

# NEWS OF BROADCASTERS, ON AND OFF THE RECORD,

By *S. J. Wells*

## SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT

"THE MAN WHO BROKE THE BANK AT MONTE CARLO" has its origin in the gambling exploits of one Charles Wells, who was attacked by Labouchere in London "Truth" in 1890 as "the biggest swindler living." Wells was able to take palatial offices and to own a whole fleet of luxurious yachts, in one of which he retreated, from an adverse decision in the Civil Courts, to Monte Carlo in 1892. There, with no particular system but an amazing run of luck, he had a series of staggering wins, breaking the bank half a dozen times. When Charles Coborn, the famous old British music hall singer, first sang "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" at the Trocadero, the audience wouldn't have it at any price. They hooted, howled and hissed until one night Coborn advanced to the front of the stage and told them: "I am engaged here for 12 weeks, and I'm going to sing this song every night and repeat the chorus until you join in with me." Soon the song was being whistled and sung all over London.

hearts almost immediately, and he responded by charming their hearts away with the beauty of his voice and the artistry of his singing." Tagliavini set out to be an electrical engineer, and he is licensed in that trade. But when he was a little over 20 his father lured him to Parma when some competitions were being held and the boy was dared to sing before the judges. He was offered a scholarship and in a few years became an artist of recognised stature, and a film star. When the Allies took over Italy, Tagliavini toured Army camps and American GI's took back to New York enthusiastic reports of their newest favourite. Like a good many other operatic tenors he is stocky. He

still enjoys straightening out complex electrical circuits needing repairs, and high on his list of pleasures are Italian football, swimming and prize-fighting. He is also something of a painter and sculptor. Tagliavini recalls that his first conversation of any length with a certain other singer named Pia Tassinari was during an opera which was interrupted by an air raid. Pia Tassinari became his wife.

Francka Sacchi, another Italian opera singer, appeared about 18 months ago at the Cambridge Theatre, London, in *Tosca*. Quite young, and handsome, she has been performing more recently at Genoa and Turin. (Note: Your local stations would answer your last question.)

"I ONLY get hurt when I try to do something acrobatic. I tore a muscle in my calf jumping on to a table in

*The Beggar's Opera*, I spent most of Henry the Fifth on crutches, most of *Hamlet* in a

wheel chair. I was stabbed near the heart in *Hamlet*, tore a cartilage in *Richard the Third*, I've been cut and slashed and bashed in stage fights, and I was nearly killed in *The Critic*."—Sir Laurence Olivier in a BBC talk.

MISS H. ANDERSON (Opatiki): Maynard Ferguson (trumpeter in Stan Kenton's Orchestra), was born on May 4, 1928.

WHO BLOWS THERE? In Montreal. At the age of seven he began to study the trumpet. His professional career was launched with the Black Watch Band. He has played with Boyd Raeburn, Jimmy Dorsey and Charlie Barnet. In 1950 he was recruited by Stan Kenton for his "Innovations" concert tour. Under Kenton's sponsorship Ferguson has come to prominence in Jazz circles.

HERE is a photograph of Professor J. Robert Oppenheimer, distinguished physicist and atomic authority, and Director of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey, who gave the BBC series of Reith Lectures for 1953



BBC photograph on Science and the Common Understanding. The lectures will be heard from NZBS stations in due course.

MAURICE DENHAM, whose chameleon voice is heard often in BBC Variety Shows, is one of the many-sided men in radio who can speak with both men's and women's voices as he chooses. Whenever any new character

VOCAL ELASTICITY voice appears in a show like *Much-Binding*, for instance, listeners can safely bet that it's Denham. A British film cartoon—a version of George Orwell's satire, *Animal Farm*—used Denham for making some of the sounds. His voice was so astonishingly elastic, so easily able to produce all manner of strange growls, grunts, neighs and whistles from the zoological repertoire that he was asked to record every noise that was needed. It's a great tribute to the versatility of a man who is a very successful comedian and also a straight actor of sufficient repute to play leading parts in the BBC's Third Programme.

Latest news of the vocal Denham is that a young actor-comedian, Nicholas Parsons, has taken over Denham's *Much-Binding* parts, while Maurice is making a film in Ceylon. "I'm often asked how one sets about creating different voices," says Parsons. "The answer is you just devise them instinctively and discover afterwards that they belong to your local butcher or a distant relative."



BBC photograph

JOE HATTON, who has been deaf and blind since he was four years old, appeared in a television programme recently and played skilful chess with his "interpreter," the Rev. Laird White. It happened in a programme portraying the problems of badly handicapped people.

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"PRETEND"
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- "LET'S WALK  
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- "YOU, YOU, YOU"
- "ST. GEORGE and  
the DRAGONET"
- "MISTER TAPTOE"
- "I'M WALKING  
BEHIND YOU"
- "DRAGNET"
- "WHY DON'T YOU  
BELIEVE ME"
- "HI-LILI, HI-LO" "CORONATION RAG"
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