

This document is a series of pages from an old book about the start of radio in Cape Town, South Africa. The book is likely long gone from the shelves of bookstores and libraries, but makes interesting reading of an early radio history in South Africa.

The scanned book has been converted to PDF format by Adam Farson VA7OJ. There are a few additional pages: the front cover, tables of contents and illustrations and introductory pages.

Enjoy!

Ian Simpson - Vancouver, Canada (ex pat. SA) February 2006



Capetown's  
*First Call.*

Confessions of the  
Broadcasting Staff.

CAPETOWN'S FIRST CALL



Sir DAVID De VILLIERS GRAAFF, Bart.

# CAPETOWN'S FIRST CALL

"DO YOU REMEMBER?"

Confessions of the  
Broadcasting Staff

*Edited by* UNCLE REMUS.

Capetown  
GALVIN & SALES LTD.  
1925

## INTRODUCTION.

Scientific discoveries of the last 50 years or so have been of varying importance and advantage to mankind.

Sometimes they have been definitely retrograde, arising out of the shortsightedness of countries fighting against one another—at other times a real *gradus ad parnassum* opening up a road for the advance of civilisation. Yet this latter description would be inadequate to give one any idea of the enormous potentialities of this comparatively recent and as yet barely understood phenomenon of wireless. The scientists themselves are too bound by the microscopic view which the perfection of technicalities gives them, and it is left to the poets of the world to contemplate the far-reaching good or ill which will ensue. That it will certainly be good is undebatable, but it would need a visionary to prophesy how far reaching it is likely to become. The man who recently ascended a high hill with a 60-valve set and attempted to get messages from Mars may perhaps be that visionary or he may be merely a practical experimenter; in either case, it is an attempt to run before we can walk. We are only now beginning to realise what the linking up of town and town can accomplish in the way of fellowship, and when we can widen the educational aspect, which, of course, time will make more and more possible, then a further good result will be forth-

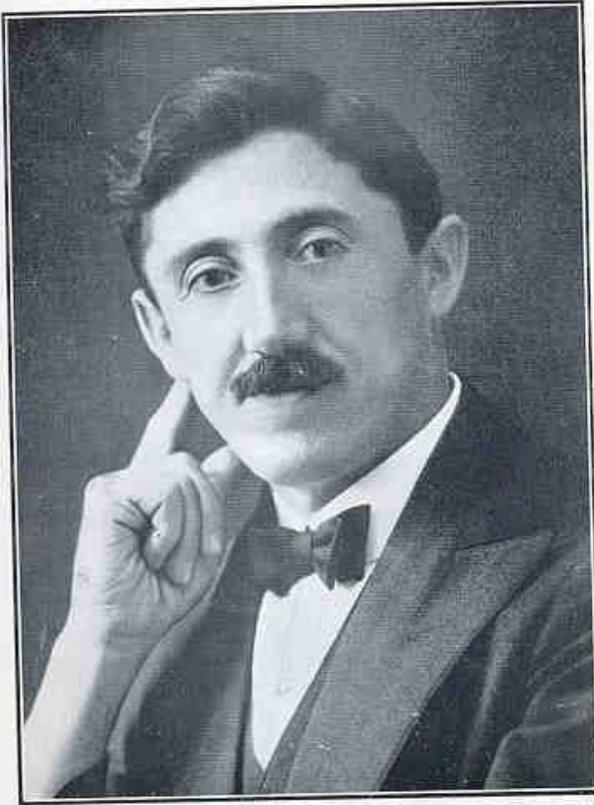
coming. Education is the ram that beats down barriers and promotes fellowship, which is after all the real foundation stone of civilisation.

We in South Africa feel our responsibilities very heavy upon us, and although in the following chapters we have attempted nothing more than a light-hearted account of the birth of what is now a sturdy infant, yet we fully realise its extreme infancy and the enormous care needed in its upbringing. One day it will grow too big for us, but when that time comes the other countries of the world will be ready to adopt it into a larger family and we shall bask in the good fellowship of a stauncher and more lasting League of Nations than we know to-day. When we have learned to unite the world by this great power which we hold, then shall we find that our gaze is towards the stars.

