. It was his customary way of telling his actors not to make any more changes—and to remember all the little things they had done to bring the final rehearsal close to perfection.

He sank into a chair and leaned back to rest. “We won't do anything more until the orchestra comes in at seven o'clock. Then we'll run through cues once and finish up with a dress.”

Sam knew that “dress” was short for “dress rehearsal,” the term borrowed from the theater to describe the final, complete rehearsal of a radio production, before it is broadcast for the radio audience to hear. He guessed at what

Montour meant by the phrase, "run through cues once." He meant that, before the dress rehearsal, he wanted the actors to speak the words and Sam to produce the effects that came at the end of each scene, preceding the orchestra's music which was used to connect it with the scene that followed. Then, as the sounds of the music died out, he wanted them to start into the next scene so Montour could be sure the audience would understand the scene changes which the music was intended to suggest.

This was the first big "production," with a full orchestra, that Sam had been permitted to work on. But during his months of apprenticeship, he had been an avid radio listener in every spare moment he could find. So he knew how musical "transitions" were used on these big productions: sometimes to indicate a passage of time between two dramatic scenes; sometimes to indicate a change of locality; and sometimes to prepare the audience for a change of mood—from a serious scene before the music, for example, to a gay scene after it.

It was not quite six o'clock when Claude Montour and Sam and the cast left the studio. They had more than an hour to rest and relax before they must return to join the orchestra for the cue rehearsal and the dress. As they wandered out, the first of the musicians began to straggle in, opening their instrument cases, making the weird sounds of tuning up—in preparation for *their* hour of rehearsal of the music alone, prior to the combined musicodramatic rehearsal at seven.

Cecil Merriman and Claude Montour invited Sam to join them for a snack at the restaurant, downstairs, during their hour of leisure. Nothing could have pleased Sam more. It

made him feel that he belonged, even though he spoke scarcely a word while Claude and Cecil ate and chatted.

Their talk was of the stage and of radio. A kind of busman's holiday. They reminisced about shows they had worked in, in the past. About actors and actresses they had played with. About shows they would like to have done; and about kinds of shows they hoped they might do in the future.

Suddenly, when it seemed to Sam that they had been talking for only a few minutes, Montour rose from the table.

"Time to get back to our opera," he said.

To Sam's surprise, his watch announced that it lacked only five minutes of being seven o'clock.

Francesco Bonato, the orchestra leader, was ready for them when they reached the studio. His men were all in their places. The transition music had been rehearsed. Nothing remained save to put music and drama together.

"Cues!" called Montour from the control room.

Bonato rapped on his podium with his ivory baton. The musicians raised their eyes to his.

"Last eight bars—first number," he ordered. And, as he beat time with his right hand and signaled his interpretations of the music with his left, the players seemed like so many puppets under his magic control—puppets plying instruments from which Bonato, alone, could charm whatever sounds he chose.

The ending of the overture filled the studio with its lovely melody and, at a signal from Claude Montour, through the control room window, as the last note died out, the announcer began to read the introduction of the

comedy that was to follow.

“Okay!” Montour interrupted him. “Cut to the end of the narration.”

“Number two!” cried Bonato, as the announcer skipped almost a page of script and read the last few lines before the music that would introduce the opening scene of the drama.

A split second after his voice died out the music swelled once more.

Again, Montour’s interruption, “Cut to the last eight!”

Again the staccato rap of Bonato’s baton.

And thus the transitions for the entire one-hour show—from music to spoken lines, and from speeches back to music—were telescoped into a cue rehearsal that consumed only a little more than twenty minutes—even including Claude Montour’s frequent interruptions when he felt that the transitions were not quite right.

The cue rehearsal progressed with businesslike speed until they came to an especially tricky spot that involved the orchestra, followed by a sound effect, followed, in turn, by Cecil Merriman’s first words in the next scene.

Sam was a little worried about that transition. A great deal depended on his timing of the sound effect. The effect itself was simple enough—merely rapping on a heavy door—but it had to be exactly right, or it would sound terribly wrong.

The preceding music ended with a rhythmical beating on the kettledrum. Sam must permit the drum to beat, *alone*, exactly four times—no more and no less. Then he must rap heavily on the door, in precise cadence with the drum, for exactly four more beats. And finally, as the

drumbeats became lighter and lighter, Sam must break the cadence of his rapping and, without pause, merge it into the annoyed pounding of an impatient man.

And then, at exactly the right instant, Cecil Merriman must begin to shout for the door to be opened.

They started to rehearse the spot. The end of the music came.

“Tum! . . . Tum! . . . Tum! . . . Tum!” sounded the drum. . . . “Rap! . . . Rap! . . . Rap! . . . Rap!” rapped Sam, in cadence with its second four beats. Then, as the drum began to fade, “Rap! . . . Rap! . . . Rap! Rap! . . . Rap! Rap! Rap!” And, “Open!” (the imperious voice of Cecil Merriman). “Open!” “Rap! Rap!” (from Sam). “Open!” “Rap! Rap! Rap!” “Open! In the name of His Majesty, the King!”

The transition sounded great to Sam. It was so smooth, so perfect that he felt little shivers of elation run up and down his spine.

But, just then, Merriman’s voice was interrupted by an explosion from the control room. The door burst open and Claude Montour catapulted into the studio.

“Shucks!” thought Sam. “It must not have been as good as it seemed.”

Montour rushed over to Bonato’s podium, reached up with both hands, grasped the conductor by the shoulders and began to shake him violently.

That was queer! It was the first time Sam had even seen Montour excited. What on earth had happened? Had the transition been as bad as all that?

Bonato, at first surprised, broke into a broad, beaming smile.

Sam was more than ever perplexed.

The director called him over to the podium. "Come here, Oscar," he said. "Oscar" was his current name for Sam.

As the latter approached, Montour threw an arm around his shoulder.

"Boys," he cried, "it's wonderful! It's marvelous!

"Francesco, it's the smoothest, most beautiful transition I have ever heard."

Bonato beamed more broadly. He had composed this music, himself—and the ingenious transition was his own idea. He was delighted.

Montour turned to Sam once more. "Oscar," he said, "I take back everything I thought about you when you first got into sound.

"Oscar, you're good.

"Without your perfect timing Bonato's effect would have been lost.

"And, Cecil," he called to Merriman, who stood, smiling, at the microphone, "you couldn't have entered that scene more perfectly!"

As suddenly as he had entered the studio, he left it, shouting over his shoulder as he bolted through the control room door, "Stick a pin in that!"

From that moment on, the rehearsal went as smoothly as a well-oiled machine. Everyone—musicians, conductor, actors and Sam—had been caught up in the director's enthusiasm. And everyone did better than his best.

Long, long after, when Sam had seen Claude Montour direct many shows, he began to suspect that Claude had "gone crazy" for that very purpose: to infect the cast and

the orchestra with his enthusiasm.

It was a trick of Montour's that he used very sparingly.

He used it when his people were getting tired after a long rehearsal. And he used it when things were going well--when there wasn't anything specific about the play that he could criticize or correct--but when the whole just didn't seem to possess the spark and sparkle that marks the difference between a dead performance and a vital one.

Nor did he always react in the same way.

Sometimes he burst into the room in a towering rage. Sometimes he spoke from the control room with a cold sarcasm that made its victims wish ardently that they could lay hands on him and slowly, painfully murder him.

But, always, he got results.

And, after a performance, he never failed to tell each member of the cast something nice about his or her work. So, in one way or another, he made everybody willing and anxious to work for him.

It was that way tonight. The dress rehearsal went so perfectly that one of the actors, an old trouper of the theater, full of superstitions, shook his head apprehensively. "Good dress: bad performance!" he predicted ominously.

That worried Sam. He remembered the first time he had worked for Montour. He rushed over to the music rack on which his script was propped up. He counted over its fifty-odd pages to make sure he had them all in the right order.

Hurriedly, he started to go over his cues, one by one, to make doubly certain not to miss any of them--there was no Jem Waters to save his skin, tonight. But before he was half finished, he heard the announcer's voice:

"One minute!"

Calm descended on the studio—but not upon Samuel Hubbard of the sound effects department. For this was Sam's first really *big* show. He had the horrible feeling of having forgotten something; and now there was no time for him to finish reviewing his cues.

The gloomy warning of the old actor had ruined his peace of mind. He was nervous and excited when he felt he should be calm.

He saw the announcer punch the "Program" button. Heard him whisper, "Take it away, Francesco," as he pointed his index finger at Bonato. The tones of the overture filled the studio. The show was "on the air."

Swiftly and flawlessly it progressed, until the time came for Sam's first sound effect; Merriman and the other actor spoke the lines which led up to their entrance into the log cabin.

"Let's leave as much of the Arctic outside as we can," said Merriman. "Stamp the snow off your feet."

As the other actor replied, Sam stood upon a flat canvas bag packed tightly with cornstarch and stamped his feet vigorously. The crunching of the cornstarch created a realistic picture of men stamping in cold, hard-packed snow.

"All right, come on," Sam heard the actor say. Glancing at his script, he reached over and noisily slid the wooden bolt of his heavy sound effects door. Then he pulled it open to the accompaniment of squeaking hinges—and trod lightly on a low wooden platform.

The picture was complete. The men were inside the cabin. Sam pushed the door shut with a bang.

Then, as he reached for the matchbox (the lighting of the fire was his next cue), he looked through the control room window at Claude Montour. The director nodded encouragingly and held up his right hand, with the thumb and index forming an "O," and the other three fingers extending upward—expressing complete approval in Radio's sign language.

Sam's nervousness passed without his being aware of its going. Now that he was concentrating on his part in the show, there was no room in his mind for fears or uncertainties.

Bonato's drumbeat transition came and went, with Montour beaming his delight through the control room window.

The show was more than good: it was genuinely artistic.

Sam, in his concentration, did not appreciate *how* artistic until he suddenly realized it was over. A full hour had passed; but to him it had seemed like only a few minutes!

The last note of music died out. The announcer spoke his "sign-off" cue, "This is the Transcontinental Broadcasting System." He punched the button marked "Chimes." Faintly Sam heard the familiar tones of Transcontinental's musical trademark.

"Okay!" the announcer called. The show was off the air.

The studio burst into a buzz of conversation. The musicians noisily packed up their instruments. Montour entered with compliments and congratulations for everyone. They were all happy—happy with the simple delight of little children when they're praised.

As the others left the big room, Sam began to pack up his equipment.

He was tired. He was feeling the fatigue that always follows the sudden ending of long-endured nervous tension. But it was a pleasant tiredness.

Pushing his sound effects truck toward the studio door, he smiled. "All my qualms for nothing," he thought.

CHAPTER IX

Samuel Hubbard, Playwright

THE next day, Monday, was Sam's day off.

And that was the day he got his great idea.

At nine o'clock, just as he was beginning to awaken, it came to him, as fully developed as though he had been thinking about it for weeks.

He had read somewhere about a famous author who had said that the best ideas always come in the night; or just as one is dozing off; or just at awakening.

"It must be true," said Sam to himself.

Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he hurriedly jotted down the plot of the play that had burst upon him—he was so afraid he would forget some part of it.

Then, glowing as much from excitement as from the brisk rubdown that followed his shower, he dashed off to tell Helen Chambers about his inspiration. Helen's job was on a morning newspaper, so Sam was fairly sure of finding her at Barrow Street. She rarely reported at the newspaper office for her assignments before half-past one.

In recent months, she had frequently invited Sam to lunch at her apartment because, since he was "working nights" again and never was free on Sundays, they had had to give up their excursions into the country. Helen, too, worked far into the night, more often than not. So "Monday for lunch" was more or less a standing invitation.

On the way downtown, Sam decided he would wait

until after lunch to spring his idea on her. But it was occupying his mind so completely that he wasn't a very lively conversationalist; and long before they finished eating, Helen knew he had news of some kind.

She said nothing, though, until the meal was over and the dishes washed and put away:

"Now then, Sam—what is it?"

"What is what?" Sam was surprised at the question, as one always is surprised when someone else sees through him.

"What is it you are bursting to tell me?"

"Did you get a raise? Are you going to write the great American novel? Or the Pulitzer Prize play of the year?"

Sam's amazement was apparent.

"Say!" he cried. "Are you a mind reader? How did you know I'm going to write a play?"

Helen laughed. "I knew *something* was up," she said. "The play was just a guess. But it was pretty apt to be a right guess, because almost every living person thinks he can write either a great play or a great novel."

Sam's face fell. She saw that she had robbed him of part of the pleasure of telling her, and that he thought she didn't believe he *could* write a play.

"My goodness, Sammy!" She attempted to reassure him. "I'm working on a novel right now. The only difference between you and me is that I've already started on mine."

"So have I," said Sam—"at least, I've written down the plot of it."

"Tell me about it," Helen commanded.

And he did. He launched into his plot with such gusto as he had not shown since that day, months before, when

they had sat high up atop the Palisades and he had told her about his promotion to the sound effects department.

As he progressed, Helen's eyes began to glow with excitement. Only twice did she interrupt him—and then to make suggestions for the improvement of his plot. These Sam instantly scratched down, lest he should forget them.

At last, when he had finished, Helen exploded.

“Sam!” she cried. “It’s great! It’s a marvelous comedy!

“After you’ve done it for radio, you might even be able to get it produced on Broadway!”

Sam fairly burst with pride and delight that she shared his enthusiasm. They discussed the plot and rediscussed it until it was time for Helen to start out for her office. They talked about it all the way uptown.

Finally, as Sam left her at the entrance of the *Intelligencer* Building, she gave him this parting admonition:

“Now get busy and *write* your play,” she said. “Because the best idea in the world isn’t worth a snap of your fingers until you *do something with it*. The woods are so full of people with ideas they’ve never developed that you can’t see the woods for the ideas,” she paraphrased.

Sam lost no time in putting her advice into practice. He spent the whole afternoon in his room, working on the opening scene of his play.

The farther he progressed with it, the more engrossed he became. The ideas seemed to cascade into his mind faster than he could write them down.

Nevertheless, he tore himself away in time to drop in on Mike Cassidy before the Chief of Announcers had left for the day.

Mike was delighted to hear that Sam was writing a play. He said he'd be glad to call up the Continuity Editor and ask him to talk to Sam about it. So it was arranged that Sam should see the great Fletcher Gordon early the next morning. He wanted to tell Gordon his plot and show him as much of the script as he had finished—little as that was.

If you had asked him, afterward, what he had done between his talk with Mike Cassidy and his interview with Fletcher Gordon, he couldn't possibly have told you. He didn't even remember his walk home that late afternoon, nor back to the studio in the morning. Though he had traversed a dozen hazardous street crossings on each journey, he couldn't have told you what routes he had taken.

Tuesday morning he was up before seven, scribbling away at his script. Up without an alarm clock, too—although his usual time for awakening was nine o'clock or later.

This morning, however, nine-thirty found him at the studio, in the continuity department, awaiting the summons to the inner office of its director.

Fletcher Gordon was one of the few department heads whom Sam did not know. He had passed him in the halls frequently enough; but unlike most of the others, Gordon never had spoken to him in his entire ten months with the company. Sam couldn't feel that the other had intentionally snubbed him, because he never had met him. Gordon simply did not see him.

The Continuity Editor seemed always intently preoccupied. He walked with a rapid, nervous stride, looking neither to right nor left.

When Sam was called into his office, he seemed quite

as vague and far away as ever. He peered at Sam from behind a large pile of manuscripts.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Hubbard?" His manner seemed to accuse Sam of rudely interrupting some task in which Gordon was deeply interested. It made Sam extremely uncomfortable.

"Why, yes. . . . I thought—that is—Mr. Cassidy called you about me last night, Mr. Gordon."

"Oh!" said the editor, as though the light of understanding finally had penetrated his preoccupation. "Then you're with the company, aren't you?"

Sam's suspicion had been correct! The man had never even *seen* him before!

But now his manner changed as he continued. "Mike said you had a script you wanted to show me." And he smiled cordially.

Sam explained that he hadn't a finished script—that his play was barely started—but that he wanted to explain his idea to Gordon and show him as much as he had written.

"I thought perhaps you could tell me whether Transcontinental would be interested in buying—at least, in *producing* my play." To speak of "buying" or "selling" a thing as beautiful as this brain child of his seemed almost sacrilegious.

But Fletcher Gordon wasn't interested in hearing about Sam's plot. He didn't even want to hear about the idea on which the play was based. He explained that ideas are valuable in radio only after they are worked out—that plots are plentiful; but that writers who can develop them into good shows are very rare indeed.

"I don't doubt that *you* can do it," he said encourag-

ingly; “but I’d rather read it after you’ve finished than to have you try to tell me about it now.

“You see,” he said, “I might get a wrong idea from hearing you talk about it. . . . When I read it, I’ll see it for exactly what it is.”

Sam promised to bring the play to him by the end of the following week. Then he left.

All the way back to his room he berated himself for going off half-cocked—wanting to “shoot his mouth off” about something that wasn’t half finished!

“Why,” he thought, “if I’d only had sense enough to realize it, Helen told me, yesterday, almost exactly what Fletcher Gordon said just now: ‘An idea isn’t worth a snap of your fingers until you do something with it.’”

When Sam had promised to show his finished play in less than two weeks, it hadn’t occurred to him that there is a great deal of difference between *having* an idea and *developing* it.

The first few scenes came easily enough; but the farther he progressed, and the longer he worked, the more difficult it was for him to keep his interest at a high pitch. And unfortunately, he discovered that the scenes he tried to write when his enthusiasm lagged were dull and dry and uninteresting. Many an afternoon of hard labor went for nothing: he would be so dissatisfied with what he had turned out that he would throw away several pages of script and start fresh the next day.

He made another unpleasant discovery, too. He found that new thoughts which came to him as he wrote later scenes didn’t fit in with incidents he had written about in the earlier parts of his play.

Sometimes a character whom he had thought of as a certain kind of person in his introductory scenes would turn out to be an entirely different kind of person when he appeared later on. When this happened, Sam either had to go back and rewrite the first part of the play or drop the new idea entirely. It was always hard to do that, because the latest idea, exasperatingly, usually seemed to be the best one.

He mentioned this difficulty to Claude Montour one day.

“So you’re writing a play!” said Montour. “I hoped you’d have better sense—but I guess we’re all alike in this business. We don’t know when we’re well off. We’ve all got to go and write a play.”

Pressed for advice, however, he showed Sam where he had made his mistake.

“Of course, I haven’t read your play, Oscar,” Montour said. “But, from what you say, it sounds to me as though you had started *writing* it before you finished *thinking* about it.

“A writer,” he said, “can write convincingly only about people and things he knows very intimately. And I’ve got a hunch you started to write about these people before you were sure of just exactly what kind of people they were; and just what they were going to do.

“But don’t let that discourage you,” he urged. “Every person who ever started to write has had the same trouble until he has learned to overcome it.

“And what’s more,” he continued, “a lot of successful playwrights say that, even when you *do* know your characters before you begin to write about them, they almost

always surprise you by doing things and saying things that you never intended them to do or say—things that force you to go back and reconstruct earlier parts of your script."

That gave Sam a new impetus. He went back to work with redoubled vigor.

At that, though, Sam might never have finished the play had he not had the benefit of Helen Chambers' advice and encouragement.

Even with her to goad him on, he frequently had to force himself to stick to it by sheer strength of will. Many an afternoon he was tempted to sneak away from the portable typewriter she had lent him and spend an idle hour or two in one of the near-by movie houses.

But he always overcame the urge—and gradually the final scenes of his play began to take shape.

It was almost a month after his first talk with Fletcher Gordon before Sam was ready to return and lay the completed manuscript proudly on the Continuity Editor's desk.

Gordon's greeting forestalled Sam's apology for his lateness.

"I didn't expect you back so soon," he complimented. "One's first play usually takes him about twice as long to write as he thinks it is going to take."

"Well! What do you know about that! He doesn't remember that I promised to show it to him over two weeks ago!"

Sam dropped into the easy chair beside the busy man's desk and looked at him with an expectant grin. He thought Gordon would reach for the sheaf of papers and begin reading.

"Oh," said the editor, observing Sam's air of anticipa-

tion, "I'm afraid I won't be able to look at this now—I've got to go over the continuities for some of tonight's musical shows.

"And besides, I never like to read a thing in its author's presence. I'll be able to judge it better if I read it at home, alone."

"But," Sam objected, "there are some things about it that I wanted to explain to you." Now that the hard labor of writing was over, his first enthusiasm had returned.

Gordon smiled and shook his head.

"Who do you think is going to explain those things to the radio audience?"

Sam did not reply.

"Don't you see," said the other, "that, if it requires explanation, it isn't a good play?"

Sam *did* see. Why had he said that about explaining things, anyway? His play didn't really need any explanation—he just wanted to talk about it.

Gordon picked up one of the manuscripts that cluttered his desk.

"Come in to see me about a week from today," he said.

And that was all.

Sam's departure was a painful anticlimax to the high expectations with which he had entered the office. He felt as though he had been sentenced to a week's imprisonment—and he knew it was going to be the longest seven days he had ever lived through.

Somehow he managed to endure the first day. A movie consumed the afternoon, though afterward he had no recollection of the picture he had seen. Then came his evening's work with his sound effects. But that seemed like

a very tame way of occupying his time as compared to the excitements of the past month. He had forgotten all the hard labor of his writing. All he could remember was the thrill of seeing his ideas take shape on paper.

The next Monday he felt simply compelled to talk about the play. So, as early as he dared, he tucked a copy of his precious manuscript under his arm and set out for Barrow Street.

On the way downtown he made up his mind that he wouldn't make the mistake of "explaining" his play—he'd let it speak for itself.

He tossed it carelessly on the little table in the hall as Helen welcomed him to the apartment.

But that understanding young lady noticed his manner of overcasualness. She immediately exhibited a most satisfying enthusiasm.

"Samuel! It's finished, isn't it?" She had not seen it for more than a week.

"Yep," said Sam. "I turned it in three days ago.

"But, of course," he added, "it'll be some time before I know what Gordon thinks of it," as though he had been familiar with the ways of editors all his life.

"Of course, but don't let that worry you," Helen said. And then she did exactly what Sam had hoped she would do. She picked up the play and, "May I read it, now that it's complete?"

Might she read it? Just let her try to escape reading it!

They seated themselves in the tiny living room and, for more than twenty minutes, no sound was to be heard except the turning of the pages—all thirty of them—and Helen's amused and gratifying chuckles as she read the

comedy through.

She laid the papers down. Sam looked at her.

"It's exceedingly good," she assured him. "I take back everything I said about you last year, when you wanted to quit your job and go into the newspaper business. Maybe you *are* a writer. Maybe you *could* succeed in newspaper work—but I think you'd be foolish to try; because your dialogue's so good that *I* think you may be able to make a playwright out of yourself."

Sam stood up. He looked down at his manuscript. There was all the pride in his heart that a doting mother feels when the teacher praises her only child.

He scarcely heard Helen when, just before he departed, she cautioned him not to count *too* much on getting the play produced immediately.

"You can never tell," said Helen. "There may be any one of a dozen reasons why Transcontinental may not want exactly that kind of a comedy just at this time.

"But," she said, "that wouldn't make it any the less a good piece of work. So don't you let anything discourage you."

She was thinking back to a dozen minor disappointments she had had; to the night, for example, when she had written the "Yoicks! The Cop!" story—which had never been printed.

CHAPTER X

We Discover That Sam Can Take It

THE great day dawned. It was time for Sam to return for Fletcher Gordon's verdict.

The Continuity Editor's cordiality was encouraging. "He must like the play," Sam thought, as the other greeted him.

"Hubbard," he said, "from all I have to judge by, I'd say that you have very definite possibilities as a writer: your dialogue is good; your characters seem very natural, real people; you have a nice feeling for suspense; and you seem to know how to build your story to its climaxes."

Gordon, Sam thought, had something of a feeling for suspense, himself. He was certainly keeping Sam in it. And Sam found it very difficult to sit quietly through this impersonal discussion of the play. The important question was: "Is it going to be produced?"

Sam wanted to know the answer. At last, he could wait no longer.

"Then you're going to buy it? It's going on the air?" While he was asking the question, his mind jumped ahead to the many details of production about which he wanted to consult Fletcher Gordon: would it be possible for Francesco Bonato to compose the incidental music? could Cecil Merriman be engaged to play the leading male part? how about Barbara Work for the female lead? (she had played opposite Merriman in the comedy that had inspired Sam

to become a dramatist); and would it be asking too much to expect Claude Montour to direct? He was the only director, Sam felt, who had the comedy sense to get the most out of his play.

As suddenly as all these questions had entered Sam's mind, Gordon drove them out.

"No," he said. "No, your play isn't going on the air.

"At least, not here at Transcontinental," he added. "And when you know the reason why, I hope for your own sake that you won't try to sell it anywhere else."

Why?

If he liked it as much as he said he did, why shouldn't it be produced? And, if not at Transcontinental, why shouldn't Sam try to sell it elsewhere?

Fletcher Gordon was coming to that.

"I've been telling you all the good things about your play," he said. "Now I must tell you the one thing that *isn't* good: it isn't original."

Sam was dumfounded. Not original! Gordon must have taken leave of his senses! The only person who even knew the story of the play was Helen; and surely, the few little suggestions she had made could not take away Sam's claim to originality. Besides, Gordon couldn't possibly know about his having showed the manuscript to Helen.

"But—you said you liked it!" Sam cried.

"No," the editor contradicted him, "I didn't say I liked the play; I said I liked your writing.

"And my reason for saying that the play isn't original is that we produced it, almost scene for scene, over a month ago."

Sam couldn't believe his ears. There must be some ter-

rible mistake.

But Gordon picked up another manuscript and handed it to him.

"Did you ever see that before?" he asked.

It was a copy of the script on which Sam had worked with Claude Montour and Cecil Merriman. Of course he had seen it before; and he said so.

"I made the sound effects on this show," he said.

Gordon nodded.

"Now you mustn't think I'm accusing you of consciously copying another author's play," said he—"because I'm not. But, if you'll compare your play with this one, you will see that you have duplicated practically every incident it contains."

He noticed the look of disbelief on Sam's face.

"Oh, I know the scenes were laid in the Far North—and in midwinter—while *your* play takes place at a seaside resort at the height of the summer season.

"But that doesn't alter the fact that your comedy situations depend on the contrast between the relations of the hero and his wife, and those of their manservant and the servant's wife.

"Even that wouldn't be anything against your script," he continued, "if you had developed the contrast in an entirely original way. But you didn't. Show me any scene in *your* play, and I'll show you its counterpart in this one," said Gordon, tapping the other manuscript.

He went on to point out that the only original things about Sam's play were the dialogue, the settings and the names of the characters.

Slowly, heartbreakingly, the awful truth began to dawn

on Sam. Unwittingly, he had done everything that Gordon accused him of. All the hard work of the past four weeks and more had been to no purpose except to make an unconscious plagiarist out of Samuel Hubbard, playwright.

He swallowed hard.

"I see," he said. "You're right. But I didn't know what I was doing."

Then a terrifying thought struck him: suppose Gordon doubted his sincerity! He searched the editor's face. "You believe that, don't you? You don't think—"

Gordon smiled reassuringly. "Of course I believe it," he said. "No one but a literary thief takes another's ideas intentionally. And you needn't fear that I think that of you. Because," he continued, "if you had been a thief, you wouldn't have submitted your play to *me*. You'd have taken it to some other broadcasting station in the hope that its editor was unfamiliar with the original play."

Suddenly it occurred to Sam that Gordon had done something very nice for him; and that he had done it in a very nice way—had done his best to take the sting out of Sam's disappointment.

So he told the older man how grateful he was. He told him how much he regretted bothering him with the reading of a worthless script.

As Gordon waved his apology aside, Sam stood up.

"Well, that's that!" he said with an air of finality, and picked up his manuscript.

"Hold on," said Fletcher Gordon, motioning him to resear himself. "I'm not through with you yet."

Sam couldn't imagine what more there was to be said,

but he sat down and waited.

"Perhaps your play is not quite so worthless as you think. I meant what I said a little while ago when I told you I thought you might have possibilities as a writer. I can't be sure, because there is one thing every real writer must have that you haven't shown me—"

"Originality," Sam put in.

"Exactly," Gordon agreed. "Maybe you've got it and maybe you haven't. The fact remains that I've a place for another writer, here in the continuity department—and if you think you'd like to write, the job is yours."

The offer came so abruptly and unexpectedly that Sam almost jumped. At one instant he had been a discouraged sound effects man—and a plagiarist, at that, though an unconscious one. And at the next instant he was a prospective writer.

"Suppose you think it over for a day or so," advised Gordon. "And if the idea appeals to you, let me ask Cal Murphy if he'll release you from Sound Effects."

And that was the way the matter was left.

Sam floated, rather than walked, to the elevator and out of the building. He paused on the sidewalk and consulted his watch. He wanted to make sure that it wasn't too early to call on Helen.

There were several reasons why he wanted to see her just then. In the first place, he had a confession to make to her: he knew he was going to feel a little bit—well, almost dishonest—as long as she thought him the author of an original play; and in the second place, he wanted her to tell him that he ought to accept Fletcher Gordon's offer of a job; and in the third place, he just wanted to see her.

Before he arrived at her apartment, the business of consulting Helen about the new job had become a mere formality: he had already made up his mind to take it.

There was something about Sam's manner that Helen couldn't quite make out this morning. She had been prepared to congratulate him and to exult with him on the acceptance of his play. Or she had been equally ready to sympathize with him in case of its rejection. But, as she greeted him, she didn't know quite which line to take.

She thought fast: if the play had been accepted, he would be walking on air. Well, he wasn't. And yet, if Gordon had turned it down, Sam would be as dejected as only Sam knew how to be. But he wasn't *that*, either.

Well, then, it must have been accepted—and he was just trying to keep her in suspense.

"There's no use your being so mysterious," she said at last, "because I knew all the time that Fletcher Gordon would buy your play."

"Well, he *didn't* buy it," said Sam.

She didn't believe him. "You're fooling!" she accused.

"The truth is, I never had a play," Sam stated.

"What on earth are you talking about?"

When he finished telling her, Helen was as disappointed as though it had been her own play that had been torn to ribbons.

"I'm sorry I didn't hear the Merriman play," she said; "because if I had heard it, I would have warned you—and saved you the humiliation you must have felt when Mr. Gordon showed you what you'd done.

"But you mustn't be discouraged, Sam. Borrowing someone else's ideas is the easiest thing in the world for a be-

ginner to do." She made a wry face and laughed, as though at something she was remembering.

"I ought to know," she continued. "Because, 'way back in grammar school when I was first trying to write, I wrote a perfectly marvelous story. Even Mother said it was wonderful. The only trouble with it was that Rudyard Kipling had done it, long before I was born: it was one of his *Just So Stories* that I had faintly echoed!"

Sam laughed with her and was glad to have something to laugh at.

Helen, though, was still puzzled by his manner. He wasn't running true to Hubbard form as she knew it. He wasn't so downcast as she thought he ought to be over the rejection of the play.

So she wasn't surprised when he told her about Gordon's offer. And she said exactly what Sam hoped she would say—that, by all means, he must accept it.

She approved, too, his idea of consulting Mike Cassidy about the job, before telling Gordon he would take it. She was sure Mike would agree; but it seemed like a good piece of diplomacy to talk it over with him in advance. He had been Sam's first boss at Transcontinental and he had sponsored his transfer to the sound effects department.

Sam refused Helen's invitation to luncheon. He was far too eager to embark on his career as a writer.

After he left the apartment, Helen sat down and thought over their conversation.

Ten months ago, Sam would have crumpled under such a blow as he had received this morning. Today, he had taken it standing up.

Ten months ago, even the offer of the new job wouldn't

have lessened his feeling of utter defeat at the destruction of his play. He'd have refused the job and considered himself a failure as a writer. Today he had regarded the setback merely as a lesson; and the new job as an opportunity to learn something from that lesson.

Ten months ago, in his impatience to jump into something new, he never would have shown the thoughtfulness to seek Mike Cassidy's advice before he jumped.

Helen was very much pleased with these thoughts.

Sam Hubbard was "growing up."

CHAPTER XI

"Simply the Smiths"

SAM had entered on his career as a radio writer with Mike Cassidy's hearty approval and Cal Murphy's good wishes for success.

It had been almost eight months since he had made his last sound effect and written his first script.

That first script, however, hadn't given him nearly the thrill he had anticipated. It consisted of two typewritten pages of song introductions which were to be read by one of the announcers on a fifteen-minute musical program.

Laboriously, Sam tapped it out on his typewriter—he was still a "two-fingered" typist. "The Transcontinental Broadcasting Company presents the musical comedy star, Marta Morgan, in a quarter hour of 'Broadway Melodies,'" he wrote.

New paragraph.

"ORCHESTRA: Fanfare."

New paragraph.

"ANNOUNCER: For her first selection, Marta Morgan has chosen that rhythmical romantic plea, 'Sing a Swingy Love Song to Me,' from the current musical comedy success, *Sing Swing.*"

New paragraph.

"ORCHESTRA }
AND MORGAN } 'Sing a Swingy Love Song to Me.'"

New paragraph.

“ANNOUNCER: Miss Morgan’s second offering gives us a sage piece of advice. . . .”

And so on, through the introductions of three more vocal numbers and two orchestra selections that completed the program.

It had seemed like a simple enough assignment when Sam received it; but the better part of a day had passed before he was satisfied with what he had written. And when he had submitted the program to Fletcher Gordon, that gentleman’s comment had been less than enthusiastic.

“This will do all right, for a starter; but don’t let yourself get into the habit of saying, ‘Her first selection. . . . Her second offering. . . . Her third number.’ Try to put some originality into these things. Find a new way to introduce each piece; and a new way to begin each program.”

“Gee, Mr. Gordon,” Sam exclaimed, “it seems as if I’ve used nearly every way there is, in this one program!”

Gordon smilingly shook his head. “Oh, no,” he said. “You’ll *never* exhaust the supply of new ways. You may exhaust your own ingenuity; but the supply is inexhaustible.

“Take this last number, for instance: you’ve introduced it with the stereotyped ‘For her last selection.’ Instead of that, why don’t you tell the audience that Marta first sang ‘My Heart Did a Highland Fling’ in her last musical comedy, *Hoot Mon?*”

“Why,” Sam confessed, “I didn’t know that.”

“It’s your business to know it,” said Gordon quietly.

“But nobody told me!” Sam objected.

The editor smiled again.

“Hubbard,” he said, “no one will ever tell you. No one

can tell you the thousand and one things you'll have to know to hold down your job. It's up to you to find them out for yourself."

