



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



THE background of "The Band of Death":

"The Band of Death" is pure fiction, of course, and an author has the privilege of creating any sort of characters he likes—taking liberties with history, if he wants to, so long as he doesn't violate the laws of probability. My experience has been, however, that readers are most likely to pick on some character or incident as impossible when the character has actually been drawn from life and the incident is something that happened.

So to forestall criticism to the effect that no person elected president of a great republic could possibly be as eccentric as President Illoti, and that the government of a country like the Argentine couldn't be overturned with the lightning-like rapidity of the revolution in the story, permit me to state that the revolution of a few years ago in Buenos Aires happened in a few hours and was almost bloodless, while the actual president of the Argentine, Ippolito Irigoyen, was as fantastic a person as ever became ruler of the great country.

Illoti, of course, is a fiction character, but he was suggested by Irigoyen.

Irigoyen was a dictator who affected old clothes and professed to be too democratic to live in the palatial quarters provided for the president. He lived in a small apartment over a tobacco shop in a side street which did not possess a bathtub. Having an obsession against the telephone, he would not have one in his apartment; and messages of state were telephoned to a pay station in a bootblack establishment across the street and were delivered to him by the bootblack, who became his confidant and grew rich thereby.

Such was his prejudice against talking into the telephone that when a direct service between Buenos Aires and Washington was inaugurated four years ago, he did not use a phone but talked from his desk into a microphone several feet away to President Hoover in Washington—his words being transmitted by radio to the telephone.

Once he forgot to answer an invitation from the King of Italy to the wedding of one of the

Italian princesses, and his discourtesy almost caused an international breach.

The president in my story resembles Irigoyen in these respects, but he is not supposed to be Irigoyen who, by all accounts, was a worthy man sincerely devoted to his country but who was overthrown because he had become hopelessly a back number.

And it may interest readers of "The Band of Death" to know that I have lived in Buenos Aires and admire the city and its people very much. It is a city worthy to rank with London, Paris, and New York, possessing a culture equal to that of any city. The Argentine is no more prone to revolution than France or Germany or even the United States. The Argentines resemble Americans much more than they do their Latin brethren who live in Central America and tropical

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12-3

South America and have a revolution every morning before breakfast.

FRED MACISAAC.

THE scientific basis for "Murder on the Mike":

Perhaps readers will think that the electric ear—the parabolic microphone by means of which *Craig Kennedy* spots a murderer—is an invention of my own imagination. But let me point out that the super-sensitive parabola is a scientific fact. Radio engineers have spent years perfecting this invaluable piece of apparatus, and the larger broadcasting companies have been using it for many months. By means of it, quite as though with their own ears—much better, in fact—radio owners have been listening to the hoof-

beats of horses on the race track, to the bombastic speeches of politicians at great national conventions, to Olympic games and the World Series and big football matches.

The advantage of this type of "reflecting" or "focusing" microphone over the older variety is that it can be made to pick up even the faintest of sounds made at some distance from it, and to exclude sounds outside the desired area. If you will imagine a searchlight beam—but one in which the rays (comparable to sound waves) are traveling backward and are being collected in the searchlight itself—you will have grasped the principle of the thing.

Craig Kennedy, of course, uses one of these extraordinary electric ears as a kind of mechanical stool pigeon.

ARTHUR B. REEVE.



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