

The Chit-Chat Club

Being a Record of Some of the Dissertations of Members of the X Club on Wireless Matters of Moment in New Zealand.

(Set Down by "Telanother").

"Personally," said Hargost, known to his X club cronies as "Blinks," "I think that the softest job in the world is a lawyer's. They stand up in Court and put the sob stuff across to the jury for an hour or two, and when the 'not guilty' verdict is brought in you find you're out of the frying pan and into the fire, with a bill of costs that would stagger a Rockefeller."

"Ha ha," said Winton Thribs, who enjoyed nothing better than the chance to have a sly dig at Blinks, "now we're going to get a glimpse into Hargost's horrible past. So lawyers are your bugbear, Blinks. For myself I reckon the Government servants have the softest thing. A sure job all the time, little work, and superannuation."

"Stuff and nonsense, sir," said the oldest member, who, deep in the recesses of the most comfortable arm chair in the "wireless bug's" corner, was alternately dozing and waking up to take part in the conversation. The fact that on the previous evening he had attended a veterans' smoke concert, and indulged rather freely in the '80 port, made his contributions to the conversation a little more acid than usual.

"You don't know what you are talking about. I was in a Government office myself once, and never worked harder in all my life. The softest job in the world is that of a parson. Preach once a week, and then as often as not crib someone else's sermon. Well paid, well fed. What more do you want, I'd like to know."

"But think of the visiting they have to do," said Blinks with a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes," added the oldest member sarcastically, "just think of it. Poor fellows. Must have three or four lots of afternoon tea every day. They do have a hard life."

"Well," said Brenton, "for myself I would choose any occupation except that of a minister. I reckon it's a dog's life. You work against the disdain of youth, the complacency of middle age, and the acerbity of the elderly ungodly. No good to me. Lots of the chaps at the war reckoned they would have done anything to get the padre's job but I wouldn't have swapped jobs with him."

"Me either," said Larton. "I was listening-in to Dunedin a while ago and heard a talk by the Rev. W. E. Scott, one of the chaplains to the forces. He called it 'The Padre's Cushy Job,' and he gave you a jolly good idea of what it was like, for the parson."

"We'd better hear the yarn," said Blinks, "if it's only for the benefit of the oldest sinner here."

"It made my mind go right back to the fateful declaration," said Larton, "for the padre told his story so clearly and so modestly that you got a jolly good picture of the life all through. He said that he didn't want his lecture to be regarded as 'swank' for he would not have parted with his experiences for all the tea in China, though he classed himself with the Aussie soldier who said that he had the wind up only once. On being asked when that was he replied 'all the time.' The padre was appointed to the engineers and as soon as he arrived in London he received orders to go over to France. He joined up with the N.Z. Division just at the time when the last great push commenced. Someone told him that he had got a 'cushy job' but he said that apart altogether from the war, it was the most difficult charge he ever had."

"The boys didn't want any parsons poking their blue noses into their fun," said the oldest member vehemently.

"Didn't they?" replied Brenton. "We just jolly well did need the padres, but they had a dog's life until all the boys were satisfied that they were real sports. Some of the finest chaps I ever met were the padres out in France."

"That's exactly what the Rev. Scott said," continued Larton. "He got to the lines after the deuce of a job and was greeted by a subaltern who told him that 'we want no blank padres here.' He found that the padre worked under difficulties and had to grasp every opportunity that came his way. In this way he was able to gradually break down resentment and change it to friendship. He had worked everywhere. Helping at the dressing stations, organising

games, and refereeing at football matches. One of his most interesting experiences was on Oct. 12, 1918, in a little village of Briastro. The padre and a dozen men had gone up to the village to bury one of their comrades who had been killed by an aeroplane the previous day. Fritz was shelling the road, and by the time they got to the village shells were falling all round them. For two hours they had to take refuge in a cellar and watch houses all round them being demolished by shell fire, and catching alight. Strangely enough, although none of them expected to get out alive, he said that that was one of the occasions when none of them seemed seriously perturbed. So you see," concluded Larton, "the padre's job wasn't as cushy as you might think."

"A conscientious and enthusiastic padre has my sympathy," said Blinks, "whether it be at the front or at home here. Fancy having to try and make the oldest member here mend his ways."

"If you have as few sins on your conscience when you get to my age," said the oldest member threateningly, "you'll..."

"Be wearing wings and flying to the drunken beanos of the old veterans," added Winton Thribs.

At this stage, since things seemed likely to become a little heated, Thribs generously suggested that the others should join him in a toast, so glasses were replenished and the health of the oldest member was drunk. Appeased to some extent, he once again sat back in his chair, and conversation drifted along.

"You can't beat a good lecture on literature or art," said Drexter, who



REV. W. P. RANKIN.

The Rev. W. P. Rankin acted as "Uncle Bill" for some time at IYA. He is a well-known baritone and in addition is a keen bowler.

rather prided himself on being something of a philosopher. "There's a chap up in Auckland, a Mr. W. P. Rankin, who has given several lectures, some of which are jolly good."

