

A DAY WITH THE RADIO

BY ROBERT LITTELL

AT SIX-THIRTY on a Winter Thursday the sun rose in a murky and dispirited East, and I rose with it, and sat down in front of a small black metal box with knobs and wires. There I remained practically without stirring for the next seventeen hours, turning the knobs on the black box, and listening, in a spirit of impartiality, show me, and what have you, to as many as I could catch of the sounds, intentional or unintentional, that invisibly throng the American air, and have given us one of the most significant and marvelous inventions of this mechanical age. And here, ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience, is the log of that long day spent in the presence of the Tenth Muse.

6:45 A.M. This is the hour of the daily dozen. A cymbalon in the back-ground, and a man's voice, brisk and confidential. "Now let's do the Russian dance, the gazotski, the flippity-flop . . . one, two; one, two . . . On your backs everybody . . . All ready, Daddy boy? All ready, Mamma? Now standing up in front of the open window—of course your windows are open . . . Try to radiate a little cheer and joy into the hearts of others today . . . Don't forget your morning smile; this is Cheer Day . . ." I turn the knob. "The temperature this morning was 47 degrees at six o'clock . . ." Another voice, deep and devotional: "Lord, be our guide, that by Thy power no foot may slide."

Back to the gym class. "All together for the upper and lower lobes of the lung." The class leader is talking to people in the room with him, as well as to the invisible horde in pajamas. "Somebody sent Bill a gorgeous box of chocolate bonbons . . ." We are let in on the joke. Now he talks to us again. "You're good this morning, Mother . . . Oh, very wonderful, Mother; very wonderful! Every day in every way you're getting better and better . . . Sit on the heels and raise the arms. Now begin . . . There you are, Poppa, old boy . . ." From another station come a bugle, reveille, and a military march, followed by a chorus of crooners, very faint and happy . . . "At the next stroke of the bell it will be exactly 7 A.M. Eastern Standard Time . . . Ping!"

More calisthenics. What a voice—soothing, persuasive, snappy and facetious! The bedside- and Elk's-Convention-manner combined. Like a magician, his patter never stops. "Now we're going to lie down on our cerise rug . . . Bill selected a cerise rug . . . Number 18—the jack-knife . . . Now we'll take a bicycle ride from Hartford to Albany and over to Schenectady . . . Schenectady, we're here, and we're glad we're in your splendid town."

7:13. Violin music, sensuous and sad, a gypsy tune, the right thing just before breakfast . . . I turn the knob. "Oh, boys, this is Station WOR in Jersey and here comes the cuckoo." (The cuckoo goes "Cuckoo".) "Out of bed, please! Remem-

ber Clements Clothes look better because they *are* better." While the millions in pajamas pause to rest there are jokes. "Doctors live on Park avenue, don't they?" "Yes." "Don't you think it would be more appropriate if they lived on Madison avenue . . . Now let's do Number 14."

At ten minutes of eight, the knob, flitting from station to station, reveals (1) the sounds of a cuckoo, of trotting horses, of gongs, bells and chimes, suddenly drowned by the blare of a big orchestra; (2) distant voices singing a hymn; (3) a passionate matutinal tango; (4) a muffled crooner's voice and a slow trickle of piano, and (5) "Goodbye, Sweetheart," very mournful and very soft.

With a coffee cup in one hand I use the other to reach Jolly Bill and Jane. A man's voice. Something about a magic glass. "I see a little girl way out in Pennsylvania . . . she wants you to sing Micky Mouse in Scotch . . ." Woman's voice, as full of r's as my mouth is of toast: "Dinna worry, dearr." Then something about a Farmer, and a Dwarf, and Captain Hop Toad. "They're hopping all over Squeaky Town . . . I want you to fly over to my friends in Maryland and bring back some Magic Powder . . . And now goodbye until Cream of Wheat time tomorrow . . ."

