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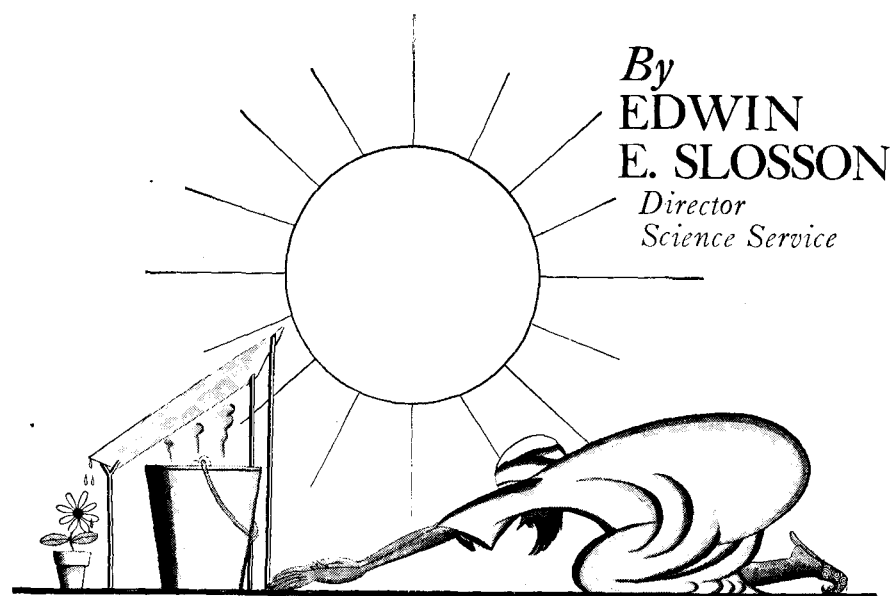


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By
**EDWIN
E. SLOSSON**
Director
Science Service

Irrigation by Sun Power

A DESERT land along the seashore is in the pitiable state of the Ancient Mariner:

*Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink!*

Tunis is in that sad situation. So it occurred to the ingenious administrators of the colony that the same solar rays that dried up the land might be used to pull up the water. That is, in fact, how every land gets watered, by evaporation from the sea. Why not accomplish it locally and as needed, rather than through the roundabout and careless way of clouds and rain? So they opened a competition for a simple apparatus that would utilize the sunshine for the distillation of water from the ocean.

This would give pure water, with no fear of the land's being ruined in the course of time by the rise of alkali as has happened to so much of our Far Western lands. And the arable area of Tunis could be enlarged by half.

But nothing came of this attractive project. Of the seven types of apparatus presented for the prize, the most effective was a shallow sheet-iron tray covered by glass like a greenhouse or forcing frame. Sea water was run in to the depth of a few inches, and as this evaporated it was condensed on the glass top. This was set at an angle facing the sun, so the water ran down the incline and off through a gutter to a tank.

The apparatus gave about a quart a day for ten square feet of glass surface. But since it takes ten or twelve inches of rain or irrigation water a year to restore an arid region to fertility, this means that it would take an acre of windowpanes to irrigate an acre of land. So the scheme has been laid upon the table until some inventor will devise a more economical method of using the waste heat of the sun to get the waste water on the waste land.

Rain Today in England

WHEN turned-up trousers first appeared upon American streets the wearers explained the eccentric style by saying, "It is raining in England today." This may have been wrong as a reason, but the chances are it was right as a guess. For an average of the reports for 4,000 weather stations in all parts of the British Isles for thirty-five years shows that there were 204 rain-days in the 365.

Every day on which a fall of a hundredth of an inch or more is recorded is counted as a "rain-day."

The total rainfall for a year over the British Isles is 41.4 inches on the average. The mean rainfall per day is one fifth of an inch, and if this is counted as falling at the usual rate it would amount to 3½ hours of continuous rain in the twenty-four hours.

[The mean annual precipitation in the United States runs from 62.0 inches, in Mobile, Ala., to only 7.9 inches, in Phoenix, Ariz. The British rainfall is nearly the same as that of Indianapolis or Philadelphia. If we go outside the continental United States we find that at Colon, Canal Zone, the wet-season average rainfall is 116.3 inches.]