"I heard one of them," said Harrison, "and thought it was very poor. I gave his experience as a singer and lecturer to unknown listeners-in. It was a pretty dull eight minutes."

"Yes, I didn't like that one myself," said Drexter, "but it may be that the subject was given him, and the broadcasting people wanted listeners-in to realise some of the difficulties facing the artists who performed."

"What was it all about?" said Blinks.

"It gave a description of the feelings of the lecturer who talks over the wireless for the first time. Some of the allegedly humorous stories in it were a bit weak, although, as I say, it was a difficult subject. If he chose it himself he was giving himself a pretty hard job. His second address, which I liked very much, was called 'The Second Mile.'"

"What a mad title," said Harrison. "Yes, it may sound funny," said Drexter judiciously, "but it was an excellent lecture, with just a shade too much moralising."

"What is the second mile anyway?" asked the oldest member.

"The distance you've never travelled," said Blinks facetiously.

"In my young day we thought nothing of walking twenty miles to

see a girl, sir. None of your motor cars then. Two miles. Pshaw! A mere nothing. Just shows what modern men are when a chap thinks it great for a fellow to do two miles."

"Yes, but this second mile is different, chosen from a quotation: 'The ferret,' said Drexter. "The subject great rewards are given to those who travel the undemanding second mile."

"That's absolutely true," said Winton Thribs, with the air of conscious virtue of the successful man. "But to it should be added 'but some get great rewards because they trode the undemanding second mile for them,'" said Blinks, with emphasis, for it was well known that Winton Thribs had merely stepped into the shoes of his father who had built up a lucrative concern.

"Well anyway," continued Drexter, "the speaker said that it was the undemanding second mile that really tested our character. The willingness to do more than we were compelled to do was a revelation of the finest character."

"There aren't many young men doing the second mile then," growled the oldest member. "In my young day I would be working till six and seven o'clock every evening, and not sitting by a club fire."

"Well, perhaps you're right for once," agreed Blinks. "We are a bit soft. It's only too true that there are too few doing the second mile. We see it every day. Along at the office I know there are some of the fellows loafing on the job, and whether it is in the office, out on the farm, or amongst the ordinary labourers, there are far too many loafing on the job. I honestly believe that the fellow who will do the second mile regularly, will get ahead. I like the expression."

"Yes, Mr. Rankin said that only too often you heard people saying that they weren't going to do more than they were compelled to do, and those same people wondered why the rewards of life did not come to them. 'The man who watches the clock will never be a proprietor,' he said, and we all know that's true. He said that there's too much sloppy selfishness, and that unionism has done much to kill a man's ambition."

"Of course it has," agreed the oldest member. "They're all ruled by the rate of the slowest, and the result is that you pay through the nose for any job."

"You're coming on," said Blinks. "That's the second thing you've said to-night with which I agree. There's too much slowing up to the pace of the poorest man. And then fellows whine about not being able to get a place in the sun."

"Yes," said Drexter. "The lecturer pointed out that the rewards of life all go to the 'second milers'! It's the law of sacrifice that tests us, all the way through life."

"That stuff's a bit heavy for me," said Harrison. "I like the lighter things."

"More in keeping with your head, I suppose," said Blinks. "What do you listen-in to then?"

"Well, I've heard every one of those lectures Mr. Geo. Campbell has given from IYA, about the motor car. Having a car myself..."

"Good Lord," ejaculated Blinks. "You don't mean to say that you call that wheezing old 1910 Lizzie a car. It groans like the ghost of a murdered innocent, and has one and a half bung lungs."

"It's not a 1910 model," said Harrison indignantly, "and I'd have you know that it's still in perfect order. And why? Because I've always taken care of it, and followed out the advice which Mr. Campbell is giving, and which is invaluable to the budding young motorist like Larton here."

"Don't talk about cars to me," said Larton vehemently.

"Ha, ha," said Blinks. "What's happened to the beautiful Doshter of which we heard so much a few weeks ago?"

"The damned engine seized," said Larton. "When I got it they told me to give it a drop of oil every few days, and I did so, oiling it with the little can. It appears that when they spoke of a drop, they meant about a pint, and the blessed engine ran out of oil and seized. I wish to blazes I'd never seen the car."

"What a funny thing," said Harrison. "Mr. Campbell told a story of a chap whose engine had seized in exactly the same way. He said the trouble is that sellers now-a-days take it for granted that the buyer knows all about oiling a car, and don't explain the process, carefully as they used to do."

"Mr. Campbell has been giving some very good hints on 'safety first,' and said that every motorist had a duty in seeing that his car was safe to drive. He said that the trouble was that even the careful driver took risks in racing the car to the next stop, hurrying home, and trying to pass everything on the road. It was really a miracle that every motorist didn't have an accident at some time or other, but he, shouldn't tempt Providence too much. The motorist had to remember that the foot brake and the hand brake were all that he had between him and

eternity—and also, perhaps between him and gaol."