## FOREWORD

BY

The Hon. THOMAS BOYDELL,  
 Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.



The Hon. THOS. BOYDELL,  
 Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.

It happened like this.

Mr. Dickson, the live wire of the Capetown Wireless Station, sent me a letter saying he was writing a book. This sounded most serious. I at once visualised at least three volumes and felt very sorry for Mr. Dickson, as well as for that unfortunate fellow the proof reader who, on pain of losing his job, would be compelled to read the book. For the rest of the world I did not mind. I thought it could take care of itself.

Continuing to read the letter, I found myself pulled up with a round turn when I came to the request that I should write a foreword for the book.

Now, strange as it may seem, I did not feel equal to writing a foreword to a book I had never seen and knew nothing at all about. It seemed to me that a foreword would be out of place unless it was hooked on to something. So I groped about for something to hang it on to. I had almost given up the search when I found a clue. I saw that the book was to be a series of reminiscences. This helped me quite a lot. It enabled me to exclude

from all consideration the things I had forgotten or never heard about. Mr. Dickson having so considerably narrowed down the subject, made me feel much easier in mind. You see, it is much more difficult to write about the things one has forgotten or never known about.

Well, in order to prevent discord in what might have been a harmonious production, I did something which I now think was a big mistake. In simple innocence I wrote and asked Mr. Dickson to tell me what the book was all about. Up to this point I had quite an open mind. That is, I could see daylight all around, so to speak. By return of post, Mr. Dickson sent me what he was pleased to term one of the chapters. That did it. Daylight disappeared and all became very dark. It helped me to know that Mr. Dickson did not write the chapter. I read it through a second time and the darkness gave way to bewilderment. Perseverance, however, was eventually rewarded, because I finally discovered that the reminiscences had something to do with the Capetown Broadcasting Station. It seemed to suggest "Capetown Calling." This took me back to a night I well remember. It was the night when the Station was formally opened, the night that London was anxiously listening for our message. A message that would have, no doubt, got there had it not slipped off the footpath near Muizenberg.

Arriving at the Studio, I found all was very quiet. The Orchestra was nicely packed in ready to play "God Save the King" when the Studio clock struck eight and the "dingus" was pulled back.

On a wooden stand in the middle of the room at one end rested the microphone in its rubber ham-

mock. Close by, the Mayor rested on the arm of a chair in which sat a lady who was to sing "Land of Hope and Glory." Other celebrities were dotted about, but only in whispers did they speak. Then the clock struck eight, the "dingus" was struck back, and the Orchestra struck up. Some of us then made speeches. Some of these were heard in different parts of the world, chiefly in Adderley Street. The people who heard something voted the station a huge success; those who heard nothing voted it a ghastly failure. The rest of the people didn't vote at all.

Since then, however, the Capetown Broadcasting Station has firmly established itself in the hearts and the homes of the people. It has entertained, instructed and amused many thousands every day. It has more than justified expectations and the confidence of its promoters.

The enterprising and self-sacrificing efforts of the public-spirited body of men who own and control it, not for profit, but entirely for public service, have my admiration and my best wishes.

I would take off my hat to them, only I don't happen to wear one, so the will must be taken for the deed.

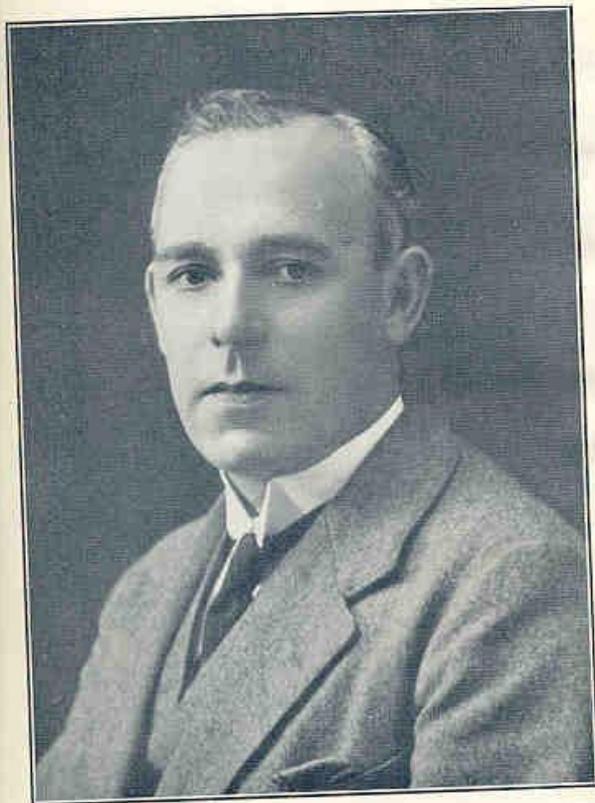
THOMAS BOYDELL.