The Soot Avalanche

IF ALL the dirt and soot from smoke-laden air that drifts down upon American cities every year fell at one time upon the city of Washington, it would bury the nation's capital under a dense blanket more than eight feet deep, stagnating all traffic and paralyzing the machinery of national government.

This avalanche of soot, if piled up, would make a sloping mountain 1,500 feet high, over two miles long and a mile wide, submerging the White House, the capital, the Washington Monument—everything in its path.

These calculations have been made by engineers, based upon an estimate that 70,000,000 tons of soot rain down upon American cities every twelve months.

Measuring gauges show that the yearly precipitation of soot at Pittsburgh runs as high as 1,920 tons per square mile; at Chicago, 1,200 tons; Cleveland, 700; St. Louis, 600; Indianapolis, 600; Cincinnati, 500; New York, 375 tons. Hardly an American city escapes a downfall of less than 100 tons to the square mile each year.

Out of this pall of smoke, if every American citizen inhaled the share allotted to him on a per capita basis, he would breathe, along with the 43½ pounds of air that goes into the lungs every day, 2½ pounds of poison-laden soot.

Meteorologists find that smoke shuts out from 30 to 50 per cent of sunshine, with its health-giving ultra-violet rays, from American cities. Inhalation of this smoke, according to pathologists, induces serious inflammatory and nerve disorders. Physical damage to buildings and their furnishings through smoke is estimated by the Mellon Institute of Pittsburgh at \$500,000,000 a year. In Chicago alone it is calculated at \$50,000,000.

Laundry bills are higher by 50 to 75 per cent in cities having the heaviest smoke density. Government recording instruments show that 30 per cent more sunshine falls upon Governor's Island, in New York Bay, away from the city's smoke, than upon Manhattan Island.

According to the British Coal Commission three million tons of soot are annually shed upon English cities. This is nearly equal to three days' output of all the collieries of Great Britain.

"In effect, the work of over a million for three days every year is devoted to providing the soot which pollutes our atmosphere," says the commission.

Lion's Skin

Continued from page 13

Weir turned the letter over and over: a plain sheet of paper, no letterhead, no address, no telephone number. Not a clue. And she was waiting even now beside one of the two or three million telephones in New York.

"The scoundrel!" said Ambrose. "The damned scoundrel!"

The next morning he had an imperious summons from Arthur Misrock; arriving hastily at the office, he found a check—a check for \$400, signed with his name and made out to the Green Macaw, Inc.

"Well?" said Misrock. "Bad?"

Ambrose grew scarlet with fury.

"Bad? It's terrible! That isn't even an imitation of my signature, and I never had any money at that bank in my life. And the Green Macaw—that's a night club, isn't it?"

"At the moment," said Misrock, "it's the night club. It opened last month and it will be padlocked next month, but just now they're cleaning up. Let me tell you, my boy, this fellow is playing Ambrose Weir better than you ever did. It takes genius to cash a check at the Green Macaw."

"But, Arthur, I might be prosecuted—"

"Now, now, you're all right. I covered the check and told the bank and the manager of the Green Macaw that this was only one of the oversights of genius. So if you still want to write something that's worthy of you, write me a check for \$400. You will get your money's worth; no \$400 spent for personal publicity would do you so much good as the news I am spreading around that you can cash checks at the Green Macaw."

"It's an outrage!" said Ambrose blackly. "This man is a scoundrel! He's breaking a girl's heart—under my name."

"Good!" said Misrock.

Ambrose stood before the mirror, studying the fit of his new evening clothes. He hardly looked as if he had been born in them, but there was no doubt that new clothes and the new haircut took years off his age and added stature to his personality. But his face—Ambrose was afraid it was still flat and uneventful, despite that reticent but unmistakably apologetic letter he had had from Maude Maitland and the polite but unmistakably final note he had sent in reply.

Tonight he wished he had not been quite so final. He had dressed for a party at Arthur Misrock's, only to find himself paralyzed by diffidence and inertia.

