

# TV and Radio

## UNADAPTED THEATRE

**M**ARC Connelly's play "Green Pastures," so the story goes, went the Broadway rounds begging a producer for five years. Theatre legend has it that this is not uncommon: other stage hits have mouldered in faithful agents' files before they saw the light struck by \$4.80 seats. In spite of the fact that managers read manuscripts avidly, who would confidently deny that rave notices would not be the morning-after destiny of many a Pulitzer Prize candidate heaped ignominiously now in type-blurred copies on playreaders' desks?

For the presentation brochures of some try-anything television program packager, here is an idea: a show which would present choice selections from the peddlars' packs of play agents. It could not be argued that such are untried properties and would therefore have doubtful audience appeal. If we accurately gauge the success of WOR-TV's "Broadway TV Theatre," which presents full-length, former hit plays in their "unadapted" versions, the qualities to be derived merely from characters and situations free to flow in an hour and a half of air time are refreshing and satisfactory enough to win sustained approval.

WOR-TV is the New York station of the as-yet-hypothetical Mutual television network. At this writing, it has presented three former Broadway hits substantially in their entirety, "The Trial of Mary Dugan," by Bayard Veiller, "Three Men on a Horse," by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott, and "The Jazz Singer," by Samson Raphaelson. It has presented them between 7:30 and 9:00 P.M., five nights a week, Mondays through Fridays.

"Broadway TV Theatre" has two sponsors, General Tire and Rubber Company and Cavalier Cigarettes. The commercials come at the end of the acts and they do no violence to the moods of the plays precisely because the theatre intermissions are technically and psychologically normal. The WOR-TV innovation, produced by Walter Wade, hoped originally to run for at least twenty-six weeks. No doubt it will run longer: it has struck gushers of critical applause plus ordinary ratings multiplied by five. Which arithmetic, at the repeat division of costs, adds up to a very good dollar-per-thousand buy.

The idea, of course, is daring, and

could probably only appear on a local station with no seller's market problem of satisfying a small host of time-hungry, big-spending advertisers. How can you reserve seven-and-a-half hours across the board for only two sponsors and keep all your customers happy? Nevertheless, WOR-TV is to be congratulated, coincidentally, for defying, in one bold scoop, a whole bundle of trade shibboleths.

The conventional contortions of TV-wrights, directors, and set designers to achieve "motion" were thrown into agonizing relief by the literal stage reporting of the cameras in all three plays. In the Veiller piece they were pinned to the witness chair for the full playing time; in "Three Men on a Horse" and "The Jazz Singer" there were modest changes of interior, but again the business was of the pros-cenium and completely satisfying. Only in the last moments of "The Jazz Singer" did the producers introduce an unoriented television shot and it was an error.

The chief excitement of "Broadway TV Theatre" is the play. A courtroom melodrama, a high farce suffering from a poor cast and lack of indigenous audience laughter, and a dated overdrawn excursion in sentimentality were attention-compelling because they were all good yarns ably told. They had not been thrown together in a hectic hurry and their authors had been privileged to re-examine their work. Moreover characterizations

could be made in some depth, situations could be slowly pointed to climaxes. In "The Trial of Mary Dugan," a gifted actress, Ann Dvorak, had a role susceptible of some real insights and true tension.

Time, valuable time in which to create drama, to develop a character, time and time alone can do these things—and time in its contracted rather than its extended form is present master of TV. This is why the plays on "Broadway TV Theatre" are relatively so satisfying. They achieve their effect by sheer contrast with the pressurized product.

**I**T IS no use weeping over television's economics which rules that these things shall be. Conversely, for the TV practitioners the bread and the butter lie in the quick turnover: the business is, after all, a living; and there are many making it who would welcome the opportunity of thought. The drama-disposed audience can only be grateful for a "Broadway TV Theatre" and hope it runs forever and that it is widely imitated.

And, eventually, when Samuel French's weighty catalogue of plays is exhausted in TV's insatiable material maw, there will remain those yet untried plays that pass from authors' desks to producers and back again. Most of them may be unworthy of Broadway's highly selective screen of hits—but, at least, they are an hour and a half long, their characters can play a scene for more than a side without moving, and the acrobatic camera "reporting" them, would be forced to give way to the considered line. Even television can never consume the annual output of hopeful hits.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.



"The Trial of Mary Dugan" on TV—"gushers of critical applause."