Somewhere there is a military march, brassy and gay. From somewhere else come pious, meringue voices, singing "I Am Trusting in the Lord."

Still more calisthenics, for late risers. "One—two—three—four. B e n d—a n d—touch-the-floor." These boys are good. They croon the commands tunefully, skilfully, they are extraordinarily expert, peppy, and infectious. It would be hard to remain grouchy while listening to them. "You've gotta bend—*down*, Sister, bend—*down*, Sister, if you wanna keep thin . . ." Some non-athletic singers take their place.

"I'm crazy about your kisses—They thrill me through and through—The more I get the more I want—I can't get enough of you . . . All I need is you, kissable Ba-by, kissable Ba-by!—Where'd you learn to kiss?—You weren't born like this—kissable Ba-by!"

By eight-fifteen I have settled down. Breakfast helped a lot. I enjoyed not doing the exercises, and I have learnt which stations are which on the dial. The sun is high above the horizon and new stations keep coming in. Bits from the papers. "New Brunswick man drops dead after parade . . . Bernard M. Baruch [pronounced Barouche] says America is . . . Finger of Fate points at Ritchie . . ." This is serious, clear, well presented—but I can read . . . Respighi's "Fountains of Rome" floats in on muted strings . . . The Lord's Prayer . . . Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" . . . Jokes. He: "A doctor says kissing should be abandoned on hygienic grounds." She: "I don't care, I never go to such places." Other jokes about golfers (gawlfers), with hilarious studio laughter . . . "Good Morning to New York from the Old Almanac Man . . . A year ago today General Ludendorff . . . This is the birthday of Jack Oakie . . . Today's horoscope: a day of conspicuous achievement, a time for pushing to high goals, a day for inviting the help of elders . . . A child born on this day should rise through the favoritism of those in power . . . Weather cloudy, warmer in the interior." A poem by Nixon Waterman: "A rose to the living is more—Than sumptuous wreaths for the dead." Twittering of canaries all through the poem.

A woman's voice: "Keep the system clean. If you don't know what I mean by the system, it is the stummick, kidneys and so forth . . . Now just why do I tell you these things? It is not solely for personal

gain . . . Fat people do not enjoy long life . . . Sylph Tea . . . Drink Sylph Tea, spelt S-y-l-p-h . . . It removes gas and bloat instantly . . . A combination of nature's herbs taken from the four corners of the earth and skillfully blended . . . One dollar per package . . . Send your orders to me, Miss Sylph, spelt S-y-l-p-h." Jazz: "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow . . ." Slow violin . . . A trio, with Gilbert and Sullivan patter: "I'm only a consumer, and it really doesn't matter." The last gasp of the calisthenics: "One—two—class—halt . . . And now, soldiers of health, your commander must depart . . . Just exercise in the morning, marching to happiness . . . Mr. Glick will be back with us tomorrow . . ."

II

Nine o'clock. Here's something about Egyptian beauty secrets. A man's voice, low, strong, convinced, possibly foreign: "I have been offering par-fumes at special prices . . . This morning I am offering Gypsy Bo-quet . . . Twenty-six dollars an ounce . . . If you have been putting off the purchase of a real par-fume, try Gypsy Bo-quet, which is so romantic, so fiery, so impulsive . . . I want the ladies who have the *Wanderlust* to send for this Gypsy Bo-quet . . . Five dollars an ounce . . . Tomorrow you cannot get Gypsy Bo-quet at five dollars an ounce . . ." "Children, do you drink enough water . . ." "Slenderizing tablets," with black-voice Amos and Andy imitations . . . A woman. "I know you're going to be interested in this pink gown" . . . A manly chorus singing "The Maine Stein Song" . . . Dance programme through the courtesy of Coward Shoes . . . A plaintive accordion . . . "The bath mats are the sweetest things you've ever seen, and your college girl will

simply *thrill* over them" . . . Alice Foote MacDougall, a cultivated, slightly superior voice, "Take two pounds of the neck of the beef and cut it into squares . . ."