## CONTENTS.

	Page
INTRODUCTION .....	i.
FOREWORD BY THE HON. THOS. BOYDELL .....	iii.
THE CHAIRMAN OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE .....	1
THE STATION DIRECTOR REMEMBERS .....	13
AUNTY LEX .....	21
THE STATION ENGINEER .....	35
THE STUDIO MANAGER .....	46
THE ACCOUNTANT .....	56
THE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES TRIES TO FORGET .....	62
UNCLE PORPS .....	74

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

SIR DAVID DE VILLIERS GRAAFF, Bart.	Frontispiece
THE HON. THOS. BOYDELL, ... ..	facing page iii
J. S. DUNN, C.B.E. .... ..	" " 1
CECIL J. SIBBETT .... ..	" " 6
A. N. DICKSON .... ..	" " 13
GLADYS DICKSON, B.A. .... ..	" " 21
THE FAMILY'S FIRST CHRISTMAS CARD .... ..	" " 26
E. O. P. THOMAS, A.M.I.E.E., A.M.I.R.E.	" " 35
TRANSMISSION ROOM .... ..	" " 38
TRANSMISSION ROOM (another view)	" " 42
RENE S. CAPRARA .... ..	" " 46
STUDIO .... ..	" " 50
HECTOR M. KERR, A.L.A.A. .... ..	" " 56
LESLIE H. HEWARD .... ..	" " 62
THE CAPETOWN ORCHESTRA .... ..	" " 68
C. V. HELY-HUTCHINSON .... ..	" " 74



J. S. DUNN, C.B.E.  
Chairman Management Committee.

## CAPETOWN'S FIRST CALL.

THE CHAIRMAN OF MANAGEMENT  
COMMITTEE,  
J. S. DUNN, C.B.E.

My first vivid recollection of wireless broadcasting centres round Lady de Villiers Graaff's beautiful garden at Tygerberg. Her delphiniums and cannas were exquisitely beautiful. Sir David and I were walking among them when he told me he was going to make a gift of broadcasting to the City of Capetown. I remember my surprise and delight at this project, and remarked, "Surely, this will be a very big undertaking."

Sir David, who had caught the glamour of transmitting music and speech through the ether on his visit to America and England, replied, "I have gone into the figures and it can be done with the best possible set for about £6,000." "I have been thinking of the pleasure and useful information which I can give to large numbers of people on the outskirts of the Peninsula and on the farms, and I think it well worth while."

Sir David Graaff then told me that I had been nominated by him as one of his representatives in connection with broadcasting, and he most sincerely hoped that the City Council would accept his offer. So convinced was he of the future of listening-in in South Africa that he made the stipulation that surplus profits should be put to a Fund to be used only for public and charitable purposes.

Thus do I remember the first project of wireless broadcasting in Capetown.

Many times afterwards did Sir David and I discuss his fascinating scheme, which was eventually turned down by the City Fathers.

The history of the vicissitudes of this generous offer I need not enter into beyond recording the fact that the City Council, after long and grave deliberations, decided that for them to enter on it might involve a large expenditure without securing adequate public support.

That Sir David Graaff was right and the City Fathers wrong has been proved in the first year of broadcasting. Although also there may be "Pirates," this is merely further evidence of the popularity of broadcasting and most excellent testimony that wireless broadcasting has come to stay. Indeed, it seems curious on looking back to these earliest days of enthusiasm in Lady Graaff's garden that the Government now should actually have had under consideration the making of wireless broadcasting a public service under the administration of the Postmaster-General.