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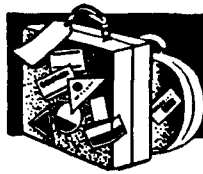
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# BOOKED for TRAVEL

## ENGLAND IN THE SUN

LONDON [BY CABLE].

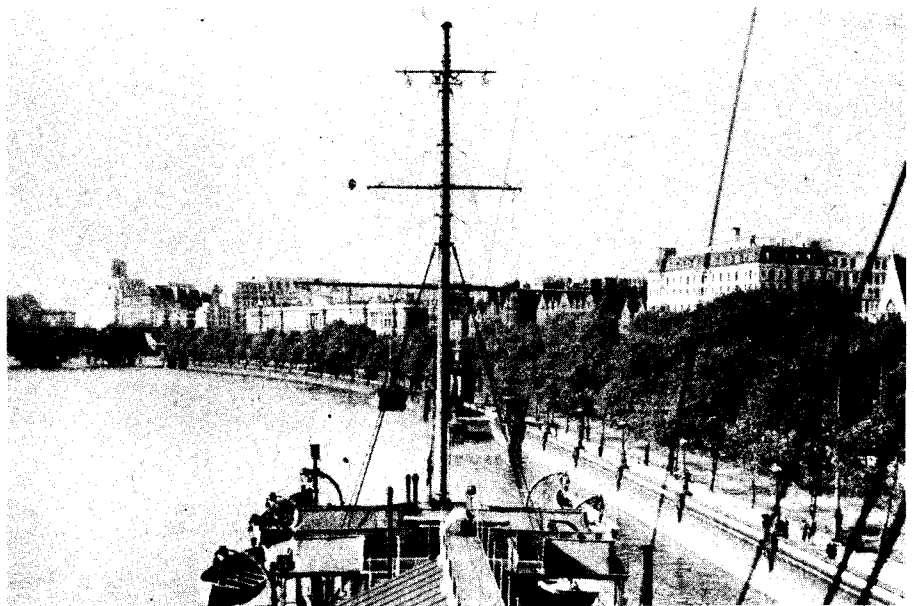
**A** WARM Spring sun was shining brightly over England as the first plane of the new transatlantic tourist-class service rolled into London Airport out of New York. The big plane, a Super 6 of Pan American Airways Rainbow service, was the forerunner of a low-cost airlift bringing an additional 55,000 Americans to Britain this year aside from the army of tourists coming by ship and regular first-class air transportation.

The new plane, which I had ridden a few weeks ago on a short flight to Bermuda, proved equally comfortable on the longer span to Europe. In place of the rich, lavish meals served on first-class airliners, we ate sensibly and well of pre-cooked meals of Irish stew or chicken-and-rice-with-peas, served with cake and coffee. Travelers pay \$1.75 each for a complete meal, and I, for one, felt more comfortable in flight without the trappings of a seven-course dinner.

Flight time aboard Pan American's 82-passenger clipper is twelve hours to Ireland, thirteen and a half to Paris or London. Virtually all planes will stop at Shannon—the plane for refueling, the passengers for a spot of Irish coffee "with a wisp of mountain dew," meaning a shot of Irish whisky in the bottom and a blob of Irish whipped cream atop. Since Shannon is a port with special privileges, a

liquor store dispenses a fifth of Old Grand Dad for \$3.50, Scotch for \$3, Irish whisky for \$1.50, and fifty-year cognac for \$6.50. While local spirits constitute a bargain to be leaped at, one should exert some restraint in buying American cigarettes at the Shannon price of \$1.25 a carton. They are apparently old stock, for Lucky Strikes are still packed in the green package which was supposed to have gone to war in the early Forties.

Those who come to England this time of the year will find the countryside bursting with flowers and good cheer, in rather vivid contrast to the gray impression of the land one gets 3,000 miles removed. The highway from the airport to town is blooming with TV aerials and brilliant purple cherry trees. The May trees are blooming, too, and Englishmen are recalling the proverb "Cast not a clout till May is out." People are back arguing whether the ancient epigram-coiner meant May the month, or May the tree. A clout, everyone agrees, is an old English way of saying clothing. Tulips dab London with color at every turn—in the quiet church garden behind St. Paul's, in the rubble of blitzed buildings, on the sills of newspaper offices on Fleet Street. Lazy deck chairs are scattered over the greensward of Hyde Park, beckoning seductively to the tired New Yorker less than a day from his hectic city.



—Keystone View Co.

The Thames Embankment—"an unhindered view of the maritime scene."