There seems to be, hiding behind the others, a station I cannot reach. It blares out no matter where I turn the knob. I shut the juice off entirely, and still it blares. It is out in the street; it is a German band. Pleasant to get something through the eyes once in a while. The puerile, lazy music, always on the point of snoring and breaking down, falls on grateful ears. The trombone player, with the end of it filling his mouth, and the wind of it filling his cheeks, looks up at the apartment-house windows, hoping for nickels, or even pennies . . . I turn back to the invisible world again . . . "Introduce to you Senator Royal S. Copeland." Deep, certain, Senatorial voice: "Good morning, everybody. This morning I want to tell you about ulcer of the stomach . . ."

This guitar is good, and the lazy voice beside it has color, and a kind of genial contempt. "Brothers and Sisters—My sermon today: Is Boop-a-doop-doop and voo-de-o-do . . . A-men, a-men . . . Sing, you sinners." He stops singing and says, in the tone of a driver addressing a favorite mule, "Sing, durn you, sing."

Next comes a rich Jewish accent speaking "a few words on behalf of the National Home for Jewish Children at Denver . . ." Turn the knob! "A person has an eruption . . . phenolphthalein occurs in chewing-gum laxatives . . . Let me read this letter: 'About four years ago I noticed a small red spot on the side of my face and my physician treated me for ringworm . . .'" Fortunately, though some of the stations are only two or three notches apart, the ringworm is not catching, and I switch quickly to the "Traviata" *prélude*, done by an excellent orchestra . . .

A throaty contralto swoops into an old Maori tribal song . . . "Two tablespoonfuls of sugar" . . . "If your grocer does not have Libby's Hawaiian Pineapple . . ." "Hey there, ho there! . . ." "So many ladies have been to see me lately regarding scars on their faces . . ." "This religious fervor does not die as the years go on." Phonograph record of rich, melancholy, juicy spirituals . . . Another sound hovers over the air, like a ghost, like the ghost of the whistle of a peanut stand . . . The static is gone, and I shift the scene to a broadcast from the National Museum in Washington, where old John Bull, a hundred years old today, and the first locomotive ever to carry paying passengers in this country, is being put through his aged paces with the aid of compressed air. The ancient wheels roll and rumble, the old axles clank, the whistle's high toot spans a century, while Jack Dorsey, dressed in a tail coat and a high hat—so we are told—pulls the levers.

10:30. Jazz, jazz . . . "And then the cheese to go with the salad . . . cocoa is not soluble under any circumstances . . ." A melody from Peter Arno's "Here Goes the Bride," by special permission of the copyright owners . . . An organ drips noble molasses, and makes me think of screen presentations and uniformed ushers hurrying up and down the dark aisles of a movie cathedral . . . "If at the apex of one or more of the teeth should be found a pus-y condition . . ." "O Sole Mio" from a gifted and conceited tenor . . . The "Coppelia" ballet . . . "How the Mystery Chef prepares the turkey is just too thrilling for words" . . . A woman's octette, with harp and wordless humming . . . Cute, confidential, sugary voices talking of sweet potato puffs . . . Kathleen Norris, a hard, sensible, clear voice: "Begin today to tell the children stories of courage"

. . . "The right kind of a foundation garment might make all the difference . . ." "Hark, Hark, the Lark!" by Brahms . . . "Butter and Sugar" . . . (Brahms and butter) . . .

Little Miss Gossip, a shrill and silly voice: "So now you've heard the dirt—About every gent and skirt . . . This is Franky Bash, razzing the news. Tootle-ooh, girl *and* boy friends . . ." Slow ordinary jazz, which makes me feel slightly tired, as if I were being dragged to a night club where this sort of thing is played . . . Speech on Children's Speech. Not bad. Good advice. "Just suppose your child is a thumb-sucker . . . Lots of rabbit-jawed children are self-made . . ." (Am I self-making myself a pair of rabbit ears? Courage! On to the end! . . .) "We offer expert re-upholstering service . . ." Hill Billy, in old ballads—"The Rosewood Casket," "The Drunkard's Child . . ."