To say that Sir David was disappointed at the rejection of his offer is to put the matter mildly, but he was far from being downhearted and determined to give to his fellow-citizens in their homes the joys of music and entertainment which he had experienced in England and America. And when the time came he put in an application for the Licence and he secured it.

It was about this time that the Orchestra Committee had found their task of maintaining the Orchestra a very uphill one. A tour of South Africa had been arranged and there was every reason to feel that it would be successful. Surely there could not be another misfortune such as the big strike

in Johannesburg in 1922. Alas, as all South Africa knows, a General Election came along most unexpectedly and once again the Orchestra Tour was placed in jeopardy. When the Publicity Association took over the Orchestra, it was well known that its finances required an annual tour to pay for itself in order that revenue and expenditure might balance. The unexpected formation of the Durban Orchestra and unforeseen misfortunes in the way of tours caused the Orchestra Committee to look about for further sources of revenue, it being realised that the City Council was loth to expend more than its contribution of £7,500 on the Orchestra.

Members of the Orchestra themselves had caught the fever of broadcasting through having followed the pioneer work of Mr. J. S. Streeter. Mr. Caprara, now the ever-popular Uncle Bonzo, Mr. Bray, and Mr. Leitwich in particular, were dabbling in the new art. Their ardour in these early electrical investigations spread like wildfire and their radiant talk became infectious.

So it happened that one day, as Mr. A. N. Dickson (our Uncle Remus of to-day) and I were passing in front of the Post Office, a firm determination was made that we must take broadcasting by the hand because we felt that by using it in conjunction with the Orchestra, we could save a great initial cost on the entertainment estimates and make it possible for Capetown to be alongside of Johannesburg and Durban in the new art, which had brought such pleasure and instruction to the homes of millions in England and America.

Listeners-in will perhaps appreciate from this narrative what a big part the Capetown Orchestra

played in making a start in wireless broadcasting for the Cape Peninsula. But let it be said here and now that it has ever been the desire as soon as funds justify it that every professional singer or musician should be paid for his or her services. At the same time, no one will realise more readily than music teachers that there must be some outlet for amateur talent amongst their pupils, not only in the interests of the teachers themselves, but as an aid in the general advancement of music at the Cape.

Throughout the world amateur effort has given birth to wireless broadcasting, and no one will appreciate more than listeners in the tribute which must be paid to our world-wide famous amateur investigators and to those who have so generously assisted in building up attractive programmes. Let us hope that the professional musicians will add a small mead of praise.

Just one more word as to the big part played by the Capetown Orchestra in making our present position possible. On the basis of the payments made to the Orchestra in the first year and at minimum recognised rates it would only have been possible to have employed three and a quarter full-time professional musicians.

If all this dissertation on policy has been much too long winded, my only excuse can be that I am more than anxious to take my brother listeners-in into the complete confidence of the Committee, who are amateurs like themselves—paradoxically professional men who have worked arduously without fee and who have paid for their licences.

Now we must come back to Uncle Remus and me having a talk outside the Post Office. My last words

were: "I must see Sir David and ask him for the Government licence to set up a broadcasting station."

To telephone to Sir David required both adroitness and skill owing to his vast ramifications and many telephone numbers. But it was achieved. An invitation to lunch at Sir David's favourite Club was the result.

History is made in these devious ways. Suddenly Uncle Remus and I found ourselves in the proximity of greatness. There in his favourite chair was our Administrator, Sir Frederick de Waal, and around us were a famous Bank Manager and lions of Rhodesia and South-West Africa. Surely they had not all come to talk to us about wireless broadcasting. They had not. Somewhere about the coffee stage, Sir David at a tangent turned to me and said, "Well, young man, what is it I can do for you?"

"Please give me the Government licence for the Cape Broadcasting Station," I replied.

A smile overspread Sir David's face and whimsically he said, "Young man, are you not asking for too much?" "It is worth a tremendous lot to the Cape."

Yet he seemed quite pleased at the request and made an appointment to discuss the proposal that the Publicity Association should take wireless broadcasting under its wing, so that Capetown might not be behind the other cities of the Union in her amenities both for her citizens and for her visitors.

