

This Week's Special Article

Human Interests and The Radio Reporter

"GOOD evening, Mr. Puffin."

"Good evening."

"You are an engine-driver?"

"That's so."

"What is it like being an engine-driver?"

"Oh, so-so; depends how you look on it."

And so on.

And they call it a radio interview!

Interviewing is an art. And radio interviewing is doubly an art. Any experienced newspaper man will tell you his "chief" prizes a good interviewer beyond rubies. What everybody wants to hear, is the details of the inner life of somebody else—and it takes a good man to get to them.

It must be admitted, however, that the newspaper interviewer has an advantage over his wireless cousin, for he can sit back over his typewriter and frame his sentences with care, more or less at leisure. The radio man must have his wits very much in the "present tense," with no happy background of reflection. Still, that is no excuse for the kind of radio interview heard over the air so often lately.

A successful interviewer is not concerned so much with bringing out a celebrity's attitude towards some question of the moment, as with bringing out the great one's personality itself.

Granted that the interviewee may be reporter-shy,

THOSE who listen to radio interviews and those who arrange them should find considerable interest in this article by E.R.B. who claims that listeners want personality rather than philosophy from the "great ones."

microphone-shy and camera-shy, but the interviewer's job is, at all costs, to set him at ease and to induce him to talk naturally in the club-chair or fire-side manner.

It is, as I say, the personal touch that is open to enter-

taining exploitation. And here thorough preparation plays a big part. What's the use of dragging a man into a studio, firing questions and expecting up-to-the-minute, snappy answers? It can't be done. Again, when the "intimate" type of interview is sought, say over a dinner-table in a hotel, it is fatal simply to barge in with a list of questions that the second party has not had time to study.

Time, of course, is the essence of the contract in radio work, but a word to the wise: Once the interviewee is launched on a subject, you may be sure it is interesting to listeners. If, by ill luck he becomes "un-broadcastable," the remedy lies in the switch-off.

The greatest virtue an interviewer can possess is tact. He must remember that he is a nonentity compared with the interviewee, although he may have his public and his fan mail.

Most of the New Zealand radio stations have tried their hand at relayed interviews, from the man who works in a sewer to the exalted gentleman who sits on the judges' box at a high-class race meeting; from the visiting prima donna to the secretary of the mouth-organ band, and from the traffic cop to the lady who recently toured New Zealand with the signatures of all the mayors in the world inscribed

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In the Wake of the Week's Broadcasts

If ever there was need for a leisurely delivery in radio talks it is in the NBS "Whirligig of Time" series now on the air from the main stations. For thousands of listeners the facts are

HE TALKS TO A MENTAL PICTURE. new and strange, or half-forgotten with time. And if these facts are given with speed, the poor

listener is led over continents and and through past centuries at a pace that is exhausting. This is my complaint against more than one speaker, and the latest offender was Dr. A. C. Keys speaking from 2YA last week. He fired off his good material like a human machine-gun, and left at least one listener almost lifeless in his chair. Listeners like to be coaxed and wheeled and treated gently in radio talks. After all, radio talks are like conver-

sation. One talker I know has a good system. When he speaks into the microphone he has a picture in his mind of his wife. He gives his radio talks to her.

Last week Mr. L. D. Austin's informative talk at 2YA on the Lyceum first night of Tennyson's "Becket" stirred many memories of Sir Henry Irving. As Mr. Austin reminded lis-

MEMORIES OF IRVING AND TENNYSON.

teners, it was in this role that the great actor suddenly received his last call. This was at the Theatre Royal, Bradford, on October 13, 1905. As he fell beneath the strokes of the four knights in the last act of this spectacular tragedy, Sir Henry uttered the words, "Into Thy Hands, O Lord—into Thy Hands!"

They were the last lines ever spoken by the great actor. The talk reminded one listener of a remarkable thing that took place on the day after Tennyson's death in 1892. Immediately after the poet's death was announced, there was a sudden appearance in the streets of one big English town of dozens of men selling pirated versions of a musical setting of Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." The hawkers did a thriving business. Nearly every passer-by had two penn'orth of Tennyson's very popular short poem. The Poet Laureate was buried in Westminster Abbey thirteen years within a day, before Sir Henry Irving's dramatic exit.

I made up my mind that I would listen to A. G. Fleiming's studio presentation of John Harvey's play, "Peace