

# Effortless Education—Thanks to Broadcasting

(Specially written for the "Radio Record")

**I**N the last few months I have realised how valuable broadcast talks may be in education about topical affairs. It is really only in political circumstances like the present that probably thousands of people would have the patience to listen to talks on "World Affairs," for it is only in such circumstances that they realise that they are surprised in ignorance of things they simply must know something about.

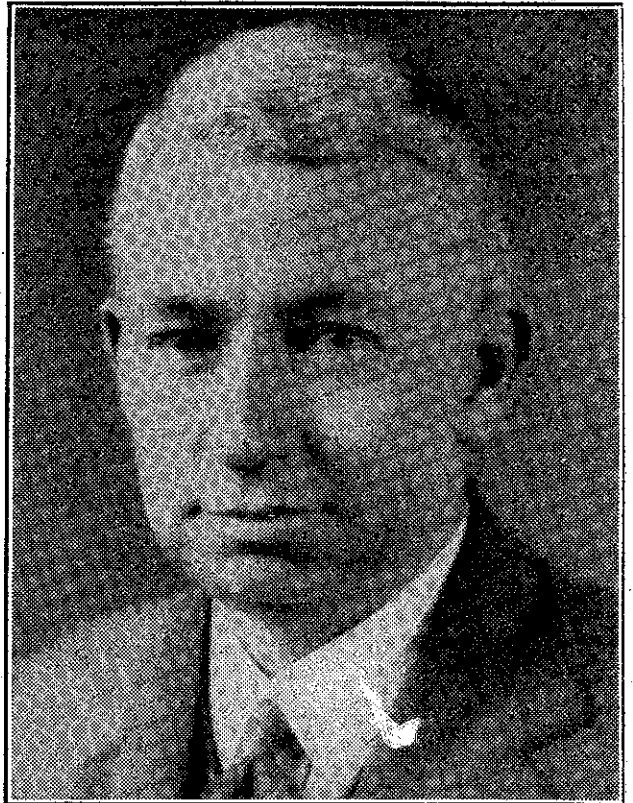
Had the situation between Italy and Abyssinia never developed, I for one might well have finished my mortal days content with the vague backwash of school geography which reminds me only that Abyssinia is somewhere in Northern Africa and is peopled by a lot of blacks. I think I might safely assume that I was not the only one caught napping with this meagre idea of things when trouble started to look more troublesome. There was one thing to do—find out something about the place and the situation between the diplomats of the contending countries.

Ten years ago the obvious thing was to read the elucidation provided by the newspapers, for how many would bother to consult public libraries? Even in the present case I have absorbed as much as my capacity allows from the interesting articles written by people who have been to the country, to compare their information and their opinions as to chances for and against either participant in the event of war. And the newspapers are the obvious and inevitable source of cabled information about the day-to-day progress of negotiations.

What has held my interest just as closely, however, is the regular series of talks which the national stations have provided, all of them designed and delivered by men who have given intensive study to whatever their subject may be. In Auckland Mr. Alan Mulgan was the "World Affairs" speaker until recently, when he undertook the duties of his appointment to the Broadcasting Board's head office staff. Wellington has been looked after by Professor F. L. W. Wood, who has spent most of his recent 20-minute spells at the microphone in explaining the Abyssinian dispute. Mr. Leicester Webb is carrying out a similar duty in Christchurch, and Mr. J. T. Paul in Dunedin.

Doubtless there was considerable unobtrusive retreating to quiet corners with a textbook containing much of the latest information and much of the history of both Abyssinia and, to a lesser degree, Italy; for no one is so full of information that he can, without some amount of research, keep his hearers interested and confident of the speaker's knowledge of his subject. One of the virtues of the explanation of things such as this over the air is that more people are likely to listen to the talk than would ordinarily read all that may be printed in newspapers about the same subject. As exceedingly few people are zealous enough to consult a public reference library for a more complete understanding of the world's affairs, and probably fewer would attend a public meeting about it, broadcasting as a means toward their better education is the most beneficial supplement to the newspaper reports that I can conceive.

At every listener's fireside there is now an opportunity of hearing up-to-the-minute explanations of the progressive—or retrogressive—steps being made on the other side of the world. A point worth noting about the talks, too, is the fact that there is no effort made to pass judgment or advance personal opinions. This alone creates a particular value and greater interest for myself, at any rate, in what is said by



*Alan Mulgan, who until recently was listened to by interested thousands in his broadcast talks from IYA on "World Affairs." His appointment to the position of Supervisor of Talks at the Broadcasting Board's head office deprives listeners of one of the country's most capable speakers.*

the "World Affairs" speakers, for there are already enough both in newspapers and out of them who are always ready to thrust their too often immature and ill-considered opinions and conclusions down one's throat one week, and follow them up next week with a brand new set of ideas. This freedom from bias and absence of effort to "mould public opinion" is indeed one of the most commendable features about the broadcasts of the four men who conduct the talks from the main stations. Whether we have to thank the Broadcasting Board or the speakers themselves for this omission I know not nor care. It is at least appreciated.

Until the present critical situation I had been content to take that passing interest in international affairs which entails merely the reading of a cable page in the newspapers, with infrequent dippings into articles reprinted from overseas journals. Although I am honest enough to confess to my abysmal ignorance of anything worth knowing about Abyssinia a few months ago, I think I may as honestly lay claim to an average knowledge of affairs and conditions now. I might have improved myself out of the newspapers—apart from the actual cabled reports—but it is more likely that I might not have bothered. It was only when I heard for the first time one of the "World Affairs" speakers from a national station that I mentally pricked up my ears about Abyssinia, and since then I have "followed" them from week to week and from station to station.

Of course, I might be one of only very few who have become really interested in Abyssinia and so on through broadcast talks. In that case, I've stolen a march on most people for effortless education.