Events then moved rapidly. The proposal was submitted to our colleagues and without delay secured their approval. Mr. J. E. P. Close, Dr. Bennie Hewat, Mr. S. R. Johnston, Lieut.-Col. J. G. Rose strongly supported the project, and after a committee meeting it was decided to hit the nail on the head and to ask Sir David Graaff to see us all forthwith. Sir David said he would see us at once, and sent his motor car to the Visitors' Bureau to fetch us all down to his office.

I wonder whether there was ever a more business like or briefer meeting on an important subject. Sir David heard us and within a few minutes he had joined us—now in two motor cars—in a dash to the Postmaster-General, Colonel Sturman.

The Postmaster-General was in. He seemed surprised at the sudden advent of Sir David and of our little Committee, which was accompanied by Uncle Remus.

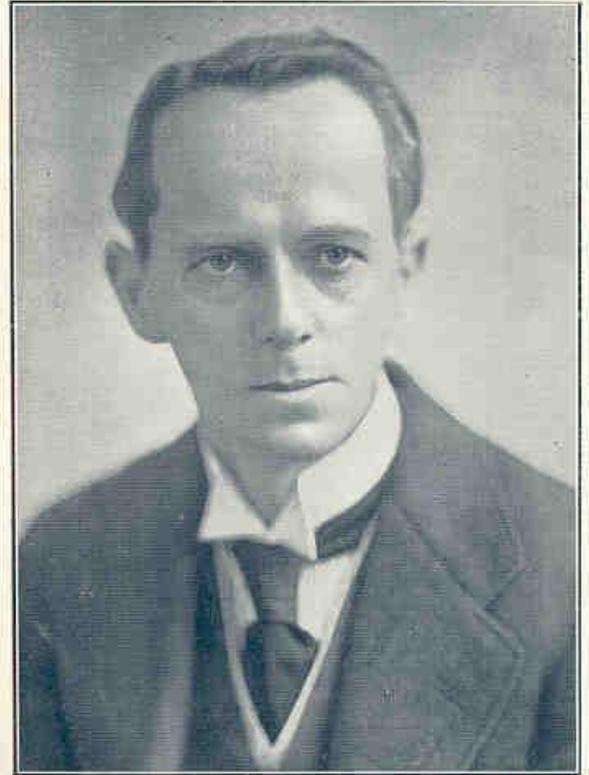
Here, again, negotiations must have been of almost record brevity.

Sir David, addressing the still surprised Postmaster-General, asked: "Mr. Postmaster-General, do I hold the Government licence for the Cape Broadcasting Station?"

"Yes."

"Then please hand it over to these gentlemen of the Publicity Association."

Col. Sturman, laughing most heartily, acquiesced, everybody shook hands, and Capetown was well on



CECIL J. SIBBETT.  
General Manager S.A. Advertising Contractors.

the road towards wireless broadcasting for the Cape Province.

Now came the vital matter of financing the venture and facing a very considerable capital cost. Having the co-operation of the Orchestra in the first place made the establishment of the Broadcasting Station possible and then came a tremendous factor, the support of Mr. Cecil J. Sibbett in the matter of advertising. Mr. Sibbett was as much imbued with the public service which the Station would render as any of us, and his ready support in taking the Advertising Contract made wireless broadcasting a certainty in the near future. But particularly would I like to pay a tribute to the public-spirited motive which inspired Mr. Sibbett and the great assistance which we also got from his partner, Mr. Redford. Perhaps, here it is appropriate to give an example of how difficulties can be overcome. Troubles were bound to arise in such a new and novel enterprise as broadcasting. Perfect quality in transmission could not be secured instantly, and the post of announcer becoming vacant, the question was how to get the best possible announcer to be had in Capetown. Mr. Sibbett hit on the brilliant idea of collecting all the principal advertisers in his room and having a competition for the position, each person present voting for the candidate whom he thought best. The candidates were tested both in English and in Dutch, and the proof that Mr. Sibbett's idea was entirely successful is borne in the fact that the successful candidate of that day is our present well-known announcer, Mr. De Fontein.

