

Editorial Notes

Wellington, Friday, December 30, 1932.

THE first broadcasts of the Empire

Short-Wave Station appear to have left an unfavourable impression upon the minds of New Zealand listeners. Several factors must be borne in mind, however; the transmissions are little more than experimental both as regards technical features and programme material; the time of the year is not favourable to long distance reception; rebroadcasting at the best of times does not treat music very favourably. One can always tolerate imperfections in speech, but in music they are instantly noticeable, and completely destroy the value of the transmission. For this reason it seems that, even at the best of times, the greatest asset of the Empire stations will be the news and talks it makes available. Recordings of British programmes will always be welcomed by listeners, particularly if the conditions to receive them are good, but if records are to form the mainstay of the programmes, then we are afraid there will be few listeners in this part of the world. The novelty will appeal to some, and for that reason there is no doubt that the initial broadcast brought many from their beds, but probably few took the trouble to listen seriously on succeeding nights. But it will need more than a novelty to make the station a success, and great attention will have to be paid to the programme material. Long and heavy numbers are definitely out of the question with New Zealand audiences, and the rebroadcasting of these items will only bring the Board into disrepute. Furthermore, the time falling in the middle of the evening session is not good. Perfectly good programmes have to be interrupted to impose speech and music that is far from good, but the listener will have no complaint, we imagine, if the items broadcast are good, and comprise something he cannot hear from the New Zealand stations.

IN his address at the opening of the station, Sir John Reith stressed the fact that the present transmissions were experimental ones, and that listeners in the Dominions were invited to state exactly what they wanted in the way of programmes. But they must bear in mind the technical difficulties and

make allowances in the programmes. In other words, the B.B.C. would, within reason, give the Empire what it wanted. We very sincerely hope the B.B.C. will adhere strictly to this plan, and give us popular talks, recordings of commentaries on important events, and musical items which are not available here. Otherwise the Empire station will



"Lies from a Skipper's Log
—'Blackbirding in the South
Sea Islands.'"

A Sea Story

To be told by

"Old Wire Whiskers"

From IYA on

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7.



not be worth to the Empire what the B.B.C. planned it should.

THE emergence of microphone technique as applied to talks has been a slow and painful process; the broadcaster has learned from his mistakes—and those mistakes have been paraded as a subject for music-hall humour! The preparation and presentation of a fifteen-minute talk may seem to the listener to be a small and simple matter. This is not so; every talk that is broadcast presents an individual problem, not only of matter, but of manner, too. It is, unhappily, essential, in almost every case, that the text of a broadcast talk should be written out beforehand. There are various reasons for this; the convenience of accurate timing, the necessity for knowing what a speaker is going to say, are only two. There are actually few talkers capable of speaking impromptu, or even from notes, when faced by the microphone (many

have tried, but few, however successful they may be on the public platform or the lecture theatre, have been able to combat the peculiar circumstances of having to talk from an empty room to an invisible audience.

TALKS, then, must be read aloud from a written or printed sheet, though the mere reading of written matter, however clearly performed, plainly does not constitute a broadcast talk. The broadcast talk is perennially in competition with the published author. If he is to succeed as a talker, he must bring to his work a more live and personal quality than is achievable in print; otherwise it would be absurd to maintain that it were more worth while to hear a thing broadcast than to read that same thing at leisure in the pages of a book. This live and personal quality—it has been styled 'microphone personality'—is rare and elusive; the ideal talker must possess not only an engaging personality, reflected in the tonal quality of his voice, but the ability to write colloquial English and speak that English colloquially once he has written it down. These gifts are no common possession. The gift of talking simply without a

hint of patronage, of conveying geniality without facetiousness, of talking conversationally without wasting time, of packing a lively phrase with meaning, is a rare one. The possession of the 'common touch' implies a wide acquaintance with, and a real love of, humanity; the possessor alone can approximate the Ideal Broadcast Talker.

WE have thrust the question of material to one side in favour of that of manner—for the very good reason that it is of only secondary importance. For every ten men who *know* a fact, there is only one who can express it adequately through the microphone for the benefit of an audience of ordinary men and women. The microphone can reduce the most learned professor alive to no more than a dreary monotone. That the broadcaster's material should be fresh, original, stimulating, goes without saying, yet, if we had to choose between the lively presentation of old facts and the academic revelation of new facts by one mumbling long words into his beard, we should not hesitate to vote for manner and let matter go hang!

In Phase and Out

By "Quadrant"

WHAT is that saying about things being made in Heaven—oh, yes. "Announcers are made in Heaven," but Wellington, and according to the critics, Dunedin, is not heaven all over.

THE IYA news session wants trimming up a bit. The assistant announcer interrupted the concert session to broadcast the latest cricket results—hot from the batter's bat "by courtesy Australian Broadcasting Commission." But the score had already appeared in the morning paper!

9.30—ENGLAND calling! Our set became a nucleus of rapt attention, but its retentive power has faded, and now England calls in vain. This N.Z. has never done, and will never do, listen to programmes it doesn't like.

THE "Messiah" from 2YA was one of the few good relays of its kind we have heard recently.

MR. VOCO, 2ZW, we congratulate you upon your excellent programme, and incidentally upon the high standard you have maintained in the past year.

HOST (offering cigars to dx guest): What would you like—Havana, old boy?

Dxr: By jove, yes. Mexico is as far east as I have got yet.

I NOTICED in the radio notes of a "daily" "that nowadays there are fewer radio fans in the summer than in the winter." That probably accounts for the warm summers experienced these last two years.

DEAR Quadrant,—If Mr. Stilling said that sawn-off guns were used for buffalo, he's either talking a lot of bull or should buy another book about "the territory."

The cook's offside might wear a cotton singlet, but I'll bet Mr. Stilling my old flannel shirt and long-barrelled .308 (having no further use for them) that only one out of ten affect the garb he suggests.—Otherwise "O.K."—Dingo.

DETERMINED to find out what the public really thought of his window display, an ingenious radio dealer is said to have fixed a concealed microphone in front of his shop and connected it with a speaker in his office. It must have been rather fun for him, at times, I should think—especially if his errand boy went outside and told the next door butcher's boy what a mean old hound the boss was!

DEAR Editor,—I know my column is bit topsy turvy this week, but it's like me. I'm having a wonderful Christmas. Kind regards.—Yours, Quadrant.