Then the telephone rang.

"Yes?" He answered with a studied hoarseness, as he had answered every call all week, for Ambrose had laid plans whose crafty astuteness amazed him every time he thought them over.

"Ambrose?" came that silken drawl. "Ambrose Weir?"

"Yes, of course." He permitted himself to be eager. "Doris?"

"Where on earth have you been?" Her voice was tremulous with relief.

"Out of town, recuperating. I've had a cold." He coughed for plausibility.

"Oh! Did you get my letter?"

"Haven't heard a word from you," said Ambrose, "since that night we were at the Green Macaw."

"Oh!" That sounded like a sigh of thanksgiving. "Well—" She laughed a little.

"When can I see you?" Ambrose demanded promptly.

"Why not tonight?" Doris suggested with encouraging blitheness.

"Fine! Where shall I meet you?"

"Under the clock at the Biltmore," she said. "In half an hour?"

"Right!" said Ambrose. "And—what are you going to wear?"

"Why, that depends. Do we dress up? . . . Well, then!" Her fluty laughter rippled. "You don't suppose I have two evening gowns, do you?"

Ambrose left the telephone in dismay.

Half an hour later he ascended the steps of the Biltmore, looking up toward that three-sided alcove where half New York keeps its dates. A dozen pairs of crossed legs, flesh-colored, silken; a dozen figures, dim in the half light. . . . Ambrose paused on the top step, lighting a cigarette with ostentatious indifference; above his cupped hands his eyes roved the line of waiting women. . . . There were three red-headed girls in evening dress.

Then Ambrose Weir had an idea worthy of the author of *The Outline of Progress*—worthy even of the serious books he had never written and never would write. A girl—a young girl who obviously thought rather well of herself—would never call herself red-headed if her hair were offensively red. His eyes passed over the two frankly carrot-topped women who waited, and lingered on the slim figure of a girl in blue and silver whose fluffed golden hair held just the faintest shade of ruddy rose. . . . In three steps he was beside her.

"DORIS?" Her gray eyes looked up at him, startled and severe.

"I'm Doris Clayburn, yes." Even stern suspicion couldn't drain the softness out of the silken drawl. Ambrose was crimson.

"I have a message from Ambrose Weir," he said. "If you can give me two minutes—Suppose we go around the corner into the tea-room."

They sat down at one of the little tables and waved the waiter away; Ambrose admired her cool poised aloofness. Now was the moment.

"Don't be angry with me," he said, "or get up and walk away till you've heard my story. There's been a mistake somewhere. There are four or five Ambrose Weirs in New York, and I'm Ambrose Weir, the author." She didn't stir; the gray eyes regarded him darkly. "If you want proof of it," he said, "here are some letters: royalty checks—"

"Are you the man I telephoned to tonight?" she asked. He nodded. The gray eyes were still level, expressionless; but her hands, clasped on the table, were clenched and rigid.

"And are you the man I telephoned to last week?" He nodded again. "And"—now her eyes were averted—"did you get my letter?"

"Letter?" said Ambrose. "What letter?" Her whole body stirred in an instinctive movement of relief.

"It doesn't matter. . . . Then who's the other Ambrose Weir?"

"God knows. . . . But there must have been some misunderstanding!" Now he was eager. "I'm sure it was unintentional—"

She laughed. "Oh, no, it wasn't." The laugh softened into a smile of twisted amusement. "Anyway, it was decent of you to tell me. Though I suppose it's been awkward for you, hasn't it? . . . Lord! What a fool I've been!"