But *how!* Sam had a feeling of hopelessness.

Gordon seemed to sense it. "In this case," he said, "you don't know enough about Marta Morgan to be writing her programs. Have you talked to her about her work?"

Sam hadn't. He hadn't even met Marta Morgan.

"Then you should," advised Gordon. "And read all her past publicity—you can get it from the press department's files."

There is a whole lot more to being a writer, Sam decided, than just sitting at your typewriter and writing. So he read Marta Morgan's press clippings, as Gordon suggested. And it helped a lot. It gave him so many more things to write about.

That last song introduction on Sam's first program came out like this:

"ANNOUNCER: A little more than two years ago, Miss Morgan created one of the sensations of that theatrical season when she took the leading part in the melodic comedy, *Hoot Mon*. Listen to her now, as she tells us why her 'Heart Did a Highland Fling.'

"ORCHESTRA
AND MORGAN } 'My Heart Did a Highland Fling.' "

The next day, Sam made it a point to visit Marta Morgan in the studio, after her rehearsal. He found her quite willing to talk about herself and her work. In fact, he couldn't stop her until it came time for her program to go on the air. That talk helped him, too, in his writing. And so did others which followed it. But even then,

“finding new ways” was no easy matter.

That had been thirty-three weeks ago.

And during each of those thirty-three weeks, Sam had written three programs for Marta Morgan. Ninety-nine programs with an average of five musical selections on each! Four hundred and ninety-five new ways to introduce as many songs!

He figured this out while he was cudgeling his brains for a novel opening for the one hundredth program.

A wave of hatred for Marta Morgan surged through him.

Then, just when he had despaired of finding an opening which he had not used before—one came to him. He was off. In less than two hours, program number one hundred was finished.

That was a relief. But the relief was only temporary, for he realized that in exactly two days he would be searching for the new opening of program number one hundred and one!

Marta Morgan had not been Sam’s only burden, either. During the time when he had been slaving his hardest to help *her* professional career with fresh, lively announcements, he had also written at least fifty introductions for the speeches of foreign notables—and famous authors—and presidents of societies for the prevention of this or the enforcement of that or the abolition of the other.

It got so that when Sam opened his morning newspaper and read that some famous foreigner was expected to arrive on the next ship, he couldn’t enjoy his breakfast. His imagination would picture an endless procession of steamships, all bound for New York harbor and each bearing

a foreign notable, headed toward the Transcontinental Broadcasting Studios. For Sam knew that, as the junior member of the writing staff, he was almost certain to get the assignment of writing the foreigner's introduction.

This was not at all the kind of writing he had bargained for when he accepted Gordon's offer. It was a long, long way from being a playwright.

However, these assignments had not occupied *all* his time and, as Fletcher Gordon urged, Sam had devoted every spare moment to creative writing. He had submitted to the editor five half-hour plays and—just a few days ago—the first three episodes of a serial program which he had planned as a five-time-a-week show.

Though the criticisms of the first four plays had been far from favorable, Sam refused to be discouraged. He was rewarded by Gordon's comments on the fifth: "This begins to show some promise. There is a spark of originality in it. Keep it up, and it won't be long before you'll have something on the air."

That was when Sam had decided to try his hand at the serial. A serial, he reasoned, would keep him busy as a playwright; and that would deliver him from the drudgery of those unending song announcements and introductions.

Two days after he had sent in the first three episodes, his boss summoned him. Gordon came closer to real, out-and-out enthusiasm than Sam had ever heard him come before—at least as far as Sam was concerned.

"Sam," he said—and it was the first time he had used Sam's given name in addressing him—"I think you've hit your stride this time: your title is good; your story starts well; your characters are excellent; and the whole thing

sounds as though you knew what you were writing about.”

Sam suppressed a smile. The characters ought to be good. They were people he had known all his life, back in Athens, Ohio. And the story *should* sound as though he knew what he was writing about, because the incidents were taken out of the lives of those people and out of his own life.

He called the series “Simply the Smiths.” He knew it was a catchy title, even before Fletcher Gordon set his approval on it. It was short. It was simple. And it had the “folksy” sound that people like.

Gordon said he would present “Simply the Smiths” to the Program Board, and if its members liked the scripts, he would arrange to have the three episodes auditioned—played by actors, just as though they were being broadcast—so that the Board could decide whether they would be as entertaining on the air as they seemed on paper.

Then came another of those exasperating delays of which there seemed to be so many in the broadcasting business. Several weeks passed and still Sam heard nothing about the Board’s opinion of his serial. And yet, knowing how busy Gordon was with the many programs that must be made ready to go on the air each day, Sam did not like to bother him with inquiries about the fate of “the Smiths.”

When the news finally came, it repaid Sam for all his patience. The Program Board liked his scripts; the three shows were to be auditioned! And the speed with which they were put into production was in startling contrast with the Board’s slowness in making its decision.

Two days after Sam learned of it, Fletcher Gordon had

edited the scripts, making only a few slight changes in Sam's dialogue; Claude Montour had selected the actors and actresses who were to play the parts; he had ordered the sound effects and the incidental music; and Sam was sitting in one of the control rooms beside the director, hearing his characters come to life!

Sam marveled at Claude's skill in picking actors and actresses to represent the small-town people Sam had created. It was as though the persons, themselves—Sam's friends from Athens—had been brought right into the studio, to play their own parts.

But the satisfaction of hearing the shows take shape was nothing as compared with Sam's feeling of elation when Montour spoke to him after the audition was all over.

"Oscar," Claude said, "those three shows are as good as any three serial programs we've ever broadcast.

"Of course," he continued, "you can never tell what the Board is going to say about *any* show—but this series *ought* to go on the air."

He had scarcely finished speaking when the control room telephone bell rang. It was a call for Sam to go at once to the board room, where the members of the Program Board had been listening to the audition which had been "piped" to a loud speaker so that they heard it exactly as though it were being broadcast over the air.

That was encouraging, said Montour, because they wouldn't be likely to call an author in to tell him they did not like his shows.

"If they hadn't liked your opera," he said, "they would have dropped it on the floor; and all you would ever have heard would have been a sound like the dropping of a

wet dishrag.

“Good luck!” he added, as Sam left the control room.

On the way to the board room, the excited author hardly dared hope that Montour was right; and when he entered he was sure the director had been wrong, for the Board members were busily discussing something that had no connection whatever with “*Simply the Smiths*.”

Fletcher Gordon motioned him to a chair which stood some distance away from the long table at which the others sat. There Sam waited, feeling as unnecessary as the landing wheels of an airplane ten thousand feet aloft.

However, the sea of faces that met his eye as he came in was confusing. He couldn't, immediately, take them all in; and the wait gave him an opportunity to discover who the members of the Board were—something he had never known before, because their identities were not advertised: they could not afford to risk being besieged by ambitious authors with “wonderful ideas” for radio shows.

They weren't interested in hearing about mere ideas. They wanted only to hear completed shows, ready for the air, so that they might better judge the probable “listening” popularity of each show that was presented to them.

Sam saw that, besides Fletcher Gordon, the Board consisted of the head of the commercial program department and his assistant; the manager of the Artists Bureau and *his* assistant; Dr. Garfield Foster, Transcontinental's Educational Director and his secretary. Then there was George Monroe, Chief of the Program Directors, and Sam's friend, Michael Cassidy.

Mike's presence on the Board surprised Sam, for he had had no idea that the head announcer was one of its mem-

bers—not even while he had worked as Mike's clerical assistant.

"But," Sam considered, "that's not so surprising, because I worked at night when I was in his department, and the Program Board meets in the mornings; and only two mornings a week, at that."

He looked at the other four persons seated at the big table. Their faces were familiar to him; he had seen them in the halls; but he couldn't identify them. It made him realize what a vast organization was required to conduct the affairs of Transcontinental. Sam had been with the company for more than a year and a half; and yet, here were two women and two men, important enough to be members of this Board, whom he didn't know.

The end of the Board's discussion put a stop to these thoughts.

Fletcher Gordon waved a hand in Sam's direction. "This is Sam Hubbard," he said to the others, "who wrote 'Simply the Smiths.'"

Mike Cassidy gave Sam a friendly wink.

Henry Firman, head of the commercial program department, seemed to be spokesman for the group.

"We like your program," he said. "We think we may be able to interest a sponsor in it."

Sam gulped. He hadn't given a thought to any such happy possibility. Why, if an advertiser should sponsor his series, he probably would be paid for each script more than his weekly salary as a member of the continuity department. Five scripts a week! He couldn't imagine such wealth!

Then he came to, quickly. He forced wealth and spon-

sors out of his mind. “After all,” he thought, “the most important thing is for me to write good shows. And if I get to thinking too much about the money, I probably won’t do it.”

In the back of his head there was something else: the experiences of the past months had begun to teach him that chickens counted before they were hatched frequently do not hatch. Indeed, he suspected that some of those *he* had counted hadn’t even been eggs, except in his own imagination.

He listened as Henry Firman outlined the Board’s plan for “Simply the Smiths.” Sponsors, he said, were becoming wary of buying untried programs. There had been too many disappointments. Moreover, Transcontinental didn’t want sponsors to put on unproven shows, because failures were very likely to drive them away from radio altogether.

Accordingly, he proposed that “Simply the Smiths” should be broadcast as a sustaining program, five times a week, until its popularity could be determined—and until an advertiser could be found to sponsor it.

Sam smiled and nodded. That was exactly what he wanted, he said, and he appreciated the opportunity the Board was giving him.

“The booking department has set aside a spot for you,” Firman said.

“Three to three-fifteen, Mondays through Fridays,” said one of the two men whom Sam didn’t know but who, he now supposed, was in charge of bookings.

Then Fletcher Gordon tossed a bombshell in Sam’s lap: “Beginning next Monday,” he said.

Next Monday!

That was only six days away, for already it was Tuesday. No—really only *five* days, because Tuesday was nearly half gone. And Sam had finished only the first three episodes of "Simply the Smiths." That meant that he would have to write two more episodes between now and Sunday night—and take care of his other work besides.

He didn't see how he could possibly do it. Yet he knew it had to be done, because Claude Montour would demand scripts at least a week in advance, in order to have plenty of time to read the scripts, cast the actors and actresses, order the sound effects and arrange for whatever music was called for.

Sam was getting himself worked up into a good lively dither, when Fletcher Gordon took away all his worries by saying, "I'm relieving you of all other assignments, Sam, beginning tomorrow morning. We want you to devote all your time to making this series the very best you possibly can."

Sam thanked him and left the Program Board room feeling as lighthearted as a robin on the first day of spring. No more continuities for Marta Morgan! No more introductions for politicians, or famous authors, or visiting celebrities!

The freedom from the routine drudgery of the continuity department was not to be Sam's only freedom, either; for later in the day, Gordon dropped into Sam's room to tell him that he might write "Simply the Smiths" at home if he wanted to; that it wouldn't be necessary for him to report at the studios, as long as he got his scripts in well ahead of time.

Freedom!

Before many days had passed, however, Sam found that this kind of freedom called for very strict self-discipline. When his alarm clock awakened him, it was too easy to roll over for another cat nap. Then it would be ten o'clock or later before he sat down at his typewriter to click out the next episode of “Simply the Smiths.” So he abandoned morning cat naps.

Until each day's script was finished, he made it his rule to let no outside thought enter his head. Some days the writing was easy and he would be through before mid-afternoon; but other times he just couldn't seem to get into the swing of his story. On those hard days there was no telling what time he would finish. It might be ten o'clock at night when he pulled the last page of dialogue from the machine. Then he would be only too glad to tumble into bed.

On such days, he would be sure that he had lost forever the gift of orderly thinking and the ability to put his thoughts on paper. But he soon learned that all he had to do was to stick to his work, and all of a sudden—he never knew at exactly what moment—his characters would come alive and begin to say and do the things he wanted of them.

The Friday when Sam turned in the tenth chapter of the series was the second Friday after the audition. It was also payday.

Miss Morris, the company's cashier, came around late in the afternoon as usual, with her big wooden tray of pay envelopes. Sam had made it a point to be in his room at the time when she should arrive.

She smiled as she handed him a long envelope with his name typed across its face. It wasn't the kind of envelope he expected because, always before, she had given him a short, narrow one; just big enough to hold bank notes, folded twice.

"What's this?" Sam asked. "Something new?"

"Unh-hunh," said Miss Morris, as she opened the door to leave, "something new."

Her way of saying it made Sam open the envelope as soon as she left. Instead of the customary thin roll of folded bills it contained a single narrow sheet of gray mottled paper.

Sam hastily pulled it out and looked at it. It was a check on the company's bank, drawn in his favor. Naturally, the thing about it that attracted his eye was the amount—always the most interesting spot on *any* check.

Sam blinked. Then he sat perfectly still and stared at it. The figure he saw was "\$125.00." There must be some mistake! Why, this check made his salary two hundred and fifty dollars a month! Surely, there must be some mistake!

Then he began to consider.

No. That was impossible. Always before he had received his pay in cash. This was the first time it had ever come to him as a check. The cashier's office must have received instructions for the change. And the cashier's office would not make an error in such a matter. Not an error that more than doubled his pay.

Of course, this was not the first raise Sam had had. He'd had one after he had been with Mike Cassidy for three months; and another at the end of six months; a third

when he had been with the company a year; and still another when he had joined the continuity staff. Those had been modest raises that had gradually increased his original fifteen dollars a week to just a little less than thirty.

But this! This was no mere raise. It was an ascension into loftier realms than Sam had even dreamed of. At least, he hadn't allowed himself to dream of such riches since almost two years before, when he had come to the depressing conclusion that a university diploma was not the open door to wealth and position that he had always thought it.

When he recovered from his first surprise at the size of the check, it dawned upon Sam that it wasn't so remarkable, after all. A fledgling apprentice in the continuity department undoubtedly wasn't worth a cent more than thirty dollars a week. The author of a five-time-a-week serial was quite different. *He* was worth much more to the company.

Sam made a hasty mental calculation: his salary was now just over sixty a week; five scripts a week; that was only slightly more than twelve dollars for each script. Say! When you stopped to figure it out, that was darned little. He knew plenty of people who were being paid twice that and more for sustaining shows. Maybe he ought to talk to Fletcher Gordon about it.

He'd go in to see Gordon right now. He started for the door. But, before he had crossed the room, something stopped him. Perhaps it was his growing sense of proportion that gave him a friendly nudge.

At any rate, Sam went back to his chair and sat down. “Better think the thing over. Don't want to go off half-

cocked—as I've been known to do before."

He thought with what unwarranted assurance he had asked Mike Cassidy to make him an announcer. And he almost laughed.

Was he really justified in asking for more money just now?

Without a word on his part, his pay had been more than doubled—and *that* after he had been writing "Simply the Smiths" for only two weeks. As a matter of fact, the increase had taken effect when he had written only three scripts; and before any of those had been broadcast.

Looked at in that light, Gordon certainly had shown a good deal of faith in Sam.

Now, Sam had finished ten shows altogether. He'd handed in the tenth episode only today. But, could he keep it up? Nobody knew. Certainly Gordon didn't know. There had even been two or three mornings when Sam, himself, had felt certain that he couldn't go on. At this moment, he felt sure he could—but nobody knew.

And another thing that was still an unknown quantity was the public's reaction to "Simply the Smiths." Would they like it and make it one of Radio's popular and profitable shows? Or would they turn thumbs down and let it die, as so many good shows had died, although the wisest heads in show business had believed they would be popular?

Nobody knew.

Sam took another look at the check. He shuddered at his narrow escape. He had come very close to "pulling another boner." Instead of striking Gordon for still more money, he wanted to rush right in and thank him for this

display of confidence.

But this was Friday and Sam knew that the boss would be even more than usually busy; so he wrote him a note of thanks, instead.

That done, the author of “Simply the Smiths” reflected on what his new wealth meant to him:

In the first place, he could rent an apartment and have his mother come to live with him. He had wished for this many a time since he’d been living alone in New York. Their home life in Athens was the one thing about the little town that he hungered for.

He had asked his mother to join him before; but she had told him that her income—though it was plenty for living in Athens, where she owned her own home—wouldn’t be nearly enough to support her comfortably in the big city.

Secretly she felt, too, that it was much better for Sam to be “on his own.” He and she were of two different generations. His friends couldn’t take the place of hers. Her friends couldn’t be his. And anyway, she’d have to leave hers in Athens, if she went to the city.

Her rare trips to New York to visit Sam had been the high spots of her life these last two years. But, as for leaving Athens permanently, she just didn’t want to—much as she missed their comradeship.

Not knowing how she felt, though, Sam dashed off a letter to her, inviting her to come and live with him. Then he went back to thoughts of his new-found riches. What else would the raise mean to him?

Well, in the second place, Sam could now begin to accept the invitations that were always bobbing up—in-

itations to do interesting things, which he had had to refuse, either because he couldn't afford them or because he had hesitated to accept favors he couldn't return.

And lastly, this wonderful raise would enable him to add at least twice as much, each month, to the savings account he had started soon after he left Mike Cassidy's office and joined Cal Murphy. Sam didn't know exactly what his purpose was in nursing this bank account so faithfully; but it gave him a fine feeling of security and independence to know it was there if ever he should need it.

Making plans for the future, however, wasn't completely satisfying to Sam just now. He felt rich; and he simply had to do something to express his feelings. So, on his way home, he stopped at an expensive florist's shop and telegraphed a box of American Beauty roses to his mother.

Still unsatisfied, he instructed the slightly amused florist to deliver a dozen orchids to Helen Chambers' apartment. To the florist, Sam didn't look like one of the spendthrift playboys whose habit it was to send orchids by the dozen. However, the florist was a philosopher: "his not to reason why." And since this young man was paying cash, there was a very practical side to the florist's philosophy.

The person who was *really* perplexed by Sam's extravagance was the recipient of those orchids. Near midnight that night, when she got home after covering a late assignment, she looked at the flowers in amazement and consternation.

A *dozen* orchids! What on earth should she do with them!

Helen didn't think of herself as an orchid girl.

CHAPTER XII

Sam Seeks a Sponsor

MRS. HUBBARD'S reply to Sam's suggestion that she come to New York to live gave him the first really serious case of homesickness he had ever had. Until he received her letter, he had always felt that the reestablishment of their home was only being put off until he could afford it. But the finality of her answer made him realize that he must give up all hope of inducing her to leave Athens.

As he reread her letter and thought over her reasons for refusing to uproot her life and come to the city, Sam was forced to admit that she was right. However, that didn't make him any the less homesick, at first; though it *did* help him to accept the situation.

If he couldn't have Mrs. Hubbard with him, he decided that the next best thing would be to rent an apartment with Bill Dickson, one of the younger announcers at Transcontinental. Bill had suggested this months ago, when Sam first joined the continuity department. It wouldn't be quite the kind of home that Sam had planned on; but it would be a lot better than his present lonely life.

His pleasant room at the Y.M.C.A. seemed dreadfully lonesome and dismal, because his unusual hours had prevented his making friends among his fellow lodgers. When he was in, they were out; and when he was out, they were in.

Well, he need no longer live like a hermit. He'd tell

Bill Dickson right away.

As soon as he and Bill could arrange it, they installed themselves in a little apartment overlooking Stuyvesant Square, where they could entertain their friends and where Sam could work undisturbed during the daytime, with the trees and flowers of the Square to look at—instead of the bare brick walls and uptown rooftops that had been his only view from the single window of his first home in the city.

The next months were busy ones and happy ones for Sam. Before many weeks had passed, his writing seemed to come more easily. The days when he had trouble getting started in the morning came less and less frequently; and the ones on which he finished his script early in the afternoon became the rule, rather than the exception.

On those days, Sam would hurry to the Transcontinental studios as soon as he got up from his typewriter; and after turning the new script in at the continuity department, he would sit at the elbow of Claude Montour, in the control room of the studio in which "Simply the Smiths" was being rehearsed.

It gave Sam a sense of unreality to hear the actors and actresses speaking the words he had written two weeks before. (The show he had just turned in would not be broadcast until two weeks hence.) As he listened, he would be surprised by words that sounded vague and unfamiliar to him. "Did *I* write that?" he would often ask himself.

The plays he heard in the studio always sounded so much better to him than they had looked on paper. As Sam knew, this was partly due to the skillful directing

of Claude Montour. Claude seemed to get out of each script so much more than Sam had written into it.

Watching Claude's direction was a great help to Sam in writing the future scripts of the series. And another thing he liked about sitting in the control room was that his old friend and mentor, Doc Martin, was the studio engineer. It gave Sam a fine sense of security to have Doc's sure hands at the controls.

The day when "Simply the Smiths" had had its première had been like a "first night" in the theater—very gay and festive. Sam had been there. He wouldn't have missed it for anything.

"Well, Sam," Doc Martin had said, "now you're a author, ain't ya?"

And, "Remember the time you came snortin' into my studio to broadcast that news flash?"

Sam remembered. That was something he would never forget.

"You've sure built a lot of bridges over the water since them days," said Doc Martin.

Just before the show had gone on the air that day, Doc had pulled three bottles of ginger ale from under his control board.

"Here," he had said, handing one to Sam and one to Claude Montour, "we'd oughta launch Sam with the proper ceremony—and this here ginger ale is the closest we can come to breaking his nose over a bottle of champagne!"

They had drunk to the success of the show; and the show had had a highly satisfactory launching.

One day some weeks later, Sam met Claude on his way

to the rehearsal. It was not quite one o'clock. Sam had finished his writing unusually early that day. They met in the big lobby, outside the studios, on the fifth floor. The lobby was filled, as usual, with actors, actresses, musicians and singers, all awaiting the times when they were due to report in one or another of the studios for rehearsals or for broadcasts.

Their endless conversations about their experiences in show business made a cheerful babel of noise. Sam liked these journeys through the lobbies, because his long hours of sitting alone at his typewriter made him miss the constant contacts with many people and the gay, casual conversations he had enjoyed so much during his months of working in the studios. The loneliness of writing was the one thing he didn't like about being an author.

Under his arm this day, Claude Montour carried two sheafs of scripts—scripts for the show that was about to be broadcast, and scripts for the show that would be put on the air on the following day. It was Claude's custom to conduct, after the broadcast each day, a "reading rehearsal" of the next day's script. He did this for two reasons: first, to familiarize the members of the cast with their parts; and second, to discover any spots in the next day's dialogue that he thought Sam should rewrite.

As the two walked through the lobby, Claude saw a little girl sitting at its far side. He stopped and called to her. Coyly, she skipped across the broad expanse of floor, thoroughly aware that she was creating a "cute" impression.

Claude made a wry face. "Pert little scamp!" he said to Sam out of the corner of his mouth. Then he turned

to the approaching youngster.

"Margie," he said, "I've cast you for the part of Suzie Smith, a new character in 'Simply the Smiths' for tomorrow."

"Oh, sure, Mr. Montour," Margie replied, with just a hint of boredom. She wanted this director to understand that being cast for a part was no novelty to *her*. "I got the call all right," she added.

"Well," said Claude, handing her a copy of the next day's show, "I want you to read over your part and get acquainted with Suzie. You don't read at sight any too rapidly, you know," he said.

Margie giggled and tossed her head. "You don't know me," she stated. "My teacher says I read lots better than I did last year. You just wait and see!"

"I'll believe that when I hear you," Montour said. And then, "I want you in studio 5-A at a quarter after three today; and again at one o'clock tomorrow, for rehearsals," he instructed her.

"Okay, big boy," said Margie, with another toss. "I'll be seein' ya." And she scampered back across the lobby.

Sam and Montour entered the studio. "Annoying little brat," Claude commented, "but she's exactly what we need for the part of Suzie."

Soon after their arrival the rehearsal started and they forgot all about the impudent child.

Under Claude's deft touch, the show quickly began to take shape. Sam watched in admiration; and before he knew it, two hours had passed and it was time for the broadcast.

The director left the control room to give last-minute

instructions to the cast and the sound effects man—Jem Waters. As the door closed behind Montour, Sam turned to Doc Martin.

"He's a wizard, isn't he?" he exclaimed.

"Son," Doc answered earnestly, "I say he's the best director in the whole business! I may be wrong, but I ain't far from it!"

Sam was still chuckling at this characteristically twisted phrase of Doc's when Claude reentered the control room, and Emmet Carson, the announcer, out in the studio, stepped to his table and pushed the "Announce" button and the "Local" button.

Two little corresponding lights flashed in front of Doc Martin. Doc, with both hands on the controls, was wearing a single headphone clipped over one ear. Its mouthpiece, hung by a canvas tape around his neck, extended upward from his chest so that he could talk into it without removing his hands from the controls.

This telephone line was connected directly with the Master Control room, up on the eighth floor. Its only purpose—but an important one—was to enable the studio engineer to talk with the supervisor, whose duty it was to make sure that the program being broadcast from Doc's studio was "piped" (by long-distance telephone wire) to every station on the vast Transcontinental network which should receive it—and to *no* station which should *not* receive it. Every control room in the big Transcontinental Building was equipped with a similar private telephone line for the sole use of the engineers.

As the two little lights flashed in front of Doc Martin, he spoke quietly into the mouthpiece on his chest:

“Local,” he said.

Then, from the loud speaker in the control room, Sam heard Emmet Carson’s voice:

“Station WTRA, New York.”

Sam knew that, as long as *only* the “Local” light showed on Doc’s control board, Carson’s voice would be piped only to the transmitter of the local station, WTRA.

But now, after a short pause during which Master Control plugged in all the stations which were to receive (and broadcast) “Simply the Smiths,” Carson pressed the “Network” button. The hands of the clock pointed exactly to three. In front of Doc flashed the light marked “Net.”

“Network,” said Doc to his chestphone. And, “Okay, Net,” came the reply from Master Control to Doc’s listening car.

Now Sam heard Emmet Carson’s voice once more:

“The Transcontinental Broadcasting System presents another episode in the lives of ‘Simply the Smiths. . . .’”

The show was on the air.

Sam sat back and watched Claude Montour direct his cast by sign language, through the control room window: spreading his hands apart, palms outward, when one of the actors spoke his lines too close to the mike; bringing them together, palms inward, if someone were not close enough; making circles in the air with the index finger of his right hand when he felt that the actors were speaking their lines too slowly and letting the action lag; and making a slow motion of stretching a long rubber band if he thought they were speaking too rapidly.

He lifted his hands, palms upward, when he wanted

someone to speak with more volume; and lowered them, palms downward, if anyone was speaking too loudly.

Three minutes passed, and the show was "running in oil," as Claude remarked.

Then, suddenly, something happened.

The far-off studio door, at the opposite end from the control room, was flung open! The door that was *never* supposed to be opened while a show was on the air! To open it was outrage, *lèse-majesté* and contempt of court—all rolled into one!

But just the same, it burst open.

And into the room, at top speed, came a tiny cyclone. A silent one, it is true—but nevertheless, a cyclone—in the person of Miss Marjorie Miller—the same pert and impertinent Margie Sam had met in the lobby a little more than two hours ago.

Frantically fumbling at the script Claude Montour had given her, she made a headlong rush for the microphone. Arrived there, she bumped into a surprised actor who was just on the point of speaking one of his own lines. He hadn't even been aware of her entrance. In her effort to crane her head over his arm to look at his script, she almost shoved him away from the mike. In the nick of time he fended her off with his free hand. Holding her behind him, at arm's length, he picked up his cue and read his speech as though nothing out of the way was happening.

As soon as Claude Montour saw Margie enter the room, script in hand, he dived for the door of the studio.

The workings of Margie's confused mind were perfectly apparent to him: she thought she had misunder-

stood his instructions; she thought she was supposed to be in *today's* show instead of tomorrow's; she had a part to play and she proposed to play it, willy-nilly.

Claude moved with the speed of a greyhound. But the distance from the control room, through its soundproofed vestibule, into the studio, was too great. And Margie had a head start on him. Sam saw with horror that Claude could never make it.

The perplexed actor, after speaking his line, erroneously thought he had averted disaster. He relaxed his hold on Margie, expecting her to retire like a lady. But he didn't know Margie. She was not one to admit surrender. Like Captain John Paul Jones, she hadn't even started to fight.

The instant she was released, she headed for the microphone once more. But this time she made for its other side and attempted to find her place by looking at the script of another actor, while trying to wrest it from his grasp.

Failing in this attack, she resolutely advanced on the mike, looking at her own script. Margie was an actress. And it was evident to everyone that she was about to act, whether she could find her place or not.

When Claude Montour was still fifteen feet away from her, Margie opened her mouth to speak.

But no sound came forth.

Because, just in time to prevent it, a firm hand was clapped over Margie's mouth. A firm arm was placed around her plump waist. And, with a force that even the determined Miss Miller could not resist, she was wafted through the air, away from the microphone, to a chair at the far wall of the studio.

Another of Radio's crises was over.

The hero who had conquered Margie was Jem Waters—that unflurriable sound effects man—who, it seemed to Sam, was always on hand when catastrophe threatened; and always managed to do exactly the right thing to avoid it.

Between sound effects cues, Jem in his leisurely manner had left his post, sauntered to the actors' microphone, captured Margie, sat her down with whispered instructions to "stay sat," and returned to his effects without missing a single sound called for in the script.

Claude Montour nodded his thanks to Jem, shook his fist at Margie, and started back to the control room.

Sam stood, worrying, at Doc Martin's elbow. "For Pete's sake!" he cried. "Claude isn't going to let that child stay there, is he?"

"Sure," Doc replied, "why not?"

"She'll do something! She'll ruin the show!" Sam fretted.

"Shucks, son," said Doc, "quit stewing. You're barking up the wrong alley. She'll set there quiet as a clamshell. It's the rest of them you want to worry about, now. She maybe got 'em rattled."

But she hadn't. The other actors and actresses were too experienced to be flustered by Margie's unexpected invasion.

Even so, it was with relief that Sam heard Emmet Carson sign off that episode of "Simply the Smiths."

Much as Sam enjoyed these excursions into the studio to hear and to watch his shows being put on the air, the thing he was most interested in—and most anxious about—was the public's reaction to them. And that was

something which was very hard to gauge.

During the first few weeks, he was tremendously encouraged by the number of fan letters the show received. People wrote in to say how much they enjoyed the Smiths and their experiences. They wrote in merely because they wanted to; there was no way that Sam could invite them to write or encourage them to express their opinions. Such invitations were contrary to the company's policy; applause isn't applause if you have to ask for it, the Program Board felt.

Still, that placed sustaining shows, like Sam's, at a great disadvantage when their fan mail was compared with that of almost *any* commercial program. Because the sponsors could—and *did*—offer valuable premiums to the listeners, to test the popularity of their programs.

"Send in a box top, and we will send you, absolutely free . . ."

Sam had heard it so often that it made his blood boil to think that the author of a sustaining show wasn't even allowed to say, "If you like this program, write and tell us so: your letters of commendation will keep it on the air, so that you can continue to enjoy it." A few local stations permitted that sort of thing, Sam knew—but not the Transcontinental Network.

He was complaining bitterly about this to Bill Dickson one night when they were dining together.

"*You* should complain!" said Bill. "You don't have to read the premium offers and commercial plugs on the air. I *do*! And some of them make me so bored I don't ever want to see the sponsor's product—let alone buy it.

"Send us twenty manhole covers," he burlesqued, "and

we'll furnish your home—yeah—with mousetraps!"

Sam laughed, in spite of his bitterness on that subject.

"Of course, though," Bill defended, "they're not all like that. Most of the advertisers work in their plugs and offers so smoothly and invitingly that it's a pleasure to buy the things they tell you about."

The fifth week that "Simply the Smiths" had been on the air had brought in more than three hundred enthusiastic letters. Everybody told Sam that was sensational. Everybody said, "You ought to get a sponsor, easily." Everybody except the experienced members of the Program Board—and especially the conservative Henry Firman, head of Commercial Programs.

"Don't go too much by the fan mail," Firman advised. "Wait until we get the first Audit Bureau report."

Audit Bureau reports were something Sam had not heard about before. But, on inquiring, he learned that the Audit Bureau was an independent organization which conducted constant and careful investigations into the public's radio-listening habits.

All over the country, each day, employees of the Audit Bureau made thousands upon thousands of telephone calls to ask people what radio programs they had listened to the day before. They asked about "the day before" (as Bill Dickson explained to Sam) because it was felt that a show which could not be remembered for from twelve to twenty-four hours had not made enough of an impression on its listeners to be worth counting.

Pressed for further details, Bill told Sam just how the Bureau's agents worked.

Each one used an ordinary telephone directory, calling

up numbers at random, in a certain locality. And each telephone conversation went somewhat like this:

“Good morning. This is the Radio Audit Bureau. Would you mind answering a few questions for me? . . . Have you a radio?”

If the response was “No,” the answer was, “Thank you, good-by.”

But if it was “Yes,” the questioner went on.

“Was your radio in use yesterday?”

“Last night?”

“What programs did members of your family listen to?”

“Can you tell me what company sponsored each of those programs?”

Each day the answers to these questions—and others like them—were sent to the head office of the Audit Bureau, by the tens of thousands; there to be sorted and tabulated. Then, figuring by percentages, the Audit Bureau could tell—with a fair degree of accuracy—what proportion of *all possible* radio listeners had listened to each program.

“Good grief!” Sam exclaimed. “That must be terribly expensive!”

“It is,” said Bill, “in total; but the cost of it is split up among so many advertisers and advertising agencies and broadcasting stations that to each one of them it isn’t expensive at all.”

(That’s what Bill Dickson thought: he should have heard Transcontinental’s treasurer grumble, on the first day of each month, when the Audit Bureau’s bill for the previous month came in!)

“How soon,” Sam wanted to know, “will they have

an Audit Bureau rating for 'Simply the Smiths?'"

"Oh," Bill answered, "probably not until the show has been on the air for at least three or four months."

Sam fairly howled. Wait *that* long to know the fate of his show? But Bill convinced him that it would be wise to wait; for, he said, no sustaining show could be expected to win its greatest possible audience much sooner than that, because you had to depend entirely on chance for your first listeners. Your show couldn't be advertised in advance, the way a show is that's going into a Broadway theater.

The audience of any one radio show, he said, grows slowly at first. A few people hear the first show, mostly by chance, and like it enough to tune in to the second one—if they don't forget. A few more listen each succeeding day. Then, when they get to know the characters and become interested in their story, they begin to tell their friends about it. That's when your audience begins to grow like a mushroom; or, if that doesn't happen, that's when your show begins to die on your hands—and you might as well quit.

