



I'd never trust my hair to soap . . . I use a SHAMPOO . . .

Soap dulls hair . . . a scientifically made shampoo is made for the job . . . use Camilatone and watch the lustre, colour and brilliance in your hair.

CAMILATONE
with
Tonrinz SHAMPOO

Agents: HILLCASTLE (N.Z.) LTD.,
Wakefield Street, Wellington.

ENGINEERING CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Correspondence Courses or Tuition for Engineers and Engine Drivers' Examination. Special Courses for Engineer Apprentices. For Prospectus, apply

GEO. W. MARTIN, M.I.E.S., M.I.N.A.,
M.I.Mar.E., M.I.Mech.E.,
Colonial Mutual Buildings, 276 Princes St.,
Dunedin, C.I. P.O. Box 904.

"CARTOONIST IN SOUND"

Ted Kavanagh, the New Zealander Behind "Itma"

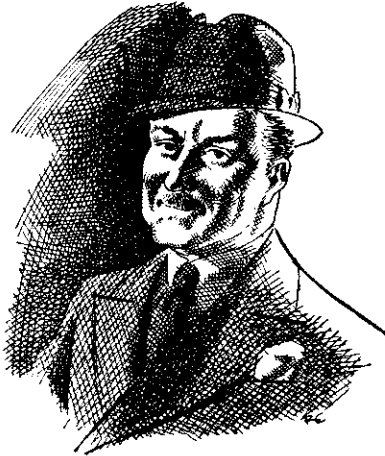
"IT must be so nice to be an actress. You travel about the world and have all day to yourself, and play to crowds in the evening."

That, or something like it, was once said by a young New Zealander to an older woman. It deserves a prize for fatuousness. Where is the imagination which should see that plays don't play themselves, that there is such a thing as rehearsals? Yet, in varying degrees, this fallacy is widely held. It is by no means everyone who realises the truth that nothing can be done well, from making runs to making jokes for a living, without a lot of trouble.

I am dealing here especially with the world of entertainment, and in that world circumstances govern the extent to which this truth sinks into the minds of audiences. It is plain enough that a first-class violinist or pianist must have worked hard to acquire perfection. The fingers tell the story. It is not so plain that an actor who moves and speaks so smoothly and effortlessly, has served a hard and long apprenticeship. Here, art conceals art. "How natural" we say to ourselves, and we may be foolish enough to think the player is only "being natural," not understanding that to appear natural on the stage is the result of jolly hard work. I say "appear," because if you behaved on the stage exactly as people do in real life, you wouldn't put it across.

With "variety," failure on the part of the audience is even more common. Among the arts, humour is a menial: you laugh at him, but he isn't quite the thing socially. His gifts may be indispensable, but they don't enjoy the prestige of "serious" work. So probably most people who enjoy comedians don't realise that just as much effort may have gone to the perfection of their quick patter and facial expressions, as to voice and gestures of a man who plays Ibsen and Shakespeare. The frothiest item may have been polished and polished over hours, days, or weeks.

This brings me to the British institution known as *Itma*. You have all



TED KAVANAGH

"Listeners should fill in their own mental pictures"

heard this BBC feature. It's very amusing, but very light, isn't it? Hardly anything in it. Well, try your hand at this sort of thing, and see. The main points about *Itma* are these, that it is team work, and that the builders of the script

Written for "The Listener"
by A.M.

labour as a real team for hours and days before they are satisfied with this one feature. After that, of course, the script has to be "produced." But first of all a personal note. New Zealand has a direct interest in *Itma*, because its script-writer-in-chief, Ted Kavanagh, is a New Zealander. He is a brother of Paul Kavanagh, of Auckland and Wellington, who has followed the staid profession of law. Many years ago, before the first world war, Ted Kavanagh was a student at Auckland University College, and I know contemporaries of his who still talk about the brilliancy of his part in college burlesques. His takeover of the then Mayor, the late Sir James Parr, was a joy to be remembered. It is also told, as an example of Ted's readiness, that at a wedding breakfast where the best man was struck suddenly by stage fright and could not propose the toast of "The Bride and Bridegroom," Ted, a young man of twenty, was called on to do the job at a moment's notice, and this is how he began: "The happy couple are about to start their career in double harness. Let us hope that neither will prove a nag."

Studied Medicine

Ted Kavanagh served in the war of 1914-18 with the New Zealanders. He had studied medicine at Edinburgh before that, and during the war he did bacteriological work at Hornchurch Hospital. He resumed his medical course again after the war, but gave it up to go in for journalism before sitting for his final. Before broadcasting became popular, he had a wide connection as a free-lance writer. Like many humorists, he is a serious-minded man. He was one of the early contributors to the weekly that Chesterton founded. He wrote his

first script for the BBC in 1927, and since then, says a writer in an English journal, "he has lost count of the songs, records, scripts, sketches and music-hall acts he has written." Tommy Handley is not the only star comedian who owes his success partly to Ted Kavanagh's gifts.

Itma actually started shortly before the last war broke out, but it was as a war-time show that it captivated England. "People were suddenly deluged with a host of new restrictions and regulations," says Ted Kavanagh, "there was the black-out and the call-up, and coupons and rationing. I deliberately aimed to show people that there could be a lighter, a humorous side, to all these difficulties. Tommy Handley was installed as Minister of Obstruction and Irritation in the Office of Twerps." The fame of *Itma* went all over the world. The team got letters of thanks from prison camps, from occupied countries, from the jungle. Ships in convoy under air-attack broke formation to the signal: "After you, Claude," with its answering message, "No, after you, Cecil." Firemen fighting bombs in English cities used the same gags.

The whole thing was typically English—or, if you like, British. It made fun of grave issues. It was based on character. Ted Kavanagh created a line of stage-radio people who became favourites with listeners at home and overseas—Mrs. Mopp, the Colonel, Miss Hotchkiss, Mr. Fusspot, and others. Ted Kavanagh won't use the books of gags that are available to script writers in America—"There if you want a joke about sardines, you turn up an index card and find every joke there ever was, and is ever likely to be, about sardines." (Francis Worsley, the third member of the team, admits that they use a gag-book occasionally for one character). Kavanagh's view is that for a series you have to build up characters which the public—at any rate the British public—are going to get to know and to like.

Experiment with Sound

Experimentally and technically the series was highly interesting. According to Kavanagh, *Itma* was an experiment with sound. Walt Disney had made sound live in his screen cartoons. Kavanagh wanted to "cartoon sound." He did this with the voices of his characters, and with the incidental music. His idea was that from the voice alone, without any other traits, listeners should fill in their own mental pictures of the character. So musical portraits of the characters were designed by the best arrangers they could find. Academic musicians played round with popular tunes. It has been said of Kavanagh not only that he has become a radio writer incomparable in his own field, but that he is as great a cartoonist in sound as David Low in his medium.

This should give some idea of the amount of work that went on behind the scenes. There were the ideas in each script to be thought out; the script to be completed; the music to be provided; the feature to be rehearsed. The routine was for the three partners—Ted Kavanagh, Tommy Handley, and Francis

(continued on next page)



INSTANT RELIEF with
TONKING'S
Linseed
COUGH MIXTURE

Safe for All the Family

Distributors: Sharland & Co. Ltd., Dixon St., Wgtn.