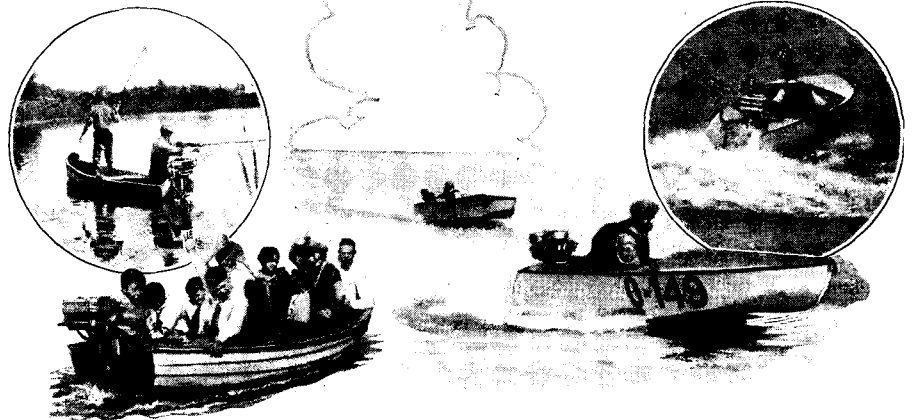
"Not at all!" Ambrose protested. "I hardly ever go around: nobody knows me—"

"I came from a little town where I was somebody," the girl interrupted, "and I didn't like being nobody in New York. I'm secretary to the manager of a restaurant—not the kind of restaurant a famous author eats at—and I thought I was too good for the people I was going around with. Then one night at a party I met a man who was introduced as Ambrose Weir. I asked him if he wrote *The Outline of Progress*, and he said he did; so at last I felt as if I really lived in New York." Ambrose was crimson once more, but she didn't notice it. "And then when he started taking me around to night clubs—well, I'd always heard about night clubs, but I'd never been to one. So you see!" Ambrose admired her strategic reticence.

"Yes," he said gloomily. "And do I understand that he's—er—missing at present?"

(Continued on page 38)

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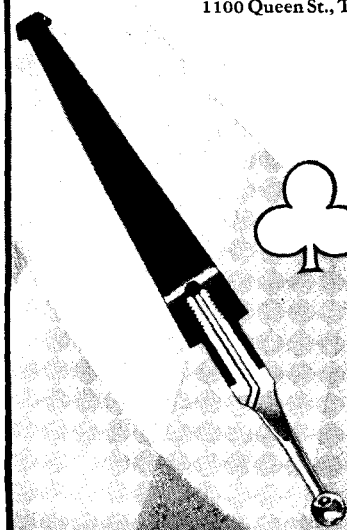


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Lion's Skin

Continued from page 37

She shrugged. "He lived in the Saskatchewan Hotel—but he's gone, and left no address. . . . So I'd have found out sooner or later, I suppose. Idiot! To feel that I was somebody, just because I knew a famous author—"

"Uh!" said Ambrose disconsolately. "Well, of course—"

She looked up at him and burst into sudden laughter.

"Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't mean—Only I don't know you, of course—"

"See here!" said Ambrose with sudden firmness. "I've met a lot of famous authors, and outside of office hours they look pretty much like anybody else. But if knowing them makes you feel like somebody—Arthur Misrock's having a party tonight for all his authors. I suppose you think I'm— Of course you don't know me, but I did write The Outline of Progress. What I mean is, if you'd like to meet a dozen famous authors all at once—"

He choked; he could go no farther. He had snatched up this idea from a feeling that he owed her something, but now he began to see how it might look to her.

Her laugh rippled softly.

"I think it would be lovely," said Doris. . . .

Lovely was hardly the adjective Ambrose would have applied to the lush turbulence of Arthur Misrock's party, but lovely Doris seemed to find it so. An hour later Ambrose sat in the corner, sipping a highball, watching her dance with a novelist of indubitable fame and wishing that his own dancing were a little more worthy of hers. And here Misrock, who had been absorbed in a tête-à-tête with a dashing girl poet when Ambrose arrived, descended upon him at last.

"Did you bring that red-headed girl?" he demanded.

"What's the matter with her?" Ambrose rasped.

"Not a thing—very much not. But—is that the red-headed girl your double has been going around with? Ambrose, you haven't—"

"Certainly not," said Ambrose with dignity. "That's an old friend of mine—a Miss Clayburn."

A MONTH later she really was a friend of his—and Ambrose was aware that he had been in love with her ever since Misrock's party. That night he had found in her fresh eagerness something he had always missed; with her collaboration, since then, he had explored aspects of New York that he had been missing for twenty years.