"It happens a good deal quicker with a commercial show," Bill said, "because sponsors can afford to give their programs a lot of advance advertising: they don't have to depend entirely on chance for their first listeners.

"But, sponsored or sustaining, if people don't begin, mighty soon after the start, to tell their friends what a good show you've got . . ."

Bill went through the pantomime of washing his hands on each other.

"If they don't talk, it's curtains for you," he finished.

The remaining weeks of that four months passed more slowly than any other weeks of Sam's life up to that time. But at last, late one afternoon when he brought his script in, he met Henry Firman in one of the halls.

The Commercial Manager stopped him. "Well, Hubbard," he said, "I'm beginning to think we may be able to sell your show. At least, I'm ready to begin to try."

Sam wondered what had happened to make the usually cautious Firman commit himself—even to that limited extent. And Firman must have read the question in his eyes.

"We got the first Audit Bureau rating on it this morning," Firman said.

Sam hardly dared ask what the rating was.

"One point nine," the manager told him—as though that were something to be very happy about. But it sounded extremely low to Sam. Perhaps he did not understand its meaning.

"Does that mean," he asked, "that one and nine tenths per cent of the possible listeners are listening to it?"

The other nodded.

"Less than two people out of every hundred!" Another nod. "Is *that* all!" It seemed terribly little to Sam.

"For heaven's sake, man!" cried Firman. "What did you expect?"

Sam didn't know quite what he had expected—fifteen per cent, maybe—or twelve—or anyway, ten. But from Firman's manner, he guessed he hadn't better say so.

"Why!" Firman exclaimed. "One point nine after only fifteen weeks on the net is a darned good showing! If it keeps on like that it ought to build up to around three or better in another couple of months—and that would give

our salesmen something to really shout about.

"You keep up the good work," he added, as he started to leave, "and if we have any luck, we'll have you sold before you know it."

Well, it couldn't happen any too soon to suit Sam. But he guessed he'd better revise his ideas about what constituted a good rating. Later on, he was to learn that there are never more than ten or a dozen shows on the air with ratings of ten or better.

Somewhat more than a month after his talk with Henry Firman, Fletcher Gordon told Sam that a large advertiser of breakfast food was interested in "Simply the Smiths." For the next two weeks, Sam was on tenterhooks. Through the mysterious grapevine telegraph of the studios he would hear that the advertising manager of the company "was sold on the program." His wife had said so. She had told her sister, who had told *her* husband, who had told his stenographer, who had told one of the boys in the Transcontinental mail room, with whom she was keeping company.

Then—it might be the very next day—he would hear that there wasn't a chance that the manufacturer would buy a program like "Simply the Smiths." Why? Because the wife of the president of the company simply *hated* radio drama. In fact, the only thing she would ever listen to on the radio was symphony music.

At any rate, whether the advertising manager's wife was misinformed, or whether the president's wife wore the pants in her household, the company cooled off. The sale fell through.

In the next five months, there were three more prospects,

very much like the first one. As each one faded, Sam became more and more sure that the show would never sell. Around the studios and in the business, the comment was almost always the same: "I can't understand why someone doesn't buy Sam Hubbard's show!"

Neither could Sam. But no one ever did.

CHAPTER XIII

“The Best-Laid Plans—”

SAM had now written nearly two hundred and fifty episodes of “Simply the Smiths.” Almost five hundred thousand words of dialogue!

As he looked back over the year, he would imagine all the scripts, set up one behind another, stretching back into the past farther than his eye could reach. It made him think of the barbershop he had gone to ever since he could remember, back in Athens. There was a mirror behind the barber chair; and another on the opposite wall, in front of it. And when Sam sat in the chair, lulled into a funny half-consciousness by the monotonous “snip, snip, snip” of the scissors, he would look at the barber and himself, in the mirror on the other side of the shop. Their images were reflected back and forth between the two mirrors, so that what he saw was an endless succession of barbers and Sams—stretching away to infinity. The first image he saw was of their faces; the second of their backs; then alternately, faces and backs, faces and backs, the images receded into the distance, each succeeding image half as large and twice as far away as the one before.

Sam had liked that. He used to imagine that the last of the barbers and Sams he could see were people in another world, whose antics he was watching from *his* world—seeing but unseen. But he did *not* like the picture he now saw, of the interminable procession of dead scripts

strewn back over the past twelve months. Nothing in the world seemed quite so useless as a radio script that had been broadcast.

You slaved your heart out over it for a whole day, at your typewriter. A troupe of actors and a director labored with it during two hours or more of rehearsal. Then it went “on the air.” And pouf!—in fifteen short minutes it was gone. Gone as though it had never existed.

Sam was feeling pretty discouraged about the whole business of being an author. The hopes, first raised and then dashed by vanishing sponsors, were not the only things that caused his discouragement.

Even more disheartening was the fact that the last fifty episodes had been getting harder and harder to write. And he was beginning to suspect the reason for this: he was running out of material.

The first scripts had been easy—and they had been good—because Sam had been writing about things that had happened to people he had known. But now, he had exhausted his memories; and the actions and thoughts he invented for his characters just didn’t ring true.

Maybe he wasn’t a writer, after all! Surely, if he really was a playwright, he would be able to imagine experiences for the people of his plays that would seem as real and believable as though they had actually happened.

His memory went back to the interview with Fletcher Gordon in which the editor had pointed out to him that his first play was not original. The more he thought about the whole thing, the more certain he became that that was the trouble. Samuel Hubbard *was not a writer!* He was sure of it now.

—

But what should he do about it?

His first inclination was to talk it over with Helen Chambers. After thinking about this, though, he decided against it. He'd settle his own problems.

Before he got this one settled, however, Fletcher Gordon asked him to drop into his office one Friday, after the show. There Sam found Gordon and Henry Firman waiting for him.

"Sam," the editor began, "I've got bad news for you."

Sam's first thought was that he was going to lose his job. And it made him feel as though his breathing apparatus had suddenly been removed from his body. He said nothing. He couldn't say anything. He just waited for the blow to fall.

"We've got to take 'Simply the Smiths' off the air," said Gordon.

Henry Firman must have misinterpreted the expression of relief that crossed Sam's face; for he hastened to speak, as reassuringly as he knew how.

"It isn't that we don't like the show, Sam," he said earnestly. "That isn't it, at all. And it isn't because the public doesn't like it—apparently they do. Your last A.B. rating was over three points.

"But we can't seem to sell it to a sponsor. They just don't seem to be interested in your kind of a show."

"I think Sam realizes that," put in Fletcher Gordon.

Sam said he did—or at least that he'd begun to suspect it.

Firman took up the conversation again. "The sales department is insisting that we put something into your time that they can sell—and we've found a new show which,

everybody agrees, ought to do the trick. That's why we're killing 'the Smiths'; and that's the only reason." He put especial emphasis on the word "only," as if he thought that would lessen Sam's disappointment.

Sam did his best not to show his elation. He felt that there was something almost indecent in his feeling of happiness over this sudden wiping out of the entire Smith family.

"We want you to bring the series to a logical conclusion a week from today," Gordon instructed.

"Ugh!" Sam thought. "That means that I've got to re-write the five episodes I've done this week, so's to bring the story to an end." Now that the Smiths were dying, he didn't relish that idea in the least.

"And, by the way, Sam," said Gordon, "this won't make any difference in your salary" (Sam hadn't given that a thought, but he was glad to know it just the same), "because I've got other plans for you. In addition to a few regular assignments, I want you to adapt the stories of current novels for a series of weekly half-hour dramatic shows we're going to start next month."

After the freedom of writing his own shows, at home, this didn't sound so good to Sam. He would undoubtedly have to do all his writing at the studios, so as to be handy for frequent conferences with the editor. And yet, that kind of writing would have its compensations. For one thing, other people (the writers of the novels) would supply the ideas. All Sam would have to do would be to convert their stories into dialogue.

So, on the whole, he left Gordon's office with a light heart, even though he knew he would have to work on

Saturday and Sunday in order to rewrite the "Smith" scripts for Monday's and Tuesday's broadcasts.

There was one thing about rewriting those last five programs that would give Sam the greatest of joy: the very first thing he would do would be to kill Suzie Smith, deader than a doornail. He would "write Suzie out" of all five shows, so that not once more would he be forced to suffer the annoyance of Margie Miller's smartyness and impertinence in the studio.

The rewriting went much faster than he had expected. By noon on Sunday, the first three of the remaining five scripts were finished, and Sam was ready to welcome the guests he had invited to Sunday dinner. Bill Dickson was away for the week end, so Sam was lord of the "Manor," as he and Bill called their four-room apartment in Stuyvesant Square.

Helen Chambers and her roommate, Lucille Wayman, and Denis Christie were to be the guests that day; and the dinner would be sent up by the little Russian restaurant, around the corner on Second Avenue.

Helen, Lucille, Denis and Sam had made up a more or less regular foursome ever since Denis had come to New York, several months before. They had all been classmates at Ohio U, so their Sunday dinners and excursions, and their occasional theater parties (when Helen was able to take a night off from her newspaper job) seemed a good deal like college reunions.

Brilliant, amusing, erratic Denis Christie, like Helen, was in the newspaper business—and, like Helen, he was with the *Intelligencer*. But his hours were not the exacting hours of a reporter. His time was his own. He was the paper's

roving sports columnist. All the editor asked of him was that he fill his column once a day, six days a week. *How* or *when* he filled it the boss didn't much care—so long as he filled it in his swift-moving, humorous style; and got his copy in before his deadline.

Denis had gone to a big Cleveland newspaper just after completing his journalism course at the university. He hadn't graduated, because he couldn't accumulate enough credits. He refused to give the slightest attention to any course of study that didn't interest him and fire his imagination. His outstanding brilliance in the subjects that *did* interest him was the only thing that kept him in college at all.

In Cleveland, he had skyrocketed through cub reporter-ship, to special feature writing; and then to a sport column of his own. And in less than two years, his column had attracted so much attention that the *Intelligencer* had brought him to New York. Now his daily writings were being syndicated to a rapidly growing list of newspapers throughout the country, and Sam supposed that Denis was earning at least twice his own salary.

Yet, in spite of this brilliance, and in spite of Denis' charm as a conversationalist and occasional companion, there was something about him that disturbed Sam. He didn't dislike Denis. It wasn't that. He liked him very much. But there was a quality about him that was—well—undependable. When you made a date with him, you were never sure, until you saw him, that he would keep it. And if something came along that caught his interest, why, you wouldn't see him—he just wouldn't show up. It wasn't selfishness so much as thoughtlessness. But it often

made him seem discourteous.

Take today, for instance: Sam couldn't leave the Manor to call for Helen and Lucille; he had to be on hand when the waiter arrived with the dinner. Denis must have known that, if he had given it the slightest thought. But it hadn't even occurred to him to suggest that he would bring the girls up from Barrow Street.

Then there was the matter of money. Despite his income, Denis was always strapped; always borrowing. Like most borrowings, his came at the most inconvenient times. To be sure, he always paid back what he borrowed; but rarely when he said he would.

However, Denis certainly was a delightful companion; you couldn't deny that. Sam supposed it was faults like these that Emerson meant when he spoke of "the defects of men's qualities." Undoubtedly, if you wanted to enjoy Denis Christie's qualities, you had to be willing to accept his defects.

Sam was still thinking about him when the debonair Denis arrived.

"Hi'ya, Shakespeare," he greeted Sam. "How's the business of committing radio?" Denis' dislike of radio was a constant issue between them.

Sam started to tell him about the ending of the Smiths; and then thought better of it. He decided to keep it to himself today. On the one hand, he didn't want the sympathy of his guests; and on the other, he hesitated to say how glad he was that the series had ended—it might sound like sour grapes. So he met Denis' banter with banter of his own.

"The trouble," Sam told him, "is not with radio. The

trouble is with *you*.”

“How do you mean?” Denis wanted to know.

“Why,” said Sam, “no one who talks as much as you do can possibly be a good listener. And if you’re not a good listener, *of course* you don’t like radio: *you* want to broadcast all the time!”

Denis laughed. “Pal, y’ got me!” he cried, throwing up his hands in mock surrender.

At this point, the waiter came in with the dinner; and while he was still setting the table in front of the big window that overlooked the Square, Lucille and Helen put in their appearance. Sam had no further occasion to defend radio against Denis’ cynical onslaughts—and Denis, even more than usual, got a chance to broadcast to his heart’s content. That was because Helen, usually a pretty able talker, herself, seemed strangely quiet, with a kind of suppressed excitement.

All through dinner, Sam noticed this. But there was no chance to ask her about it until late in the afternoon, when they all decided that they needed a walk in Central Park. On the way up to Fifty-ninth Street in the Fifth Avenue bus, he learned the reason for her strange mood.

Helen had sold her first novel! After months of traveling from publisher to publisher—after enough rejections to try the patience of a saint, she had sold it.

Sam was full of questions.

“Whom had she sold it to? When would it be published? How much had she received for it?”

Helen was amused. “That isn’t the way you sell a novel,” she told him. “You get paid a royalty, so much for each copy the public buys; so what I get paid depends alto-

gether on how many people buy my book. My one hope is that the publisher will make some money on it, so he'll be willing to print my second one—the one I'm working on now."

Suddenly it struck Sam that he had not shown very much interest in that first novel of Helen's, though he had known for almost two years that she was writing it. He didn't even know its title. And Helen wouldn't tell him. She said she did not want to talk about it too soon. Wait, she said, and see whether it's *worth* talking about.

Even Lucille Wayman knew nothing of it, except that Helen had written it. And now Helen swore Sam to secrecy about its publication.

Sam remembered how he had run to Helen with the story of his first play, before he had started to write it. He remembered what a comedown he had suffered when it had been rejected. So he sympathized with Helen's unwillingness to talk ahead about her book. She had been wise, he thought. He, too, had learned better than to talk about his work in advance of doing it.

But, now that he knew about her novel, he would have to tell her about the Smiths and about the change in his job; because it might be possible for him to get Fletcher Gordon to include this book of Helen's in the list of current novels which were to be adapted for the air. The publicity might help to sell the book.

Helen was surprised at the turn of Sam's affairs, but she thought the change would do him good; get him off the treadmill of writing a script every single day, whether he felt like it or not. She was sorry he hadn't been able to get a sponsor; but she pointed out all the good things

“Simply the Smiths” had done for him. Things which Sam already knew.

The writing had given him experience. It had established him much more solidly at Transcontinental. And by no means least, it had increased his income. By no means least, Sam agreed!

Late that night, after he returned alone to Stuyvesant Square, he experienced a curious feeling of elation over Helen’s success in selling her novel. He was more pleased about it, he believed, than he would have been if it had been his own novel. He dozed off to sleep, happy in the thought that by dramatizing it for radio, he might have a hand in helping it toward fame and a big sale.

How little he suspected what the next eight months held in store!

Helen’s book—*Of Spreading Wings*—was dramatized for radio; but not by Samuel Hubbard. For a first novel, it was a moderate success, too. Almost two thousand copies of it were sold. But Sam had nothing to do with that, either, except that it was he who first called *Of Spreading Wings* to Fletcher Gordon’s attention.

Fate had other plans for Sam.

He had adapted twelve novels for the air before his first suspicion that he was not cut out to be a writer began to take shape as a certainty. He didn’t enjoy the labor of putting other people’s stories into dialogue, as he had thought he would. Not one of the plays satisfied him when he had finished it. When he heard them broadcast, they satisfied him even less.

And the time it took to write them! He had written one fifteen-minute show a day, all the time his own series had

been on the air. Then why shouldn't he be able to write each half-hour dramatization in two days? Instead, he was never able to finish in less than four; and more than once he had to spend every minute of his spare time in making the revisions suggested by Fletcher Gordon—or worse still, demanded by the author of the book he was dramatizing. What unreasonable persons some of those authors were!

Besides the adaptations, he had regular assignments to write. Those boresome song announcements. Those deadly introductions for speakers. Those endless shows in celebration of great men's birth dates, or holidays, or famous dates in history. History with a capital hiss, said Sam when such assignments fell to his lot.

On Monday mornings, he struggled out of bed in dread of the new week. As he forced himself to set out for the studios, he felt the same Monday reluctance he had known during his first days in grammar school.

It was awful. He hated the novels. He hated the authors who wrote them. He hated all songs, all composers, all speakers. At last—he had to admit it—he hated his job!

The thirteenth novel decided him. He thought it the worst, bar none, that he had ever waded through. Like all books, it wasn't written to be broadcast. It was written to be read. What made this one especially bad, though, was the fact that it was a "psychological" novel. Its story depended on the play of one personality upon others. It had no action—and action is the very soul of drama. It simply couldn't be done!

At least, late on Monday afternoon, Sam made up his mind that *he* couldn't do it.

He hurled the book across his little office. He bolted out the door and down the hall to the elevators. "Two," he snapped, as he entered a descending car. At the second floor, he could hardly wait for the doors to open. He rushed out of the car and headed, pell-mell, for Mike Cassidy's office. Entering the outer room, he brushed past Emmet Carson and Gardner Strong without so much as a word of greeting. They were just leaving.

"Whew!" said Gardner. "Wonder what ails Sam—looks like the wild bull of the continuity department, doesn't he?"

"Yes," Emmet agreed, "and on a rampage, at that."

Unheeding, Sam burst into the inner office without waiting to be announced, and faced a somewhat surprised Michael Cassidy. Mike didn't need to be told that something was wrong. Within a wide radius of Sam, the very air was surcharged with his emotion. Mike foresaw an explosion.

Thinking fast, he decided that his office wouldn't be a good place for it to happen. A little delay might diminish its force. So Mike stalled for time. He stood up, exactly as though he had been on the point of doing so before Sam's entrance, and sauntered to his coat closet at the far corner of the room.

"Well, Sam! This is great!" he ejaculated. "You get down here so seldom, these days, that I'd begun to think you had forgotten your old friends."

He set his hat on his head with a final pat into position and threw his coat over his arm.

"I just finished work for the day," he hurried on. "Run up and get your duds, and we'll stop for a cup of coffee

and a chat, on the way home."

By this time, he had his arm around Sam's shoulders and was urging him toward the door. There was nothing for Sam to do but go. All the way down the hall, Mike kept up a running fire of trivial conversation.

"No Irishman is ever at a loss for the wrong word," Mike had said of himself, one time when Fletcher Gordon was chaffing him for his talkativeness. Right now, though, Mike was belying the implication: he was at no loss for words; but they were all the *right* ones.

At the elevators, he gently pushed Sam into an "up" car. "I'll be waiting for you in the restaurant on the corner," he said.

Now Sam's rage was not directed at any certain person, nor at any specific thing. It was an unreasoning rage against things in general. And it is very difficult to keep that kind of rage at its exploding point for more than a very short time. Sam's exploding point had been reached just as he entered Mike's office.

It was a much calmer Sam who joined his one-time boss four or five minutes later. But, though he was calmer, he was no less determined on his course. Over their coffee, he told Mike his grievances—and finally, his decision. He was not a writer, he said, and it was high time he quit trying to be. He was going to get out of the continuity department immediately. He'd tell Fletcher Gordon, first thing in the morning.

Mike Cassidy let him work off all his steam. He knew there was no use trying to stop him until he had finished. Then Mike spoke.

"I'm not going to argue with you, Sam," he said. "If

you’re sure you don’t want to write—if you really don’t like it—then, no doubt your decision is a wise one.

“But—when you leave Continuity, what *are* you going to do?” He thought that question would floor Sam. He thought Sam had not given it any consideration. So he wasn’t prepared for the reply.

“I’m coming back into your department. That’s what I came in to tell you, just now.”

“Hold on! Hold on!” cried the startled Mike.

“I’ve got to, Mike!” Sam put his very heart into the words. “I’ve simply *got* to!”

“Now wait a minute,” said Mike. “That just isn’t possible. My staff is complete. I haven’t a place for you.”

“Yes, you have,” Sam insisted, “your clerk’s leaving. I heard about it this morning.”

“Yes, but—” for once, the Irishman was at a loss for *any* word, right or wrong.

“Mike”—Sam pressed what he thought was his advantage—“I want my old job back.”

At last the older man found voice to express his consternation. “Sam,” he said, “the answer is No! It’s the most definite, positive and final No you ever got in your life.

“Keep still!” he ordered, as Sam started to speak. “That would be the greatest mistake you could possibly make; and *I’m* not going to be the one to let you make it. . . . No, let me finish. . . . That would be a step backward; and steps backward lead to just one place in this business—or in any other—they lead to the way out.

“Sam—” he leaned forward earnestly—“Sam, you’ve made a pretty fine record for yourself in these—how long

has it been?—almost three years. You're well thought of. You've earned the respect and affection of every one of us. Do you want to stand before all these friends of yours now, and admit defeat?"

Sam misunderstood his meaning. "I don't care what other people think," he said. "All I want is to get out of Continuity."

Mike Cassidy never used the lash unless he was forced to. But now there was a sneer on his face. And there was a sneer in his voice when he spoke. "So we've been wrong about you all this time. You're a sniveling baby—and you're willing to go back to fifteen dollars a week to prove it! All the time and money we've spent in training you to be of some value to this business was just so much waste! You're letting us all down—Cal Murphy and Fletcher Gordon—yes, and Doc Martin—and me."

That stung. Sam couldn't have been more taken aback if Mike had slapped his face.

Mike saw that it had stung. That was exactly what he had intended. The sneer was gone now. He leaned forward again and patted Sam's knee under the table. "No, Sam; you can't do it. . . . You say you don't care what other people think. . . . Well, you're right. What other people think doesn't matter. It's what YOU think that I'm worried about."

There was a long pause.

"Do you see what I mean?"

Sam saw.

"Sure you do." Mike turned on the Cassidy smile. "So you go back to your typewriter tomorrow and tear into this psychological thing—what d'you say the name of it

is?”

“*World without End*,” said Sam.

“All right—you tear into it and make the best darned radio show out of it that you possibly can. Maybe you’re right about it: maybe it won’t make a good one. But if it’s your best, that’s all anybody can ask of you.”

That was a hard prospect to face, but after this talk with Mike, facing it was no longer impossible. Sam wanted to thank him. He was afraid, though, if he tried, his voice would break. He squared his shoulders and offered Mike his hand.

“Okay, Mike,” he said.

And they parted.

CHAPTER XIV

The Unseen Hand of Michael Cassidy

SAM tore into that novel, *World without End*, like an irresistible force. By Thursday noon he had finished his dramatization and laid it on Fletcher Gordon's desk. He had written it in less than three days. That was a record for him! Late that day, just as he was about to leave for Stuyvesant Square, he was rewarded by a telephone call from the editor.

"Sam," he said, "I've read your adaptation; and I thought you might like to know that I think it's the most mature piece of writing you've ever done."

Sam couldn't find words to express his gratification. As his boss continued to talk, he offered thanks to Mike Cassidy for putting starch into his spine when he had weakened.

"After we had picked the book for this week's dramatization," said Gordon, "I was afraid we'd made a bad choice; it isn't a 'natural' for radio. But you've made it into an exceptionally good show."

Gordon's remarks weren't Sam's only compensation, either. Almost a week later, after the broadcast of *World without End*, actors and actresses who had taken part in it stopped him in the halls to tell him what a fine piece of work it was—and how much they had enjoyed playing in it.

But the pinnacle of all the praise was reached when he met Mike in the lobby, the morning after it went on the air. "I turned down an invitation to the theater last night," Mike said, "so that I could listen to your show. And I'm glad I did. It was one of the best things I've ever heard on radio."

Not one word did Mike say about their conversation on the night of Sam's discouragement. And Sam was grateful. Thinking back, it was hard for him to believe that he had said to Mike the things he remembered saying.

The next four novels were increasingly easier for him to dramatize. The compliments he received for *World without End* made the labor of translating other people's prose into broadcastable dialogue much easier; nevertheless, it was still labor. When he finished one of the plays he never had that fine feeling of having *created* something of his very own. But he did begin to experience a satisfaction of a different kind—the satisfaction that a cabinetmaker must feel when he sees a beautiful piece of furniture coming to life under his skilled hands, although someone else has drawn the design from which he makes it. At least, Sam never again wanted to lie down and quit when an assignment seemed to be a tough one.

Almost six weeks had passed when, one morning as Sam sat at his typewriter working on the current adaptation, an envelope was dropped on his desk by one of the mail-room messengers who made hourly rounds of the offices, delivering and picking up mail and interoffice memos.

Sam, intent on his work, barely glanced at it. It was a long envelope bearing no stamp.

INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

To: Samuel Hubbard
Continuity Department

From: George Monroe

Ordinarily, Sam would have opened it at once, to learn its message. But his mind was concentrated on his dialogue. So he left it on the corner of his desk, where the boy had dropped it. "Probably just some routine matter," he thought. "I'll look at it when I get to a good stopping point in this play." George Monroe, he knew, was Chief of the Transcontinental Production Directors. Sam's subconscious mind told him that this message was most likely a request for some rewriting on the play he had handed in a week ago, which was now in rehearsal. He never liked to rewrite the shows which he considered finished when he turned them in. So it was easy to delay opening this envelope.

He didn't give it another thought until almost three hours later when he put aside his work to go out for a bite of lunch. Then the envelope caught his eye. He picked it up and casually ripped it open. Casually he pulled out the single sheet of typewritten paper it contained. With his mind only half on it, he began to read, hardly aware of what the first few sentences were saying. Then something caught his eye that brought him up short.

What was this? “Claude Montour . . . going to the Coast . . . to be Western Production Director.” Oh! That was bad! It meant that someone else would have to direct Sam’s dramatizations of novels. He would have to get used to working with another director. And the new one couldn’t possibly be as skillful as Claude! Sam was sure of it.

But shocking as that news was, it was the *next* words that actually staggered him: “I am wondering whether you would like to try your hand at directing. Your experience in Mike Cassidy’s office and in Sound Effects and Continuity ought to be very valuable to you; and, on the other hand, directing experience will be useful, no matter what branch of broadcasting you plan to follow. . . . If the idea interests you, let me know and I’ll talk it over with Fletcher Gordon.”

Sam sank into his chair. He no longer felt hungry. In fact, he scarcely *felt* at all. The mere thought of attempting to fill Claude Montour’s shoes gave him a sensation in his middle that was a good deal like the time he had been kicked in the stomach by a playful colt down on his grandfather’s farm, years ago. He remembered the words of a Democratic politician whose party offered him the nomination for mayor of Athens, a town that had always been staunchly and almost unanimously Republican. “Gentlemen,” the Democrat had said, “I appreciate the honor—and regret that I must decline the defeat.” That was the way Sam felt about George Monroe’s proposal.

What had he better do about it? If it had come about six weeks earlier, he knew he would have jumped at it in desperation. (He was glad it had *not* come at that time.)

Today, he didn't know *what* to do. In the last six weeks he had proved to himself—and, more important, to Mike Cassidy—that he could write, if he had to. Six weeks ago, he had been sure that he was not a writer. Now, he didn't know. The thing that made him still doubtful was that, try as he would, he couldn't seem to get an idea for an original drama. He seemed to have drained himself of original ideas while he was still writing "Simply the Smiths." Well then, here was his chance to get away from writing.

In his reverie, Sam forgot lunch altogether that day. And at last his thoughts, so confused by the surprise of Monroe's memorandum, began to sort themselves out into an orderly procession. Everything Monroe had said about the advantages of Sam's experience was true. It was true, too, that experience as a director couldn't fail to be valuable to him later on. He thought how many things he had already learned about directing, by watching Claude Montour at work; and his first doubts of his ability to succeed Claude began to loom less terrifyingly. Of course, Sam had no idea that he would be able to duplicate Claude's sure touch in the twinkling of an eye. That might take years; and perhaps he could *never* do it, for Claude's skill came very close to genius. But the more Sam thought about it, the more confident he became that he could give a satisfactory account of himself. He decided to make the move.

When he told Mike Cassidy, Mike listened attentively to all he had to say; listened to all Sam's arguments, for and against the change; made appropriate comments; and never once let on that he, Mike, had been at the bottom of the whole business. Sam never knew that, ever since his blowup six weeks before, Mike had been considering

his case and looking for the kind of a change he thought Sam needed. For Mike Cassidy not only liked Sam, he genuinely believed in him.

Later, when Sam talked to Fletcher Gordon, he was sure he was taking the right course. He frankly confessed to Gordon that he had no taste for adapting the works of other writers for radio. He told him about his inability to develop story ideas of his own. He confessed to his growing hatred of the hours of grinding work at his typewriter. Gordon smiled.

“If you feel like that about writing,” he said, “then you weren’t born to be a writer—and the sooner you get into work that’s more to your liking, the better it will be.

“But I want you to know this,” he told Sam as the latter was leaving, “you’ve earned your way while you’ve been here in Continuity; and you need never be ashamed of anything you’ve written. I only hope you’ll like your *new* work as well as we have liked your old.”

After that talk with Gordon, when it came time for him to actually leave the continuity department, Sam was sorry to go. Not sorry to leave his job, but sorry to leave Fletcher Gordon—who had turned out to be such a different fellow from the intent, cold, impersonal editor Sam had first taken him to be.

Claude Montour would not leave for the Coast for nearly a month. And, during that month, Sam Hubbard was to be his assistant. That was the arrangement under which Sam started his career as a program director. But that was not at all the way it worked out in the hands of Claude Montour. Claude’s idea of the way to learn to be a director was *to direct*. “You’ll learn a lot more *doing*

than you'll ever learn *watching*," he told Sam; and turned his production schedule over to the apprehensive Sam, lock, stock and barrel, while he stood back and watched. And, though it gave Sam some anxious moments, the scheme worked out remarkably well.

During the first two days, Claude had no shows to produce. So he and Sam spent their time in a kind of "back-stage" tour of the studios, through which Sam learned the workings of many devices he had seen or heard about before, but had not understood. For instance, there was the "echo chamber." Sam had heard Claude—and other directors—call the engineering department on the phone from the control rooms: "I want the echo chamber from now until such and such a time," was the usual request. Sam knew they asked for it when they wanted actors' voices to sound as though they were speaking in a great, echoing hall; or from the depths of a cave or a mine. But he had not the least idea what the device was, or how its effect was achieved.

In their tour of one of the upper studio floors, he and Claude came upon a door marked "Echo Chamber." Inside, Claude showed him a large, bare room with hard-surfaced walls, ceiling and floor arranged at such angles that a sound, entering the room through a loud speaker at one end, would be literally "bounced off" the opposite wall; and then from wall to wall, to ceiling to floor, and back again; finally to be captured by a strategically located microphone, and sent back, all broken up into a funny echoing sound, to the control room of the studio where it had first originated; and thence to the broadcasting line which takes all programs to the transmitter.

Claude explained exactly how this chamber worked: after it was connected with one of the studios, he said, the studio engineer could “tune it in or out” at will, by turning one of the control knobs on his control room board. He could give you the effect of a slight echo, such as your voice might make if you were speaking in an empty house; or, by turning his knob to the fully “tuned in” position, he could give you the effect of a person speaking or shouting in a great cavernous hall—Madison Square Garden, for example. And when the knob was “turned off,” you would get no echo at all. Thus, if you wanted your actors to sound as though they were going from out of doors, where there would be no echo, into a convention hall, where the echo would be very pronounced, you simply called for the echo chamber; and then instructed the studio engineer to tune it in at the precise point in the script where the actors were supposed to enter the hall.

Then there was the use of “filter mikes,” to produce the effect of a telephone conversation—or of a person speaking over the radio (a radio show *within* a radio show, so to speak). For this effect, Claude showed Sam a special microphone which had to be used. It was called a “condenser mike.” And, in the line which connected it with the control board, a “filter” was placed. This filter, at the will of the engineer, had the ability to cut out all the “low tones” of a person’s voice, leaving in all the “highs”—or vice versa. When only the highs were left in, the voice sounded slightly cracked and squeaky, exactly as one’s voice sounds over the telephone—or over a homemade loud speaker.

“Let’s suppose,” said Claude, “that, in the middle of a

conversation in your radio script, the telephone bell rings, and you want one of your characters to answer the telephone. In order to make it clear to the audience that he *is* talking over the phone, you want his voice to sound as it does to the person at the other end of the line."

Sam nodded. "I get you," he said.

"Well," continued the other, "you'd have the actor talk into the regular mike, until the telephone bell rang. Then, before answering the phone, you'd have him step to the filter mike; and the engineer would tune it in. The actor's next words—and *all* his words, as long as he talked into that mike, *with the filter tuned in*—would sound exactly as though he were at the far end of a telephone line."

Claude also showed Sam a variety of useful tricks that could be done by using the filter mike. One of these was the trick of effecting a change of scene so that the audience could not fail to understand it.

"We'll imagine a play in which the first scene takes place in a city," Claude said. "And the second scene, with a different set of characters, takes place on a farm, say five hundred miles distant.

"During the first scene, you have your city characters talk into the regular mike, while they are talking with one another. Now, at the end of that scene, the phone bell rings. The city character who answers the call *continues to talk into the regular mike*; while the character who is supposed to be at the other end of the line—on the farm—talks into the filter mike, giving you the telephone voice."

Montour interrupted himself. "Remember," he said, "that the next scene is taking place *on the farm*, with a different set of characters."

Sam understood.

“Then this is the way you make the change of scene: at a certain spot in the telephone conversation, the city actor leaves the *regular mike* and speaks the balance of his lines into the *filter mike*; and, at the same instant, the farm character leaves the *filter mike* and speaks the rest of *his* lines into the *regular mike*.

“Do you see how that sounds to the audience? The listener suddenly is transported five hundred miles, from the city to the farm; because, now, the farmer’s voice is coming to him direct and clear—while the city man’s voice now is at the far end of the telephone line.

“All right,” Montour went on, “the telephone conversation continues to its end; the listener hears the final click of the receiver as the farmer replaces it on the hook. Then the listener hears the farmer talking, over the *regular mike*, with other characters who are supposed to be with him at the farm. Those other characters also speak into the regular mike. And so”—he flung out his hands in a gesture of completion—“the listener now *knows* that the scene of the action has shifted from the city to the farm.”

Something else suddenly occurred to Montour. “And, by the way,” he said, “when the farmer is supposed to hang up his telephone receiver, don’t let the sound effects man use a French phone—because they don’t have ’em out in the country; and replacing the receiver of a French phone doesn’t make the same kind of a sound as hanging the receiver of an old-fashioned phone on its hook. . . . Even if no one in the audience notices it, only a sloppy director will permit that kind of inaccuracy.”