Noon. Whistles in the air. For a moment I look the real world in the face. Puffs of steam from tug-boats on the river. A truck is unloading bathtubs in crates. Owners have their dogs out for a walk. But I mustn't miss what the paper's radio column calls Midday Massage . . . Only it's a message, not a massage. Rabbi Cohen it is, vigorously attacking a "lustful group of militarists" and the "morasses of our day . . ."

Next door is the *Air Journal*: "That's the Presidential situation in a nutshell . . . Ritchie as spearhead of new movement . . . They found six hundred-gallon stills going full blast" . . . Violin, jazz, a trio . . . "Other lamps eat current like a horse in an oat bin" . . . "Do you know what neckband worry is?" . . . "What is love but a helping of Angel Cake?" . . . A thoroughly common sense lecture on "Education for Leisure . . ." "Inspect the new Buick for 1932."

12:30. I've been at it for nearly six hours, yet here comes the first of what the radio page calls the "Bright Spots For Today." The American Academy of Arts and Letters is about to award its gold medal to the radio announcer with the best diction. Hamlin Garland talks about American speech, and how we must develop a good, clear, standardized speech of our own, without importations. The award this year goes to John Holbrook of the N. B. C., New York. He was, says Mr. Garland, born in Boston, educated in Canada; speaks French, German and Spanish; has studied music . . . Here is Mr. Holbrook himself. Good sensible talk—"the art of stimulating the imagination through the ear is still in its infancy" . . . I'll say it is . . . It's still mewling and puking . . . Mr. Holbrook speaks simple, correct American, not distinguished, perhaps, and lacking in the personal fire that makes Holmes, Edison, Al Smith memorable on the radio, but natural, clear, and cultured without the affectation of culture . . .

Applause from the unseen audience. The clapping of a hundred hands sounds like the liquid clatter of large drops of wooden water.

One o'clock. Station WEVD—named after Eugene V. Debs—is on the air. Mrs. Eliot White, an earnest, rather anxious voice, talking of Birth Control . . . "Every baby has a right to be wanted . . ." I feel sorry for Station WEVD. It has its foot valiantly in the door to the air, it tries to squeeze into the narrow crack between two or three other stations, but Mrs. White's plea to consult your family doctor suffers from a piano obbligato which drowns out the babies with its merry chords. Representing, quite accurately, the place that Socialism (and the Higher Things generally) occupy in the consciousness of the nation.

III

From now on I sink into miscellany, fiddling, fiddling with the little black knob, trying to find something, something—I no longer know what. I wonder how many radio listeners have knob disease and are unable, as I am now, to listen to anything for very long, always fiddling and turning and turning back again the knob . . . "All we have to be sure is that he feeds his hen a mash rich in vitamins . . . Good Old Mother Hen and Bossy Cow . . . Pratt Food Company" . . . The Academy again: "Channing had a thoroughly independent mind" . . . "On the Beach at Waikiki," with ukuleles . . . "What am I going to do without a bluebird?—What am I going to do when you're gone? . . ." The Brahms lullaby . . . Jazz . . . Light Spanish piece . . .

Recipes: "One third of a cup of fine chopped pineapple." This lady has sense enough to pause so the housewives can get it down. Sudden vision of a hundred thousand housewives seated with pencil and pad at the kitchen table . . . The weather . . . Recitation: "Life is just a ringlet of smoke" . . . Tschaikowsky . . . A saxophone, moaning from underneath its tin derby . . . Sport Talk: "It looks as though the winner is the one who will land the first hard smack" . . . "Zwei Herzen im Drei-Viertel Takt" . . . Argentine tangoes . . . One of two crooners says that the other "uses his ukuleles for snowshoes when the snow is deep" . . .

