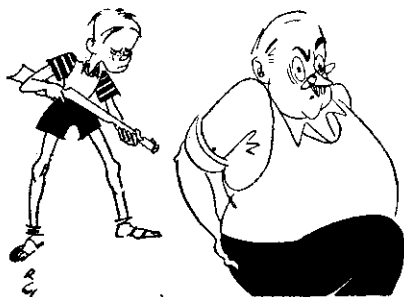


(continued from previous page)

children never turned up at the Saturday matinees to see for themselves. Now it's the radio. Well, I'm afraid I'm one of those people who don't have much time to listen to serials, but I do come in contact with a lot of youngsters who listen in, and when I asked their opinions they were quite definite that none of them took the serials at all seriously. When I question some of the more intelligent, they seemed to think that the whole thing was soon forgotten or put off till the next instalment, and that it had very little influence on them in any way. Of course we know that outside influences are important in a child's growing-up process, but the most important influence is its home and parents. I think if we got down a bit more and tried to educate the parents and made it possible for people to have decent homes, homes with plenty of room for the kids to play in, we'd be able to take radio serials and serial pictures in our stride. By the way, as far as the adult thrillers are concerned—



"... Any effect on child delinquency?"

and I have listened to some of these—for real blood-curdling kick I think the YA sub-stations have got the ZB's licked."

## Headmistress of Girls' College

A HEADMISTRESS of a girls' college was more critical.

"For convenience I would divide the serials into three. To start with, there's the thriller. My opinion of this is that it is a waste of time and a very wrong thing to broadcast to children. It is wrong not only in that it might do harm to the morality of boys and girls, but also in that by its presence in the programme so much that is good has to be excluded.

"The next type of serial is the *Big Sister*, Dr. Mac brand, serials that are specially written for radio. I think they're bad because they have no real character value, no literary value. They just drift on aimlessly, growing more foolish as they go. They can act merely as food for the empty-minded, and we have enough empty-minded people as it is.

"The last type is the better serial, consisting of dramatisations of the classics and of good modern material. I can think of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and of *How Green Was My Valley*. I have asked the opinion of the girls, and they seem to enjoy this type of serial very much. For myself they are very good reminders of the things I've read, but I don't remember much of the serials I haven't read. Some of these serials are very well done and the voices very suitable. The broadcast often acts as a stimulus to read the book, and in that way we should encourage it. But again there are people who may hear one chapter of a book in this way, or who perhaps see a film version, and

they are quite content with these fragments, thinking they know the book. This encourages a snippity mind. It would be a pity if broadcasts replaced reading, because a broadcast can never produce the mental stimulus derived from reading a good book.

"As far as serials on the whole go, three-quarters of the girls here listen to and like them. There is one thing I don't understand. If the serials keep the children from bed, why can't the parents switch off the wireless?"

## Psychiatrist

"IT'S not the fact that boys learn ways to do wrong that's dangerous—they can pick up little tricks anywhere—but it's the completely false picture they get of the world," said a psychiatrist, who has a good deal of experience with naughty boys—or child delinquents, as they are called nowadays.

"I have mainly boys to deal with—not girls, they are not so interested—and I am always finding that radio serials of a bad type are influencing their lives very much. There are boys who take them very, very seriously—who might miss a meal but would never miss a serial. And they get illusions about themselves: 'If he can do that, so can I.' All of us to some extent want something we can't get. The modern child wants the fictitious power of his favourite serial hero."

"Are you suggesting that this is a modern ill? Didn't fairy tales serve something like the same purpose?"

"A child up to 10—sometimes 12—lives in a world of its own, in which a broomstick is a gun, or a doll talks. That is natural and healthy. But after that age, it's a very different thing for a child to start getting ideas from the film or the radio which make him want to take a car and tear out to Lower Hutt at 60 miles an hour. Serials influence the child just at the time when he is beginning to get the shape of the real world and forget his own world, and they give him, as I say, a completely false picture of it.

"It seems to me that radio serials are never first-rate stuff. Done by true experts who really understand children they could be an enormous power for good—because, as I say, many children would rather miss a meal than a serial. If they were based on history or real life, they could be just as absorbing as they now are. And even if at first we seemed to be doing no good, at least we would be doing less harm."



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