I have, however, got somewhat ahead of my story. The initial Broadcasting Committee, consist-

ing of Sir David Graaff, Dr. Bennie Hewat, Mr. S. R. Johnston, Mr. J. E. P. Close, Lieut.-Col. Rose, and myself, determined to send Mr. Dickson immediately to London to recommend the best possible installation for Capetown—the cost, of course, being an important factor in the business. In the end the Marconi installation was chosen, and I am sure that everyone concerned will express their deep indebtedness to Marconis for the splendid treatment which we have always had from them.

Then there were hectic meetings as to sites for the station aerial and the studio. Economy had to be our watchword, and principally on account of it the very central position on the top of Stuttafords' building was chosen for the aerial. The studio in Greenmarket Square was fixed up with the cordial co-operation of Messrs. Rogers-Jenkins.

It is as well to record that the experts in England had advised a position on the Cape Flats, somewhere out beyond Rondebosch, as perhaps the ideal site for the aerial, and of course some theorists at once suggested the top of Table Mountain. Cost alone caused the turning down of the Flats site. It was at this juncture that we secured the invaluable co-operation of our brothers on the Committee, Mr. J. S. Streeter and Mr. A. C. Fuller. Under their guidance, the suitability of a site in the centre of the City was tested, and even this first test showed in a most astounding way how wireless waves defeated our mountain ramparts. The site on Stuttafords was so infinitely cheaper than one far afield that the Committee decided upon it.

For a couple of anxious months our aerial in the City was under a cloud of suspicion, and it is in-

teresting to recall how it was condemned on various grounds—too close proximity to radiation from the mountain, interference from neighbouring electrical plants, lack of a good earthing system, and very many other indictments.

Even to-day it may not be the ideal site, but it was found to be not guilty on most of the above counts. What happened was that the speech choke of our modulating panel had become slightly damaged, possibly in transport, and a spark was jumping across the mouth of the tube, giving rise, as can easily be seen, to a series of extraordinary and quite unwanted phenomena in the entire working of the plant.

It should be said that Mr. McLellan, the Wireless Agency engineer, in co-operation with his colleagues, Col. Childs and Mr. Penrose, who have never failed to assist us, erected the elegant tripod masts of the aerial and helped us out of our knotty problems with regard to the installation.

The coming of Mr. Thomas, the Station Engineer lent us by Marconis, and the bulk of the plant, was a great day for all of us. The weird-looking gagets reposing in the installation room and at the studio were infinitely mysterious to the layman. Mr. Streeter and Mr. Fuller, of course, had an altogether different aspect. Our second engineer, Mr. Borthwick, we found in the Capetown Technical Institute—a local find of great value to us. It is a fact, I believe, that Mr. Thomas erected the plant in record time and so enabled Mr. Boydell, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, to make his opening speech on September 15th, 1924. Of course, also, there was the finding of an Auntie—and, as you can guess—and

thank goodness too—Auntie Lex came to us. The Fairy Queen in Iolanthe said that she could nestle in a buttercup, but I am sure that Auntie Lex must have been found in the heart of a rose—don't you agree, children? Then there were the uncles—but I shall leave Auntie to talk about them.

We were all very excited over the opening and exceedingly anxious to hear what results would be achieved by our new plant. I determined to test it out in the country, and no one will be surprised to hear that I selected the famous little fishing town Hermanus for that purpose. On the Sunday before the opening night, tests on the carbon microphone in the installation room came through with remarkable volume. Indeed, there was some freak about this, because they have never been repeated.

Let me confess that the opening night was something of a disappointment to us all. In looking back, one realises that a month could have been spent on experimenting in order to give our engineers a chance of bringing their gear to perfection point. Undoubtedly, a wireless broadcasting installation matures and ripens like cheese or wine. But we were all on the tip-toe of expectation and so desirous of giving the public the benefits of a wireless service that we rushed full programmes on to the air.

The days after that were those of ceaseless activity, everybody being inspired with the idea of bringing about systematic improvement. At times Mr. Streeter and Mr. Fuller, as well as Uncle Remus and myself, seemed to live with the installation, and daily endeavoured to secure comparisons with other

wireless plants. The improvement unquestionably was steady and progressive, the finest possible quality being aimed at above everything else. Yet there were baffling faults, all of which were revealed when the spark across the speech choke was discovered.

