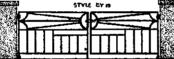


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## THEY LISTEN AND READ

Radio Popularises Literature



OES the broadcasting of stories adapted to the radio from well-known books increase the public desire to read those books?

This is what The Listener set out to discover the other day.

Booksellers we interviewed were of one opinion. Classic literature gains a great deal in popularity through the broadcasting of book adaptations. This is reflected in the demand for a book currently dramatised over the air. The popularity may be only temporary, but it is strong, and the demand, during the life of the serial, is insistent.

Instances are: John Halifax, Gentleman, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, East Lynne, Little Women, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Moonstone, Paul Clifford and The Woman in White. Some of these, of course, were 19th and 20th century stage plays adapted from books and then transcribed for radio. Many of them have also been made into films - another potent factor in their popularity with the modern reading-

### Big Demand: Poor Supply

Booksellers are up against the difficulty of securing stocks. Not until after the war, some of them say, will there be anything like an adequate supply.

It may be assumed that broadcasting is having a definite effect upon the mass taste in reading and that, generally, it is beneficial. For instance, a listener may, for one reason or another, miss an instalment of a serial. Immediately he seeks a copy of the book to bring his listening up-to-date. Books are not broadcast in their entirety. Rather are they dramatised to secure the greatest affect.

Again, we were told, there are many listeners who, having heard the radio version, desire to go over the whole story at their leisure. Here again, the bookseller is up against the problem of supply.

One man told us that as soon as it as announced that Dorothy Sayers' The Man Born to be King would be broadcast here, the demand for the book of the plays (in this case written specially for radio) was such that every copy was sold out in a few days.

Another suggested a link-up between broadcasting and the bookselling trade. "My idea," he said, "is that if booksellers could have ample notice in advance that a well-known tale was to go over the air, then they could possibly arrange to secure copies to meet the certain demand."

That, however, was outside our province, so we next directed our inquiries to librarians. They all had much the same story to tell: that their system for bespeaking books is used very much whenever a book is put over the air in serial form.

#### Comparison With Films

After we had talked with the people behind the counters of two or three ordinary bookshops, and discovered that most of the books that come into demand through broadcast versions are classics-the reason being that the copyright on such work has expired, and therefore they are popular with radio producerswe decided to look in at a second-hand shop. And there, of course, we found that Pride and Prejudice or John Halitax, Gentleman are just as rare as they are in other shops.

While the new-book shops consider themselves lucky if they open a parcel of a dozen nowadays, when once it would have been a couple of hundred, the second-hand shop is pleased when one copy comes in every now and again that can be put away for a persistent inquirer.

One idea that came out in the secondhand shop was interesting. People who go to a film based on a book, whether it is Mission to Moscow or The Count of Monte Cristo, don't seem to be so anxious to get the book as people who have heard part of a radio serial.

(continued on next page)