Musical comedy: woman's voice, mucker-slow and saloon-sad . . . Third movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight" sonata. A breath of fresh air, a draught of wine, but the piano tinkles, and sounds like a cymbalon, like barbed wire . . . "Lady, Play Your Mandolin" . . . "You simply apply Polymol to the hair each

morning" . . . A brightly foolish voice reciting A. A. Milne: "A lion had a tail, and a very fine tail" . . . Robert Underwood Johnson, slightly lachrymose (this is the Academy again), praises Timothy Cole: "The old days of the *Century Magazine* . . . It was a veritable epoch of delight . . ." WEVD manages to open the door an inch wider: "Winnipeg taxi-drivers earn thirteen cents an hour" . . .

I am becoming a little mad, and must shut it off for a few minutes and think. In my despair I tune in on a Still Small Voice, or Voice of Reason. Sounding as if it were speaking from underneath a sofa, it says to me "Do not laugh, do not squirm. Control, for a moment, your personal prejudices and your private horror. Think of what this all means to millions of those fellow beings to whom at this moment you feel so superior. This wonderful little black box tells them to open their windows and brush their teeth. It tells them how to cut turnips into cubes and what to do when their hair falls out. It sells them, to be sure, a certain amount of rubbish, but on the whole they are the better for it. The fact that, æsthetically, it gives you a pain, should not prevent you from realizing that the increase in American knowledge, spirits and health due to the radio would, if placed end to end . . ."

I tune out on the Voice of Reason. It may be true, but my insides cry No. I look for proof of what my insides feel to be true . . . "Miss Edna W. Hopper is going to tell you how she managed to have all her teeth, at sixty . . . Miss Hopper . . ." A voice, brutal, merciless, aggressive, like a whip, like a machine-gun, like a revivalist, crashes upon the air. No one who tuned in on it would fail to stop and listen. It roams up and down a staircase of inflection, charges round corners, and chins itself on a significant word. "I spoke over the-

air about my own TEETH . . . I have all my own TEETH . . . I'll tell you how you can have a dazzling SMILE . . . I not only have white sparkling teeth but I have kept all my own TEETH . . . the way to have white teeth is QUINDENT . . . TEETH . . . QUINDENT . . . TEETH . . ."

Again I appeal to the Voice of Reason, which, this time, sounds as if it were talking to me through the hole in the bottom of a flower pot. "Use your imagination," says the Voice; "think of the millions of people for whom the radio means companionship, and travel, and a window into the great world from which they are dismally cut off, and a filling up of the void that would otherwise be their lives. Millions are listening who would, of course, be better employed working at something of their own or reading a book, but there are other millions. Think of the old people in the poorhouse hospital, the crippled children left at home, the rheumatic farmer on a mortgaged farm forty miles from town, the rancher shut up all Winter with his bleating sheep, the ugly girl alone in the great city. Think of those whom life has passed by, those who are waiting for death, the insulted and injured and alone, the poor in spirit and weak in body, the sick and the old and the afflicted, for whom this black box is the sole whisper of friendship, the only hand on a defeated shoulder . . ."

Three o'clock. American Ice is quoted at 15½ . . . In the Gypsy camp they are playing something like a *csardas*—not a real *csardas* . . . Herr Kirchoff sings, lustily and well: "Du, Meine Seele! Du Mein Herz!" . . . A series of ills beset a scalp . . . Down Reminiscence Road: "H-a-double r-i- . . ." and "The Girl in the Heart of Maryland" . . . A lecture on backgammon . . . "Some very fine analyses of intermittent health systems" . . . Father

Walsh trounces Bernard Shaw, quoting the Devil against himself: "Shaw went off the gold standard long ago" . . . Grieg's "Wounded Hart" . . . Some bouncing Italians roll out "Viva! Viva! Tra-lallala-Viva!" . . . From a greater distance, and as if speaking at us down a long rain-pipe, comes the voice of the Right Hon. Leopold Amery, M.P., of London, on "What I would do with the world". Mr. Amery leans across the ocean to tell us that "the problem of war and peace is not as simple as it seems at first sight" . . . (Isn't it in England that the government controls all the air, and all broadcasting, and prohibits advertising completely, and takes a small tax from the owners of the radio? And shall we ever have half as much sense?)