In those four weeks as Claude Montour’s assistant, Sam

received countless little tips like that; things that made him realize the director's reputation wasn't based on genius alone—or rather, that a part of Claude's genius was his exacting attention to the tiniest details which would aid the listeners' illusion of reality. These things brought home to Sam with renewed force the truth of the saying that “every show is made up of an infinite number of little details, all blended so skillfully into a whole that the audience sees (or hears) the whole—and *not* the details.”

One of the most vital lessons he learned was that, though timing is important in radio (you've got to get the show off the air, on time to the split second), nevertheless, you must never permit time to be your master. Claude put it differently: “The director must rehearse his show so perfectly that, when he gets it on the air, he will never have to think of timing. The first thing to do when you go into a studio for rehearsal is to have the cast read the script through for timing. Add to their reading time the exact number of seconds the music will require—if there *is* music. Make whatever cuts or additions you need, right then. And then *forget the timing!*”

“It's a poor director,” he said, “who is constantly giving his actors the hurry-up signal or the slow-down signal while the show is on the air. Only his own carelessness makes that necessary.”

Many a time Sam had seen Claude “give 'em the windmill” (the signal to speak more rapidly); and many a time he had seen him “stretch the rubber” (the slow-down signal). But never once had he given those signals for the sake of timing. When Claude gave them the windmill, it was because the actors were unconsciously slowing down

a scene which needed to move faster in order to create the mood that was intended. And when he stretched the rubber, it was for the opposite reason.

It was on the third day of his assistant directorship that Sam discovered Claude's method of teaching a novice to swim was to throw him overboard. As the two entered the studio where a rehearsal was to take place, Claude handed him a stack of scripts. "There you are, Oscar," he said; "if you're going to be a director, let's see you direct."

After Sam recovered from the first nervousness of this sudden plunge, the rehearsal went amazingly well. It was not as though Sam were a rank beginner, Claude reasoned. Sam had been in and out of the studios for the past three years. He knew his way around. He had watched and worked with many directors. The question was only whether he could put his knowledge into practice. And Claude discovered that he could.

The older man interrupted only once. That was when Sam disagreed with one of the actors about how a line should be spoken. Sam couldn't seem to make the man understand how he wanted him to say the words. For some moments Montour remained silent, letting Sam try. But at last, he broke in.

"Hold on, Oscar," he said. "Ask them to go back a page and read this whole scene for you. And don't interrupt them. You just sit still and listen."

Sam spoke the instruction through the control room P.A. The entire scene was reread. When the disputed line came, the actor spoke it in his own way.

"How'd that sound to you?" Claude asked, when the scene was over.

"Well," Sam said, grudgingly, "it was all right—only I think he ought to speak those words *my* way."

"But," the other objected, "you just said it sounded all right. And, since it sounded all right, let him do it his way."

"What's the matter with my way?" Sam demanded.

"Nothing," said Claude. "It's just as good as his—except that you can't make him understand it. He does understand *his* way; therefore, in this case, his way is best."

"Oh." Sam saw what he meant.

"The point I want you to get," Claude said, "is that good direction depends as much on knowing when to keep still as on knowing when to direct."

Sam spoke again into the P.A. "I was wrong about that line, Jerry," he told the actor. "Say it in your own way."

And so ended another lesson.

At the end of each show, during Sam's apprenticeship, Montour would criticize parts he thought Sam could have improved; and sometimes his criticisms were far from gentle. Sometimes his sarcasm stung. After one of these sessions, Sam lashed back. "Why didn't you tell me that during rehearsal?" he complained.

There was a whole volume of philosophy in Montour's reply: "Because, Oscar, everybody makes mistakes. But one can never see his own mistakes so clearly as *after* he has made them—and it's too late to correct them. I want you to see yours, so that you won't make the same ones a second time.

"And besides," he continued, "in this business of directing, there is no *one right way* of doing a thing. Usually there are many. Perhaps your way is just as good as mine.

Your greatest fault is that, too often, you see only one way—while you ought to see and try several; and then pick the best one.”

That ended Sam's impatience with Claude Montour's criticisms.

The day before Claude was to leave New York for his new job, he sat with Sam in the control room of one of the studios, while Sam rehearsed a very special anniversary program. The day was the anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's appointment to the office of first Postmaster General of the United States. A half-hour drama had been written around the event and around Franklin's remarkably efficient administration of the Colonial Post, which had preceded the Declaration of Independence.

The program was an important one. Sam knew it would be listened to by the postal authorities in Washington. He wanted it to be an especial credit to him.

It was to be an outside pickup—a “nemo job,” as the engineers call such programs. Permission had been secured to broadcast the show from the lobby of the old General Postoffice Building in downtown New York. Sam, himself, that very morning had gone to the building and selected the exact spot where the microphones were to be placed. Hours ago, he had sent his instructions to the engineering department.

Now, when the rehearsal was nearly over, Bill Glassford, the nemo engineer who was going to handle the pickup for Sam, came into the control room. Sam looked up from his script. Out in the studio, the actors, unaware of any interruption, went right on speaking their parts; the sound effects man went right on making his sounds.

"Listen, Sam," said Bill Glassford. "You know the spot you picked for this broadcast? At the Postoffice, downtown, I mean."

"What about it?" Sam asked.

"Nothing," said Bill, "except that it won't work."

"Won't work!" Sam was aghast. "What do you mean?"

"You just can't broadcast from that spot. It's liver than forty tigers." By saying that the spot was "live," Bill meant that it was so full of echoes and rumblings that a dramatic show just couldn't be broadcast; every word of each actor and actress would sound as though it were being put through the echo chamber. "I clapped my hands right where you want the cast mike," Bill reported, "and I got back five echoes that I could count."

"But, Bill!" cried Sam. "We've *got* to do it from there! I went over the whole place this morning—and that's the only spot where there's room enough for this big cast and my sound effects."

"All right," was Bill's reply, with a shrug of his shoulders, "I'll send out what your actors give me. But I've told you how it's going to sound—just about like machine guns in an empty icehouse."

Sam turned frantically to Montour who had exhibited not the slightest interest in his difficulty. "For heaven's sake, Claude, what shall I do?"

"Well, Oscar," said Claude, chuckling, "the first thing you do is to keep your shirt on. After that, I've been thinking—and I believe I know how you can get around your trouble: send the biggest rug you can find in the studios, down to the Postoffice on the same truck that takes your sound effects. Set your mikes as near the middle

of that rug as you can get them.”

“Shucks, Claude!” Bill Glassford was skeptical. “That won’t kill the wall echo.”

“I’m coming to that,” Montour told him. “Now this is a government building you’re going to broadcast from, isn’t it?”

Bill and Sam admitted that it was.

“Well, there never was a government building that didn’t have three times as many flags around as it has any possible use for. So, right after this rehearsal, Sam, you go back down to the Postoffice and ask the postmaster to let you hang those flags all over the walls of his lobby—especially around the spots where your mikes are going to be. And if he hasn’t got enough flags down there, why then you call up that flag house down on lower Broadway and rent some more.”

“Doggone if I don’t believe that’ll work!” said Bill Glassford.

“Of course it’ll work,” Montour assured him. “It will kill those echoes as dead as though they had never been there. And, since this is a sort of a patriotic broadcast, the flags won’t be at all out of place.”

By this time, the actors and the sound effects man had finished rehearsing their last scene. But, though their voices had been coming through the control room speaker all the time, Sam hadn’t heard one word they had said after Bill Glassford’s entrance. So they had to do the last scene over.

As soon as the rehearsal was finished, Sam set out for the downtown Postoffice and put Claude’s advice into practice. The rug was laid. The flags were hung. The echoes were killed.

That was the last bit of help Claude Montour ever gave Sam; because, by the time Sam and his actors had started the broadcast of "Poor Richard, Postmaster," Claude was out at Newark Airport, boarding an air liner for the Pacific Coast.

CHAPTER XV

New Shoes for Samuel

IT was a credit to Claude's tutelage that Sam Hubbard never had an inclination to "run to someone" with his production difficulties; from the day of the Postoffice broadcast to the end of his career as a director, he settled his own problems and devised his own means of meeting unexpected situations. That's not to say that he didn't consult Doc Martin or other of the engineers on many a technical question. He did—as often as such questions arose—because Sam's technical knowledge about radio was very hazy indeed. But, as far as the decisions of a director were concerned, he made his own; and George Monroe had a very definite feeling that Sam was standing on his own feet.

The things Monroe heard about Sam's conduct in the studios made him sure he had made no mistake in adding the erstwhile continuity writer to the production staff. And when George told Mike Cassidy of his satisfaction with Sam's work, Mike felt as the weather man must feel on a bright, sunny day in spring, when he has predicted "Fair and Warmer."

He reflected on Sam's experiences at the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company since that early summer day, almost three and a half years ago, when he had presented to Mike the letter of introduction from Sam's father's old friend. "The youngster's rise has been pretty rapid," Mike thought. "And yet, I don't believe it's been too rapid for

his own good." From clerkship, through Sound Effects and Continuity, to the position of Production Director—it was a logical progression, each job helping to fit Sam for the one that followed. Even so, Mike considered, Sam *had* been lucky in that his opportunities seemed to present themselves almost as soon as he was ready for them. There was nothing in what he had done that couldn't have been done by any bright, ambitious fellow with Sam's ability and willingness to work; but not many beginners got the chance for such rapid or such steady progress.

Take the errand boy who had succeeded Sam as Mike's assistant: like Sam, he had been a college man; like Sam, he had been a bright, personable young fellow—and as willing as they make 'em. But he hadn't possessed Sam's initiative. He had done well, what he had been told to do; but he hadn't seemed to develop the faculty for seeing things he could plan and do himself, without being told. And then, he hadn't been lucky—as Sam undoubtedly *was*. No shorthandedness in the announcers' department had occurred to give him a chance to show that he was good for something besides a clerkship. Nothing like the *Atlantis* disaster had happened, to let Mike see that he had other abilities. And, even if it had, Mike doubted that he could have taken advantage of it; because he had a high, slightly hoarse voice and a somewhat halting manner of speech, and he lacked self-confidence and a sense of showmanship.

He had remained as Mike's assistant for almost a year and a half. Then, almost two years ago, he left the department as unceremoniously as he had entered it; resigned to return to the little midwestern city whence he had come; and to take the job of sole salesman for the local broad-

casting station. Moreover, he was obviously delighted to be making the change. Mike knew that the boy's connection with Transcontinental had probably had a good deal to do with his securing the new job. His identification with the big network would give him a standing in his home town that he could have gained in no other way. And so, Mike had accepted his resignation without regret—and without urging him to stay. For that boy, Mike realized, the change meant SUCCESS. For a young fellow like Sam, a similar move would have spelled defeat and failure.

Mike shrugged as he finished this reminiscing. “One man's meat—another man's poison,” he reflected. “Success is a funny thing; you never can tell just what goes to make it up.”

Sam Hubbard, meanwhile, was having a wide variety of experiences: he was producing musical programs where his principal functions were to make sure the timing was accurate, and to rehearse the cues, from music to the spoken words of the announcer, and back to music, so that each transition would be smooth and fast; so that the show would “keep moving” and never give the listener's attention a chance to lapse or wander. He was producing dramatic shows—those were Sam's favorites, because his part in them was (or *seemed to be*) much more important. He knew that each actor and actress, performing the part of just one character, couldn't possibly hear what the whole show was sounding like. Each had to concentrate on his or her own part. It was up to Sam to direct each person in the way that would keep all the characters in proportion—and not permit one actor, by “overplaying” his part, to assume an importance that his character didn't call for.

As Claude Montour had pointed out, Sam had to know when to direct and when to keep still. The ablest actors and actresses required the least direction—and peculiarly, they were the ones who were most willing to *take* direction. Some of the less skillful ones resented it. So no two of them could be directed in exactly the same way. With the resentful ones, Sam sometimes had to be a master diplomat, scrupulously careful not to injure their sensitive feelings. With others, he could speak right out—and got the best results when he did.

Then, when he had been directing for almost a year, he met a type of actress that was new to him. Later, he discovered there were many like her; but Miss Jeanne Duprée was the first "parrot" of his acquaintance. (She pronounced her name "Zheon Diewpray," and insisted that everyone else pronounce it so—though in her native heath, the Bronx, it had been "Sadie McCann.") Jeanne, Sam learned, was a valuable actress in any part that suited her. She had a lovely voice, a delightful personality and a fine "lift" that helped every show of which she was a part. But, the first time she read for him, Sam found, to his amazement, that she "had no ear." If it was possible to put a wrong emphasis on a word or a speech, Jeanne always found the way to do it.

The first time she worked for Sam, she had a speech that read like this: "Just a minute—I think I'd better tell Mother before we go." Sam didn't see how it could be wrongly spoken. But he soon found out.

When she came to it, Jeanne said, "Just a minute—I think I'd better tell Mother BEFORE we go."

Sam interrupted from the control room. "I don't think that's quite the way you mean to read that speech, Miss

Duprée. . . . Will you try it again?"

Jeanne was perfectly willing. She would try it as many times as he liked. The second time, it came out, "Just a minute—I think I'd better TELL Mother before we go."

"No, no," said Sam, patiently. "Think of the situation that has led up to that speech."

"Oh," said the imperturbable Jeanne, "you want it like this? 'Just a minute I think—I'd BETTER tell Mother before we go.'"

For a moment, Sam thought she was having fun with him; but her earnestness belied this idea. So, quietly, he spoke again through the P.A., "I think the sense of it is more like this," he said: "'Just a minute—I think I'd better tell MOTHER before we go.'"

"Oh, thank you!" Jeanne was genuinely grateful. And from that instant, every time she spoke the line, she did it in perfect imitation of Sam's timing and inflections.

She was a parrot; one of the tragedies of the theater (and of radio). She had all the tools she needed to make a great success: the voice, the personality, the manner, the appearance—she was vividly beautiful. But of technique she knew nothing. And she couldn't learn. She possessed neither the intelligence nor the ear to interpret an author's lines. She always had to be told exactly how to speak each word. Nor had she any idea of how to use her beautiful face or her lovely body, as Sam learned later, from one of the actors. Her beauty of form and voice had earned her a chance in the theater and in motion pictures—one chance in each—and that had been all. Even in radio, no director ever dared cast her for a part unless he was certain that he would have plenty of time to "parrot" every important

line for her.

George Monroe, by the time Sam had been directing for a year, was intrusting him with shows of greater and greater importance. But his biggest opportunity came after about eighteen months. Will Stanley, one of the other directors, was forced to go away for his health; and Will, for years, had been directing the full-hour comedy show of Jimmy Barkley—the famous Jimmy Barkley of musical comedy and the screen—and the most popular comedian on the air. To Sam came the honor of directing Jimmy Barkley during Will Stanley's absence.

Jimmy's show was a fast-moving combination of monologues, music and comedy dramatic sketches; all—except the music—centering around Jimmy's infectious funny personality. The music was provided by a thirty-two-piece orchestra, under the expert direction of Pieter van Hooten, who soon became one of Sam's closest friends in the business.

There was a funny thing about Sam's growing circle of friends at this time: it was developing into *two* circles, really. On the one hand were the friends in show business with whom he worked, lunched and dined; and with whom he played, between rehearsals and shows. And on the other hand there were personal friends, not in the profession. This group included and centered around Helen Chambers and Lucille and Denis Christie. But the two groups didn't seem to mix. Sam discovered this when he and Bill Dickson gave a dinner party at which both sets were present. Bill and Sam and Helen and Denis were the only ones who seemed to be equally at home in both circles. Most of the others gravitated to their own kind. The show people

had little in common with the rest. It wasn't that they didn't like each other. Their interests simply divided them into two distinct camps. So Bill and Sam made it a point not to repeat the somewhat unsuccessful experiment.

Before his first Jimmy Barkley rehearsal, Sam wondered what this noted funny man would be like. When he met him in the studio, he found a serious but very friendly fellow in his late thirties. His age was no surprise, for Sam had seen him hurrying through halls and lobbies many times; but his seriousness *was*—he always sounded so comical and carefree on the air, and always looked so on the stage or the screen. That, as Sam soon learned, was Jimmy's professional cloak—his false face, which he never put on except when he was being paid to do so.

A Barkley rehearsal was an all-day affair. At nine in the morning, Sam met Jimmy and his company of "stooges" in a small studio where they rehearsed the monologues and dramatic sketches until noon. Jimmy's writer, Max Kane, was present at these sessions, too.

Simultaneously, in the biggest studio in the building—from which the show would be broadcast that evening—Pieter van Hooten rehearsed his orchestra and singers from nine until twelve.

Then both groups went out for lunch. Usually Jimmy and Pieter and Max Kane and Sam lunched together.

At one o'clock they all met in the big studio with Pieter's musicians, for two hours more of rehearsing—this time of the whole show: music, monologues, vocal selections and sketches. At half-past three, the client came in to hear a "dress"—bringing with him a trail of satellites: sales managers, secretaries, advertising agency men and vice-presi-

dents. Most of them had very little idea of what the show business was all about; but all had definite ideas of just how to improve the show; and all had avid desires to show "the old man," the president of Universal Food Industries, how much they knew about it, and how valuable they were to the business. The old man, John Dennison, was different. He didn't know much about it—but he *knew* he didn't. So he would just sit and listen to the suggestions of his subordinates, shaking his head to most of them. Then, when someone made one that he liked, he would turn to Jimmy Barkley. "How about that, Jimmy?" he would ask. And more often than not, the suggestion would be incorporated into the show.

But Sam's first rehearsal with Jimmy Barkley was complicated beyond anything in his experience. In the first place, the timing was complicated. During the morning session, he had no idea whatever about the length of the musical numbers. All he could do was to "clock" the monologues, the comedy bits and the sketches with his stop watch, adding together all the timings to discover that Jimmy's part of the show would take forty-seven minutes and ten seconds. That left twelve minutes and thirty seconds for the music.

"Forty-seven:ten plus 12:30 equals 59:40," Sam computed. The other twenty seconds of the hour would be used by the announcer, in ringing chimes and making the local station announcement; and by the engineering department, in completing the complicated hookup that would send the Jimmy Barkley show to all the stations on the network which should receive it—and to those stations only.

After the first reading, Jimmy asked Sam about the tim-

ing. Sam told him, adding, "That leaves twelve and a half minutes for music."

"Oh, no!" cried Jimmy and Max Kane with one accord.

Sam couldn't see why not, until Jimmy explained that it was always necessary to allow three minutes out of the hour for the laughter and applause of the studio audience. So, in this case, there were *nine* minutes and thirty seconds for music—unless cuts were made in the script part of the show.

While Barkley and his cast were going through the script the second time, Sam began to interrupt occasionally, when he thought he saw places that could be improved by different readings. Before he had done this many times, he was aware that Max Kane, who sat in the control room with him, was irritated by his attempts to direct. For a time, Max said nothing; but Sam could feel his irritation. At last, though, the interruptions were too much for Max. "For cryin' out loud!" he shouted. "Let Jimmy do it his own way! He knows more about playing my lines for comedy than you'll *ever* know!"

Evidently Jimmy had heard this outburst through the P.A. speaker. He spoke quietly to Max through his microphone. "It's all right, Max. Let Hubbard alone. Don't forget that we're all trying our best to make it a good show." He didn't want any friction in rehearsal. From years of experience he knew the best comedy shows are the ones when everybody has a good time right up to the moment of the curtain's rise; or up to the moment when the announcer calls out, "One minute, please," and the studio suddenly becomes as quiet as midnight in a forest.

But Max's impatient words had been like a slap in the

face to Sam. He didn't feel like making any more suggestions during that rehearsal. As they were all leaving for lunch, Jimmy took Sam aside. "Listen, Sam," he said, "don't pay any attention to Max. We've worked together so long that he just thinks I can't make a mistake. You go right on making suggestions whenever you feel like it.

"Only—" Barkley paused—"only don't let it hurt your feelings when I don't pay any attention to some of your directions. You see," he explained, "I've been playing broad comedy for a good many years; and I've learned just about what kind of an effect I can get out of any kind of a line—when to take pauses, and how long to make them.

"Playing broad comedy," he told Sam, "is a lot different from high comedy or straight drama or anything else. Then, too, the audience makes a lot of difference. I have to have an audience in order to know just how long to pause for laughs. I have to *feel* the audience in order to gauge my timing. So don't you worry if what you hear on the air tonight is not exactly the same as what you've heard in rehearsal. It *never* is.

"You've been directing dramatic shows—for the air, only; without studio audiences. Some of your directions this morning would have been fine for that kind of show—but weren't any good for mine. See, Sam? The audience makes the difference."

Of course Sam understood the difference; and was thankful for this peep into a part of the show business that was entirely new to him.

CHAPTER XVI

A Minute and a Half of Silence

THERE were many new things to be learned about a fast-cracking comedy show that Sam hadn't run into before. One of them, as he found out in the dress rehearsal, was that he couldn't direct *this* show from the control room. The cues were too fast and there were too many of them. The distance from the control room window to Pieter van Hooten's director's podium was too great; and so were the distances to Jimmy Barkley's mike and the sound effects mike. Pieter and Jimmy and the others might not even *see* Sam's signals, if he stayed in the control room. The only way Sam could be sure each person would get his cues—and get them on time—would be for him to do all his directing from the stage, the huge platform which occupied the end of the great studio, in front of the audience.

Sam had to do all his listening to the show in the control room, between one o'clock and three—before dress rehearsal. After that, during dress and during the show, he had to depend on the engineer to make the right “fade-ins” and “fade-outs”; and in fact, to control *all* the sounds. Sam had to be out in the studio, on the stage.

At first, he didn't like the idea of trusting to someone else's judgment for the sound of the show. But very quickly he developed a serene confidence in the engineer who worked on it with him. This fellow's name was Eamon McCoy. Sam had never worked with him before, so his

early misgivings were quite natural. However, when he noticed how carefully McCoy marked his script with every fade and every change of microphones, Sam's fears disappeared.

Competent as he was, McCoy was a hard person to understand; and Sam didn't especially like him. He was a "black Irishman," a dour individual who rarely spoke except when he was spoken to—and even then, said only what was absolutely necessary. Since he did a good job in the control room, though, that didn't particularly matter, Sam reasoned.

The only thing about the first Jimmy Barkley broadcast that caused Sam any worry was that he couldn't figure out whether the show was going to run according to his time schedule. During the dress rehearsal, he noted in the right-hand margins of his own script the exact spot which should be reached at the end of each minute; and the time at which each musical number should begin and end. But when he had allowed three minutes for the laughter and applause of the studio audience, the total time of his markings was cut to fifty-six minutes and forty seconds, although the performance must last for fifty-nine minutes and forty seconds.

How on earth could he tell whether the laughter and applause was going to consume that extra three minutes? How could he be sure that it wouldn't take *four* minutes, and cause the show to run a whole minute overtime? Or that it wouldn't take only *two* minutes, and make the broadcast a whole minute short of the scheduled fifty-nine minutes and forty seconds? This uncertainty of timing the studio audience was a factor Sam had never before

had to cope with.

After the dress, he figured out a scheme which he thought would work: he divided the audience's allotted three minutes by sixty (the approximate total number of minutes in the show). That told him that he could safely allow *three seconds* for laughter and applause, during each minute of the broadcast—or fifteen seconds during each five minutes. So he changed his figures on the right-hand margins of the script. At the figure "5:00," he wrote "5:15," instead. At the figure "10:00," he wrote "10:30," and so on, adding fifteen seconds for each five minutes; so, when he reached the figure which he had written down during dress rehearsal at "55:00," his new timing read "57:45." In other words, if the show reached that point fifty-seven minutes and forty-five seconds after its beginning, he would be sure it would get off the air on time.

But that wasn't enough for Sam. Suppose the audience should "doublecross" him, by laughing and applauding for more or less than that three minutes? He provided against any such catastrophe by asking Pieter van Hooten to be prepared to cut a half chorus from the last orchestra number, if they laughed more; or to *add* a half chorus in case they laughed less.

"Great heavens!" Sam thought. "This business of timing the whims of the audience is certainly complicated!"

The night of that first show he entered the studio with his timed script in his hands and many doubts in his mind. To his great delight, however, the audience did not play him false. They chuckled and chortled and applauded almost exactly according to schedule. To be sure, they weren't always quite consistent: at the end of one five-

minute period, the performance might be a few seconds behind time; but the next five-minute spot would find it a few seconds ahead. So the Hubbard system of timing worked out entirely satisfactorily.

By the time six weeks had passed, and Sam had produced five more programs for Jimmy Barkley, all his qualms and all his nervousness about timing had disappeared. He had put Claude Montour's rule into effect: "Rehearse your show . . . so that, when you get on the air, you will never have to think of timing."

Things were going as smoothly as anyone could wish, with all his programs; but especially with the Jimmy Barkley show, which was by far the most important one he had. There was only one thing about it that vaguely annoyed him: he couldn't seem to get any better acquainted with Eamon McCoy. There was no friction between them; but, try as Sam would, he never seemed able to break down McCoy's air of somber reserve. The taciturn engineer gave the impression that he was constantly depressed about something. It bothered Sam a good deal. Finally, though, he gave up and decided he would have to take McCoy as he was.

Some weeks passed, with the show going as well as ever. Then, in the middle of the seventh Barkley broadcast, Sam looked from his place on the stage into the control room. He was surprised not to see McCoy at his control board, behind the big glass window. However, he assumed that McCoy had leaned forward for some reason, and that his head was below the level of the window sill. He watched for its reappearance. Fifteen seconds passed and still no McCoy. Sam began to worry.

Pieter van Hooten had just started a three-minute musical break, so for that length of time there would be no cues for Sam to give. He decided he had better run into Control and make sure that all was well.

He tiptoed off the stage and hurried through the double doors. As he opened the second one, into the control room itself, his ears were assaulted by a crescendo of SILENCE! No sound was coming from the control room speaker! There was no engineer at the control board! Frantically, his eyes darted around the room, dark in comparison to the studio, and difficult for him to see in. But after an anguished instant, he discovered McCoy, standing quietly in a corner, behind a tall amplifier cabinet which almost concealed him.

Before Sam could ask what had gone wrong, the door behind him burst open again. It was Doc Martin, now night supervisor of engineers. Catching sight of McCoy, Doc burst into speech:

“What’s the matter, Eamon? We’re not getting you in Master Control! Why didn’t you answer the phone?”

“Nothing’s the matter,” McCoy answered quietly.

“Quick! Tell me what happened! The show hasn’t been on the air for almost a minute.”

“Nothing’s the matter,” McCoy repeated, dully. “I just turned off the carrier switch.”

Doc Martin jumped to the control board. With one hand, he made several adjustments while, simultaneously, he called Master Control on the private wire. Suddenly there was a blare of sound from the speaker. It was Pieter van Hooten’s music. The show was on the air again.

Not until then did Doc Martin speak once more. When

he did, it was with an air of quiet authority. "Eamon," he said, "you go up to Master Control and wait there for me until after the show. I'll handle it from now on."

As McCoy left the room, Sam found his voice again. "For Pete's sake, Doc, what happened?"

"Didn't you hear?" Doc asked. "Eamon turned off the carrier switch—this little button"—he pointed to it—"that cuts the whole show off the air. That's all. You were off for more than a minute."

It was unthinkable! Such a thing just couldn't happen! But it had!

"Why!" cried Sam.

"Don't ask *me*."

"What shall we do? What *can* we do?" Sam was distracted.

"Listen, Sambo," said Doc without taking his eyes or his hands from the board, "don't *you* go *byserk* on me, too. It's all over now. We can't do anything. The trouble with you is you want to lock the stable while the horse is still in there.

"You go on back to your stage," he advised, "before the end of this music—and direct the rest of the show just as if nothing had happened." He nodded toward the actors and musicians. "They don't know nothing went wrong—and you don't *want* 'em to know it."

Sam took his advice. And the broadcast proceeded swiftly to its end.

The studio suddenly became lively with the talk and laughter of the audience. Jimmy Barkley signed autographs in the midst of a milling throng. The sound effects men noisily trundled out their equipment on its heavy truck.

The actors disappeared through the stage door. And at last, the audience departed with much good-natured jostling.

Doc Martin was finishing his task of coiling up the microphone cables and placing the mikes in a row at the back of the stage. As he set the last one in place, he beckoned to Sam, who followed him out of the studio and up to Master Control.

There they found Eamon McCoy, standing listlessly at one side of the room, much as he had stood in the control room half an hour earlier.

Sam let Doc do all the talking.

“Eamon,” said the latter, “why did you do it?”

“I turned the carrier switch.” The engineer repeated the words he had said downstairs.

“Sure, I know,” said Doc. “But *why*? You must have had a reason.”

McCoy’s eyes lighted up with a peculiar brightness. “Doc,” he said in an eerily intense manner, “I couldn’t help it. I had to. I’ve wanted to for months; and I just couldn’t keep from it any longer. I’ve sat at control boards hour after hour, listening to the words and the music going out onto the air—different words all the time, and different music; but they all sound the same to me.

“And I’ve realized, all the time, that all I had to do—to shut off that endless stream of noise—was to reach out, easy—like that”—he made a nonchalant gesture—“and flick that little button.”

“Sure,” Doc said. “I guess everybody’s thought about that, one time with another.”

“Well,” Eamon McCoy told him triumphantly, “tonight, a sense of power came over me. For a minute I felt like a

king! So I did it! I turned the carrier switch!" The animation left his face and voice as suddenly as it had taken possession of them. Listlessly again, he finished: "Now I'm satisfied."

"Yeah, I 'spect you are." Doc nodded. "But I bet old man Dennison ain't!"

He paused. "I tell you what you do, Eamon. You go on home now. You don't need to come in for the rest of the week. I'll see that your work is covered."

A childlike smile from McCoy. "That's darn nice of you, Doc," he said.

"That's all right," said the other. "And listen, Eamon—you don't mind if I send the company doctor around to see you, do you?"

"No," said Eamon. "No, I don't mind. I'll be glad to see him."

He left as quietly as he had previously left the control room.

There was a moment of silence. And then, from Doc, "Sambo, that's a mighty sick guy. He sure was a bull in a Chinese shop! I don't know whether he's went wacky or just on a temp'rary bustup of the nerves. I hope it's that. If it is, we'll put him on another kind of work when he gets back."

Sam was saddened by the experience. He felt that he ought to have guessed, from McCoy's habitual moodiness, that something was wrong.

"Forget it," Doc told him. "How could *you* know, when none of us fellows up here caught wise?"

Along with his feeling of regret for McCoy, Sam was very much concerned over the break in the show he had

been directing.

“What will the Company say to Mr. Dennison?” he asked Doc Martin.

“Don’t worry about that,” Doc reassured him. “The client’ll never know what happened. The sales department’ll just tell him, ‘due to a failure of facilities,’ his show was off the air for a minute and a half. And that’s the honest truth: it *was* a failure of facilities.

“Then they’ll rebate him for the time he was off—and that’ll be that. But, oh, boy! Even that minute and a half is going to cost some jack! Around about four hundred smackers—just for a break of a minute and a half.”

Sam went back to his own desk with a heavy heart, to write his report of what had happened.

Doc Martin called him on the telephone several days later to say that McCoy’s case had been diagnosed as a nervous breakdown; and he had been sent to his home, in Maine, to rest and recuperate.

A long time after—six months or more—Sam learned that Eamon McCoy was back with the Company; but now, in the research department, engaged in work that was better suited to him; and contented as a clam!

CHAPTER XVII

"Take It Away, Sam!"

THE Monday morning after Eamon McCoy's disastrous exploit, began a week in Sam's career which he will never forget.

Among the production assignments on his desk he found a casual little long-hand note from Michael Cassidy: "Sam—Drop in on me for a moment when you have time. M. C."

Late morning and early afternoon were fully taken up by the rehearsal and broadcast of one of Sam's regular Monday musical shows; so it was after four o'clock before he presented himself in the Chief Announcer's office.

"Hi, Sam," Mike greeted him. "Sit down a minute while I finish getting out these instructions, will you?" And went on dictating to his secretary a routine order regarding an outside pickup—a nemo job—that was to be put on the air that evening. Sam sat down and waited, scarcely bothering to wonder what Mike wanted to talk to him about.

The dictation finished, Mike dismissed his secretary and turned to his visitor. "Sam," he said, smiling, "how do you pronounce P-a-r-a-m-a-r-i-b-o?" He spelled out the word.

Sam laughed. "Pă-ră-mă-rî-bô," he replied. "Why? What have I done now?"

Cassidy answered with another question. "How's your French pronunciation?"

"I hoped you'd forgotten all about that," said Sam. "But since you ask, my French pronunciation is every bit as good

as *your* Irish."

It was Mike's turn to be amused. "It'll need to be a lot better than that!" he chuckled.

"It'll need to be—" thought Sam. "What does he mean by *that*?"

"Five years ago next fall," the older man went on, "you struck me for a job as announcer." Sam felt a sudden tautening of his nerves. He forced himself to remain outwardly calm.

"That was a pretty nervy thing for me to do, wasn't it?" he asked. "I guess I was a darned presumptuous kid!"

"No-o-o," said Cassidy, "not presumptuous—just a few jumps ahead of your experience."

Sam said nothing. He waited. His body half reclined, in the most relaxed posture he could manage; but his mind sat on the very edge of the chair, eager for the other to continue.

And at length, he did continue. "Well," he said, "I think your experience has caught up with you; so, Mr. Hubbard, in response to your application of five years ago, I now offer you an announcer's job. What do you say?"

Sam could remain calm no longer. He jumped to his feet. "I say YES!" he almost shouted. "Before you have a chance to take it back!"

Mike assured him there was no danger of that, and told him to let George Monroe know about the change. "I've already had a talk with him," he said; "but we didn't settle anything about the time; and I'd like to have you take up your new work on the first of June."

Less than a month away, Sam thought. And as he made his way back to the Production Director's room, he felt

a pang of regret that he should be leaving, so soon, the work he had enjoyed so thoroughly.

The first programs Sam announced, a month later, were all "sustaining shows." Not because Mike would have been unwilling to trust him with sponsored programs; but because most of Transcontinental's advertisers had their favorite announcers, with whom they had built up associations of long standing. For that reason it was not until the next fall that Sam had a chance to try out for a job on a commercial broadcast.

During June, July and August—a time when few new commercial programs are started on the air—Sam got a taste (or rather a mouthful) of what it was like to speak the kind of song introductions he had once written for artists like Marta Morgan. As between speaking them and writing them, he decided that he preferred announcing to continuity writing. When he had been a writer, it had often seemed next to impossible to give variety to a series of song announcements. Now, in reading them, he found that he was able to avoid monotony—no matter how similar the actual wordings might be—by changing his inflections; by altering his pace and manner; and by suiting the tones of his voice to the moods of the different musical numbers and the styles of the singers who sang them.