"Most of the fault for accidents is with the pedestrians," said Larton. "They should be fined for getting in the way."

"The French system would be the thing for you, then," said Blinks, "for the chap who is knocked down by a car there, is taken before the Court for obstructing the traffic."

"Mr. Campbell admitted that there was carelessness on both sides," continued Harrison, "but said that there was more on the part of the motorist than on the part of the pedestrians. In his second lecture he gave a few tips to the pedestrians, and they were sound. He told them that if they wanted to survive, they must quicken their step, as they were living in a fast age. The 'jay walker' owed his life mainly to the good driving of the motorist, and he considered that it should be a criminal offence to cross a busy intersection at an angle."



Mr. George Campbell, IYA's Motoring and Racing Expert.

"So it should," said Larton. "The day before by car went bung, I very nearly knocked down a man at the corner of Manners Street and Willis Street. The idiot waited sideways across the road and I had to pull up in about four feet. Of course there was a policeman on point duty there, and he would have seen that it was the chap's own fault, but that isn't much consolation when you are confronting the widow."

"He considers the tendency in the future will be for greater speed, so the jay walkers had better look out. One of his own experiences with a bird of this species was most amusing. He was making down the street in his car when he saw a jay walker crossing, and looking in the opposite direction. He could see that the 'jay' didn't see him coming, so he pulled up. The 'jay' walked right in

to the car and got such a shock that he wanted to fight the driver. Mr. Campbell told him that he did it merely to teach him a lesson, so the chap shut up. It reminded him of a cross-eyed cyclist who was going along the road and hit a pedestrian. The cyclist asked him why the devil he didn't look where he was going, and the pedestrian came back with: 'Why the devil don't you go the way you're looking?'

"In his third lecture he gave some good tips regarding the way to look after a car, and said that it is a day well spent when the car owner goes right over the car, tightens up every bolt, and oils and greases every place he can find. He said that the common belief that the earlier cars had better material in them is only partly correct, and that the reason for cars wearing out more quickly now is that they don't receive the same attention.

The steering gear wants careful oiling, and wheels need to be kept in alignment.

"The soundest advice of all that he gave, to my mind, and I could not help hoping that Larton was with me to hear it, was to keep out of the busy thoroughfares when you are only a beginner. No beginner has a right to get mixed up in heavy traffic, more especially at night, and when it is raining."

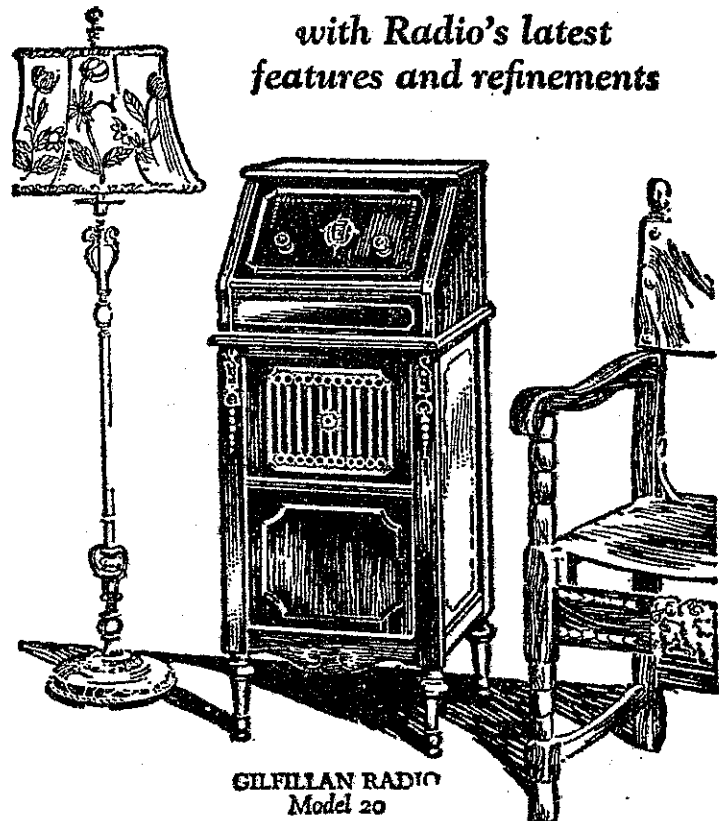
So when your jolly old contraption gets out of the undertaker's hands, Larton, I'd advise you to park it outside the city precincts and go for little runs in the country by yourself. And don't forget the oil. The car will not run without oil, would be a good line for the modern child's copy book..."

"Oh, shut up. You needn't rub it in," said Larton. "Motoring's a beastly occupation, and every motorist's a fool. What with traffic cops, pedestrians, and by-laws to dodge, the chap that can get through a year of it with a sound skin, deserves a V.C."

"Contraptions of the devil. That's what they are," said the oldest member, and with that he strolled out of the room, and being thoroughly illogical, called a taxi and went home.

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