Teatime. Let's get back to America, as long as I have set out to do this up brown . . . Dr. Eddy, consultant for *Good Housekeeping*, is talking about scurvy . . . Mr. Tom L. Masson, the expert in humor, is reviewing children's books for Bamberg-er's; he is not trying to be funny and is quite sensible and interesting . . . Someone touting the Marie Harriman Galleries says that John Marin "vibrates like a sensitive violin" . . . "Subject for next week," says an unidentified voice, "What is the Effect of Illuminating Gas on Carnations?" . . . Here come the Jungle Man and his Animal Alphabet. The announcer, a little nervous, says that the Jungle Man is evidently still in the jungle and that while waiting for him we are going to hear "Purv" Somebody, who will imitate all the animals he can think of whose names begin with H . . . Purv, who himself says "vury, vury wee'urd", thereupon makes noises somewhat resembling, successively, the Laughing Hyena, the Hoptoad, the Hog, the Hen, the Hawk, the Hummingbird, the Hoot Owl, the House Wren, the Hare, the Hound, the Hippo and the

Horse Fly . . . The Jungle Man, however, never turns up, and the animals beginning with I and J are postponed.

5:30. The Children's Hour. A roomful of hysterical, confused voices seems to be trapped in a cave on Mystery Island . . . They find some chewing-gum under a rug . . . "Say, that must have been Walter's chewing gum." Scrambling, and whispers . . . Announcer: "And still the rescue party worked to get the Lady Next Door" . . . Another station: Woman's voice: "Mrs. MacDonald of Newark is having a birthday party and she's asked you to sing 'Dancing Dominoes.'" Man's voice: "Sure, Aunt Betty, here's a happy birthday and here's your song: 'A box of dominoes were in despair—Double six, doing tricks—Number four, got sore . . .'" Little Orphan Annie and her pals sneak across the tracks to steal a ride in an empty box car on the train. The choo-choo and the puffing and whistling are very realistic. It all leads up to Ovaltine. "A glass of Ovaltine with every meal . . ."

Six fifteen. Football from a son of Fordham: "Now, in the backfield we have a much different situation" . . . Session of a post of the American Legion, beginning with a recital of "In Flanders Fields" . . . Next door, tribute to Justice Brandeis, who "stands out as an inspiration . . . a guiding beacon . . . a fearless fighter for truth and justice . . . added lustre . . . high and inspiring ideals . . ." Prudence Perine, and the Little Woolly Lamb and the Horse that was Painted Blue . . . The sharp, sudden dignity of Mrs. Sabin, speaking for the unemployed . . . A Spanish lesson, Berlitz method. Lady with a cutting, accurate, strident accent, alternating with Mr. Berlitz: . . . "Open your books at Page 40: *claro*, light; *oscuro*, dark; *la luz*, the light; *la luz? la luz!*" . . . Song by cheerful quartette, very skillful: "I'm going

where onions get their strength—Out where men are men.” . . .

And now, between seven and eight o'clock, come the headliners. Amos and Andy. Black-voice dialogue, admirably natural and soporific, saying, so far as I can see, nothing in particular, pushing lazily ahead a story on the development of which hang, nightly, millions of American ears. A drug, a sleeping potion, something to which one cannot help listening, something to keep you in that safest of places, the armchair. There seems to be a third party, who is called Lightnin'. He sounds different from Amos or Andy—though he may be one of them; he has caught the rich tired, naïve accent of the Negro. The real plot is Pepsodent, which is useful for a “condition as stubborn as dandruff.”

