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"Put" and "Take" in Broadcasting

A Heart-to-Heart Talk with Listeners on Future Possibilities

A SERIES of interesting articles have recently appeared in the "Radio Times" on the future of broadcasting and the probable lines of development. The views of Val Gielgud, as expressed in this series, are thought provoking and worthy of reproduction. Two main points brought out are that perfect reproduction is now possible to those taking the pains to master the simple technicalities required; and, that each will get out of broadcasting in proportion to what is put in, i.e., discrimination in using broadcasting rightly and selecting items in accord with taste.

HERE exists among the many famous stories of Bismarck one which tells how, at the height of his power, he was questioned about his future. His reply was: "I need no future. My past is enough." In his case it was perhaps more than enough. But, for most of us, the present is so wearying and complicated, the past so disappointing, that it is to the future that we turn alike for consolation and for hope.

We all know, and most of us remember, that extraordinarily difficult moment, common in all our lives, when we first realize the fact that we are no longer children; that we have grown up; and that we must take ourselves seriously. The transition is made doubly difficult for us by the galling fact that our parents refuse to see any change in us.

Now all of us are, in some sense, the parents by adoption of Broadcasting. And I would urge that the time has come for us to realize that Broadcasting has come to man's estate; that it is no longer a joke, a toy, or a miracle, but a very real combination of Art and Craft, with a future before it that is not only remarkably interesting, but also practically illimitable.

A FEW weeks ago I happened to be paying a country visit to some people who had a large and modern wireless set, and a certain amount of, perhaps unusual, mechanical and electrical aptitude. For the first time I was forced in common honesty to admit that through the medium of that set I could hear a concert as perfectly and as satisfactorily as if I had been in the hall with the orchestra. This is no question of exaggeration. It is mere fact. It was so. I had not believed it possible. I had heard a good deal of broadcasting. I have done a certain amount of it myself. I have always been interested in its possibilities. But always before, I must confess, with a certain spirit of patronage, and "making allowances" ("of course an astonishing thing, but—").

The realization that the making of these allowances and reservations was quite needless entirely altered the situation. It was obvious in a flash that the allowances had to be made not for broadcasting, but for the mechanical imperfections of the average receiving set; that, given the right material and the right knowledge, there is no positive reason why perfect reception should not be generally achieved. It was rather as though mankind had made allowances for a rather inadequate view of a solar eclipse, patronising the sun for its efforts, while failing to use the proper instruments to obtain the "vision splendid." I was, in short, most properly humiliated.

FUTURE COMPLEXITIES.

TURN, then, from this humiliating present of realisation to the future. Whether we agree with Mr. Wells, Professor Julian Huxley, or Dean Inge, as to the likely future of the human race, there seems to be no possible doubt that, barring the death of mankind in a Greater War, the immediate future will see an ever-increasing and more complex mechanical civilisation. Twenty years ago

the machinery of the embryonic motor-car was a mystery. To-day, every schoolboy is the perfect Guide to the Motor Show, and can probably describe the inward parts of the machines that won the Schneider Cup. Surely, then, it is not unreasonable nor unduly optimistic to assert that in the almost immediate future the technical knowledge that is evidently needed to secure perfect radio reception will be well within everybody's grasp.

IN this respect Wireless is running neck and neck with cinematography—if such a word is permissible. Both these Arts—for I persist in a stubborn belief that both must be included among the Arts—have suffered so far from imperfect technical background combined with the natural crudity of all immaturity. Both are now on the point of achieving technical perfection. It may be reasonable for people to say that a man should not write a book while he is learning how to read and write the alphabet; or at least that if he does so, they cannot be expected to regard him as anything more than a sort of elaborate music-hall turn. In the same way they have said that they could not

be in two places at once, and of getting thence to a third! That curse is unlikely to be lifted. It is more likely to increase. Every second is going to have an added value as time goes on. Now, Perfected Broadcasting, as I would like to call the ideal of this article, will save a good many of these invaluable seconds. No longer will you need to prop the paper uncomfortably against the coffee-pot from which your wife wishes to pour out. You will keep the Improved Paper for the journey citywards. At breakfast you will eat in peace, while the essentials of the news of the day will be quietly spoken to you from the future 2L.O. And in the evening there will no longer be the need to cope with the traffic problem to hear concert music or dance. You can hear your concert perfectly from your arm-chair. You can give your dance in your own house.

I HAVE cited no more than a few instances of the future importance of broadcasting in our lives. Such development is bound to come. When it will come depends on the average listener. It is his demand that must be satisfied by the B.B.C. And

if he likes his wireless set to be both imperfect and a toy it will remain so until inexorable progress defeats his apathy. Not that I believe him to be apathetic. That perfect reception is really attainable is not yet sufficiently widely known. But when it is, surely the demand will arise for this amazing instrument of civilisation to be used for the best at its best. Is there anything else in the world that can at the same time teach, amuse, inform, advise, warn, and satisfy artistically—all to an unlimited extent?

It would be as radically unsound to treat the future of wireless without seriousness or respect, as it would be to laugh at a scalpel, and use it for pencil-sharpening or nut-cracking. It would be sheer waste of a supreme opportunity.

SOME SUGGESTIONS.

I WOULD like now to suggest one or two practical ways in which such a more serious attitude might be brought to bear results.

Everyone, I expect, is familiar with Mr. Bernard Shaw's definition of the word "gentleman";—that a gentleman is an individual who puts more into the common stock than he takes out of it. It is rapidly becoming necessary that, for a period at any rate, we should become gentlemen with regard to broadcasting, and all that the word Radio implies.

I do not mean that we should definitely give to broadcasting more than we hope to get from it. I suspect that to be impossible in any circumstances. But it is of vital importance that people should realise that in relation to broadcasting they should "put" as well as "take"; that they can and should give besides receiving.

And, when I say giving, I do not refer in any way to those ten shillings a year. It is not a question of finance, but of supply and demand. If broadcasting is to remain an amazing toy, a minor amusement, that annual fee is important.

(Continued on page 3)

WHAT MUSIC DO YOU WANT?

EVERY LISTENER NOW HAS THE OPPORTUNITY OF RECORDING HIS OR HER TASTE IN RELATION TO THE MUSIC GIVEN BY THE MEMBERS OF 2YA's PROFESSIONAL ORCHESTRA. A VOTING COUPON TO FACILITATE EXPRESSION OF OPINION IS ON PAGE 5.

YOU MAY VOTE FOR THE REPETITION OF YOUR FAVOURITE NUMBER AND ALSO NOMINATE A REQUEST FOR ANY NUMBER OR ITEM THAT YOU DESIRE. SELECTION WILL BE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WISHES OF THE MAJORITY. (Details on page 5.)

take the "custard-pie" comedies of the early kinema seriously. Wireless has never been regarded quite so much as a poor joke as has the kinema. Its apparently miraculous properties have saved it from that fate. But I do not think that even its most fanatical supporters will deny that it suffers continually from a certain apathetic tolerance on the part of listeners; a tolerance based on this view of Wireless that "it is all very wonderful, but—."

May I, just for a moment, assume that that "but" is removed? That not only is the certain mechanical perfection achieved, but also a belief in Wireless as one of the important incidentals of life; an incidental as important as Music, or Painting, almost as Eating?

SPEED TO SOLVE SPEED.

GIVEN these things I would like, as everybody likes, most rashly to prophesy. Imagine—if you will indulge me so far—the beginning of every man's day not too many decades hence. You will, I am sure, agree that the curse of our modern mechanical civilisation is its speed, combined with the ever-increasing difficulty of being unable to