

It has oftentimes been said that the Radio Broadcasting Company should take upon themselves the important task of providing for adult education, apart from the lectures and general broadcasts. It is sometimes urged that a more serious type of entertainment would reflect for the country's good and that light types of programmes only serve to foster "the spirit of the age." As this opinion has been suggested to the English Broadcasting Corporation, the following analysis of the reply of Sir W. H. Hadow, chairman of the B.B.C.'s committee of inquiry on adult education by Kenneth Ulyett in "Wireless Magazine," is of singular interest.

"We are in full sympathy with the use of broadcasting as entertainment—as 'taking tired people to the islands of the blest'—but it has also other functions." So says Sir Henry Hadow, whose name has become famous in connection with broadcast adult education. And it is broadcast adult education to which he refers when he says "other functions."

Well now, I might sit down to write a paean of praise on the way in which this is done, and on the admirable way in which adult education is added to entertainment without spoiling the symmetry of the whole.

Wrath of Displeasure.

OR I mightn't! I might agree with many who have spoken to me on the subject, or written about it, and attempt to raise your ire against the high-brow effusions of the B.B.C., so that the very caissons of Savoy Hill might rock under the wrath of displeasure of the people.

I'm not trying to do the one or the other. Let me tell you something. I happened to be in the office of a B.B.C. Press official recently when a zealous reporter from the evening paper Press was taking him to task about the quality of the programmes (stock topic).

The Pressman stood and talked and talked while I waited patiently, and he said that his editor thought the B.B.C. was putting out rotten programmes, and if it couldn't do better than that, it ought . . . and so on. You know: just what is said every morning in the up-to-city trains.

Wireless---a Potent Factor in Education

An Unconscious Influence for Good or Evil

AND then the B.B.C. official brought out the B.B.C. stock emergency phrase number one: "My good fellow, if our programmes were really so bad as you think, the number of listeners would drop off. But they don't. The increase in nearly every month this year is greater than that of the corresponding month last year." Which doesn't mean very much, after all.

But that is just the reply you would get if your dream could come true and you could meet the programme man face to face and tell him just what you think of him!

LET me now deliver my dictum: No other entertainment body—the gramophone, cinema or theatre—has ever successfully ventured on educational lines.

The B.B.C.'s present "teach-the-public" policy is wrong. Broadcasting is bound to have an educational effect anyway.

So soon as present commitments have expired, the B.B.C. should make the big experiment of changing its policy, and become popular before trying to educate.

The first dictum is more important, for broadcasting is not so much more potent than the combined forces of the gramophone and film industries, and what they cannot or don't try to do cannot easily be done by a Government-bound corporation.

In its early days the cinema was a place of amusement; and cinema magnates have made fortunes. Nowadays a kind of topical review is shown, which includes one or two items of such a general interest that they might almost be called educational; I mean scenes in distant countries, nature studies, and whatnot.

Gramophone Records.

EVEN giant gramophone companies have done nothing more than produce entertainment records to suit every need, from tum-tum jazz to "Tannhauser."

Generally speaking, the theatre is in a bad way nowadays. Farces are hard to find, and modern sex plays (or Dreary Dirt, as I like to call them) are the only things which pay. Anyway there isn't anything at all educational about the theatre.

Now, the B.B.C.'s reply to all this is simply that the microphone is more of a living force than "canned" music, acting, or talkies. Which is true.

But it is no excuse for the state of affairs which has arisen, namely, the adoption of the microphone by the highbrows for educational purposes. The living force and the personal element of radio should be used to the advantage of increasing the pleasure obtained. The present state of affairs does not savour of this.

Bodies such as the British Institute of Adult Education seem to have said: "Cinema-goers are hopeless low-brows, and the gramophone companies are too tied up by financial and marketing commitments; but the radio public is a new public; we will try educating them."

It seems to be overlooked that, as I have said in my second dictum, radio is bound to have a progressive educational effect, if only by reason of the quantity of matter broadcast.

Higher Musical Standard.

EVERYBODY acknowledges the fact that the musical standard of this country has been raised in a few years because of broadcasting. The Proms. are popular. Jazz is being fitted into its place. Ordinary folk are learning more of music, and so are enjoying more. That's what I call education—an improvement in intelligence, with a consequently greater capacity for understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment.

And, believe me, this musical education has been done by the music itself and not by critical discourses on "The

New Harmony of Bela Bartok" or "The Theory of Fugue and Counterpoint."

This same natural education can be carried out with other things than music. It is the complete and only satisfying jam to go with the powder. Nobody likes to be told in just so many words that they are ignorant, and that this, that, and the other way is what all ought to know.

That is the same as having education shoved down one's throat and because no powder is given with the jam, broadcast education is not universally popular.

Mind you, I'll never say that broadcasting should all the time be given up just to light music. I never mind switching on the set and hearing a personal experience being given by some authority on a topical subject of which I know little.

If only the B.B.C. could pick out the chief item of news in each day's national papers, and find an authority to speak for not longer than ten minutes, then this would make quite good "meat" for the programmes, and would be educating enough in itself.

Many men, and even more women, would willingly listen to a daily topic such as this, whereas they wouldn't give a brass halfpenny about an educational hour, announced as such.

Our Natural "Grouchers."

IT is the English nature to "grouse." Indeed, if the average Englishman didn't grouse about anything you might be quite sure that (a) it was above his comprehension, (b) not worth troubling about, or (c) it was something he had done himself!

The B.B.C. is a safe thing about which to grouse, for no amount of grouching will imperil its monopoly or change its policy. But it is not popular because it does not make its appeal to the masses.

Everybody has a low-brow side. Everybody wants radio for amusement and entertainment. Everybody does not want radio for "uplift."

Radio education appeals only to high-brows; it may create high-brows. But it cannot reach those who really need education; because they are not attracted sufficiently not to switch off the set when a talk is announced.

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