Mike Cassidy's practiced and critical ear was quick to appreciate what Sam was striving for. And Mike was generous in his commendation—but no less generous in his criticism, when he felt that Sam had failed to make the most of an announcement.

Beginning with his second week in the department, Sam's schedule included from three to six jobs of announcing

every day, five days a week. The busier days kept him on the jump—from studio to studio, with hardly a breathing space between shows. But Sam reveled in it. It kept him in daily contact with more and more of radio's great and near-great personages; with actors, authors, musicians; with world travelers, politicians, diplomatists. Most of them he liked. He got along well with all of them. He learned to meet all kinds of people on their own terms.

He became an avid reader of the newspapers—for, if he were going to introduce Lord Smithers-Hawkins to America, Sam wanted to know something about Lord Smithers-Hawkins' life and works. The more he could learn, the more sincere and intelligent it made his introduction sound.

He read more books (some good and some exceedingly bad, he thought) than he had ever read before in a similar length of time. He found that to have read an author's latest book made his meeting with the author much pleasanter.

Sam did not put himself to all this trouble without a very good reason. He didn't read an author's bad book just to please that author's vanity. He had learned, long since, that many writers—most of them, indeed—are not particularly good speakers. Especially, they are likely to be uncomfortable before a microphone. And Sam discovered that, by talking about a man's—or a woman's—writings, he was usually able to make the inexperienced broadcaster forget self-consciousness and discomfiture. It put the author at his ease to feel that he had a friend in the studio. It made many of them deliver far better radio talks than they knew how.

Late in August, Sam was literally thrown into a chance to show Mike Cassidy a new ability, which no one—not

even Sam—had suspected he possessed. That was the ability to "ad lib"—to speak extemporaneously before the microphone, without script to read or notes to guide him. Of course, as he knew, *every* announcer must be able and prepared to do a *little* ad libbing at any moment. Usually, though, it is necessary to ad lib only long enough to cover up one or another of the little accidents which are bound to occur in anything so complex as a show: an orchestra leader knocks his music off its stand: the announcer must go right on talking about the next number until the leader gets the sheets rearranged and is ready to begin the music. The audience mustn't suspect that anything is wrong. Or, a famous violinist forgets that he is supposed to repeat a certain passage of his solo number (he has always been accustomed to play it without repeats). That makes the program thirty seconds, forty-five seconds or a minute short. The announcer must make easy, natural-sounding conversation to fill the time.

That kind of ad libbing was mere child's play to any of Mike Cassidy's experienced men. On the other hand, it is given to only a few fortunate men to be able to extemporize for long periods—three minutes, five minutes, even ten minutes at a stretch. That is the sort of thing that must be done at public functions, when the program must take the air at a certain predetermined time, and when you can never be sure that the first speaker will be ready to begin at that time. Or at football games, where the announcer must be prepared to fill all the gaps between plays, between quarters and between halves. Or at unveilings of statues, or launchings of ships, or the broadcast of a nonsense contest, such as the cockroach race

Emmet Carson once had to cover. Though the cockroaches may refuse to run, the announcer cannot refuse to talk.

One hot August morning, Sam lingered over a late breakfast. He was not due at the studios until two in the afternoon. He had taken the part of narrator on a late dramatic show the night before. The telephone bell jingled. Reluctantly, Sam answered it. He was tired.

The receiver fairly barked at him: "Sam! You play tennis, don't you?" Sam recognized Michael Cassidy's voice.

He had barely replied, "Yes," when Mike started on at a mile-a-minute pace. If his words hadn't told Sam there was an emergency, Mike's manner would have told him.

"Get this," he said. "There's an exhibition match at Longwood this afternoon between the four top-ranking men of the country. Goes on the air at three. Blakeslie just called me from Boston. Ken Markett, his sports man, got smashed up driving in this morning. In hospital. Broken leg.

"You cover that match. Nobody else available. Catch the ten-o'clock train—Grand Central."

Sam's tiredness was forgotten. He interrupted Mike in a frenzy. "Holy smoke, Mike! I'm not even dressed! It's ten minutes from the apartment to Grand Central, with LUCK! And it's almost a quarter of ten right now! Won't the next train get me there in time?"

Mike paid no attention to the question. "All right—if you can't make it, jump a taxi to Newark Airport and hop the first Boston plane. That's better anyway—give you time to get acquainted. I'll have a messenger at Newark with your ticket and some money. Okay?"

"Okay, Mike!" cried Sam. "G'by!" Almost with one

motion, he dropped the telephone on its stand, ripped off his dressing gown and bolted for the bedroom. He dressed like a fireman, rushed down the apartment house stairs with his collar unbuttoned and his tie in his hand, shocked a surprised taximan into action at the corner of Second Avenue; and arrived at the airport just under forty-five minutes after he had answered Mike Cassidy's call. It would have been hard to cover the distance in less time except with the Magic Carpet or the sandals of Mercury.

The messenger was there. The plane took off a few minutes after his arrival, and by one o'clock Sam was at the Longwood Cricket Club, in the suburbs of Boston, meeting the nemo engineer who was to work with him, and familiarizing himself with the layout of the courts, the grandstand and the clubhouse.

After his round of the house and grounds, Sam made his way back to the box from which he was to broadcast. Passing the Press box, he heard a familiar voice. "Denis!" he cried delightedly. It was the luckiest break Sam could have wished for; because Denis Christie knew everybody in sports. Through him, Sam met all four players of the match and many others of the country's ranking men. He met the officials and the other press representatives. Their gossip before the game was all grist to Sam's mill.

How much he was going to need that grist, he had no notion until it came time for him to go on the air. The extent of his previous ad libbing could have been measured in minutes. He had never been at a loss for something to say when he had needed it; but he had never been put to a real test.

At ten minutes before three, Sam and his engineer got a time check over the Morse wire which connected them by telegraph with the Transcontinental Boston Studios. Their speaking circuit was used for broadcasting only. All other communications had to be carried on in Morse code—dots and dashes which the engineer understood, though Sam did not. They set their watches to agree with the master clock in the Boston studios, to the split second. Then there was nothing to do but wait.

Up to that time, Sam had been busy every moment since his arrival at the club. He had scarcely had time to think, much less to get nervous. But now, as those last ten minutes ticked their lives slowly away on the second hand of his watch, he began to wonder what he was going to say.

He looked up at the stands. They were practically full. Colorful costumes on the women. Smartly dressed men in sports clothes. Happy, carefree people with no thought in the world but to be entertained by the tennis match that would soon begin. How Sam Hubbard envied them!

He looked at his watch. Six minutes to go. He walked down to the water cooler and slaked his parched throat. Back to the box. Still five minutes. The last vacant seats in the stands had been occupied. Denis Christie sauntered casually into the broadcasting box. Casually he pointed out to Sam a dozen or more sports personages and society notables among the late arrivals. Without being fully aware of why he was doing so, Sam jotted down their names on the back of an envelope. Within five minutes he was offering up a prayer of thanks for that envelope, right from the bottom of his heart.

For now it was three minutes before three. There were no players on the courts. The officials wandered about aimlessly, chatting with one another in the most leisurely way imaginable. Sam wanted to stand up on the railing of the box and shout, "Hey! Don't you know I've got to begin broadcasting in just THREE MINUTES?"

Two more minutes passed. Still no players. The Morse instrument clicked out its sixty-second warning. "One minute," said the engineer, nonchalantly. As far as Sam was concerned, he might as well have said, "One minute till the crack of doom!" The condemned Samuel suffered an instant of speechless terror the like of which he had experienced only once before—that time, five years ago, when, waiting to broadcast news of a steamship disaster, he had seen Doc Martin give the "go-ahead," and heard him whisper, "Take it away, Sam."

Now—five years later—Sam saw the engineer's arm extended upward. In twenty seconds he would drop it, pointing at Sam. And Sam would be on the air. Suddenly his panic left him. He remembered how, that other time, his fright had flown the moment he heard his own voice. He cleared his throat. The sound gave him courage. The engineer leaned forward . . . down came his arm. "Take it away!" His lips formed the words soundlessly.

A cheery voice greeted Sam's ears. It was hard to realize it was his own. "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is Samuel Hubbard, greeting you on behalf of the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company, from the famous tennis courts of the Longwood Cricket Club, near Boston, Massachusetts. We are about to bring you a play-by-play account . . ."

He gained confidence with each succeeding syllable. He described the weather; warm, but dry and fair; "good tennis weather," he said. He described the clubhouse, with which he had become familiar; the scene; the costumes. He explained that, although the match had been scheduled to begin at three o'clock, there had been a slight delay; but he assured his audience it would start in a very few minutes.

He glanced down at his watch, where it lay on the table beside the mike stand. Four and a half minutes after three! Still no players! How much longer could he keep up this running fire of chatter? Then he thought of that blessed envelope in his pocket. Out it came, in a jiffy.

"As we wait for the play to start, I'm sure you'll be interested in some of the personalities that go to make up this distinguished audience. Its roster would read almost like a *Who's Who* of amateur sport and society. . . ." He read names from the envelope. He tossed in bits of the gossip he had heard during his chat with Denis, the players and the officials. Without a pause, he glanced again at his watch. Six minutes and fifteen seconds past the hour.

Sam was bothered less and less by the continued delay. He was enjoying himself! And his enjoyment was infectious. It communicated itself through his voice, to his listeners.

Then, in the middle of a sentence, he stopped. "Oh, wait!" he said. There was a new note of excitement in his tone. "The players have just appeared on the courts. Play is about to begin."

But it wasn't, even then. Unhurriedly, the four men selected the racquets they chose to play with. So Sam talked

on. He described each man. Told how many racquets had been brought out to the courts by each. Described the careful process of selection. And then:

"Earlier this afternoon, I was privileged to meet these four experts of the courts. The thing that impressed me about them more than anything else was their air of calm assurance, so shortly before so important a match. From my talks with them I should say that not one of them is nearly as excited at this moment as I am, myself—nor as you are, if you are a tennis enthusiast. That coolness under pressure, I suppose, more than any other quality, marks the difference between these Masters of the Court and average players like the rest of us."

Sam interrupted himself again. The men had taken their places on the court. "Play is about to begin—and this time, I mean it," Sam laughed into the microphone. "The north court is being defended by Mr. Burke and Mr. Baker; the south by Mr. Avery and Mr. Llewellyn. Mr. Avery won the toss, and has elected to serve." A silence fell over the stands; and, in order to let his audience feel the tenseness of the situation, Sam lowered his voice to barely more than a whisper. "Here's the service!" he said.

"Ping!" The sound of Avery's burning stroke could be heard from coast to coast.

And from the instant of his racquet's first impact with the ball, Sam was too much absorbed in the game to worry further about whether he could ad lib. He *could* and *did*. He was still ad libbing nearly three hours later, when the match had to be called a draw, with the score at two sets all and the fifth set tied at fifteen games all.

Two minutes after Sam had signed off, the Morse in-

strument began to click. "Message for you," said the engineer, scribbling on a sheet of paper. Looking over his shoulder, Sam read, "Great work sam stop from now on youre one of my first string tennis men stop mike."

For the Messrs. Avery, Llewellyn, Burke and Baker, that match made tennis history.

For Sam Hubbard, it made broadcasting history.

CHAPTER XVIII

Sam Wins Fame He Does Not Want

THE next few months brought Sam many more opportunities to use his skill as an ad libber.

When the football season opened, Mike Cassidy often sent him with a sports announcer to cover an important game. Sam's part in these broadcasts was to "set the stage" before the beginning of the game; to picture for the radio listener the setting, the crowd and the general atmosphere of the affair. Then, between quarters and halves, and during extended periods of "time out," he would take the microphone to describe the doings of the cheer leaders, the college bands and the rooting sections.

He wasn't able to broadcast the play-by-play action of the games, because he didn't know enough about the ever-changing rules nor about the finer points of play—the inside stuff that makes the playing of big-time football come very close to being a science. But the description of a science—even so active a science as football—can be a rather dry business, especially when two teams are very evenly matched; so Sam's part, in lending color and variety to the broadcasts, was almost as important as that of the sports announcer who played the game verbally while the teams played it physically.

Traveling around the country, meeting famous coaches and players, seeing college campuses he had never seen before, was a stimulating and entertaining relief from the

routine announcing assignments and the reading of commercial credits that fell to Sam's lot during these fall weeks. He liked the regular work well enough; but a football assignment to punctuate his week end was like a vacation. Each one sent him back to New York refreshed and full of vigor for another five days of announcing.

It was not long after the tennis broadcast when Sam had his first chance to give an audition for a commercial sponsor. He had looked forward to this experience, as every young announcer does, because it would mean extra money and added reputation to him if he were chosen for the job.

He found, however, that trying out for a commercial wasn't so much fun as he had imagined. The way sponsors have of going about the selection of their announcers makes it a very trying experience for the men who take the test.

Sam and six other announcers were herded into one of the smaller studios. In its control room sat five unidentified gentlemen, to listen to the various voices. These men were not an inspiring audience. Their faces wore expressions that seemed to say, "We dare you to please us—if you can, which we very much doubt!" Sam and the others were accustomed to speaking to audiences of people who *wanted* to be entertained. This audience apparently wanted *NOT* to be—which made the boys nervous and uncomfortable.

Before the first announcer went to the microphone, the five gentlemen retired to the far end of the control room, from which they could neither see the studio nor be seen from it. Each announcer received, from the production

director, a sheet of paper containing sample commercial announcements telling about the sponsor's product—in this case, a famous cigarette. Then each one was given a number. This was done at the advertiser's request: one of his representatives explained that the listeners didn't want to be influenced by knowing the identities of the various announcers. They wanted to listen to seven disembodied voices; and to make their selection on the basis of the voice and manner which they liked best.

"Read these announcements in your own style," each man was told.

Sam was given the questionable honor of reading last, because he was the newest addition to the announcers' staff. By the time his turn came, he wished ardently that he hadn't heard the readings of the other six. It seemed to him that, between them, the others had given the announcements every possible variation of inflection, style and emphasis. His paper shook in his hands as he stepped to the microphone. He couldn't make it stop. To him, his reading sounded unintelligent. The words he accented sounded all wrong. His voice sounded strained and artificial. He was an utter flop! When he heard the cold voice from the control room, at the end of the audition, he was sure of it!

"Thank you, gentlemen," said the voice—the men in the studio could not see which of those in the control room was speaking—"we'll let Mr. Cassidy know our decision, tomorrow."

Leaving the studio, Sam mentally dismissed the job as lost. He felt downcast and depressed for the rest of the day.

Imagine his surprise when, entering the announcers' office the next afternoon, he found among his day's assignments a memorandum that told him he had been selected. His first "paid" commercial! Never again would he know the feeling of exultation it gave him. When he told Mike Cassidy how rotten he thought his audition had been, Mike merely shrugged and said, "You can never tell about yourself. Maybe you weren't as bad as you thought.

"But, besides that," he added, "no one can guess at the idiosyncrasies of a bunch of sponsors' representatives. That's why I think it's best never to *try* too hard in a commercial audition. Just be relaxed; take it easy; and keep your fingers crossed."

The cigarette program added fifty dollars to Sam's income each week. How his bank account grew that winter! As he deposited the first check, late in October, he began to feel quite like a capitalist.

The second Saturday after that big event, Sam was assigned to cover a football game with Gorham Jenkins, a former All-American quarterback, and now Transcontinental's Ace football announcer. On Friday night, the two men, with Doc Martin to supervise the engineering end of the nemo broadcast, took the sleeper for Birmingham, New Hampshire, the home of little Birmingham College, which had suddenly sprung into national prominence by producing a football team strong enough to have won every game on a stiff fall schedule.

When Birmingham had scored seven to nothing over Princeton, in Princeton's first game of the season, all the wiseacres said, "Oh, well, it was just a lucky fluke," and, "It was the Tigers' first game; they haven't struck their

stride." And when the New Hampshirites chalked up a twenty-one to six victory over Columbia, in the next game, the explanation was that the Columbia coaches had left their second team in the game too long; and they had considered it only a practice game, anyway.

But when these victories were followed by a fifty-seven to nothing rout of one of the smaller, well-thought-of colleges, and by close but impressive wins over Harvard and Syracuse, why, then, the attention of the world of amateur sport was turned on Birmingham in earnest.

This mid-November game, next to the last one of their fall series, was against an unbeaten Yale team. It had been arranged by Yale as a "breather," before Yale's final struggles—against Harvard and Princeton. Now, however, it had assumed the importance of a last game of the World's Series in baseball; or a heavyweight championship prize fight. So major newspapers, and *all* the press associations, were sending their sports specialists to cover it. And Transcontinental was broadcasting it to every station on its coast-to-coast network. The honor of taking part in the broadcast was a lofty plume in Sam Hubbard's helmet. He couldn't help a surge of pride when he read his name in the advance press notices of the game and the broadcast. He was proudest of all, though, when he read Denis Christie's Saturday-morning column: "The glib, knowing Gorham Jenkins will give the gameside description for radio listeners. . . . And Transcontinental's Sam Hubbard will do the atmospherizing. Radio fans will remember Hubbard best for his skillful handling of the Burke, Baker-Avery, Llewellyn tennis match last August, though he has done football atmosphere for a number of games since

then, with an adeptness equally satisfactory to all concerned.”

Annoying though Denis' independability sometimes became, Sam found it impossible to nourish his impatience toward the fellow who went out of his way to do such nice things for him. “Denis is a real friend,” Sam thought, “even if he is a kind of a crazy hairpin—and even if he has been rushing Helen so hard, lately, that half the times when I've tried to make engagements with her, I find her already dated up with him.

“But, after all,” he reflected, “why shouldn't he make as many dates with her as he wants to? Who am I to stop him? I haven't any copyright on Helen's time.”

However, except for snatching a few moments to glance through the few New York morning papers he was able to find in Birmingham—to scan the experts' last-minute “dope” on the game—Sam had little time for his own concerns. He always read the sports writers' predictions and conjectures on the games at which he took part, because he was often able to quote them in his between-halves broadcasting. He would compare the analysts' pregame comments with what actually had taken place during the first half.

The rest of the morning he spent at such interviews as he was able to arrange with opposing coaches and players. Then he and Gorham Jenkins lunched with the owner of the Birmingham radio station, a charming old gentleman named Harris Foster, who also owned and edited Birmingham's prosperous little daily newspaper—the *State Journal*.

The radio station, CQBI, was one of the associated stations of the Transcontinental Network. Unlike the news-

paper, however, CQBI was not an especially profitable enterprise. But Harris Foster, in his modest way, had something of the Midas touch: everything that received his shrewd Yankee attention returned him a profit—so, though he might not be making much out of radio, he certainly was not losing anything.

Both Sam and Jenkins were delighted with this twinkling-eyed old New Englander; and, on his part, he seemed to be quite as much pleased with them. He seemed to feel honored, too, by this visit from representatives of broadcasting headquarters. "Much the time as not," he said, "you 'brass hats' down't th' city pays s' little 'tention t' us small fry up here in th' hills, 't we don't know 'ther y' remember us or not." Mr. Foster had a sort of shorthand style of talking which Sam found highly amusing. His New England thrift apparently extended to his conversation, for he rarely pronounced any letter in a word if the word could be understood without it.

Sam learned from him many odd facts that were useful in his pregame broadcast that afternoon. Among other things, he learned about the new Birmingham College stadium; and about Harris Foster's hand in getting it built.

"Everett Powers' money's buildin' it," said Mr. Foster. "Local banker," he said by way of explaining Everett Powers. "Gettin' him t' loosen up 's toughest job I ever tackled. . . . Tighter 'n a drumhead, Ev' Powers is. 'Course that's nought against him. He'll spend free enough when y' c'n git him t' see th' light. . . . Trouble is, he squints so, most th' time y' can't git him to see it!"

Mr. Foster went on to explain that Mr. Powers was probably Birmingham's most illustrious graduate; certainly,

he said, he was its richest. "Shamed him int' buildin' th' stadium: kept drummin' int' him 't he owed it t' his name t' leave a 'morial. Gonta call it 'Powers Oval.'" He chuckled with glee. "That's what fin'ly landed Ev," he said. "Callin' it 'Powers Oval.'"

The Oval was only a little more than a quarter completed. It was being built in easy stages, Mr. Foster said, "t' make the spendin' less painful t' Everett Powers." One entire side of it was being carved out of a granite hillside, which was a part of the property owned by Mr. Powers' vast quarrying interests. The other side would eventually be built, on the low part of the hill, from reinforced concrete. To their amazement, Sam and Gorham Jenkins were told that, when completed, the Oval would seat a hundred thousand people. They expressed doubt that there would ever be that many people at a Birmingham College game. Mr. Foster cackled. "You don't know th' plans Ev Powers an' I've got f'r Birmingham College," he assured them. "F'r that matter, neither does Ev Powers! We're goin' t' put Birmingham on the football map.

"Why," he said with pride, "we've had th' part 's finished more 'n full twice, this season—better 'n twenty-five thousand, that is. And, 't th' rate special trains an' motor-cars an' buses been arrivin' fr'm Boston an' N'York an' N'Haven this mornin', I'll wager there'll be better 'n half that many more t'day."

That afternoon his prediction came true. The sports writers estimated the crowd at nearly forty thousand. Birmingham had never before seen so many people at one time. "Good f'r bus'ness," gloated Mr. Foster. "'S th' main reason I got Ev Powers to do this." It was the main rea-

son, too, why he had campaigned so energetically among Birmingham's alumni for donations to the College Athletic Fund; and for new buildings and more professors. Behind all this energy was the Foster thrift.

At half-past one, Sam went on the air from Powers Oval, with Doc Martin at the portable control panel. Thanks to his morning's interviews and to the wealth of local information he had gleaned from Mr. Foster, he had done a fine piece of pregame broadcasting when he turned the mike over to Gorham Jenkins, a few minutes before the whistle blew for the start of the game, at two.

Then began two hours of the most exciting football those forty thousand people had ever witnessed. The staunch, fast little team of Birmingham couldn't score against the heavier, more powerful Blue eleven; but neither could the Yale team score against the "Granite" line. Three times during the last quarter, the driving Blue attack carried the ball more than half the length of the field, to the Granite five-yard line. But there Birmingham held, like the stuff of the hills from which it got its nickname. The Yale backs couldn't even maneuver the ball into kicking position, so perfect was the Granite defense.

And so, at last, the game ended, a nothing-to-nothing tie—but nevertheless, a rousing victory for Birmingham.

Sam took the microphone back from Gorham Jenkins. The crowd went wild. Conservative older alumni of Birmingham acted as crazily as the undergraduate body. Harris Foster led the students and the citizens of the town in a dance around the field, that would have put to shame the wriggling progress of a boa constrictor. The staid banker, Everett Powers, was seen to throw away, high

into the air, an almost new derby hat—the first thing he had ever thrown away in his thrifty Yankee life. Sam found no lack of things to tell the radio audience. His postgame broadcast turned into a rollicking comedy monologue that had his listeners laughing in their chairs.

All during the game, an enthusiastic Birmingham alumnus, owner of the town's single airplane, had been circling high over the stadium with a big Granite banner trailing off behind his tail fins. The plane, a sizable cabin ship, carried, with the owner, a party of four friends. Now the passengers, through the open side windows, emptied great bags of confetti over the crowd.

Sam described all he saw. The confetti made him think of the candy snowstorm in *The Wizard of Oz*. The plane dropped lower and sped the length of the field, dipping its wings crazily from side to side, in the traditional "pilot's salute"; then, making a steep banking turn, came back, climbing, with motor wide open.

Sam commented. "I can't say that I blame that pilot for feeling frisky," he said, "but I *do* feel that he's letting his high spirits carry him a bit too far. Oh, say!" he cried suddenly, "he's climbing too steeply!"

It seemed, at the plane's angle of climb, that it must certainly lose its headway and go into a tailspin. But then, just as it actually did begin to slow up, the pilot leveled out and sailed off over the hillside in a graceful sweep, still scattering confetti in his trail.

Sam's voice lost its tenseness. "No. No," he told the audience, "the flyer evidently knows his plane. He's leveled off as prettily as you please. And there he goes into a spiral climb. The crowd is watching him now." He burst

out laughing. "That confetti," he cried—"that confetti in his wake leaves a perfect spiral below him. It reminds you of that song of a few seasons back, 'I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise'! Remember it? The crowd is cheering him." Sam turned toward Doc Martin. "We'll open the mikes down on the field and let you hear them." Doc twisted one of his dials and, through the headphones he was wearing, Sam heard the swelling roar of forty thousand voices. He knew the sound was taking all the carnival atmosphere of the scene into listeners' homes from one end of the country to the other. Then Sam pointed to himself, with his free thumb. Doc twisted his dials, making Sam's mike "hot" again—and Sam began to talk.

"I believe the plane has reached the top of its climb. It must be very nearly five thousand feet up—just a little dot up there. Looks like a comet, with its confetti tail. . . . Let's see what it's going to do now. . . . Oh! Heading this way again—down the valley, toward the field. Now the pilot's diving toward us. . . . Can you hear the wasp-like whine of his motor as he dives?"

"In a moment he'll be leveling off." A note of alarm crept into Sam's voice once more. "He'll *have* to level off in an instant or he'll never clear the granite cliff at the far end of the stadium!"

Just then there was an ominous sound. From Maine to California, countless thousands of radio listeners heard it. The motor missed! Sam cried it out, but they didn't need his words to tell them.

"He can't stop the dive! He's coming down! He'll strike the crowd! I can't look! This—this—" Sam became incoherent. The motor stopped altogether! "It's awful! It's

terrible! I can't look!" And Samuel Hubbard tried to look away. "Oh! Oh!" he wailed, his voice taking on an unnatural tone of horror as his throat constricted. He could no more look away than he could halt that plane's headlong descent. His eyes were held to the plane in the vise-like grip of terror. He had no idea what he was saying—or whether he spoke at all. He still held something in his right hand. But, that it was a microphone, he didn't know.

From the motor's first miss to the rending, grinding crash that followed was a matter of short seconds. To Sam, it seemed like all eternity.

He uttered an anguished groan—half-groan, half-cry—that froze the hearts of how many radio listeners no one will ever guess.

At his shoulder, he heard another voice, made unnatural by the stress of its owner's emotion. "Keep it up, Sambo! You've got to tell 'em!" It was Doc Martin.

"Oh, ladies and gentlemen, this is horrible!" Sam kept it up, his voice broken and unrecognizable. "He crashed! You must have heard him crash! But he missed the crowd. Thank God, he missed the crowd!

"We don't know how many people were in the plane. But there must have been several, to throw out all that confetti. Oh, that confetti! A moment ago we were all so gay! *They* were all so gay! They were throwing confetti! And now this! You don't know—you can't know from where you are what this has done to us here." But they *did* know, every listener of them.

"Doc! Doc!" cried Sam. "Send down and find out—find out how many were in it—and who they were. . . . Doc Martin will find out and we'll let you know just as

soon as we can—and whether—whether—we'll try to let you know how badly they're hurt. Maybe their relatives—their friends—maybe they're listening. . . . Oh, I hope not! I don't know what I'm saying! I can't go on! I—I—please excuse me! I'll try to come back just as soon as I can!"

There was no one else to take over. Gorham Jenkins had gone to the players' dressing rooms as the game ended.

Doc Martin took the mike out of Sam's hand. Sam heard him speaking, in the same low, tortured voice he had heard a moment before. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "this has been a terrible shock to us. You know that. Sam Hubbard will tell you more just as soon as he's able to talk—he'll tell you all we can find out."

Then there was silence on the air.

It had been planned that Sam should return the network to the New York studios at a quarter after four, unless the game ran beyond that time. But Sam and Doc had lost all track of time. Already, it was some minutes after four-fifteen.

Doc had barely finished speaking when his telegraph instrument began to click. Wrought up though he was, his telegrapher's instinct made him listen. Almost automatically he grasped a pencil and wrote the message. He handed it to Sam.

"Keep the air stop," it said, "do best you can under circumstances stop but do not give up until broadcast all possible details stop we are filling from here until you can resume stop do so soonest stop WTRA."

Sam pulled himself together and reached for the microphone, which Doc still held. Details—unhappy details began

to come up from the far end of the field. From his place at the opposite end of the stadium from where the plane had crashed, Harris Foster had sensed what was going on in the broadcasting booth. As quickly as he could, he sent one of the *State Journal's* reporters to Sam, with the full story of the crash and its awful results.

When Sam ended the broadcasting of that story, his nerves and his mind were still shaken with emotion; but his voice was steady.

"Mr. Hubbard," Harris Foster said to Sam later that evening, back at the local radio studio, "Mr. Hubbard, one o' my engineers here 't CQBI was recordin' your broadcast when th' accident happened. I heard th' record played back, soon 's I got here from the stadium. And I want to tell you 'twas as fine a piece of reportin' as I ever heard—or read, f'r that matter."

Sam shook his head. "I never want to hear it," he said.

"Don't s'pose y' do," said the older man. "Don't know 's I blame ya."

The next morning, every Sunday newspaper in the country carried the story of the Birmingham catastrophe; and nearly every one quoted Sam's exact words and referred to the broadcast as a remarkable accomplishment, both for Sam Hubbard and for radio—the transmission of an eyewitness account of a disaster as only one had ever been transmitted before.

But Sam and Doc Martin and Gorham Jenkins returned to New York that night with heavy hearts. All the pleasure and excitement of the game was gone. And they left a saddened Birmingham behind them.

CHAPTER XIX

Busy as a One-Armed Paper Hanger

THE dreadful experience at Birmingham haunted Sam for many months. When he was introduced to a stranger, the person introducing him would usually identify him by some such remark as, "Hubbard, you know, is the man who gave that graphic account of the Birmingham accident." Questions always followed; and Sam would have to go over the whole unpleasant affair. He got so touchy about it that he wanted to be rude. It was difficult for him not to turn on his heel and walk away from the questioners.

He was immensely relieved when people began to forget about it and he became, once more, just "one of Mike Cassidy's boys." Of course, that wasn't quite literally true: you can't talk to as many thousands of people as Sam talked to, as often as he talked to them, without achieving a degree of prominence in your own right. But at least, it was nice to be known for his announcing, and *not* because of a kind of fame that was distasteful.

Early in the summer of the following year, his sensitiveness about the Birmingham business almost caused him to refuse an opportunity that changed the entire course of his career.

He received a telephone call one morning from Miss Margaret Hutchinson, secretary to Charles W. Gilbert, the president of Transcontinental. Mr. Gilbert would like to

see Mr. Hubbard at half-past eleven.

That was no invitation. It was a summons; the kind of a summons which one obeyed—or else. Sam tried to guess what the president wanted to see him about. He asked Mike Cassidy whether *he* knew. “I have an idea,” said Mike, cryptically, “but you’d better get the story from Mr. Gilbert.” And Mike refused to be quizzed. So there was nothing for Sam to do, but to wait until half-past eleven.

Mr. Gilbert was a very busy man. The demands on his time were many and heavy. He wasted no words in preliminaries.

“Good morning, Hubbard,” he said, as Miss Hutchinson ushered Sam into his big office. Sam wished that it hadn’t been so far from the door to Gilbert’s desk at the opposite end of the long room. The president’s steady gaze, while Sam walked the distance, made him self-conscious. He felt as though his arms were very long; and his hands felt too large, and seemed to dangle awkwardly. He put them into his pockets. “Sit down,” Gilbert invited, indicating a chair beside his desk. Sam wished he *hadn’t* put his hands into his pockets; for now, he had to take them out in order to let himself down into the deep chair.

“I believe you are acquainted with the owner of Station CQBI,” said the executive.

Sam indicated that he felt very well acquainted with Harris Foster.

“I have known him for many years,” the other continued. “I have always found him to be a great fellow—he’s smart and a hard trader perhaps, but he’s always thoroughly honest and loyal to his friends.”

"I'm sure he must be," Sam agreed. "I liked him, the instant I met him."

"Good!" said Gilbert. "Foster is losing his station manager—ill health, I believe—and he wants you to take the man's place. Evidently he liked you, too."

So *that* was the reason for this summons!

Not knowing how Sam had come to feel about Birmingham, New Hampshire, Mr. Gilbert misunderstood his involuntary grimace.

"If you're hesitating because you dislike the idea of leaving Transcontinental, let me reassure you on that point: you will not be severing your connection here. We'll give you a leave of absence until you and Harris Foster are both satisfied with your bargain."

Sam told him the truth; told him how he recoiled from the very mention of Birmingham, and why he felt that way.

"Nonsense!" Gilbert exclaimed. "That's childish. I grant you, it was a tough experience; but you're not going far in this business if you let a thing like that stand in your way. You weren't responsible for the accident. You handled your part of it well. Don't be a sentimental fool!"

Sam did some quick, hard thinking. He couldn't escape the practicality of Mr. Gilbert's point of view. Very well; he *wouldn't* be a sentimental fool. He weighed his present situation against the one that offered. In some ways, he didn't like the idea of leaving the big business and the big city. He would have to make a lot of changes and adjustments. Five years ago, he knew, he would have been afraid.

He considered the reverse side of the picture: manag-

ing an associated station would put to use all the varied experience he had gathered. He'd be in charge of everything—programs, sound effects, music, news events. It was a challenge to his ability. Could he do it? He felt very confident that he could; but there would never be a better time than the present to find out for sure! And aside from all that, he felt instinctively that it would be unwise to refuse the opportunity. If he did so, his superiors might not consider him for other opportunities in the future.

“All right, Mr. Gilbert,” said Sam. “I'll go.”

“Good! I don't believe you'll regret it.” The president offered Sam his hand. “Harris Foster will be here at one o'clock. Meet us for lunch at that time and we'll arrange the details.

“And tell Mr. Cassidy to arrange for your release, at once,” he called after Sam. “You're to leave for Birmingham within the week.”

The change was made with the same swiftness that had characterized all Sam's shifts from job to job. But Sam was undisturbed; by this time he was accustomed to the sudden moves of the broadcasting business.

The first of July found him solidly installed as manager of Station CQBI. By the fifteenth, however, he had begun to wonder whether he was so *solidly* installed, after all. He had expected he'd have to make adjustments; but the revolutionary nature of the changes and the number of new things he was called upon to learn were bewildering.

In the first place, he found that he was supposed to be CQBI's entire production department. There was no Production Director except himself. However, since there were only nine local shows a week to produce, that alone

wouldn't have been so very difficult. (The balance of the station's time was filled by network shows.)