One remembers also the series of public meetings held throughout the suburbs and in the City Hall, organised in order to take our listeners-in and wireless enthusiasts into our confidence. Mr. G. V. Adendorff, our Editor to-day of *Capetown Calling*, spoke and lectured brilliantly on those occasions, and the part taken also by Mr. Streeter, Mr. Fuller and others, instilled confidence into the minds of our supporters. It was not without hard work that Capetown's broadcasting station was established on its present basis.

Thus my narrative comes down almost to the present day. The forming of the South African Broadcasting Council should perhaps be mentioned. This body, representing Johannesburg, Durban and Capetown—indeed, the entire Broadcasting Institutions of the Union—has been of the greatest assistance to the Government, and particularly to Mr. Boydell, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, in co-ordinating all broadcasting activities. Hitherto it has been composed of Mr. Thurlow and Mr. Scott Taylor (Hon. Secretary), Johannesburg; Mr. John Robers, Mr. Shearer and Mr. Wadley (Mayor of Durban), Durban; and Mr. A. C. Fuller, Mr. A. N. Dickson and myself (as Chairman), Capetown. The Council's meetings have been attended by the Minister, who has presided on each occasion, and who has been supported by Col. Sturman, Post-

master-General, and Mr. H. J. Lenton, the present acting Postmaster-General. I should like to pay a tribute to the splendid unanimity which has always characterised the proceedings of the Broadcasting Council, a more business-like and united body it never having been my privilege to serve on.

And so to to-day. The record number of licences paid in July in response to the request for aid for the Orchestra is the most encouraging sign of the year. I no longer believe in "Pirates." As in "Peter Pan," I much prefer to believe in fairies. What I think of those who have not taken out licences is that they have forgotten, and as soon as they remember they will pay. Then there is every chance of reducing the cost of licences. Further, I do not believe that people will numb their consciences by saying the air is free. Instead, they will further join the Radio Society and promote the advancement of wireless.

THE STATION DIRECTOR REMEMBERS.

A. N. DICKSON.



"UNCLE REMUS,"  
A. N. DICKSON,  
Station Director.

Will I ever forget those hectic days following our successful negotiations with Sir David Graaff and the Postmaster-General on the transfer of the Broadcasting Licence (granted by the Government to Sir David) to the Publicity Association!

The transfer itself was a very simple proceeding: a sub-committee of four appointed by the Publicity Association Executive proceeded one morning to the offices of the Imperial Cold Storage in Dock Road. A conversation with Sir David Graaff lasting about ten minutes, a return to the Post Office in company with Sir David, and we were ushered into the office of the Postmaster-General, Col. Sturman.

In his very quiet and rather humorous way, Sir David said: "Colonel Sturman, I believe I hold the Broadcasting Licence for the Cape Area?"

"You do, Sir David," replied the Postmaster-General.

"Well, have you any fundamental objection to the transfer of this licence to the Publicity Association?"

"None whatever," replied Colonel Sturman. "I believe they are the people to have it, because they already control the Orchestra."

"Then, gentlemen," said Sir David Graaff, turning to the Publicity Association representatives (Mr. J. S. Dunn, Mr. J. E. P. Close, Dr. Bennie Hewat and myself), "the licence is transferred to the Publicity Association." And so, after a very brief meeting of less than fifteen minutes, the Association had become the captain of a very big adventure.

We had left harbour in smooth water—followed the cyclone. The Chairman (Mr. J. S. Dunn) was called away to Johannesburg the following Monday (Easter Monday), and in a brief conversation with him at the Monument Station I expressed the opinion that it was desirable I should proceed to England in order to negotiate the purchase of the transmitting set and to study the business side of Broadcasting, at the offices of the British Broadcasting Company.

The Chairman thought this over *en route*, and wired the Vice-Chairman, supporting the proposal. A meeting of the Executive of the Association was called for the following Wednesday, and at exactly 5.30 p.m. it was unanimously resolved that I should leave for England two days later.