Of course he was bound to fall in love with her: she was the only young girl he knew; she was pretty, she was gay; with her help he gradually rediscovered a lost talent for dancing and for laughter; with her he learned to order a dinner and give lordly acknowl-

edgment to the respectful attention of head waiters; she was his companion in his first ventures into gayety, his comrade in the rediscovery of life.

But more than that, she was Doris Clayburn, a person of intelligence and charm, and Ambrose wasn't altogether confident as to what Doris the person thought of him. For she was twenty-one and he was thirty-eight; she was an eager young somebody, and he was a famous author; and in sedulously taking her about to night clubs and prize fights and the opening nights of plays, amusing her, giving her the glitter she craved, he was uncomfortably conscious that, in a sense, he was practically impersonating his impersonator. He had learned a good deal in that month; he had gone a long way toward giving himself a public personality; Arthur Misrock was delighted with him. But whether Doris was delighted with him he didn't know.

Then he kissed her.

It was in a taxi, going home from a night club to her furnished-room house on West Eighty-eighth Street. He kissed her with the awkwardness of inexperience; her warm lips responded for an instant. Then she drew away.

"What's the matter?" said Ambrose. "Don't you love me?" Then, at her gurgle of laughter. "Oh, I'm an ass!" he groaned. "But I thought you could see that I'm crazy about you. I want you to marry me—" Her hand closed over his.

"Of course I know, dear. And I'd be sure I'm crazy about you if I hadn't been so sure I was crazy about the other Ambrose Weir."

"Damn him!" said Ambrose. "Has he come back?"

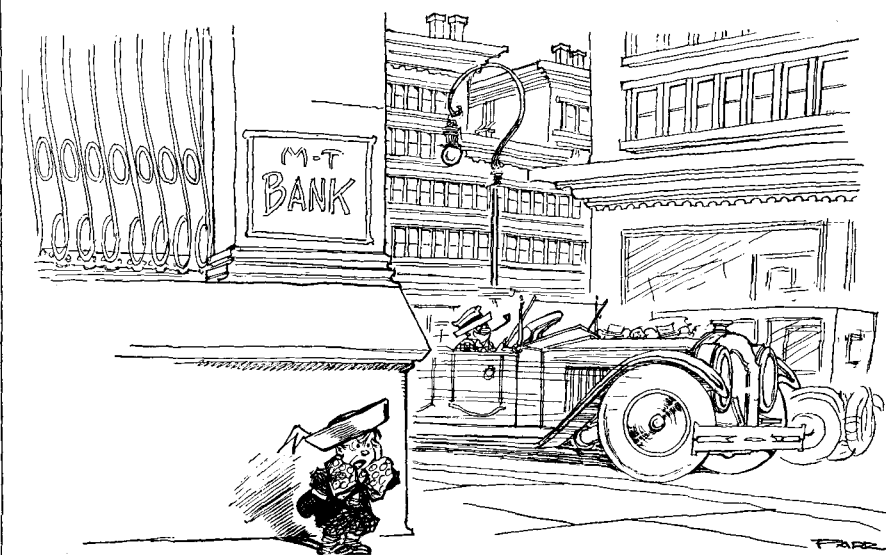
"No, I haven't heard a word from him or about him. I asked the people who introduced us, but they didn't seem to know anything about him—he just drifted into that party where we met, the way people do. But I really was in love with him—"

"Well?" asked Ambrose, shivering. "Are you still?"

"Oh, I don't know! . . . You see, he took me around and showed me the things I'd come to New York to see and wouldn't have had a chance of seeing if I hadn't met him—and I thought he was a famous author. But it wasn't just that! I mean I was sure it wasn't just that—I was sure I was in love with him. . . . Well, you've done for me what he did, and I feel the same way about you, only about ten times more so sometimes—but how can I tell, Ambrose? It does seem silly to fall in love hard twice within a couple of months. It looks as if one or the other must have been imagination."

"The first time was imagination," Ambrose suggested with a confidence he didn't feel.