But, in the second place, he discovered that CQBI's "manager and production department" was also the head of every other department of the whole business. His entire staff consisted of a secretary, who also served as telephone operator and reception clerk, three young and relatively inexperienced announcers, a combination bookkeeper and treasurer, four engineers (also lacking in experience), and a janitor. Ten persons in all. There were four more experienced engineers at the transmitter; but they didn't count. They had to *stay* at the transmitter, working in three shifts, two men on duty at a time.

Within two weeks, Sam realized exactly why his predecessor had been forced to retire because of ill health: he hadn't been an organizer; he had tried to run the whole show, single-handed.

Organization difficulties were not Sam's only worries, either; for he found that the selling of local time was another of his responsibilities. In New York, he had never even thought of such matters. He had done his own single job thoroughly and efficiently; and had depended upon a host of other persons to do theirs, just as efficiently.

As far as the selling of programs to local merchants was concerned, he found that he could depend on helpful cooperation from Harris Foster, who knew everyone in town by his or her first name. But that was *all* he could hope for—cooperation. Mr. Foster was far too busy looking out for the fortunes of his newspaper to allow himself to be drawn into the administration of CQBI. That was the reason he had hired Sam.

Sam's first inclination was to tell the owner he would have to have a bigger staff. A comparison of the station's income with its expenditures, however, convinced him *that* suggestion wouldn't meet with a very hearty welcome from his Yankee boss.

The station was making money—but not nearly *enough* money to pay a reasonable return on the expensive equipment Harris Foster had installed. A little simple arithmetic showed Sam where the trouble lay: CQBI wasn't selling enough local time. That was all there was to it. The network commercials would just about pay expenses. The real profits would have to come from local commercial programs.

The only way to get more local commercials would be for Sam to think up new program ideas and sell them to local merchants.

Hold on, Samuel! Hold on! More local programs mean more work for the manager—and he is already working from twelve to sixteen hours a day. More work for the manager means a nervous collapse—so that's no solution!

After three weeks of backbreaking toil, the manager sat down and began to *think*; something he might well have done about two weeks earlier. And the results of his thinking were these:

“One: there's no use trying to do all the work myself. It's impossible.

“Two: what I need is organization.

“Three: I can't afford to hire more help.

“Four: my three announcers spend an average of six hours a day each, running around here, punching buttons, making station announcements and looking terrifically

busy, BUT—the fact is that they are not busy at all.

"Five: my four studio engineers demand too much supervision. They lack experience. They're always running to me with questions they should be able to answer themselves.

"Six: the transmitter engineers *are* experienced; they're doing a good job.

"Seven: the bookkeeper is just like the studio engineers—he takes up too much of my time with matters he should settle for himself.

"Eight: excepting the transmitter engineers and one of the studio men, my secretary, Miss Benson, is the best 'man' around the place.

"Nine: the janitor needs more supervision than all the rest put together—but then, if he didn't, he probably wouldn't be a small-town janitor.

"WHAT SHALL I DO ABOUT IT?"

"First: I shall appoint the senior announcer Chief of Announcers, and make him responsible for the others.

"Second: I shall appoint myself Chief of Production, and train all three announcers to double as production directors, under my supervision, until one of *them* is able to become Production Chief.

"Third: I shall arrange to have each studio engineer spend every fifth day at the transmitter, where he will be working with a more experienced man; and one of the transmitter engineers will work with the remaining three studio engineers, in the studios, each day. The senior transmitter engineer will be Chief Engineer with full responsibility.

"Fourth: I shall appoint my secretary Office Manager,

and put her in full charge of Moses Pepper, the book-keeper (whose name really ought to be 'Milquetoast'), and Joey Batey, the janitor. She shall also have charge of all stationery and office supplies.

"Fifth: I shall appoint myself Program Director, Idea Man and New Business Getter, reporting to myself.

"Sixth and last: I shall try to put these changes into effect with a minimum of injured feelings and jealousies on the parts of members of the staff; *but I will put them into effect, regardless!*"

Then Sam called a meeting of his entire staff at a quarter after twelve o'clock, midnight, of his third Saturday in Birmingham. All day Saturday, there were eyebrow raisings and speculations around the studios and transmitter of Station CQBI. It was the first time in the history of the town that a business meeting had ever been called at such an outrageous hour. But it was the *only* time when Sam could get his complete personnel together. The station did not sign off for the day until midnight.

The news leaked out around town and caused quite a furore. Everett Powers, the banker, stopped Harris Foster in the lobby of the bank after Mr. Foster had made the *State Journal's* Saturday deposit.

"What about it?" he wanted to know.

Mr. Foster chuckled delightedly. "Hadn't heard about 't!" he said. "Sorry day when a banker has t' tell a newspaper man th' news."

"Hah," exploded Mr. Powers, "it sounds to me as though you've got either a crazy man or a stem-winder in that young fellow."

"You guess which," was the rejoinder. "I haven't g't time."

The editor had left his new manager pretty much alone during his first three weeks in office. Sam had seen him only at Sam's own request—and then, at the office of the *State Journal*. Harris Foster had intended to pay Sam a visit on his way back from the bank; but news of the radio meeting made him change his mind; he decided to put off his call until Monday.

At twelve-fifteen that night, Sam called his meeting to order. When he had outlined his plans, there were several questioning glances and a few black looks. Only Jean Benson appeared to be wholeheartedly with him, at the outset. The new routine sounded like more work to all the rest; and more responsibility. They wanted neither. Or rather, at the start, they *thought* they wanted neither.

Sam was prepared for that, however. He asked them how many days off they had a week. "One," was the answer. "Well," said Sam, "I think we all ought to have two. And I propose, with your help, to see that we get them."

Harvey Chirp, the eldest of the transmitter engineers, shook his head and grumbled. "That's impossible. There isn't enough help around here even now, with *one* day off." There was general agreement from the other engineers and the announcers. Sam, observing that Harvey Chirp was the bellwether of his flock, addressed himself directly to Harvey.

"We'll have *more* help," he promised—"but only if we all pull together."

Then he shot his next question: "How long since any of you has had a raise in salary?" He already knew the

answer. He had looked it up in Moses Pepper's books, the day before. Moses started to speak, and then thought better of it. It was a habit of Moses'. He would slightly open his mouth, lean forward just a shade and raise one hand about half an inch; then he'd swallow, lean back and subside without making a sound.

"Not since we got the new transmitter, two years ago." It was Harvey who gave the answer.

"That's too long, isn't it?" Sam asked. This time the agreement was enthusiastic.

"But," stated Sam, "the only time a business can *pay* more money is when it's *making* more money. Isn't that right?"

Silence.

Then Sam laid before them his analysis of the difficulties of CQBI. The only way the station could make more money, he told them, was by selling more local time. He showed them that, in order to do this, he would have to get rid of all the supervisory work, which now took up about nine-tenths of his time—and about fifteen-tenths of his energy—so that he would be free to develop new programs, *with their help* (he was careful to emphasize that). And, so that he would be able to go out, with Mr. Foster's help, and *sell* the new programs.

"Do you think you can get his help?" Again it was Harvey Chirp.

"I'm certain of it," Sam assured him. "I've already had it every time I've asked. The trouble is, I can't ask him to help me sell anything until we've got something to sell."

"Okay, boss," said Chirp. "Sounds good to me. I'll go along with you. What do you want me to do?"

That word "boss," coming from Harvey Chirp, was worth all Sam's effort. He knew he had won his first skirmish.

"Well, Harvey," he said, "you're going to be Chief Engineer of CQBI." He was a little in doubt about using the man's first name—you couldn't be sure how these conservative New Englanders were going to react to what they might think were familiarities. But the instant he had spoken, Sam saw that Harvey liked it.

"Okay, Sam," was his reply.

With little more argument, the others fell into line.

It was then someone noticed that Joey Batey, the janitor, had fallen fast asleep. He hadn't heard a word of the discussion.

Harvey shook him roughly. "Hey, Joey," he shouted, "wake up! You're not the janitor any more!"

Joey awoke, terror in his eyes. "You mean I bin canned?"

"No," was Harvey's reply. "Now you're the *Chief Janitor*."

The others laughed so heartily that Joey decided he'd better be pleased, too.

"That's right, Joey," said Sam. "You're the Chief Janitor, reporting to Miss Benson."

"And am I going to crack the whip around your ears!" Jean threatened.

Then the brand-new organization of Station CQBI, The Voice of the Granite Hills, settled down to a business meeting that didn't break up until after three o'clock that Sunday morning.

Evans Morris was appointed to the post of Chief An-

nouncer; with Richard Parker and Ben Pritchard serving under him. "And," Sam told Evans, "when you run short of help, in emergencies, call on me; I'm your fourth man. But remember, where announcing is concerned, you're the boss: the responsibility is yours."

Ben Pritchard was to be Chief of Production, as soon as he was able to assume the mantle. Until that time, Sam would serve in that capacity.

Sam warned them all that it was going to mean longer hours and more work for everybody, until their labors bore fruit in increased income for the station. That didn't matter, they insisted. They'd work as long and as hard as he liked, when they could see that they were getting somewhere.

He left them, hoping against hope that he would be able to keep their enthusiasm at this pitch; hoping that it wasn't just a flash in the pan, fired by the sparks of a temporary zeal. He didn't want a flash. He wanted a hot, steady flame.

As soon as Sam returned from church the next morning, he flopped into his comfortable bed, at the cozy Birmingham Inn, high up in the Granite Hills. There he spent the rest of the day. He had decided to put his organization to its first test. This was the first day since his arrival in Birmingham that he had not spent at the studios of CQBI. All his associates knew where to reach him. But not one of those on duty called him. By Jove, he believed they were already accepting the responsibility he had given them! He was vastly encouraged.

Early Monday morning, Harris Foster dropped into Sam's office on his way to the *State Journal*. He found

Sam dictating to Miss Benson a program idea which he proposed to sell to the Bon Ton Department Store. Sam said nothing about it to the old gentleman. He wasn't ready yet. And Foster showed no curiosity. He was a Yankee. He could wait.

"Hear you had a bus'ness meetin' t'other night," he said, as Sam interrupted his dictation.

Sam told him what he had decided and what he had done.

"Sounds practical," said Foster. "Ought t' work."

Sam waited for him to continue, but he seemed to have nothing more to say; so at last, Sam broke the silence:

"I—ah—I wondered why you hadn't been in to see us here. You know this is your first visit since the day I got here."

"Nothin' t' come for."

"I thought perhaps you didn't approve of what I was doing," Sam tried to draw him out.

"Couldn't see 't you were doin' *anythin'* th' other fellow wasn't doin'." Mr. Foster never referred to his late manager except as "the other fellow."

Sam smiled. "Perhaps I wasn't, until now. But I guess your apparent lack of interest had me a little bit discouraged."

The old gentleman's eyes twinkled. "Did y' think I'd gone off an' left ya, in over your depth? Well," he said, "I wasn't goin' t' let y' drown—I just wanted t' see how many times you'd go down. Now, I don't believe you're goin' down at all."

CHAPTER XX

Birmingham Programs for Birmingham People

HARRIS FOSTER had said of Sam's organization plan: "Sounds practical." But, in spite of its seeming practicality, the machine developed an annoying number of squeaks and rattles in its first few months of operation. Sam found himself working almost as many hours a day as when he first took over the management of the station. He was rarely able to take a day off—even a Sunday. He found, too, that an organization is something like the movement of a watch: all its members may be very good wheels and cogs, but it will not go without a mainspring; and he discovered that, in this organization, Samuel Hubbard had to be the mainspring.

So, no matter how much he wanted to spend his time working on salable program ideas—or in trying to sell them—he had to spend too large a part of it in overseeing the work of his staff.

Then, though Sam did his best to make a Chief Announcer out of Evans Morris, he finally had to admit that he had picked the wrong man for the job. Evans simply could not—or would not—accept responsibility. And, to his surprise, Sam began to see that the quiet, almost retiring Ben Pritchard was far more capable and trustworthy than Morris.

After four months of harrowing near-disasters—shows almost missed, local announcements neglected because

Morris had forgotten to assign Dick Parker or Ben Pritchard to cover them—Sam called Evans Morris in one evening and told him, as diplomatically as he could, that he thought Evans would be happier in a regular announcer's job—that he wasn't cut out for the executive part of a Chief Announcer's work.

There are times when the most adroit diplomacy is to no avail—as every ambassador and diplomatist knows. And this was one of those times. Morris sulked as Sam outlined his plan for reorganizing the announcers' department, placing Ben Pritchard at its head. Then, when Sam had finished, Morris told him flatly that he would not work under the other man. The manager of Station CQBI was faced with a quick decision. His authority was threatened.

Pritchard was the youngest of the three announcers. Would Richard Parker also refuse to work for him? If he did, and if both he and Morris were to resign their jobs, the station would be left with just two announcers: Ben Pritchard and Sam, himself.

But Sam could not back down. That he knew. If he did, he might as well resign. The die was cast. He would just have to let it roll and hope for luck.

"Evans," he said, "I wish you'd think the matter over for a day or two. I think you'll agree with me this is a good idea."

There was no need to think it over, Evans told him. He would not work for either Ben or Dick Parker. It wasn't fair to ask him to; they had both come to CQBI long after he had. "I keep on as Chief Announcer—or I quit!"

"Then you quit," said Sam quietly. "If you change your mind before morning, let me know. Otherwise, Moses Pep-

per will give you a month's advance salary, next Saturday; and you need not come back to work tomorrow."

Morris' face flushed with anger. His hand tightened around a paperweight with which he had been toying. His knuckles grew white.

Sam didn't know what was going to happen. Without moving a muscle, he braced himself.

For what seemed minutes to Sam, neither man moved. Then, slamming the paperweight viciously down on the desk, the announcer sprang to his feet and stood over Sam, glaring savagely. Still, Sam forced himself to sit perfectly motionless. Nerves taut, he waited.

And then—

The air was fairly rent by the other's bellow:

"*You* can't fire me! *You*—" What he called Sam wasn't fit to repeat.

Sam tried to explain that he *hadn't* fired him—that Morris had quit; that even now, he might reconsider his decision if he wanted to. But Morris was too angry to listen.

"*You* can't fire me!" he repeated. "Harris Foster *hired* me; and nobody but him can fire me! We'll see who's boss around here!"

Sam relaxed. He felt pretty sure he needn't fear physical violence from a man who was yelling like that. The other's tirade continued.

"I'm going to Mr. Foster tonight! At his home! I'll find out whether any smart little upstart from New York can run this place into the ground!" Sam wanted to smile. He was at least as large as Morris, if not a little larger. And he wondered if the announcer knew he came from Athens, Ohio—a town of about one-quarter the size of Birmingham.

But he sat quietly, to let the rage wear itself out. This rage, however, seemed inexhaustible. For a long time, it continued, with threats, imprecations and charges of managerial incompetency.

At last, Morris stamped to the door and, turning, delivered his parting shot: "I'll tell you something else, too—you smart Alec: my mother is Harris Foster's own cousin. Maybe *that* will give you something to think about!"

He was right. It *did* give Sam something to think about. From all he had seen of Harris Foster, he couldn't believe the old gentleman would let personal relationships interfere with business efficiency. "But you never can tell," he warned himself. He'd heard that New Englanders are a clannish people. Perhaps the owner *would* take sides with his kinsman, right or wrong. If he actually did so, that would be the end of Samuel Hubbard, as far as CQBI was concerned.

Late into the evening, he sat at his desk, thinking. What had he better do? He wished Mr. Foster would call him up and end the suspense; but no call came. He knew Morris' screaming voice must have been heard by Dick Parker and the two engineers who were on duty. How would his staff react to this situation? No one came in to give him an idea of the answer.

Well, he couldn't sit still and do nothing. He now had only two announcers. Not enough to operate the station. *He* would have to act as the third, until he could replace Morris—unless, in fact, Mr. Foster supported Morris and replaced Sam. Until that happened, however, Sam must not even think of it as a possibility.

At length, he made up his mind. He put in a long-

distance call for New York. Luck was with him. Something had kept Mike Cassidy at the Transcontinental studios. Never had Sam heard a sound as welcome as Mike's cheery voice. How was everything in Birmingham? Fine, Sam told him—except that he had just lost one of his announcers (he didn't tell Mike anything about the circumstances)—and could Mike send him a man to take the other's place?

Sure he could, said Mike. He'd try to get him on the midnight train. Did Sam want the loan of a man; or did he want him permanently?

"I guess I'd better just borrow him," Sam replied, "because I think I ought to hire a native son for the permanent job. The rest of the boys here might resent my hiring someone from 'the big town.'"

"We've got exactly the man for you," Mike said. "Comes from Manchester, New Hampshire; working in our Boston studio right now; and he's been after a job in the home state for a month or more."

"That's great!" Sam cried. "Is he any good?"

Mike laughed. "You big stiff!" he chuckled. "Do you think we'd send him to you if he weren't?" And he told Sam the new man, Calvin Barton, would be on a night train from Boston if Mike could reach him that night. Otherwise, he'd come as early as he could in the morning.

"Good-by and good luck," Mike called through the phone. Sam heard the click of the receiver with regret. He wished he could have kept Mike on the wire, and told him all his troubles.

For his sense of relief was not complete. It was marred by his uncertainty about what Mr. Foster was going to

do. He spent a restless and wakeful night.

Next morning, almost simultaneously with the arrival of Calvin Barton, came a messenger from the *State Journal*, with an envelope addressed to "Mr. Samuel Hubbard, Manager, CQBI." Sam opened it with many misgivings.

"Dear Sam," read the longhand note inside—"Sorry to hear you've lost your Chief Announcer. Let me know if I can be of any help in the emergency this must have caused you. [Signed] H. F."

And then, "P.S., I'm a little bit ashamed of the Foster stock—must be a screw loose somewhere—on the Morris side of the family—I hope!"

Along with the glow of affection he felt for Harris Foster, Sam was a trifle ashamed of his earlier doubts of the old man's staunch support. CQBI had seen the last of Evans Morris.

Sam's fears about the loyalty of the other members of his organization also were set at rest that morning. They called on him in a body to tell him they approved of his action.

Dick Parker remained for a moment after the others had left. "Sam," he said, "I know I'm senior announcer now—"

Sam's elation departed. Here was the trouble he had feared—jealousy on Dick's part, when he learned that Ben Pritchard was going to be appointed to Evans Morris' job. The beleaguered manager braced himself for another battle, as Dick went on:

"But, if you don't mind," said Dick, "I wish you wouldn't make me Chief Announcer. I'm not any good at that kind of thing—and I know it. Ben Pritchard is, though.

Give the job to him, will you?"

Sam wanted to give three cheers for Dick Parker. He almost blurted out the truth: that that had been his intention all along. Then, in the nick of time, he realized that here was a situation in which diplomacy would work to advantage. He knew he had looked surprised at Parker's proposal. But Dick needn't know why he was surprised. Let him think what he pleased.

Sam said, "Why, Dick, it's mighty good of you to tell me—if that's the way you feel."

Dick nodded.

"You've probably prevented me from making another mistake. So, if you say Ben is the man for the job, the job is his.

"And," Sam added, "suppose you tell him. . . . Then send him in to me."

Dick Parker's relief and pleasure were written all over his face. Sam knew that a ticklish situation, by sheer good luck, had turned into a victory.

Evans Morris' going seemed to be the turning point in the affairs of the station. Up to the night of his leaving, Sam had been able to see very little result from his efforts to expand the business. But on the day of Calvin Barton's arrival, the owner of the Bon Ton Department Store suddenly decided to buy the program Sam had offered him several months before.

The idea of this program, Harris Foster assured Sam, was a stroke of genius. It was merely the broadcasting, for an hour each week, of the weekly meeting of the Birmingham Woman's Club. But how the ladies took to it!

Nearly every customer or prospective customer of the

Bon Ton was a member of the Club—or wanted to be. The broadcast gave the members a chance to publicize the weekly talk of one of their number, a different one each week. And usually, the talks concerned subjects of vital local interest. Moreover, the twenty-five dollars which the Bon Ton paid into the Woman's Club treasury for each program, without any extra work on the part of its members, was like manna from heaven! The husbands of the members, too, hailed Sam as a public benefactor. This regular income cut down the size and frequency of the wifely demands for money to support the Club.

Sam found a local girl to read the Bon Ton's commercial announcements. This worked out well, too. She was popular; and she read the announcements quite satisfactorily. She had studied dramatics at a near-by women's college.

Business boomed at the Bon Ton. Sam's first local commercial program was a great success.

From it, he took his cue for others. With Harris Foster's help (in the form of much publicity in the columns of the *State Journal*) Sam established a policy of "Birmingham Programs for Birmingham People."

The only good local musical organization was the Birmingham Choral Society; and, to his surprise, Sam found that it contained a number of voices which would have done credit to any chorus, anywhere. Here was another local society which needed funds. Tactfully, he broached to its members the idea of a commercial broadcast. They were doubtful. It didn't seem quite dignified. Sam told them he thought he had a sponsor in mind who would be quite in keeping with the dignity of the Society and its

music—and he thought the Society’s programs would be entirely in keeping with the dignity of the sponsor’s business. He was thinking, he said, of the “Birmingham Bank and Trust Company, Everett Powers, President.”

Selling the idea to Mr. Powers was not so easy. But, with Harris Foster’s aid again, Sam succeeded. That was new local program number two.

Then there was the college-boy orchestra that played dance and dinner music out at the Birmingham Inn, all summer long. Before the next summer came, Sam had contracted with the Granite State Bottling Works to sponsor a nightly program of college swing music, to advertise its soft drinks.

Another active Birmingham group was the Little Theater Guild. For a long time, Sam tried to think of a way to capitalize on their activities. It was difficult, because the Guild gave only four performances each season—and no advertiser would want to sponsor anything so infrequent or irregular. At last, however, Sam hit upon a perfect plan:

He wrote to Fletcher Gordon, Transcontinental’s Continuity Editor, and asked if CQBI could buy the right to broadcast, locally, a daily children’s dramatic program which was being sent from WTRA to other stations on the network, but which had never been aired over CQBI—nor, in fact, anywhere in New England. All Sam would need would be copies of the scripts. He would use local actors and actresses. He couldn’t afford to pay much for the scripts, he said, but, he pointed out, whatever the author of the series got for it would be “just so much gravy.” He had guessed correctly that the author would be delighted.

Although the members of the Little Theater Guild were not experienced radio performers, Sam felt sure that with proper direction they could be made to do a good piece of work with the program.

Again, he had guessed shrewdly; and that program was sold on a year-round basis, to the Sugar Maple Farm Dairy Company—to advertise dairy products, in the winter time, and Sugar Maple Satin Brand Ice Cream, during the summer.

Things were humming at Station CQBI. Within a year, the income from local shows had been more than quadrupled. Sam had hired an extra announcer and two more engineers. He had given Jean Benson an assistant. Everyone in the business was taking two days a week off.

Now the daily Dairy program, which required so much direction, compelled the manager to employ another production director.

Ben Pritchard had taken hold of his new job like a veteran. Rarely was Sam called on, even to help out in emergencies. Harvey Chirp, in the engineering end, was as dependable as the sun, itself. The only engineering problems Sam ever heard about were those that involved the purchase of new equipment—or the expenditure of money for telephone lines, such as the weekly line to the Woman's Club to pick up the Bon Ton broadcast; or the permanent line to pick up the nightly Varsity Swing show from the ballroom of Birmingham Inn.

Every member of the staff was on his toes—alive to the pulsing of new activity. Even Moses Pepper showed the effect of the change. Before, he had been practically stationary. Now, under the spurring of Jean Benson, he was

occasionally seen to move. And Joey Batey appeared each Monday and Thursday morning in a freshly laundered, smart blue denim uniform, instead of the dirty, tattered pair of overalls that had been his only badge of janitorship under the previous manager.

There was one thing which, Sam felt, couldn't wait upon greatly increased profits. That was a raise in pay for each of the old employees. As soon as he saw how they were all taking hold—and long before the increased income really justified it—Sam went to Mr. Foster and proposed the raises. He explained that he needed to give these loyal workers evidence of his intention to keep his promises. (That was before he had been able to put into effect the “two days off” rule.) “Why, sure,” said Harris Foster. “Go ahead and raise 'em. Immedyt profits don't matter, s' long 's we c'n see things movin' in th' right direction.” That had been a week before Christmas. Christmas morning, they all got news of their raises. If they had been loyal to their new manager before that, afterward they were ready to fight, bleed and die for him!

The increased liveliness of Station CQBI had another effect, which Sam had not counted on. Reports of its growing influence in the community traveled fast; and reached the ears of advertising agencies in New York and Boston; in Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago. And soon, Station CQBI began to be added to Transcontinental Network shows whose sponsors previously had not considered the Birmingham station worth while. This brought added profits to the business, without appreciably increasing the cost of running it.

By late spring, the organization was recognized as a

force in Birmingham. Sam, as its head, was asked to join the local Rotary Club. Birmingham had taken the outsider to its heart. The cautious banker, Everett Powers, proposed him for membership in the exclusive Granite Country Club and—even more remarkable—invited him to dinner at his home.

That was when Sam met Everett Powers' daughter, Martha, whose wide acquaintance in the town helped Sam to meet, socially, everybody he needed to know in business. It was she who introduced him to the younger people at the Country Club; and she who suggested his leaving the Inn and moving to the Club to live.

Martha Powers was a "grand egg," Sam told himself. She played a fast, hard game of tennis. She taught Sam golf, which he had never played before; but which he needed now, as a part of his business equipment. He was far too busy to give time enough to the game to play it well. But so were most of the local business men with whom he played occasionally; so that didn't matter.

Sam enjoyed the dinners at the banker's house. Martha's mother, like Sam's father, had died when she was a small child; and that had made her relationship with her father a close one—a good deal like Sam's relationship with his mother. The similarity made Sam feel very much at home at the Powers dinner table.

There was just one disadvantage in this relationship: Martha was a very rich girl with lots of time on her hands. Sam was, by comparison, a very poor boy with practically no time at all for play. In addition to her father's wealth, Martha was rich in her own right, through inheritances from her mother and her grandmother. She couldn't under-

stand Sam's refusal to join her in expensive pastimes, as long as she was willing to pay the bills. "Poor but proud!" she jokingly called him. Finally, however, she accepted the situation—uncomplainingly let Sam refuse to do the things he couldn't afford, and the things he didn't have time for.

Nevertheless, busy as he had been during that long winter in Birmingham and the spring which followed, Sam wasn't altogether happy. He missed the friends in New York; missed the companionship of Bill Dickson and the homelike quality of the little apartment on Stuyvesant Square. Not even the magnificent view down the Granite Valley from his room at the Country Club, made up for that; nor the fact that the room at the Club was more convenient and much more elaborately furnished than the "Manor" had been.

But, most of all, he missed Helen Chambers. There was nothing in Birmingham that could take the place of those stimulating conversations which had meant so much to Sam during his whole stay in New York. Often, as he finished a late job at CQBI, he would wish that he could run down to Barrow Street for a midnight snack—accompanied by a lively argument about his work or hers. Once or twice he had actually reached for the phone to call Helen, before awakening to the fact that Barrow Street was four hundred and fifty-seven miles away.

Of course, it was great to get her frequent letters; and he liked writing to her, too—telling her about his problems, his mistakes, his victories, the shows that flopped and the shows that succeeded. But writing to Helen and getting letters from her was a weak substitute for the delightful

times they had had together. Skillful writer though she had become, she wasn't entirely able to put her vivid personality into her letters; nor her ready wit; nor her infectious laughter. No, thought Sam—nor her darned attractive face!

He wished he had a picture of her.

CHAPTER XXI

Anchored to Birmingham

THE late New England spring had barely turned to summer, suddenly—as it always does in the New Hampshire hills—when CQBI's owner and most ardent supporter threw a bombshell right into the midst of Sam's plans.

Harris Foster sold the *State Journal*.

And, worse still, he announced to Sam his intention of selling the radio station. That threat sent poor Sam into a frenzy, until Mr. Foster explained that he was going to offer CQBI to Charles W. Gilbert, the president of Transcontinental.

That wasn't quite so bad as having the station get into strange hands. And yet, it would mean that Sam and his associates would become a part of a big, nationwide organization. "A cog in a machine once more," thought Sam, "instead of virtually a king in a little empire of my own."

Twelve months ago, he had never imagined he'd ever leave the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company. And many a time he had wished he hadn't left, during the early days in Birmingham. But, now that he had got things rolling so beautifully, he almost resented the prospect of running the affairs of CQBI under a set of inflexible rules laid down by the executives in New York.

Mr. Foster half apologized to Sam when he told him his plans. "You see, Sam," he said, "Lucy hasn't been s'well

this past winter." Lucy was Mrs. Foster. "Jim and Prudence're both married and livin' out t' California. Natur'ly, Lucy'd like to be near 'em—an' Doc Petty says 'twould be good for her health."

He sighed. "Besides that, I ain't so young as I used to be, myself. Lucy wants f'r me t' retire and do a little travelin' with her, before we settle down. And—well—I kin; I've got money enough; so why shouldn't I?" He ended a trifle defiantly, as though he feared the younger man might not approve of his retirement. Sam suspected that Harris Foster didn't entirely approve of it, himself. So he reassured him.

"Why, you should!" he told him, enthusiastically. "Of course you should! And I hope you and Mrs. Foster have a grand time traveling. . . . But don't think we aren't going to miss you here."

"Son," said the old gentleman with deep conviction, "don't you think f'r a minit, 't I'm not going to miss bein' here. I reckon th't, more 'n anythin' in my whole business career, I've enjoyed seein' you put ginger int' this little one-hoss radio station."

Sam started to object to the belittling term. He had come to feel that CQBI was his "baby," and any word of criticism of the station made him want to jump to its defense. But the old man motioned him to silence.

"'Twas a one-hoss station. Don't you think I knew that? But 'tain't now—or leastwise, 'tain't agoin' t' be, 'f you keep on th' way you've started." Then, with scarcely a pause, he went on: "Now you listen t' me: I just g't through tellin' y'u I was goin' t' offer t' sell t' Charlie Gilbert. How's that strike y'u?"

"Fine," Sam assured him. "Next to having you own the

station, I'd rather have Transcontinental own it than anyone I can think of."

"That so?" questioned Mr. Foster. "*Anybody?*" He emphasized the word to give it a special significance.

"What do you mean by that?" Sam asked him.

"We-e-ll," drawled the other, "I said 't I was goin' t' offer it t' Charlie—an' I am—unless anybody else wants t' buy 't." He paused and eyed Sam. Then, "You, f'r instance," he finished.

Sam nearly laughed in his face.

"I! Why, Mr. Foster, I could no more buy CQBI than I could fly! The equipment alone is worth five times as much as I could beg, borrow or even steal! And, with the business we've got now, the station is worth a lot more than that!"

"Yep," said Harris Foster. "I figger it's wuth about seventy-five thousand—mebbe more. . . . But I'll be lucky to get fifty for it."

"Why?" Sam demanded.

"Because I want t' sell," the canny trader told him. "'F th' other fellow wanted t' buy, I might be able t' get a hundred. D'ye see?"

"Now, I tell y'u what I'll do," he said. "I'll sell out t' you f'r forty-five thousand—on any kind o' terms y'u want to name. How's that?"

"It's generous!" said Sam. "It's—it's practically a gift. I—honestly don't know what to say to you."

"Th'n don't say anythin'—think it over." And, abruptly, he left Sam to think.

Think Sam did, with an intensity that surpassed that of any thinking he had ever done in his whole life.

At that price, the station was a bargain. There was no question about that. "Any kind of terms you want to name." Well, he might be able to swing it. He did a swift bit of mental arithmetic. His savings of the past seven years now amounted to nearly four thousand eight hundred dollars. He could make a down payment of four thousand and still have eight hundred for working capital.

No. No, that wouldn't do. That wasn't nearly enough. Why! The weekly payroll was more than that. He couldn't afford to pay more than twenty-five hundred dollars down. That would leave him owing forty-two thousand five hundred dollars to Mr. Foster.

Whew! A lot of money!

Debt! A word his mother had always taught him to fear.

Yes, but this was a different kind of debt. This might be the big opportunity of his life. He wondered. Perhaps it would be a good idea to get someone else's advice. Before he did so, however, he decided to think over the darkest possible side of the picture. What were the disadvantages?

For one thing, the *State Journal* had been sold. From now on, the newspaper would be a competitor of the station—not its ally.

Then, of course, the debt was a disadvantage. Maybe it wouldn't be wise for him to saddle himself with such a burden, at his age. And yet, if not while he was young, then when?

Another thought popped into his head at this point: what about the selling of programs? Until a year ago he

had had no selling experience whatever. It was true, he had sold a lot of local programs in the past year. But, in every case he had had the shrewd advice and the powerful assistance of Harris Foster. Could he continue to do alone what he had been able to do with that old gentleman's ample backing? He believed he could—but there was no way of being sure.

At last, he determined to take counsel with others. He would run down to New York over the week end and talk with Mike Cassidy—and Helen Chambers.

Some local advice might be good, too. He'd get it.

Suiting the action to the thought, he called up the Birmingham Bank and Trust Company and asked for its president, Everett Powers.

"Certainly, Sam. Be glad to talk to you. Come right on over."

Dinner parties and occasional golf games with the banker had made Sam feel very well acquainted with him. Their relationship at the Club and in the Powers home had become quite informal. Powers, Sam thought, was the least bankerlike banker he had ever met. There was nothing cold, austere or forbidding in his manner. But then, Sam hadn't met many bankers.

That afternoon, Everett Powers' greeting was as cordial and hearty as ever. And his manner remained as informal—until Sam disclosed what he had come to talk about. Then the banker might have drawn a curtain over his personality—so complete was the change. Instead of a warm, welcoming friend, he became a hard-headed, impersonal business man. Asking questions, stating facts, drawing conclusions as coldly as though he had never set eyes

on Sam before.

The net result of the conversation, however, left Sam exactly where he had been before he came: with a decision to make for himself. Nothing the banker said either added to, or subtracted from, Sam's own analysis. Powers had a way of saying things, though, that seemed to magnify all the disadvantages that Sam had thought of, and to minimize the favorable things.

"You say you've had just this one year of general business experience," he said, at last. Sam admitted that was true. "Then I think you're embarking on a pretty ambitious undertaking, all alone. . . . Remember, you won't have the support of a smart business man like Harris Foster."

Sam had been all over that, already.