Morton Downey, said to be as high in the radio heaven as Rudy Vallee, and rising much faster. Almost a falsetto, like a high, high tenor who got caught in a door. He's the rage. Anemic, candied, tenuous, and yet somehow vaguely pleasing. The usual foolish words and tune. Close upon him comes a more robust, a malign and secret voice, which says that Camels have “never been parched or toasted . . . Switch over to Camels for just one day . . .”

Rudy Vallee, with Nancy Carroll as the guest star. She has much less voice than most of this day's radio women, but somehow one likes her . . . Of the great Rudy I have nothing to say. Pinkish and neutral, effortless, edgeless, bloodless and thoroughly at ease, the voice of Indoor America, the voice of the Eternal Sophomore, calm now and round with success, he sings “this little piece of sophistication called ‘On The Day I Fell For You’—I fell like a once too often lifted face,” etc. . . . At the end, from the announcer: “Don't let nightly pleasures rob you of your sleep! Try Fleischmann's Yeast . . .”

Somewhere near these three the dial finds a voice from the hard, the real and bitter world. Police alarms. Broadcast of missing persons. “Missing since November 11: Frank Perpito, eighty years old, grey hair, blue eyes, right foot amputated, poor mentally and physically . . .”

8:30. Jewish voice, speaking what is probably Yiddish. “Wir haben all sizes in stock” . . . The Rin Tin Tin Thrillers, on behalf of some Dog Food Supreme; man's voice: “Rin Tin Tin! Action! Camera!” followed by the yapping, excited bark of a dog . . . A military march dies away, and a diction-conscious voice (male) says: “Fields of gently dancing goldenrod . . . busy bees gathering their nectar”—Is this going to advertise some remedy for hay fever? No, it's just plain Art: “Rimsky Korsakoff has caught all this in his ‘Flight of the Bumblebee’ . . .” A stern and rather thrilling woman's voice. It is that of Mrs. August Belmont, speaking to twenty thousand people in Madison Square Garden, urging New York to give all it can to the unemployed. “The courage and the pride of the new poor . . .” There is great feeling and dignity behind this voice, and a reverberation that brings to one's mind's eye the huge space of the Garden, filled with white faces . . .

I turn the knob. “Let me suggest that you give your child a hot cereal . . . Cream of Wheat . . .” Another rich, eloquent flow of Yiddish. “Eier glick . . . Eier glick . . .” It is Reuben's Jewish Matrimonial Bureau, located at 1525 Eastern parkway, Brooklyn, and at 1440 Broadway, New York. Telephone Pennsylvania 6-3075 . . . Some Brahms *Lieder*, very well sung. The announcer says: “Our last tribute to you, Herr Brahms . . . Tonight we offer reverential silence, Herr Brahms . . .” Madison Square Garden again. There is only one voice in the world like this:

"There was an old friend of mine who had a butcher shop up at Henry street . . . I want to make an appeal foist to the woikers . . ." Al Smith, of course . . .

A radio playlet, a love scene in which a young man and a young woman tip over a canoe. "I love you so much, I hate you . . . you, you darling!" . . . Some jokes. "When he sat down at the piano somebody had pulled the stool away" . . . Dialogue between a grumpy, nasal Sherlock Holmes and a foreign villainess. "That seals your fate, Madam" . . . A young business-like voice invites those who want to make money in their spare time to "meet with me personally" at 500 Fifth avenue, room 525, tomorrow morning . . . The Lucky Strike Hour, perhaps the best of all air jazz orchestras, with interpolations by the confidential gutter voice of Walter Winchell . . . The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, playing Brahms. High spot of the day, musically. Delicate soaring violins, strong and frail . . . Not far from Herr Brahms a hurried bass voice declares that "Whatever he does or wherever he goes, his truss is gone."