"Oh, I hope so! But if he came back—Maybe I'd find out that I was cured,



"I can't always be wrong. This time it's my mother who's lost."

but it wouldn't be fair to ask you to take the chance. I like you too much." "Did you—did you like him too?" asked Ambrose diffidently.

"Oh, I don't know. He had a way about him—"

"A way that I haven't?" He seethed with jealousy.

"Please, dear! Don't you see that I just want to be sure—for your sake and mine too? But you and he both dazzled me. If I'd known you before you started going around—when you spent your evenings reading at the public library—"

"You'd have passed me up as a stuffy old owl," said Ambrose. "And you'd have been right. I suppose I'm a sort of lion, since I wrote that Outline, but I'd been wearing an ass's skin for years and never knew it. If I've turned human, I owe it to you—and to him. I'll always owe you that much, whatever happens. But that's not enough—"

Then Doris kissed him, and for two minutes he thought all was well. But it wasn't.

"No, I can't marry you," she sighed. "Not yet. Wait a while; perhaps I'll be sure—"

THE next evening they went from the theatre to the newest night club, where Ambrose had reserved a ring-side table, and when they sat down after the first dance they saw a man coming to them across the floor—a tall, handsome, pink-faced man who looked as if he had been born in evening clothes. Even before he heard Doris' gasp, Ambrose knew him.

"Doris!" said the newcomer. "I've got such a lot to tell you—"

He gave Ambrose a look that was like a blow in the face.

"You've got a lot to tell me," said Ambrose. "I'm Ambrose Weir."

The pink-faced man paled ever so slightly; then he looked back at Doris.

"So am I," he told her. "One of the Ambrose Weirs that nobody ever heard of. When you asked me that evening we met if I was the man who wrote The Outline of Progress—well, I was half stewed and I said yes for a joke, and then when I saw that I seemed to be making you on the strength of it—well, I wanted to make you, and all the time we were playing around together for the next two weeks I never could be sure what you'd do if I told you I was nobody."

Doris gave a queer little hurt shiver. He went on, gloomily:

"I was ashamed to tell you! I'd tried about everything and never put over anything; whatever I did was a flop. I got by for a couple of weeks on another man's reputation, and then I decided that it was time to pull out and try to do something on my own. I heard about a proposition where I could clean up quick, in a week or two, make all the money I'd need to come back and talk to you—"

Again she shivered.

"So," Ambrose, the author, put in, "you cashed a check at the Green Macaw—a check on a bank where neither you nor I had any money."

The pink-faced one reddened more deeply, but his pale eyes were unwavering.

"That was all right—the Macaw wouldn't miss it; they were cleaning up. And I knew something on the manager, in case he'd made trouble about that check. . . . Well, I was ashamed to tell you, Doris, that I was leaving town; I was so sure I'd clean up in a week. So I went on from one thing to another till finally I did clean up." He turned on Ambrose. "Well? Miss Clayburn will excuse you, I think."

Doris heaved a long sigh that turned into wistful laughter.

"I certainly won't," she said. "I'm going to marry him."

"What?" said both the Ambrose Weirs. Doris' hand reached out and linked in the hand of Ambrose, the author.

"I know now!" she said. "I know now! He wouldn't trust me—he never trusted me—"

"Trust you?" said the pink-faced one. "Didn't I know you? You were crazy about a famous author, not about me. And when I dropped out you got to asking questions, and you met this bird—"

"Yes, and I fell in love with him!" she blazed.

"Huh! I know you! You fell in love with his reputation, his royalties—"

Ambrose, the author, stood up; he jerked the other Ambrose to his feet. And as the other man's head lowered with a savage scowl Ambrose's nerves gave way: he struck his impersonator in the face.

What happened in the next hurried moment he could never remember exactly—Doris starting up, her eyes frightened; a clamor of excited voices; a blow that glanced off his temple, a moment of furious swinging. Then Ambrose, the author, caught Ambrose, the impersonator, square on the chin, with a blow that sent him plowing on his back halfway across the dancing floor. Ambrose turned back to Doris with a shuddering sigh.

"Come!" he said. "Let's get out of here."

