

# WHEN THEY DO THINK

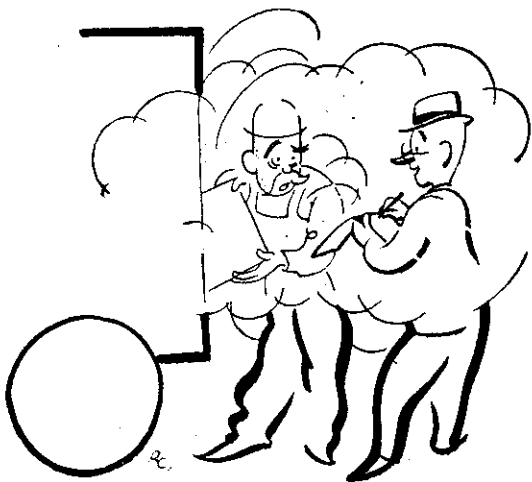
between news bulletins and finding the rattle in the platen, he liked to hear Szigeti playing Liszt, or Yehudi Menuhin on the romantic lyrics: such simple things as the songs of Schumann, or Brahms's Cradle Song. At a pinch, he would even search the programmes for his preferences, but left the muse like a hound fleeing from his mistress when there was any hint of news on the ether. Once or twice, he said, he had by accident tuned into radio plays; but not for long. It was time, he contended, that someone learned the technique of radio dramatisation. Drama at present seemed to consist almost wholly of noises off, and anybody could make a noise. So much was left to the imagination in a broadcast, he said he believed the listener's imagination was automatically stimulated, and that the broadcaster should take more advantage of this. Left to himself, the listener would imagine all that was required to fill in the picture radio could not provide. He did this quite happily as the dialogue developed. But the sudden introduction of blaring music, or unsympathetic effects, disturbed his imagination and broke up the effect of realism he had achieved in his own mind.

**Remember "The Listener's" motto:  
If You Can't Let the Light In, Let  
the Noise Out. Our correspondence  
columns are open, for criticism as  
much as for praise.**

For illustration, the printer mentioned Fred and Maggie and Those We Love. Not that he particularly liked either, but they showed what he meant: that by ordinary dramatic standards they were perfectly ordinary. The people in them said most of the ordinary things ordinary people said, and never, or very seldom, went beyond the bounds of ordinary experience. They were essentially simple, and they were kept simple, and thousands of simple people listened to them. The moral seemed to be that radio, because of its limitations, had unlimited opportunities to be true-to-life.

## The Saleswoman

In contrast to the printer's view was the saleswoman's idea that news bulletins should be forever banned, or at least reduced to her idea of saner proportions. "There is far too much repetition. Morning, noon and night we get the same old news. Speeches are recorded and played and replayed. For me, at any rate, this defeats the purpose of the news bulletins. When the name of Daventry is mentioned, I simply switch off. And, talking of switching off, tell me what I should do in the early evening when there is abso-



*Said the dustman (after a famous American broadcaster): "It shtinks"*

lutely no alternative to Daventry or the Children's Hour? Already I have heard the Daventry bulletin, often four or five times during the 48 hours previously. I cannot listen to the children's hour, with all those time-wasting birthdays. I'm just back from work, preparing a meal or waiting until it's ready. I'd like some quiet music, but I have to wait an hour or more before the auxiliary gets on the air and relieves me from the pain of listening to YA's merry mix-up between seven and eight."

Apart from this prejudice, she was a fairly reasonable listener, with a preference for medium-to-good music, and no great antipathy to anything that would amuse her.

## One Family

Next consider the sad case of a whole family. They have a splendid cabinet-model all-wave receiver. They have, in another room, a piano; the sort of piano that languishes in beautiful solitude, remembering the scales that once were played upon it, and regretting the misdirection of musical instinct that placed it so early in disfavour among the growing family. So long as any member of that family is at home, their radio is switched on. Sometimes it is correctly tuned. Sometimes the volume is properly controlled. Sometimes, but not often, the family quarrels mildly about some member's fleeting preference. But most often the radio gives forth news, market reports, talks, plays, musical comedy, jazz, brass bands, orchestras, classical music, and all the rest, without any obvious effect. This family should be admired. To reach their stage of radio-immunity must have taken years of practice. Without the noise, they feel uncomfortable. They "like to have it going." For them, no hope of Heaven, unless someone makes console-model coffins.

## —And Their Neighbours

A more reassuring picture is presented by their neighbours, upon whom we dropped, in the disconcerting manner of reporters hastening to heed the editor's command, regardless like.

Here was the ideal radio family. Mother, father, son, daughter; four different tastes, only one receiver. "How can I tell what I like?" asked father. "When John here likes jazz I hate it, and when I like the String Orchestra he wants somebody's something music, whatever that is. And apart from John, I can't say in so many words what I like. I'm not always in the mood for the same sort of programme. And I'm never in the mood for the sort of programme the rest of the family likes. Some fathers, you know, give up after the first two or three years, and keep themselves to themselves. But I *will* not. I'm going to have what I want, and while I want 1YA I'm going to have 1YA and no one else in this house is going to have anything else."

With which father became submerged in a cushion, daughter powdered her face, son sat on the cushion, and mother said: "Can't we have a little music?"

## Father's Solution

Seeking a solution, father told us he had fitted a lock to the radio, after making the necessary alterations to the cabinet so that the tuning knobs could be covered. But this did not work. When they could not fight for the programmes, they fought for the key, which now reposed in a small tin buried nineteen inches deep in the garden. Now, for peace sake, they never use the set unless alone in the room. A waste of a good set? Oh, no, "It's such a nice piece of furniture," said mother.

As we left the family was getting ready to go to the movies, and father was stealthily playing with the dial.



*The rat-catcher was the only one who didn't stop to argue*