"One more thing," said Powers, as though to close the interview: "if you've come to me to learn whether the bank will lend you money, why, yes, we will, on proper security, just as we would lend money to any other Birmingham business man, as long as your business is in a healthy condition."

That "on proper security" didn't sound very good to Sam. If he bought CQBI, he wouldn't have any security at all. Suppose he found that he needed to borrow money for operating expenses that he couldn't now foresee? Without security, he couldn't get the loans.

Sam was about to thank the banker for his advice and take his departure, when Martha Powers came gaily into her father's office.

"My goodness!" she cried. "You two certainly look serious! What goes on?"

"Don't interrupt us," her father told her. "We're talking business."

"Your business is my business," sang Martha, paraphrasing the old popular song, as she perched on the arm of Mr. Powers' chair. "What *is* this weighty matter, Sam?" she demanded. "You'll have to tell me, because Father thinks I'm too young to talk about anything heavier than spring fashions."

So Sam told her.

"Hurray!" she crowed. "Tell him to buy it, Dad—it'll anchor him to Birmingham; and that's just what we want. All of us out at the Club have been afraid he'd fold up his tent some dark night and steal away—back to New York, where he came from."

Sam threw a quick look at Martha.

Her father laughed and slipped his arm around her waist. "I'm afraid," he said, "that Sam will have to decide for himself."

Neither Everett Powers nor Martha knew it, but Sam had already decided for himself—not five seconds ago. It was Martha's innocent remark that had decided him: "It'll anchor him to Birmingham!" If Martha had wanted to drive Sam *out* of Birmingham, she couldn't have chosen words better suited to the purpose.

In the instant after she uttered the words, Sam remembered back seven years, to the day of his graduation from Ohio University, in the beautiful town of Athens, where he had spent most of the twenty-one years of his life. He remembered his unswervable determination to get to New York, and to make his mark there.

Well, he had got to New York; and while he may not

have "made his mark" in quite the sense he had thought of doing, nevertheless he certainly had made a start in the right direction—he'd made a perceptible scratch, at the very least.

Anchored to Birmingham!

All the old homesickness surged over him. The yearning for his friends. The wish that he could sit tonight in the window overlooking Stuyvesant Square. The longing for an evening with Bill Dickson and Emmet Carson; with Gardner Strong and Bradford Blevins and all the other Transcontinental announcers. The positive hunger for a dish of ham and eggs in Barrow Street at midnight.

Anchored to Birmingham? He guessed not! Birmingham was a great little town. He liked it a lot; and liked all the friends he had made there. He'd be glad to stay as long as the management of Transcontinental wanted him to. But sooner or later, Sam knew as certainly as he knew anything, he must get back to New York; back to the hustle and bustle of bigger affairs than Birmingham would ever know.

He told Everett Powers how very much he appreciated his kindness. He waved a cheery parting salute to Martha and made a beeline for Harris Foster's house, as fast as his legs would carry him.

Mr. Foster couldn't quite understand, from what Sam said, what had caused him to make up his mind so quickly. However, the old man took the decision philosophically. "I don't see exactly how you figure, Sam," he said. "I thought 'twas a great opportunity f'r y'u. But, like 's not, you know best: you must have your reasons f'r not buyin'

—same's I got mine f'r sellin'."

And that night, he wrote to his friend Charlie Gilbert, offering to sell CQBI to Transcontinental for a cash price just five thousand dollars higher than the offer he had made to Sam.

CHAPTER XXII

Fifteen Thousand Dollar a Day Man

THE Harris Fosters of Birmingham, New Hampshire, had kept up what was, for that thrifty New England community, quite an elaborate establishment. During the last twenty years, for instance, they had been one of Birmingham's half dozen or so "two-car families." For social purposes, they had—or rather, Mrs. Foster had—a big chauffeur-driven sedan; and for his own use, Harris Foster drove a businesslike, inexpensive little coupé.

When he decided to sell the *State Journal* and Station CQBI, and retire, many a fortunate Birminghamite had a chance to acquire one or another of the Foster possessions at a bargain price that was enough to delight even a Yankee's heart.

To Sam Hubbard's fortunate lot fell the opportunity to buy the little coupé, which had been new the previous September, for less than the "trade-in" price that Mr. Foster could have got for it. Sam had wanted a car for a long time. He had felt that he could afford one. But, in New York, he just hadn't been able to bring himself to pay the high garage rent. It had seemed like a needless luxury. He had figured it was cheaper to use taxicabs when he had to get quickly to places where the subways wouldn't take him; and to rent a "drive-yourself" for outings in the country.

Now, in Birmingham, though, with summer coming on,

he really needed the little bus: to get back and forth from the Country Club; to visit near-by towns, where some of CQBI's sponsors were located; and to run quickly, from place to place, in Birmingham, itself.

It made Sam feel like very much of a plutocrat to say, "I'll drive right over," or, "Wait just a minute, till I get my car." And also, he had looked forward to driving Helen Chambers around the New Hampshire countryside during her vacation, which she had agreed to spend at Birmingham Inn. Sam's glowing descriptions of the beauties of the state had made her curious to see it for herself.

Then, less than a week before she was to have arrived, the managing editor of the *Intelligencer* had asked her to investigate and write a series of articles about the city government's administration of its relief funds—and her vacation had to be postponed until fall.

It was a deep disappointment to Sam. "That's always the way!" he thought. "The things you've planned on most get snatched away from you at the last minute!" And the affairs of the radio station promised to keep him so busy that he couldn't plan on running down to New York to see Helen and his other friends, even for a week end. He'd have to be content with Helen's letters—and with Denis Christie's and Bill Dickson's—for his contacts with the city, that summer.

Of course, there would be plenty of local good times that Sam could enjoy, with the younger set at the Country Club; but Martha Powers' unconscious warning, "anchor him to Birmingham," had made Sam almost afraid to become too much a part of local society: he was afraid the little town might "get him"; that he might really be-

come a native son, though an adopted one.

For almost two weeks after Mr. Foster sent his offer to sell CQBI to Transcontinental, Sam heard nothing further about the deal. But at last the old gentleman came into Sam's office one morning and, with a shrug, threw a letter on his desk. "Read that," he said.

It was a letter from his friend, Charlie Gilbert—Charles W. Gilbert, President of the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company:

"My dear Harris:" it read—"I have delayed answering your recent letter in order to discuss your proposal with some of my associates. Now, having done so, I must tell you that we feel we cannot accept your proposition.

"Please do not misunderstand me. This is not an attempt to dicker with you on price. CQBI is an excellent 'buy' at the figure you name; and, if we were in the market for additional stations, we would be glad to pay it.

"Our refusal is based solely on a question of policy. We feel that it is inadvisable for us to own more network stations than we own at present. To do so might place an additional weapon in the hands of some of our political critics, who already claim that we are operating a monopoly.

"We feel that we are in a much healthier position when as many as possible of our network stations are independently owned and operated.

"I heartily sympathize with your wish to retire. You have certainly earned a rest; and I'm sorry I cannot help you out beyond promising to keep on the lookout for a buyer for you. CQBI is a valuable property, and it should not be hard to find one; though I must warn you that it is going to be difficult to find anyone as satisfactory to

us, as a station owner, as you have always been.

“Remember me to young Hubbard, and tell him we hear good reports of his activities.

“Regretting that I cannot comply with your wishes, I remain,

“Sincerely, your friend,

“[Signed] Charles W. Gilbert

“President.”

Sam laid down the letter and looked up at Harris Foster. “I’m sorry, Mr. Foster,” he said.

“Daggone it,” said Foster, testily, “’f I didn’t *want* t’ sell, they’d be a dozen buyers after me. And Charlie Gilbert expects me not to sell until I find a buyer th’t’s satisfact’ry t’ *him!* That’s carrying friendship too far, strikes me!”

He looked steadily at Sam for some moments, in silence. Sam knew what was in his mind.

“L’k here, Sam,” he said at last, “whyn’t you change y’r mind? Whyn’t *you* buy it? I betcha y’ could count on Charlie Gilbert’s support ’f y’ wanted t’ do ’t.”

Sam shook his head. “No, Mr. Foster,” he said. “I’m sure it wouldn’t be wise for me. . . . I’ll be glad to run the station for *you*, as long as you want me to; but I don’t want to own it—because, sooner or later, I’m sure I’m going to have an opportunity in New York that I’ll want to accept.”

The instant after he had spoken, Sam was sorry he had added that; for Harris Foster picked up the letter at once, turned on his heel and, as he paused at the door, said over his shoulder, “Humph! Some folks don’t know when they’re well off!”

And never again did he mention the ownership of Station CQBI to Sam.

Three months passed. Summer was coming to its end when, on the Friday before Labor Day, Mr. Foster came into the studios with a man who was a stranger to Sam. He was a spruce-looking fellow in his late forties. He looked vaguely familiar, as though he and Sam had met somewhere, a long time ago. But, if they had, Sam couldn't remember where it had been or under what circumstances.

Since Sam was busy, preparing for the holiday week end (he wanted to give time off to as many of his staff as possible), Mr. Foster made no effort to introduce his companion. The two men merely looked into Sam's office, and then went on into the studios. They'd be back, Sam supposed. But they didn't come, and in the rush of work, he soon forgot them.

By half-past five, his work was finished and he was ready to jump into the little coupé and whirl out to the Country Club to meet Martha Powers for a fast set of singles. Then a refreshing shower—and dinner with Martha, on the terrace overlooking the golf course and Granite Valley, stretching off beyond in the deepening twilight. Sam was feeling highly satisfied with life.

Dinner finished, he had just arranged to take Martha to the club dance the next evening when their waiter came to tell Sam a gentleman was calling to see him. "A Mr. Chirp," the waiter told him.

Harvey Chirp, Sam's chief engineer. Harvey had called him on the telephone occasionally in the past, when something had happened at the transmitter or at the studios, about which he needed to talk to him; but never before

had he come to the Country Club. What could the matter be? It must be something important.

Sam excused himself and left Martha with other friends who were dining on the terrace. He found Harvey Chirp waiting for him in the lobby. Could Harvey talk to him in private? As he guided the engineer to his room, Sam's curiosity mounted.

"You notice anything unusual, downtown, today?" Harvey asked, when the door was closed.

No. Sam hadn't noticed anything special. Why did he ask?

"Well, out to the transmitter, late this P.M.," Harvey told him, "I did!" Evidently he was enjoying his mysteriousness, for he waited for Sam to prod him with a question.

"All right, Harvey—what was it you saw?"

Harvey gave question for question. "How do you think you're going to like working for the Mammoth Broadcasting Corporation?" he asked.

Sam laughed. "I'm not going to work for Mammoth," he assured the other.

"Then you better be looking for a new job," stated the engineer with conviction.

"Take off your whiskers and come out from behind the mystery, Harvey," said Sam. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"Late today," Harvey said, "like I told you—the boss had a guy out to the transmitter. . . ."

He didn't need to say any more. Something clicked in Sam Hubbard's brain. He remembered the man who had looked into his room that afternoon. He remembered where

he had seen him before.

He had seen his picture in the newspapers.

The man was Ellis Bridgman, head of the Mammoth Broadcasting Corporation, Transcontinental's greatest rival. Harvey Chirp's confirmation wasn't needed.

Had Mr. Foster told Harvey that Mammoth was going to buy CQBI?

No, he hadn't. He'd just introduced Harvey to Mr. Bridgman. But Harvey knew Foster wanted to sell the station—everybody knew that—so he was putting two and two together. "Yes," thought Sam, "and getting FOUR for an answer!" There could be no doubt about it; that's what was in the wind.

Sam forgot all about Martha Powers. He forgot all about everything save a determination to avert this disaster. IT MUST NOT HAPPEN—and that's all there was to it! He thanked Harvey and asked him not to give a hint of his suspicion to anyone else. Then he streaked for his car and violated the speed laws of the State of New Hampshire and the Town of Birmingham—getting back to his office, in the studio building. He didn't want even the telephone operator at the Club to know anything about the calls he was about to make.

Arrived at the station, he went to the telephone board and plugged a wire into his own office. There was no one at the board. Both Jean Benson and her assistant had been freed for the week end. Sam wasn't sorry. This was a private matter and he wanted to keep it private.

He gave the central operator Harris Foster's number—and waited. For a long time, nothing happened. Then, at last, came a voice Sam recognized as that of Josey Sparks,

the Fosters' housemaid. Josey was sorry, Mr. Sam, but Mr. Foster wasn't there. No, sir, he didn't say where he was going. Yes, sir, he left in the car, with another gentleman and Mrs. Foster. No, sir, the "shofure" hadn't come back, so she couldn't find out anything from him; and nobody had told her how long they would be gone.

Sam hung up while she was still talking. He didn't want to be rude—but Josey just loved the telephone, and rarely got a call of her own, so she made the most of other people's calls whenever she had a chance. Anyway, Sam figured, she would think he had been cut off when she finally discovered he was no longer at the other end of the line.

As quickly as he could, he tried half a dozen other likely places; the Club, the Inn, several favorite eating places out in the country. But the Foster party was at none of them.

Sam sat and fumed.

He risked calling Josey again, and left word for Mr. Foster to call him at the studios, as soon as he returned. Then he put in a call for Mike Cassidy, in New York. The report of the Transcontinental operator was not encouraging. Mr. Cassidy had left for the week end. She didn't know where he had gone. Nor could she find out.

Sam asked her to call Charles W. Gilbert, at his home, and to connect Sam with him when the call was completed. From the Gilbert home came the news that Mr. Gilbert also had gone away for the week end and had left word that under no circumstances was he to be called on business.

So Sam asked for Doc Martin. It was Doc's day off. And, in succession, he learned that he couldn't reach ANY-

ONE with whom he wanted to talk—neither George Monroe nor Fletcher Gordon; nor Emmet Carson nor Bill Dickson. He could have talked to the Night Program Manager; but there had been a change in that office since Sam had left New York—and he didn't know the new man.

At last he gave up and waited for Harris Foster to call him.

Eleven o'clock came; eleven-thirty; midnight. And still no call from the boss. Sam put in another call for Foster's house. This time there was no answer. Josey Sparks must have gone to bed.

At one o'clock, after he had heard Dick Parker sign off for the night and leave, Sam gave up. He went back to the Country Club to meet a thoroughly angry Martha Powers. Sam had to do a lot of explaining to make his peace with her. At that, she insisted on going home alone in a taxi, refusing to let him take her in his car.

After she had gone, Sam spent a miserable night. It was bad enough to know that Harris Foster was trying to sell the station to Mammoth; but even more disturbing was the fact that Sam couldn't do anything but wait; that he couldn't even talk to anyone about it.

Saturday morning, however, by the time he arrived at his office, he was glad he hadn't been able to connect with anybody in New York the night before. It might be better to let that wait until he had first talked with Mr. Foster. Perhaps, after all, he *didn't* mean to sell to Mammoth. In that case, Sam would have appeared very foolish if he had cried "Wolf!" to any of the Transcontinental executives.

The morning dragged on. Sam wanted to call the Foster

home again. But if Mr. Foster had been out so late on Friday, he would certainly resent an early-morning call. And, besides, Sam had left a message for him. He'd better let him do the calling.

It was after one o'clock in the afternoon when the old man came into the studio. "I didn't call," he explained, "'cause I knew I'd see you here. What's on your mind, Sam?"

Sam told him, without any preliminaries; and asked him point-blank whether Harvey Chirp's suspicions (and his own) were true.

"Sure, sure," said Harris Foster. "O' course I'm agoin' t' sell. I told you I was goin' to. Why'n tarnation shouldn't I sell t' Mammoth?"

Sam couldn't give him a satisfactory or convincing reason, so he asked Mr. Foster if he wouldn't hold the deal off until Tuesday morning, when Sam could talk to Charles Gilbert on the telephone.

"Why, bless y'u, Sam, I can't do that! Ellis Bridgman is comin' in here at three o'clock t' close th' deal. He's actin' in good faith. I can't ask him t' wait f'r three days more!"

Sam tried his best persuasion. But to no avail.

"No. 'Sno use—I offered t' sell t' Transcontinental 'most three months ago—an' f'r fifty thousand. Gilbert turned me down. Now Mammoth's willin' t' pay me fifty-five, cash on th' line."

All Sam's arguments were useless. Mr. Foster said he knew Charlie Gilbert too well; knew exactly what he would say if Foster asked him five thousand dollars more, now, than he'd have had to pay for CQBI in June.

"Simply think I was tryin' t' hold 'im up! Tell me t' go hang! That's wh't he'd do. No, Sam—I can't hold off till Tuesday."

Sam looked at the clock on his wall. A quarter before two. He had just an hour and a quarter in which to act. He lifted his telephone receiver and called New York. He went through very much the same formula as on Friday night. Had anything happened to bring Mr. Gilbert back to the city? No, Mr. Gilbert was still away, and would be until Tuesday. How about Mr. Cassidy? Still away. Mr. Gordon? Sorry, still away. Mr. George Monroe—what about him? Mr. Monroe? Yes, he was in; he'd been in all day.

Sam's hopes took an upward bound. "Let me talk to him, please."

He held the wire so long he began to fear he had been cut off. He was on the point of signaling the operator, when the voice from New York came in again. "I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Hubbard—but Mr. Monroe has just left. He was covering the office all day; but the Night Manager is the only executive who's here now. Do you want to talk to him?"

Sam considered. . . . He nearly said "Yes." But then—no. No, he didn't know the new night manager. And such a matter as this was entirely out of his line, anyway. Sam hung up.

Poor Sam! If he had only known it, the Night Program Manager was the only person in New York that day who knew where to reach C. W. Gilbert or Michael Cassidy or Fletcher Gordon—or George Monroe, now that he had left the Transcontinental studios.

The discouraged manager of CQBI turned again to Harris Foster. He had not the least idea what he was going to say, but he began to talk, regardless. Then an inspiration struck him.

“Will you still sell to me?”

“We-e-ll, now, Sam,” the old man sparred for time. “Are y’u real sure y’u’d want t’ buy?”

“Yes,” said Sam. “I’m sure. I’ll buy the station for Transcontinental.”

“Whoa!” cried Mr. Foster. “Holt on there, Sam! Y’u can’t do that!”

“Why not?”

“’Cause y’u don’t represent Transcontinental. Y’u ain’t even employed by ’em. Y’u got no authority t’ act f’r ’em.”

He was right. There was no use trying to argue. Sam was as much alone in this transaction as though he had been the sole inhabitant of the farthest star in the universe—trillions of light years out in space.

He thought of a dozen things at once: of Martha Powers’ words, “anchor him to Birmingham”; of his months of hard work that had put CQBI on a really paying basis; of his plans for the station’s future. He was torn between his desire eventually to get back to New York, and his loyalty to the little radio station. He was on a spot, and he knew it.

Suppose he were to buy the station for himself? Would Transcontinental buy it from him? Or would he be left holding the bag?

Perhaps he could interest one of his Birmingham acquaintances in coming in with him. Then, later on, as

CQBI prospered more and more, he'd be able to sell out his share.

But suppose, when the time came, he couldn't find a buyer?

Well, the main thing was to keep CQBI away from the Mammoth Broadcasting Corporation. That he *must* do, even at the risk of being anchored in Birmingham.

Sam made up his mind.

"All right," he said at length. "Then I'll buy it for myself."

"Consarn it! I don't like this!" Plainly, the owner was disturbed. "It looks too much 's though I was tryin' t' force y'u int' 't."

"Not at all, Mr. Foster," Sam assured him. "I see just the position you're in. And I don't blame you in the least for not waiting."

"I'm afraid you *don't* see th' position I'm in. That's just th' trouble," Harris Foster told him. He reminded Sam that he could have bought CQBI three months earlier for forty-five thousand dollars—and on practically his own terms. But, now, Mammoth was offering fifty-five thousand, in cold cash. Sam couldn't expect him to throw money away.

Sam had a sinking spell. He didn't expect Foster to take less for the station than Mammoth was willing to pay; but, if the old man insisted on cash—and if he wouldn't wait until Tuesday for his money—Sam was sunk. He just couldn't raise any such amount of money! Sam hung on Foster's next words.

"O' course," he said, "I won't ask you for all cash. But I can't make th' terms near so lib'ral as I 's willin' t' make

'em before. M' long line o' New England ancestors 'ud never forgive me 'f I did." He chuckled.

"I tell y'u what I'll do: I'll give y'u till this time tomorrow t' raise twenty thousand. Th' other thirty-five I'll take any way y'u can arrange t' pay it. . . . That don't seem like I'm bein' too hard, does it?"

"It certainly doesn't, Mr. Foster," said Sam, earnestly. "It's a good deal more generous than I've any right to expect under the circumstances. And yet—"

He explained to his boss that he had just about five thousand dollars of his own. That meant that he'd have to raise fifteen thousand in Birmingham, in twenty-four hours—and on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, at that.

But—

Even if he succeeded, he'd still have only the twenty thousand he was to give Foster as a down payment; and nothing left over for working capital. So he asked if Foster would reduce the down payment to seventeen thousand, five hundred dollars, leaving Sam twenty-five hundred to work on.

Harris Foster held out his hand. "Go to it, son," he said. "I'll hold off Ellis Bridgman till five o'clock tomorrow aft'noon.

"And," he added. "I'm so sure y'u can do 't, th't I'm agoin' t' have my lawyer draw up an agreement, t'night."

The old gentleman's confidence made Sam very grateful; but he "went to it" with a good deal less certainty of success than he wished he felt.

He had intended to work in the studio on Saturday night, Sunday and Monday, so that more of his staff could have the week end free. However, that was now

impossible. It would take every waking moment of Sam's time to round up that fifteen thousand dollars—if, in fact, he could do it at all.

He called Jean Benson at a near-by lake resort (she had left her week end telephone number with him when she went away, the night before). He asked her if she would cancel her holiday, because of an emergency.

"Why, of course!" she told him, cheerfully. And she'd get one of the week-ending announcers back to the studio, too. She knew just where each one was vacationing.

"What a secretary!" thought Sam, as he set out on the craziest, most impossible quest he had ever undertaken: to raise fifteen thousand dollars in one day!

CHAPTER XXIII

The Victorious Surrender

SAM hurried away from the studios just a little before three o'clock. He didn't want to be there when Ellis Bridgman came in to close his deal with old Mr. Foster. Sam didn't want to meet Ellis Bridgman at all. If any explaining was to be done, as to the twenty-four-hour delay in the Mammoth-CQBI transaction, Sam wanted Harris Foster to do it.

He jumped into the coupé and headed for the Bon Ton Department Store. His mind had been working at lightning speed since the end of his talk with Mr. Foster, a few minutes before.

Where was the best place to look for fifteen thousand dollars?

Surely, the men who had placed sufficient trust in Sam to invest their money in his programs would be the most likely ones to invest in his radio station.

His first customer had been Jeremiah Pulsifer, owner of the Bon Ton. So Pulsifer was his first prospective investor. He had plenty of money. Next to Mr. Powers, and possibly Harris Foster, Pulsifer was the richest man in town. And he liked Sam. Of that Sam was certain. The department store owner had seconded Sam's nomination for membership in the Country Club.

At the Bon Ton, however, Sam was due for a disappointment. Mr. Pulsifer usually spent Saturday afternoons there

—even during the summer. But evidently, for this holiday week end, he had made an exception to his rule.

Sam headed the car toward the Country Club. There he found the store owner, just finishing his first nine holes of golf. He was persuaded, reluctantly, to desert his foursome and accompany Sam to a secluded corner of the clubhouse veranda.

Sam told his story in as few words as possible; and laid his proposition before the older man. But even that took time; and it was after four o'clock when Sam had finished giving him the costs of running the station, its present income, his plans for the future—and the probable profits they would produce.

Pulsifer's attentiveness raised Sam's hopes. The questions he asked were decidedly encouraging. If he were not interested, he certainly wouldn't ask them.

Sam ended by offering the merchant a one-third share in the ownership of CQBI, in return for the investment of barely more than one-quarter of its purchase price, fifty-five thousand dollars. Pulsifer was to put up fifteen thousand dollars—and receive more than eighteen thousand dollars' worth of the stock which Sam proposed to issue. Sam, on the other hand, would put up his five thousand dollars and, after paying off the balance of thirty-seven thousand, five hundred, which would be due Harris Foster, Sam would own *two-thirds* of the station.

At this generous offer (or so it seemed to Sam), Jeremiah Pulsifer smiled, raised his eyebrows, tilted his bald head forward, and peered quizzically at Sam over his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Sam," he said, "you'd ought to be in Wall Street."

"Why, Mr. Pulsifer? What do you mean?"

"Well," said the smiling merchant, "I don't think you realize just what you're asking me to do: You're asking me to put up *three-quarters* of the cash for *one-third* of the stock, while you put up *one-quarter* of the cash for *two-thirds* of the stock."

Sam didn't see what he meant. "Oh, but *I* pay off the thirty-seven thousand-odd dollars still coming to Mr. Foster! Don't you see?"

"Ay-uh?" questioned Pulsifer. "And *how* do you pay it off?"

"Wh-why, out of the profits of the station." Sam began to have doubts about his financial arithmetic.

"Sure, sure," the New Englander agreed. "But, don't you see that, if *I* put up three-quarters of the cash, three-quarters of those profits belong to *me*?"

A great light began to dawn on the young financier.

"Good gosh!" he exclaimed. "I never thought of that!"

"Thought you didn't," Pulsifer told him. And Sam revised his offer.

Then, after asking more and more questions, the older man sat for a long time, looking out over the golf course, in silence. Once more Sam's hopes started to rise.

Finally, Jeremiah Pulsifer's gaze came back from the Granite Hills to the clubhouse veranda. He shifted his chair so that he faced Sam. He cleared his throat.

"Sam," he said, "in spite of your high finance—" he paused and winked—"in spite of that, I think you're an all-fired good business man." He waved aside Sam's reply, and continued. "You got me into broadcasting—and you'll never know what an accomplishment that was: why, for

ten years, I've been telling Harris Foster I'd close up shop before I ever paid a nickel for time on the air. . . . But your Woman's Club program has been the best advertising the Bon Ton has ever done."

Sam wished he wouldn't be so deliberate.

At last, Pulsifer went on: "I'd like to help you out—like nothing better—*BUT*, I've been a department store man for a long, long time. I've owned the Bon Ton for nearly twenty-five years; and I clerked there for twenty years before that.

"And, in all my experience as a storekeeper, I've learned one thing—if I haven't learned anything else. And that is: it's a mighty good idea for a 'shoemaker to stick to his last'—and for a merchant to stay behind his own counters."

Sam felt his fish slipping off the hook. "But, Mr. Pulsifer," he argued, "you wouldn't have to pay any attention to the broadcasting business; you wouldn't need to take any active part in it."

That brought a skeptical chuckle from the merchant. "Listen, Sam," he said, "I don't know anything about the broadcasting business; and I don't want to. But, if I went in with you, I'd have to know about it—to protect my own investment."

Had he no confidence in Sam? Didn't he believe Sam was honest?

"You don't understand, son," said Mr. Pulsifer. "That isn't it, at all. If I didn't believe in you, I wouldn't be sitting here, talking to you about this thing.

"But, when you've been in business as long as I have, you'll realize it isn't possible to just stick one foot in it,

so to speak. You've got to dive clear in—at the deep end—ready to stay; or else you better keep out, altogether.

“No,” he said, with an air of finality, “I'd like to help. But I can't; I'm keeping out.”

He waved aside all Sam's pleas for further consideration. He wished him luck in some other quarter—and went back to his game of golf.

Regretful, but undaunted, Sam looked at his watch. Five minutes before five o'clock! The twenty-six hours he had had, to start with, had been shortened to barely more than twenty-four!

Ah well! Pulsifer had been only his first prospect. He mustn't be discouraged by one turndown. He sprinted through the lobby toward his car. As he passed the desk, the club manager called to him:

“You're wanted on the phone, Mr. Hubbard; Mr. Bridgman calling.”

“Tell him I'm not here,” Sam shouted over his shoulder; and, as the screen door slammed behind him, “By the time you can tell him that, I WON'T BE!”

“Just as I thought,” he reflected, speeding toward the Sugar Maple Farm ice cream plant, on the other side of town. “That bird will head me off, if he can.”

On his way to the Sugar Maple Company, he avoided the center of town. The very last person in the world he wanted to see was Ellis Bridgman of the Mammoth Broadcasting Corporation.

Holiday week ends were the ice cream man's busiest times; Sam was fairly certain of finding George Cuff in his office.

He was not mistaken. George Cuff was there, and as glad

to see Sam as a distracted ice cream manufacturer could be, on the Saturday afternoon before Labor Day. But as for going into the broadcasting business—

Cuff merely laughed. Between telephone calls from frantic customers scattered all over that end of the state, wanting to know why their week end orders hadn't been delivered; and from others, insisting that they had ordered "ten gallons of maple nut, while only five gallons had been delivered—" between telephone calls, the head of the Sugar Maple Farm waved a hand at the sheaf of unfilled orders on the desk before him. He pointed at the busy shipping platform that could be seen through his office window.

"You think I haven't got troubles enough in one business, hey? You think I ought to stick my nose into another one?"

"Nix, Hubbard! Nix! ABSOLUTELY nothing doing!" With a good-by wave in Sam's direction, Cuff picked up the receiver of a jingling phone. "Oh yes, Mr. Ashur—I saw to that personally; your order's been on its way ten minutes ago—ought to be there any minute now."

Before he hung up that phone, another one began to ring.

Sam left the room while he was still talking.

One by one, the prospective investors evaporated into the selfsame ether which carried the programs of Station CQBI to its radio listeners: the Bottling Works needed all its capital in its own business; the owner of the prosperous men's shop laughingly offered to sell Sam an interest in *his* business, rather than to become a partner in CQBI. And so it went until, at eleven o'clock that night, there remained only one man to see—the one man whom Sam

hadn't wanted to call on, Everett Powers—to try to arrange a loan from the bank.

He found Mr. Powers at home, and fortunately, alone. After a gruff, hearty welcome, the banker reminded Sam of a little matter which had entirely escaped his notice.

“You'd better watch out for Martha,” he warned. “She's just about ready to shoot you on sight. Says you had a date to take her to the club dance—and didn't show up.”

He was amused at Sam's embarrassment. “Oh, don't explain to me; save all your apologies for the young lady. You'll need 'em!”

Sam told him what had made him forget his engagement with Martha; and why he had come to see her father. And then he knew why it was that he had not wanted to bring his financial problem to Everett Powers. The banker's change in manner made Sam think of an afternoon at the bank, three months ago. All the heartiness of the welcome vanished; and in its place came something very like the hardness of the Granite Hills from which a large part of the Powers fortune had been hewn.

He fired at Sam a series of questions about the financial side of the station, to which Sam had not the slightest idea of the answers. They were not like the questions he had asked the other time, when Sam had gone to him only for advice. These questions were about “daily balances” and “amortization of equipment” and a lot of other things that Sam had had no need to know about. They contained words the meanings of which Sam understood vaguely—or not at all.

When he frankly admitted his ignorance, the banker told him he wasn't asking for information, anyway, because he

already knew the answers, having been the financial adviser of Station CQBI since its very start.

"I merely asked these things," he said, "to show you how little you know of what you need to know in order to run a business with any hope of success."

As a last desperate measure, Sam told Everett Powers that he really didn't expect to be running CQBI all alone; that he was buying the station to save it for the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company. He explained how he had tried to reach the executives in New York. He told Powers he felt sure the big company would make it worth the bank's while to help Sam save the station.

"Oh!" said Powers. "Then I was to be used as a financial cat's paw for Transcontinental, was I?"

"No, Mr. Powers. Not at all." Sam saw that he had said the wrong thing. "If Mr. Pulsifer had been willing to go in with me, I wouldn't even have offered to sell out to Transcontinental. But, if I have to borrow the money from the bank, the deal is bigger than I want to swing, alone.

"But even so, if Mr. Gilbert refuses to buy me out—with a profit for the bank—then I'm still ready to go on myself.

"And," he finished, resolutely, "I'm certain I can make a success of it."

"Well, Sam," said Everett Powers, growing more like his warm, friendly, unbusinesslike self, "I like your confidence and your nerve. I sincerely wish I could help you. But I can't use the bank's money to back any such hare-brained scheme as this."

Sam was through. His last hope had failed him.

He was just opening the door of his little coupé, when

a big open roadster whirled up the long drive and came to a stop beside him.

"As I live and breathe! It's Sam Hubbard," said Martha Powers' cheery voice. "What a surprise, finding you here." The voice was too cheery; it had a very definite brittle, sarcastic ring. "In fact," it went on, "what a surprise, finding you anywhere!"

"I'm sorry, Martha. I can't even offer an excuse. I simply forgot." Sam spoke in a strange hollow tone, not in the least like his usual one. "But," he said, "I think you'll understand when I explain."

Instantly Martha's manner softened. She sprang out beside him. "Why, Sam," she cried, "whatever is the matter? You sound as though something terrible had happened."

"It has," said Sam; and told her.

The broken engagement was forgotten. The banker's daughter was all sympathy and encouragement. "You mustn't give up so easily," she said. "You come back in the house with me. I can make Father do anything I want him to. You should have come to me in the first place."

Sam insisted that he didn't want Everett Powers' help if he had to get it that way. But Martha wouldn't take no for an answer. Into her father's study, she dragged the reluctant Sam.

Mr. Powers listened quietly until she ran out of words. Even then, he simply sat and smiled at her.

"Well," she demanded, "what about it? Does the bank help him out?"

"The bank does not," said her father, definitely—and waved her to silence as she prepared for another assault.

In great detail he told her, then, all the reasons why he would not consider lending the bank's support to Sam's plan. He said the bank directors would think him insane if he put the matter up to them. “And,” he assured her, “I certainly am not going to make a loan of this size without putting it up to them.”

As if to put a cap on all his other arguments, he said, “What's more, Martha, the time for Sam to have bought CQBI, if he was going to buy it at all, was last spring, when he could have had it for ten thousand dollars less—and on his own terms.”

Sam winced when he heard that “ten thousand dollars less.” What a fool he had been!

Martha stood up before her father. She looked very defiant. It made her look very beautiful, Sam thought.

“Very well, Father,” she said. “If the bank won't help Sam out, I WILL.”

Weakly, Sam protested. But, after the day's exhausting experiences, he was no match for these two fresh, strong fighters. They didn't even hear him.

“You'll do nothing of the kind,” snapped Everett Powers. “Sit down,” he ordered his belligerent daughter.

Without appearing to move a muscle, Martha increased her height a full inch. And without raising her voice, she managed to make it carry complete conviction in every syllable. “I am going to back Sam Hubbard, unless you do. I've got plenty of money of my own to do it. I'm of age. And no one can stop me.”