Hands fell on his shoulders—the hands of waiters; behind them hovered the head waiter, issuing orders from a place of safety. Ambrose shook off their hands.

"Let me alone!" he roared. "Don't you dare touch me." His eyes fell on the slip of paper in the head waiter's hands; he took a fistful of bills out of his pockets and tossed them at him.

"Take it out of that," he commanded, and shepherded Doris toward the door.

"Stop him!" cried the head waiter. "These are all singles—"

Two or three waiters swarmed toward Ambrose—and halted as they met his hysterically glaring eyes.

"Try and stop me!" he told them.

"Try and stop me!" He picked up a chair and swung it menacingly. "Send that bill to Arthur Misrock—he'll pay it. I'm Ambrose Weir."

Nobody tried to stop him; waiters fell out of his way as he led Doris out, down the steps. . . . On the sidewalk the soft air of a May midnight fell on them gratefully; beneath the glaring electric sign, in plain view of a doorman and a policeman and half a dozen taxi drivers, Doris kissed him.

THE frantic jangle of the telephone woke him next morning; he heard Misrock's voice, no less frantic.

"What have you been up to?" Misrock blazed. "I get a big check from the Cerise Club, with breakage and everything—"

"Pay it," said Ambrose. "I don't remember any breakage, but pay it, anyway. It's all right."

"All right? I hear you have been beating a man up and swinging a chair at the head waiter and God knows what! Do you think that is good publicity, to get drunk and disorderly before all the out-of-town buyers?"

"Please don't bother me," said Ambrose. "I'm going to get married this afternoon. You can be a witness, if you'll come down to the municipal building."

But Misrock's congratulations were tinged with dismay.

"Yes, but what shall I say about this jam you got into? Variety is sure to hear about it—Variety hears about everything—"

"Refer them to me," said Ambrose largely, and proceeded to forget all about it in the excitement of preparing for his wedding.

But just as he put on his hat to go to Doris the doorbell rang.

"Mr. Weir? I'm Mr. Gerber of Variety. About this affair at the Cerise Club last night—"

Ambrose thrust his hands into his pockets, hiding his skinned knuckles.

"Cerise Club?" he said. "I don't know anything about it. Last night I was reading at the public library till they closed it up; then I came home and went to bed."

"Well, Mr. Weir, some people who know you by sight saw you at the Cerise Club. They say you punched some fellow's face and swung a chair at the head waiter—"

Ambrose smiled tolerantly.

"Ah, I see! I've had to explain more than one affair like this lately, but fortunately my friends understand. You see, Mr. Gerber, somebody has been impersonating me."



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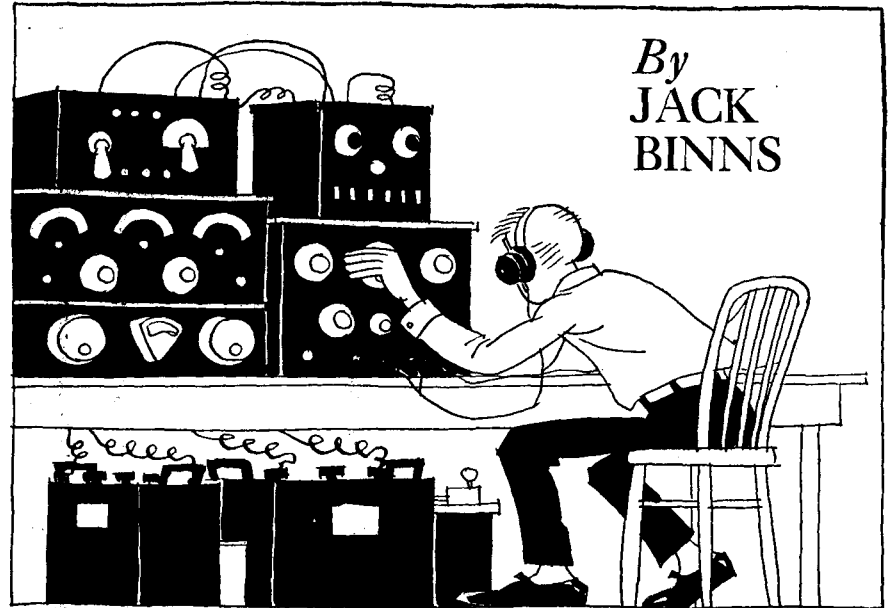
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—instantly soothes
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The Goettingest Radio