IV

It is almost midnight. I am humbled, stupefied; I have been sitting in front of this metal box, turning its black dial with the white numbers, for seventeen hours. Mechanically I turn the dial once again. Jazz. From now on everything will be jazz, jazz, jazz. Sissle's Orchestra, and Lombardo's Orchestra, and Cab Calloway's Orchestra, and Tweet Hogan's Orchestra, and Al Katz's Kittens . . . Deep into the night the local crooners will oodle anemi-

cally through their megaphones, the local saxophones will shriek and stutter and bleat and blat and break wind from under tin derby hats, the pitiless, unbroken rhythm will drum on—bump, bump, bump, bump. And when these crooners and this rhythm have gone to bed, there will steal in, from Pittsburgh and Cleveland, from Kansas City and perhaps the Coast, a faint far bump and boop-a-doop, a tiny tinkle—barely audible, gay and mysterious as music heard over a lake.

Toward dawn this too will die, and for a brief hour the air will be alone with its own immortal sounds, and the box will be emptily full of howls and whistlings, and great wings will brush metallicly in the dark air, and in all the black empire of static there will be no man-made interference. But only for an hour or two, for as the sun rises out of the Atlantic, warming the wings of little birds and turning the tops of skyscrapers to gold, clean-shaven young men will yawn and step up to the microphone, and millions in their night clothes will yawn with them and step on to the cold bare floor, and all through another long day (which will be called Cheer Day), there will pour invisibly along the air, into willing waiting ears, a flood of music, humor and health advice, of "Lohengrin" and the upper and lower lobes of the lung, of sad tangoes and sliced tomatoes, of kissable babies and Cream of Wheat, of ulcers, ukuleles, trusses and "Traviata," of sylphs, scalps, scurvy, symphonies and stummicks, of Brahms, butter, and boop-a-doop . . .

O my country, my country, the pains are so great you must be growing up at last!

WAR IN THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS

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HARLAN COUNTY is situated in the heart of the Kentucky mountains. Its villages are shoved in among the hills. Sometimes they actually touch them and run up on to their sides. There are no broad valleys with rolling highlands forming a far background, no familiar restful rural scenes. These mountains seem small at the base and come to sharp points. Some of them are quite high. They are very close together. There is nothing calm or peaceful about the outward aspects of the country. When one goes up to the top of the hills and looks down the prospect is as exciting as a stormy sea. The people who live in these mountains know little of the rest of the world. Their ancestors settled here before the Revolution. Many of their ways and even their language are not unlike those of the Eighteenth Century. Outsiders, even descendants of the Pilgrims, are foreigners, and are regarded with deep suspicion.

Harlan county lives on coal, yet industry has not changed its fundamental character. It is still a frontier mountain community. When coal was found in Harlan, the hillsmen went into the mines, and took with them their arms, and the habits of thought engendered by generations of living in communities where law as we know it did not exist. Even in the most stable communities the miner has always been a fighter. Any worker who risks his life to earn his daily bread, to whom risking life is a matter of routine, is

naturally a fighter. Add to this the characteristics produced by two centuries of feuds, moonshining, and habitual defiance of law and restraint, and you have a group of miners whose militancy is second to none in the land.

The mining industry in Harlan is a microcosm of the whole bituminous coal industry. Some forty companies operate in the county. They range from the largest and most powerful financial interests in America to small local companies hardly more than family affairs. There are the United States Coal & Coke Company mine of the United States Steel Corporation at Lynch, employing several thousand miners, the Wisconsin Steel Company mine of International Harvester at Benham, Henry Ford's Fordson Coal Company mine at Wallins Creek, Insull's mine at Black Mountain, and the mine of the Detroit Edison Company. Then there are dozens of small operations whose stockholders all reside in Harlan county, and which employ hardly more than a hundred men.

There is little tradition of labor organization in the Harlan mines. For the major part of their history the miners have been held in a semi-feudal relation to their employers without the intervention of labor unions.

In 1921 the United Mine Workers of America succeeded in organizing a portion of the field, but conditions were fairly satisfactory and it was not hard for the