Everett Powers was too experienced a warrior not to recognize defeat. He shrugged. “All right, Martha,” said he, “if you want to be headstrong and foolish, I guess

there's nothing I can do to stop you."

That was when Sam finally caught their attention. His nerves were very near the snapping point. "Listen," he said, tensely. "Both of you—listen to me: I came here tonight to lay a business proposition before a business man." He paused. "Well, I guess it wasn't a very good proposition—because the business man turned it down."

Sam turned toward Martha. "And, Martha, much as I appreciate your wanting to do this for me—I can't let you do it. That's all there is to it.

"No. No. No," he objected when the surprised Martha tried to speak. He struggled to his feet. He was very tired. From the door, he looked back into the room. "I'm terribly sorry I forgot our date," he said. "Please forgive me."

Mr. Powers' eyes had begun to sparkle as Sam made his parting speech. Now, hearing Sam's footsteps in the front hall, he called after him:

"Hey, Sam! Come back here a minute. Come back here—I want to talk to you."

Sam plodded onward toward the door—but Martha flashed past him and stood in front of it, barring his way. When he remembered the scene, long after, it seemed comically melodramatic, like one of the thrillers the stock company used to perform years ago in the hall over the firehouse, back home. Martha pointed back toward the study. "You go back there," she commanded. "Do you hear me? Go back there!"

Sam was too weak to resist. He turned, plodded back and stood in the doorway. The banker, too, had risen from his chair. He was a different person now. His face wore a

pleased, almost excited grin. "Son," he said, "I'm afraid it was I who was making the mistake. I guess your business proposition is a pretty sound one, after all."

Sam shook his head, but Powers went right on:

"I'll back you, myself," he said. "I can't put the bank's money into a thing of this kind, but you can tell Harris Foster that I'm backing you, personally."

Sam's reply almost floored Everett Powers. "I can't let you do that, sir—any more than I could let Martha put up her money."

"What the Sam Hill are you talking about!" Mr. Powers was flabbergasted.

"I mean it, Mr. Powers. If CQBI isn't good enough for the bank's money, it isn't good enough for yours. . . . You're doing this because I refused to let Martha do it."

"Nothing of the kind!" the banker insisted.

"Don't be a goop," Martha put in.

But Sam was not to be swayed.

"No, sir," he repeated. "I'm grateful, but I cannot take that kind of help."

Everett Powers was a determined man. He had made up his mind. He was not used to being opposed. His dander was rising.

"Why, you young rooster!" he exclaimed. "Do you think for one minute that I would let sentiment enter into a business deal? You listen to me, and you'll learn something about banking. If you think a banker only looks at balance sheets when he's deciding on a loan, you're mighty mistaken. Balance sheets are all right in their way; but they're not near as important as the character and integrity of the borrower.

“Well, that’s what I’m betting on in your case. Any fellow who has spunk enough to handle himself as you’ve done tonight deserves my support, and gets it.

“And what’s more—if you continue to be pigheaded, I’ll call up Harris Foster right now and tell him so.”

He reached for the telephone on his desk as he finished.

“Please!” cried Sam. “Please don’t do that! Not at this hour!”

“All right then, do you accept?”

Sam laughed, weakly. “Yes, sir,” he said. “I not only accept—I surrender.”

They shook hands all round; and at half-past four that Sunday morning, Sam Hubbard set out for the Country Club. All the way home, as he thought over the events of those five and a half hours, the result did seem more like a surrender than a victory. In his tired state, Sam wasn’t at all sure he was pleased with what he had done.

CHAPTER XXIV

Everything All Right?

AWAKENING from a fitful sleep late that morning, Sam knew exactly what was meant by the expression, "feel as though I had been drawn through a knothole." Only *he* felt as though he had been drawn through a *pinhole*.

His uncertainty of the early morning had increased. He wondered whether he had done the right thing. If only he could have talked to someone in New York before he'd got himself hooked! But he probably wouldn't be able to reach any of the network's executives until Tuesday.

Then at ten o'clock, while he was still shaving, his telephone rang. It was Harris Foster, sounding as happy as a schoolboy on the first day of vacation. "Everett Powers just called me," he said. "'N I congratulate you, Sam. Y' couldn'ta got a better fella t' go in with ya, if y'u'd searched th' whole State o' New Hampshire!"

Sam tried to make his reply sound properly enthusiastic; but whether it did or not made no difference, for the old man rattled on:

"Want y' t' meet Ev and me down 't th' bank, soon as y'u c'n get there," he said. "M' lawyer'll be there, too; he's got th' papers all drawn up."

Before he set out for the Birmingham Bank and Trust Company, Sam called his office on the phone. The dependable Jean Benson was already there. Sam asked her to put in a long-distance call for Transcontinental. He named the

men he had tried to reach on Friday night and Saturday afternoon. "Let me talk to any one of them you can get," he instructed. "And if you can't reach any of them, keep on calling every hour." Then Sam hung up before Jean could ask where to locate him if she should be able to complete the call.

The business at the bank took far more time than he had expected; and when it was all over, Harris Foster insisted that Sam and Everett Powers go home with him for Sunday dinner. So it was after four o'clock by the time the new owner of CQBI arrived at the studios.

As he opened the outer door, Jean Benson excitedly called to him: "Oh, Mr. Hubbard! I've found Mr. Cassidy, at Lake Hopatcong! He's on the wire right now! And I didn't know where to reach you!"

Sam dashed into his own office and made a grab for the telephone.

"Hello! Hello! Is that you, Mike?"

"Hi, Sam!" said the cheery voice of Mike Cassidy. "I understand you've been trying to call me ever since yesterday. What's on your mind?"

"Plenty!" Sam answered; and proceeded to tell Mike what had happened—right down to the last detail—and what he had done.

When he had finished, the telephone was silent so long that he began to fear the connection had been broken. But finally Mike spoke. He sounded very serious. His voice had lost its note of cheer. "Sam," he said, "I don't know whether you've acted wisely or not. It would be all right if you wanted to stay up there as the owner of the station. But even in that case, it would have been better if you had

put it up to Mr. Gilbert first."

"I couldn't, Mike," said Sam. "I tried to call him—but I couldn't get him."

"Oh, I understand that all right," Mike assured him; "but you can never tell what a man like Gilbert is going to say to a thing like that. The thing that really worries me, though, is this idea of selling to Transcontinental. Remember, the Company had a chance to buy three months ago—for five thousand less—and turned it down. And now you say we'll have to pay something additional to your banker friend, for helping you out."

"Yes; but, Mike!" Sam argued. "When Mr. Gilbert turned down Mr. Foster, he didn't know Mammoth was going to try to buy the station!"

"I know that," was Cassidy's reply, "but he's likely to feel that Foster should have given him a chance to reconsider, before going so far with Mammoth. He may feel that you ought to have known about the thing long before now—and tipped him off. . . . He may even figure that you did know about it—and failed to tell him. There's no telling how his mind will work."

At the suggestion that Transcontinental might refuse to buy him out, Sam realized that the thing he wanted most was to be rid of the responsibility he had assumed. Yesterday, he had had more than five thousand dollars in the bank and hadn't owed a cent to anyone. Today, his bank account was zero. He was in debt to Everett Powers to the extent of fifteen thousand dollars; and he owed Harris Foster so many more thousands that the very thought of the figures appalled him. He wanted to get out from under that debt; and to get out of Birmingham and back to

New York where his friends were.

Mike Cassidy spoke again. "It sounds to me like a great opportunity, Sam," he said. "Why don't you stay up there and run the station for yourself?"

"No, Mike! No!" Sam cried. "I can't stay here. I've got to get back to the network! I'm just not cut out for a small town."

"Then you'd better get on the train tomorrow night and be waiting in Gilbert's office when he comes in on Tuesday morning," Mike advised. "And you'd better be hoping he's in a good humor after his holiday.

"If I can catch him before you see him," he promised in ending the conversation, "I'll try to pave the way for your proposition."

For a long time after he hung up the receiver, Sam sat at his desk, pondering and planning. All kinds of horrible possibilities flashed into his mind. Suppose, for instance, that Gilbert should get back to his office unexpectedly, on Monday—instead of waiting until Tuesday morning; and suppose, by some chance, he should hear about what had happened before Sam could tell him, or before Mike was able to reach him.

"I'd better go to New York tonight!" Sam told himself. But he realized at once that this was impossible: too many of his staff were away. He'd have to spend Monday in Birmingham, fixing things so he could safely be away on Tuesday—and even on Wednesday if that proved necessary.

Ah! He knew what he'd do! He'd send a special-delivery letter to Charles W. Gilbert, explaining the whole business. That would pave the way for his arrival on Tuesday.

Jean Benson had left by this time, so Sam typed the letter himself. When he read it over, he complimented himself on having written a mighty convincing letter. And whether he got to Mr. Gilbert first, or whether the letter got there before he did—whichever way it happened—the letter would explain how earnestly Sam had tried to get in touch with the Transcontinental executives before buying CQBI without their authority.

He stuck an envelope into the typewriter and, with decisive fingers, tapped out the address:

“Mr. Ellis Bridgman, President,
The Transcontinental Broadcasting Company,
Transcontinental Building,
New York City.”

He folded the four sheets he had typed, put them into the envelope; and on his way to the Country Club, dropped it at the postoffice in time for the Sunday-night mail to New York.

Reaching the Club, he tumbled into bed without even pausing for supper. He slept as though he had been drugged. But the sleep was not restful: and he awoke on Monday morning with the same disturbing thoughts which had troubled him the night before. However, the preparations for his trip kept him so busy all day that he had little time to worry about his problem until he got into the sleeping car late that night. Then, as he lay in his berth and the train gathered speed, the clicking wheels of the Pullman seemed to be repeating, over and over, “Anchored to Birmingham. . . . Anchored to Birmingham. . . . Anchored to Birmingham.” The clicks came faster and faster;

and finally, twenty miles from town, on the long down-grade south of the Granite Hills Quarries, they seemed to merge into a rapid repetition of “birminghambirmingham-birminghambirmingham.”

And that was the last Sam knew until he felt the porter jerking at his blankets to tell him the train was standing in Grand Central Station.

He woke up with a start. He had the uneasy feeling of having overslept. “What day is this?” he demanded.

The porter eyed him suspiciously. “Why, sah, dis heah’s Chewsday; yestahday was Labah Day—doan yo’ remembah?”

Sam heaved a sigh of relief as he reached for his clothes; and the porter went away, shaking his head and muttering under his breath, “Whut day is dis? Humph!”

By the time Sam had dressed and shaved, breakfasted in the station and walked the six blocks to the Transcontinental Building, it still lacked five minutes of being nine o’clock. But although he suspected there was little chance of Mr. Gilbert’s being in his office at that early hour, Sam went directly to the president’s anteroom, prepared to wait.

To his surprise, Miss Hutchinson, the presidential chief secretary, told him the great man was already hard at work—dictating replies to his heavy holiday mail. “But he’s expecting you,” she told him. “Just go right in.”

“Expecting me!” thought Sam. “Then he’s read my letter!”

The stenographer to whom Mr. Gilbert had been dictating was just leaving his desk when Sam entered the big room. He was very doubtful of the kind of reception he would get. But as soon as Gilbert saw him, Sam’s hopes be-

gan to rise. The president got up from his desk and came forward, holding out his hand—smiling.

"Good morning, Hubbard," he said. "What's this Mr. Cassidy tells me about your having bought a radio station?" He led Sam to the chair beside his desk. "Does that mean you have left CQBI? And does it mean that you're not returning to us? We had hoped, you know—"

Sam interrupted. Hadn't Mr. Cassidy told Mr. Gilbert *what* station Sam had bought?

"No, there wasn't time for that," said the president. "I met Mr. Cassidy outside my office as I was coming in this morning. He started to tell me—but Judge Fennell of the legal department was with me, so I couldn't listen. Now that you're here, though, you can tell me all about it yourself." Gilbert leaned back in his chair and waited.

"Didn't—uh—didn't you get my letter?"

"Letter? What letter?" He had seen no letter. Neither had Miss Hutchinson, she said when he asked her.

Sam took a deep breath, the way a person does who is about to dive into cold water. At that moment, he would sooner have dived into the Arctic Ocean than into the conversation he was about to start.

"CQBI," he said, "is the radio station I have bought."

"Oh," said the president. He looked at Sam questioningly. "Oh yes—I remember, Harris Foster tried to sell it to us, several months ago. . . . I hope you haven't come to tell me you're tying up with the Mammoth network." There was a slight smile on his lips—a smile that Sam couldn't analyze. "They've been doing their best, you know, to get some of our stations away from us."

Sam assured him it was nothing of that sort. And then,

in the clumsiest possible fashion, it seemed to him, told Charles W. Gilbert what had happened on Friday and Saturday; and what he had done about it. Though he tried his level best, he couldn't make his story sound reasonable or logical.

He went back to the day in early June, when Harris Foster had offered to sell him the station for forty-five thousand dollars. He told of his refusal. He told of the coming of Ellis Bridgman of the Mammoth Broadcasting Corporation; of his suspicions, which Foster had confirmed; of the negotiations which led up to his purchase of the station—for the purpose of selling it to Transcontinental—*saving* it for Transcontinental. He let slip the fact that he had been aware of Transcontinental's previous refusal to buy CQBI.

When he came to the end of the halting story, he repeated lamely that he put all this into the special-delivery letter—the letter which had not arrived. But as he talked, he could see Charles Gilbert stiffening. He seemed to be slowly turning into an icicle, before Sam's very eyes.

Sam began to stutter; but, powerless to stop, though he had said all there was to say, he babbled on—until the other interrupted—

“Just a moment,” he said. “Don't bother to say anything more. I think I understand what you are trying to tell me. Perhaps I understand better than you want me to.”

Then he started to repeat what Sam had just been saying; except that, in *his* words, it sounded altogether different.

“Last spring, Harris Foster offered to sell us CQBI for fifty thousand dollars. You knew that, and you knew we

refused, for reasons of policy."

Sam nodded.

"Then he offered to sell the station to you—for five thousand less."

Sam tried to tell him it had been the other way round. The offer had come to Sam first. "I wouldn't have bought it anyway, without consulting you."

"Oh, you wouldn't!" flared Gilbert. "And yet, that's exactly what you've done!" He gave Sam no chance to explain. "No, young man: I'll tell you why you refused—and it doesn't matter in the least whom Foster offered it to first. You refused because you're a fairly clever young man who realizes he hasn't had enough experience, *at our expense*, to operate a radio station successfully, without the guidance of more seasoned men."

That sounded terrible! Sam tried to speak, but Gilbert waved him to silence.

"Then, some time ago—you say it was Friday—Ellis Bridgman of Mammoth blows in and offers to buy CQBI; probably at the same figure for which it was offered to you—or less—Ellis isn't throwing any money away if he can help it. You overhear the offer; and you see a chance to profit by it.

"No, no, Hubbard! Wait until I finish.

"You figure that we will not want to lose control of the territory covered by CQBI; that we'll pay any price to keep Mammoth from owning the station, or from making it a part of their network by contracting with its owner—present or future.

"So you snipe it out from under Ellis Bridgman's nose. You buy it for yourself, expecting to hold us up for a neat

little profit of ten thousand dollars—or maybe more.”

“But, Mr. Gilbert! If you’d only received my letter!” Sam cried.

“Oh, yes!” the president exclaimed. “Your letter! I meant to say something about that, too. Listen:

“You put over the deal on Sunday—or on Saturday, for all I know—or perhaps before. You feel pretty smart. You go to bed Sunday night, still feeling pretty smart.

“But you awaken Monday morning with a sneaking little feeling that perhaps you’re not quite smart enough to finish the job of skinning you’ve started. So you get on the train and come running in here to see me. And you cook up the story of this letter ‘that explains everything’—the letter you say you mailed on Sunday.” He paused and gave Sam a long, straight look. Sam tried desperately to speak, but no sound came from his throat.

“No,” Mr. Gilbert continued. “Transcontinental doesn’t do business that way. We’re not interested in your radio station, Hubbard. And, so you may have ample time to make your plans for the future, I’ll tell you what we’re going to do.

“As soon as our present contract with your station expires, CQBI will cease to be a part of our network. Perhaps Mammoth will want to take it over. But—before they have an opportunity to do so, we will publicly announce our plans to build a competing station with the most powerful transmitter the Federal Communications Commission will give us a license to put up. . . . Good day, Mr. Hubbard.”

Somehow, Sam managed to rise from his chair. There were a dozen things he wanted to say to Charles W. Gilbert in defense of his actions; but he knew there was no use

trying. Gilbert was too sure he had detected an attempt at sharp practice. And also, Sam was just too tired to fight any more. He started for the door at the other end of the long office. He was ready to resign himself to his fate: to return to Birmingham and run station CQBI forever. But it was going to be even harder than he had expected; because the little station would have Transcontinental as an enemy instead of an ally.

Sam had taken only a step or two when the president's telephone bell rang. He heard Gilbert answer the call. "You say Ellis Bridgman is calling? . . . Put him on. . . . Hello, Ellis, that you? . . . Say, what are you trying to pull on us up at CQBI?"

Sam wished he could hear Bridgman's reply

"Whatever I was trying to pull on you," said the President of Mammoth, "it didn't work. I had things all set to buy the station for fifty-five thousand; but that youngster of yours up there was too smart for me."

"Did you say *fifty-five* thousand?" Sam heard Gilbert say. And then, "Well, what about the youngster?"

Sam walked more slowly. He wondered if Gilbert was referring to him. Evidently he was; for, as Sam reached the door, Mr. Gilbert called to him: "Oh, Hubbard! Come back here a minute, will you?" As Sam started to retrace his steps, the president turned to his telephone again. "Now then, Ellis, say that over again, will you?"

"Why," came Bridgman's reply over the phone, "I'm trying to tell you about this letter I got this morning. It's got *my* name on the outside of it, but it's addressed to me as President of the *Transcontinental* Broadcasting Company, and at *your* address. It went to your office yesterday, but

whoever got it must have thought it was for me and sent it over here. Came yesterday, but I got it just now. The letter inside is addressed to you and signed by that young Hubbard. I guess the kid was so excited over what he'd done that he went a little bit haywire on Sunday—and put *my* name on the envelope instead of *yours*. I'm sending a boy over with it right now."

"Thanks, Ellis. Thanks." Charles W. Gilbert hung up his phone.

"Hubbard," he said—and then corrected himself, "Sam, I owe you an apology."

You wouldn't have needed anything nearly as heavy as a feather to have knocked Sam Hubbard over. A slight draft would have done it. He sank into the chair he had left a few moments before.

And the president told him what Ellis Bridgman had said.

Sam sat for a long moment, like a statue. Then he burst out laughing. His overstrung nerves would stand no more.

Mr. Gilbert smiled and leaned toward him. "It's all right, son," he said. "It's all right. I know just how you must feel. It is a little comical. . . . But you mustn't blame me for what I thought. In my place, I believe you'd have thought exactly what I did."

Sam shook his head. He nodded. He meant, "No, I don't blame you." He meant, "Yes, I probably would have thought the same thing." He didn't know what he meant. But he knew he was happy. So happy and so relieved that he just sat there grinning foolishly, while Gilbert told him that Transcontinental would be glad to buy CQBI from him. "And," he said, "we'll pay your banker

friend—Powers, you say his name is? We'll pay him for helping you to put it over on Ellis Bridgman.

"Another thing, Sam: when Transcontinental takes over the station, I want you to go back to Birmingham as General Manager."

Sam raised a protesting hand. "No," he begged. "Please, no. Send someone else. After the last three days, I don't ever want to SEE Birmingham again."

Gilbert only laughed. "Sam," he predicted, "if I were to send anyone else up there, within a month you'd want to have my heart out. That's your job. You've made a good start of it. You go on back and finish it.

"I promise you this: when you're satisfied that you've got it built up into a solid and profitable property, you let me know; and I'll bring you back to New York at the very first opportunity."

"I suppose you're right, sir," Sam admitted. "But right now, I'd rather be sent to Borneo than Birmingham."

"I tell you what you do," the president suggested. "You take a couple of weeks off. Take it easy. Do whatever you like; but get clear away from broadcasting. I'll send someone up to CQBI to help out until you're ready to go back."

Suddenly Sam thought of that night—a long, long time ago, it seemed—when he had begged Mike Cassidy to take him back from continuity writing to his first job, as clerical assistant in the announcers' office. "Don't be a quitter!" Mike had said, or something like that. Well, Sam hadn't been one then—and he wouldn't be one now!

"All right, sir," he said to Charles W. Gilbert. "I'll be ready to go back to Birmingham two weeks from yesterday."

Just as he was opening the door to leave, Mike Cassidy, himself, was opening it from the other side, to enter. He looked quickly from Sam to Mr. Gilbert.

“Everything all right?” he asked.

“Everything’s fine!” said Gilbert.

And Sam echoed him: “You bet, Mike! Everything’s fine!”

CHAPTER XXV

The Most Beautiful Girl I Ever Heard

CHARLES GILBERT had been right: what Sam Hubbard needed, just then, was to get clear away from broadcasting. It had been more than two years since he had had a vacation. His transfer to CQBI, sixteen months ago, had occurred before the time when he had planned to take his holiday that summer; and since taking up his work in Birmingham, he had spent scarcely a whole day away from the studios—except on business. And those occasions had certainly been no vacation!

So, after a talk with Bill Dickson, who was chosen to pinch-hit for him at Birmingham, and after long-distance telephone conversations with Everett Powers and Jean Benson and Dick Parker, Sam determined to put show business out of his mind. He left the Transcontinental Building—a free man.

Evidently, however, it was not intended that Sam Hubbard should have a complete rest from mental cares; for the very first act of his vacation brought him a brand-new set of worries, of a kind which he had not experienced before, save in a very mild form.

He whirled his way through the revolving door which separated the lobby of the building from the street. He consulted his watch. Almost one o'clock! He'd have to hurry, or he'd be too late. He rushed to the drugstore on the corner and ducked into one of its telephone booths. He

dialled Helen Chambers' number.

"Hello, authoress," he called in response to her answer. That was all that was needed to identify him.

There was a joyful note in Helen's reply. "Sam!" she cried. "Where are you? Is this a voice from Birmingham?"

"Yep," said Sam; "this is CQBI, the Voice of the Granite Hills. But it happens that I'm right here in New York."

"Oh, Samuel!" she said. "Why didn't you call me earlier? I'm just rushing for the office—and I'm going to be late, as it is."

"I couldn't," Sam told her. "I've just put in a morning that would have made Old Man Industry, himself, look like a three-toed sloth. But from now on, I'm free as air for the next two weeks—and I want you to have dinner with me, tonight."

"Oh!" said Helen. "I've got a date with Denis for dinner and the theater. He had a dreadful time getting tickets, so I haven't the nerve to ask him to postpone it."

"Oh," Sam echoed flatly, feeling a very uncomfortable sensation in the region of his seventh rib.

Realizing his disappointment, Helen tried to make amends. "I'll tell you!" she said. "You come along to dinner. I'm sure Denis won't mind. He'll be as anxious to see you as I am."

"No, thanks. I guess not. I'd feel like a fifth wheel." Ordinarily, Sam would have been glad to see Denis. But not tonight. He didn't know why; but he didn't want to. "How about tomorrow night?" he queried. "Can you get off two nights in succession?"

"Oh, yes—I'm not doing regular assignments any more—

I can get off almost any night. But"—she said—"Denis and I were going out to Jones Beach for dinner tomorrow. Will you go there?"

"Hey! Wait a minute!" said Sam. "Isn't tonight enough for that guy?"

Helen laughed. "Oh, all right, Sam—since you're only here on a visit, I'll break the date for tomorrow and have dinner with you. We'll have it here at the apartment, shall we? Lucille's got a date for dinner, so we'll have the kitchen all to ourselves."

That sounded perfect to Sam. So they arranged to meet at Helen's late Wednesday afternoon—and Helen rang off to hurry to the *Intelligencer* office.

The General-Manager-elect of radio station CQBI was annoyed at himself all afternoon, for not getting more enjoyment from the first day of his vacation. Helen's mention of Jones Beach made him decide to go out there for a salt-water swim. It had been almost two years since he had had one. He rented a car at the "drive-yourself" place and sped eastward over the Long Island parkways through as beautiful a September afternoon as anyone could have wished for.

He had the bath houses, the broad, long beach and the whole Atlantic Ocean almost to himself; for this was the day after Labor Day. Sam never could understand why so many people stop their summer activities so abruptly with the coming of that holiday. The beach doesn't suddenly change; the water is as inviting as ever—clear through to the end of Indian summer. But the people, creatures of habit that they are, they *do* change—turning off their summer customs as they might turn off a water faucet—and

missing some of the best outing weather of the whole season.

Having decided that people were foolish for cheating themselves so, Sam proceeded to have a thoroughly dull and boring afternoon, despite the loveliness of the day. After his swim, he sunned himself on the beach until the shadows began to lengthen and the sunshine to lose its warmth. Then he had his dinner at one of the restaurants overlooking the ocean.

But all the time he was swimming and throughout his lazy lolling in the sand, he was troubled by a thought he couldn't put out of his head. He kept resenting Denis Christie's dates with Helen. This made Sam mad at himself because he realized it was unreasonable. Why shouldn't Denis make all the engagements he chose to make with Helen?

Sam had asked himself that question once before—and he couldn't answer it any more satisfactorily now than the other time. Surely, he couldn't be *jealous* of Denis! Why should he be? Sam had no claim on Helen—any more than Denis had. Hold on a minute, though. Could it be possible that Denis *did* have a claim on Helen that Sam didn't know about? Nothing had ever happened to make him suspect it. Nothing had ever been said. But—

“Nonsense!” he told himself, as he finished dinner. “The excitement of this week end must have gone to my head! I'm going back to New York and look up Bill Dickson or Doc Martin or **SOMEBODY**, to spend the evening with.

By the time he reached the city, however, it was too late. Bill Dickson was making arrangements to catch the midnight train to Birmingham. Doc Martin was busy in the

studios until midnight. And the other two people Sam called—rather half-heartedly—had gone out for the evening.

He went to his hotel room and stretched out on the bed, fully intending to get up in time to see Bill Dickson off, at Grand Central. Midnight came and went, though; and Bill Dickson went, too, while Sam slept peacefully, catching up on some of the rest he had lost; and on some of the energy he had used up.

In broad daylight, he opened his eyes to the same sense of confusion he had felt when the Pullman porter roused him the morning before. He discovered with surprise that he was fully dressed. Then he remembered what had happened. He pulled out his watch. Twelve o'clock. He held it to his ear; it must have stopped. But no, it was ticking away as lustily as ever. Then he must have slept right through until Wednesday noon.

Sam was wide awake now and, though he had slept in his clothes, he was thoroughly rested. He undressed, bathed, shaved and got into the other suit he had brought with him—giving as much time as he could to each process. But even so, it was only a little past one-thirty when he finished lunch—with four and a half hours still to kill before presenting himself in Barrow Street. Fretfully, he wondered what to do with his time.

He sauntered aimlessly across Forty-second Street to Broadway, where, a few blocks north, the neon sign of an elaborate motion picture palace caught his attention. That was an idea. Movies were a luxury he had been denied during all his months in Birmingham. He just hadn't had time for them. He bought a ticket and went in, settling

himself, as he thought, for three hours more of boredom.

But there he was mistaken. For when the feature picture flashed on the screen, he was completely carried away in the difficulties and final success of its hero and heroine. The picture was a delightful little romance, with a tender and touching love scene for its climax. It was exactly the kind of picture which Sam had always before thought mawkish and silly. This one, though, really was moving. It sort of "got you." And, to his amazement, he had to swallow a lump in his throat when the boy and girl met in the final clinch which promised that they should live happily ever after.

"Well!" said Sam. "The movies must be getting better—not so dopey as they used to be."

On his way down to Barrow Street after the show, he awoke with surprise to the realization that he felt fine! All his mental unrest of the previous day—whatever had caused it—had vanished. "I guess I was just tired," he concluded. Tired as he had been, however, mere rest was hardly enough to explain the extra springiness of his step and his spirits as he left the bus at Washington Square and established a pedestrian record in reaching Helen Chambers' apartment.

Sam's high spirits took another leap the instant Helen opened the door. He'd had no idea how much he had been missing her all these months.

Suddenly, as though it had happened in one blinding flash, Sam knew why he had been so upset when he found he couldn't have dinner with her on his first night in New York. He knew why he had resented Denis Christie. He knew, too, why he had rebelled from the thought of staying

in Birmingham, New Hampshire. It hadn't been merely the call of the big town and the big business.

Of course, he wanted to get back to New York someday and he would. But compared with what he felt now, New York—yes, and even the Transcontinental Broadcasting Company—had shrunk into insignificance.

It was Helen.

He had known he'd missed her. But the days at CQBI had so completely consumed his hours and his energy that he simply hadn't had time to succumb to his loneliness.

Now, at last, he knew!

And knowing, he didn't know what to say or do. What if Helen didn't feel as he did? But that was unthinkable! She must! And if she didn't, he must compel her to!

"I've already started dinner," she called him back to reality.

Little Sam cared about dinner! But he forced himself to answer.

"I—I'll help," he said, following her down the hall to the kitchen.

Arrived there, though, he wasn't worth much as assistant cook. Not only that—he also lost his tongue. He stood in the corner, out of the way—his eyes following Helen around as though she were a magnet. And, as a matter of fact, for *him*, she was.

Helen made several unsuccessful attempts to start a conversation, but got very little encouragement from Sam. At last she stopped in the middle of something she was doing and turned to look at him, quizzically.

"Sam," she said, "you're acting awfully strange. What on earth is the matter with you?"

He was almost afraid to answer. For the second time in two days, he took the diver's deep breath.

"The—the trouble with me is—that I love you!"

Helen's questioning look changed to a look of surprise that made Sam certain he had bungled—or that she *didn't* feel as he did. He had the sensation of having lost his balance at the edge of a cliff and being unable to save himself.

Then, slowly, Helen's surprised expression gave place to one of half-doubting gladness.

"Sam!" she cried. "I thought—I thought you didn't! I thought you'd forgotten all about me! Oh, Sam! Tell me again!"

His way of telling her was the best way any man has ever discovered to tell any woman he loves her.

They stood there for a long time. So long that at last he was able to come down to earth and talk about practical things; about what had happened at CQBI; about his plans for the future—both in Birmingham and in New York. And about his plan for the very next day, which was to marry Helen as early in the morning as he could get a license at the city hall.

Helen objected to this.

Sam insisted; but she was firm. "I simply can't do that," she told him. "If I did, my family'd never forgive me. And think how your mother would feel."

"All right then," said Sam. "We leave for Athens tomorrow morning."

"No, no, no!" laughed Helen; she couldn't do that either. She couldn't leave without arranging things with her editor—so that the paper wouldn't be put out by her going. She would resign first thing in the morning, she promised; and

she and Sam would go to Athens the next Sunday, if the *Intelligencer* would release her on such short notice.

Then, quite unexpectedly, she let out an anguished wail: "Oh, my dinner! My lovely dinner!"

Sam turned to see a cloud of black smoke issuing from the cracks around the oven door and, for the first time, he was aware of the acrid odor of burning food. With a long stretch he reached over and turned off the gas. He lifted his fiancée in his arms and carried her, protesting, out of the kitchen.

"What's the difference?" he wanted to know. "Tonight we buy the most expensive dinner in New York."

And they did—or almost the most expensive.

Sunday morning.

A great many things have happened since Wednesday night.

Miss Helen Chambers has left the staff of the *Intelligencer* to devote the rest of her life to writing novels—and, after tomorrow, to being Mrs. Samuel Hubbard.

Sam's vacation has been extended from two weeks to six. And people have stopped calling it a vacation; and have begun calling it a honeymoon, though that's a trifle premature.

Sam has made a flying trip to Birmingham with Judge Fennell of the Transcontinental legal department, to arrange for the network's purchase of Station CQBI.

And now, Sam and Helen stand on the rear platform of a B & O train, in the Jersey City station, just across the Hudson from New York. To look at the crowd grouped around the rear end of the train, you'd think they

had just been married, instead of just being on their way to be.

There are Mr. and Mrs. Mike Cassidy; and Emmet Carson and his wife; and Gorham Jenkins; and Gardner Strong; and Bradford Bevins. And there, with the pointed mustachios, is Francesco Bonato, the composer. And there are Cal Murphy and Jem Waters and George Monroe and Fletcher Gordon.

That tall, dark man with the aquiline nose is the city editor of the *Intelligencer*; and the little mouselike woman with him is his wife. Those people, over there, are other members of the newspaper's staff.

And look: there's Lucille Wayman standing beside Denis Christie, debonair as always. That's Helen's publisher, just behind them. Oh yes—and there are Jimmy Barkley, the comedian, and Marta Morgan, the soprano; and a dozen other friends of Helen's and Sam's.

But wait; the train is starting. Late tonight it will deliver Sam and Helen to their waiting families, in Athens, Ohio—to be married tomorrow. The crowd is cheering. Sam and Helen are waving.

Oh! See there! Who's that chunky, black-haired fellow running along beside the car? He's calling out to Sam. "Sambo," he says, "you got a great girl there! She's the most beautiful girl I ever heard!"

Sam is yelling something back to him. "I know it, Doc," he says—"Good-by! Good-by!"

Well! When Sam Hubbard gets back to Birmingham, New Hampshire, a few weeks from now, he will be "General Manager of Transcontinental's Station CQBI."

That's quite a lofty title for the boy whose highest ambition once was to become a radio announcer. He rather seems to have overshot his mark.

But he *became* an announcer. And after he became one, he wasn't satisfied. And now, "General Manager of CQBI" doesn't satisfy him, either.

Don't misunderstand him: he isn't *dissatisfied*; he merely is *unsatisfied*. There's a great deal of difference. Sam has learned that in the world of affairs there is no such thing as a "goal." You don't work up to something and then stay there. You've got to keep moving, whether you want to or not. If you don't keep moving *up*—then there's a force, just as certain as the force of gravity, which sees to it that you start moving *down*.

Sam's idea is to keep moving up. He doesn't mind the constant changes. He has learned to like them.

Why! If anyone were to remind Sam Hubbard of the time, years ago, when he almost refused to accept a job in the sound effects department (a better job than the one he had) because he feared the changes he would have to meet—

If anyone were to remind him of that, he probably couldn't believe it was so.

That couldn't have been Sam Hubbard.

That must have been somebody else!

THE END