WELLINGTON MUIR of Lockport, N. Y., has constructed a radio receiver which employs twenty-four tubes. It is said that with this complex set he can pick up the signals from 2LO, London, England, during daylight and amplify them to a point where they can be rebroadcast from the local transmitter WMAK. His receiver is tuned to receive the regular wave of 2LO, and not the ultra-short waves that are being used experimentally for transatlantic work.

The energy that he picks up on his aerial after the waves have crossed the Atlantic probably amounts to as much as one microbe-power.

Mixing Melodies

HAVE you ever wondered at the magic of modern stage-lighting effects? If so, you may have contrasted its merging of one effect into another with the abrupt changes in harsh brilliancy of a decade ago. The engineering which has brought about this delightful change is somewhat analogous to the development skill that has given us the "mixing panel" in the modern broadcast studio.

Through the medium of a mixing panel an operator is enabled to fade out one program and merge into another without break or abruptness. The mixing panel is vitally important for remote control pick-ups, such as the Roxy periods, where the program necessitates quick jumps from stage to studio—or the emphasis of a soloist above the accompanying music. It is also vital in all musical productions on large stages because it permits the use of a large number of microphones as pick-ups and then merges the whole together harmoniously to give the listener a well-balanced and thoroughly enjoyable reproduction of the original.

I Own a Perplexodyne

IT BEGINS to look as though the French may take to broadcasting after all. According to report, they have advanced to the stage of giving freak names to each radio circuit.

The two prize circuits seem to be the Zutterodyne and Stazodyne, although the Strobodyne is said to be no slouch.

Soothing the Savage

FATE in the form of business necessity recently took me to the quaint capital of Delaware. Upon the completion of our business my companion went with me to the local restaurant. As we entered the door the strains of an orchestra playing classical compositions in a New York hotel came to us through an excellent loud speaker connected with the latest type of electrically operated radio receiver.

At the tables were all sorts of persons: judges, lawyers, legislators, tradesmen and workers. The usual hubbub of a busy eating place was strangely absent, and what little conversation there was ran its desultory course in subdued tones.

"What will be the effect of all the unconscious education that radio is thrusting upon us, especially in the

realm of music?" my companion asked.

Before I could answer a jaunty truck driver with hat atilt and a banded cigar in his mouth entered the door and began to walk cockily down the center of the room. He had taken scarcely half a dozen paces when the self-satisfied look faded from his face and his step began to falter. He raised his hand and hesitatingly removed the cap from his head and then the cigar from his mouth. Finally he eased himself quietly into a chair.

I turned to my associate and said: "There is the answer to your question."

Almost Instantaneous

THE successful transmission of pictures by radio is the culmination of more than half a century of patient labor by many devoted workers. The possibility became apparent when the peculiar properties of the nonmetallic element selenium were first observed. This element acts as a variable resistance to an electric current when subjected to light, and the value of its resistance is controlled by the brightness of the light thrown upon it.

To the early observers it was quite apparent that they had the means of translating a picture into pulsating electric currents through the medium of this property in the same manner that a microphone transforms sound waves into low-frequency electric currents.

Alas! No matter how hard they worked, their efforts were wasted because of the sluggishness of selenium. It was not until a similar property was discovered in the metallic element potassium that success came. The trouble here was the extremely small current produced, but with the aid of vacuum-tube amplifiers this defect was overcome.

The present transmission of pictures and the possibility of television in the near future rest entirely upon the rapid action of the film of potassium in a photoelectric cell. In recent experiments Dr. E. O. Lawrence and Dr. J. W. Beams have determined that when light strikes this film an electron is knocked off in one three billionths of a second. That seems to be about fast enough for any picture.

Lucky Man

ONE dealer of radio supplies in New York City advertises that he "knows all about Radio."