And then came the deluge. In two fevered days of strenuous endeavour on the part of each member of the various committees and my staff, meetings of the various Association, Orchestra and Eisteddfod Committees were held.

At 12.30 on the Friday, our last meeting concluded and I was free to pack. It was fortunate that the washlady had returned my things! Three hours later I was safely on board the "Armada Castle," but still giving final instructions to my Secretary.

No need to describe the journey to Southampton. I rested. Twenty-four days in England (twenty-four wet days) sufficed to complete negotiations with the Marconi Company. But many were the cables that passed between London and Capetown. During those twenty-four days I had also to arrange for the appointment of a Musical Director to the Capetown Orchestra, and after interviewing numerous aspirants my final recommendation to the Orchestra Committee in Capetown was accepted and Leslie Heward came South.

If my days were busy, my evenings were no less strenuous, seventeen out of the twenty-three being spent at 2, Savoy Hill, where Mr. Reith, Managing Director of the British Broadcasting Company, and every member of his staff, did all in their power to coach me in the *modus operandi* of a broadcasting station.

You have all read the magazine advertisements, "Learn to do this, that or the other in ten lessons"—well, the staff at 2, Savoy Hill, could make a fortune if they patented their "cramming machine." To Mr. Reith and his staff I shall be eternally grateful.

A flying visit to the Bournemouth Station, visits to Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, filled up my spare time (the Sundays), and finally I arrived at Waterloo Station (after an interview that morning with Col.

Sturman at Marconi House) five minutes before the boat train left for Southampton. Let it not be thought that I blame the Postmaster-General for this final dash. The closing of Waterloo Bridge and consequent jam of traffic on Westminster Bridge was entirely responsible.

And so aboard the "Saxon," where with just twenty-seven cheery souls and Captain Stanley, I spent 16 days 9 hours 10 minutes and some few seconds of perfect content.

Some people, returning to Capetown after a season in London, regard the life here as "slow." To these I would say: "Try Broadcasting."

To be sure, the transmitting plant had been ordered and the engineer engaged—both were due to arrive three weeks later—but where were we to instal it?—the plant, of course, not the engineer. Where ought we to have the station and where the studio? These problems had still to be settled, and settled at no distant date.

As soon as I landed the rush commenced again, and the Broadcasting Committee, bowing to the inevitable, gave up all thought of attending to their own business and concentrated on the question of the hour. After many consultations with the Marconi Staff and inspections with architects and builders, premises for the station and studio were secured. Such minor details as the erection of aerial masts, alterations to the station and studio, were made easy by the willing help of everyone connected with the big enterprise, and in due course Mr. E. O. P. Thomas, the engineer, arrived with his family and with part of the transmitting plant.

After meeting him at the Docks and welcoming him to South Africa, I enquired if he could get the plant going so that we might open on September 15.

The pitying look on his face made me feel just about half his size (which is five foot to my six), so I decided not to press for an answer then and there.

However, small though he is, our Engineer is "a good plucked 'un," and just about ten minutes before eight o'clock on the evening of the station's official opening, he telephoned to me at the studio and said, "Well, I'm ready." Bravo, Mr. Thomas!

Of course, we had "seen the wheels go round" before September the 15th. Shall I ever forget the previous Sunday evening, when calling in at the station on the way down from the studio, the Engineer pointed to a table telephone arrangement and said: "Speak into that and the world will hear you"!

Very nervously I approached the inanimate monster and timidly said: "Capetown Calling" for the first time; then—"Capetown testing; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday; at least, it is Sunday for some people." Next morning, to my amazement, we received telegrams from all over South Africa. "Heard you testing last night. Hurrah!"

Do I remember the opening night, 8 p.m., September 15th? Yes, well do I remember wondering whether "the wheels would go round," and as the Hon. Thos. Boydell stepped in front of the microphone I sent up a silent prayer to the powers that be that he would speak distinctly and that

South Africa, North, South, East and West, would hear his every word.

Do I remember the instructions given to members of the Orchestra that they must not even breathe whilst we were "on the air"? Do I remember one member of the Orchestra being seized with a desire to cough and that in an attempt to suppress the desire, gave a most beautiful bubble-blowing performance?

But even a bad operation or a nightmare must come to an end, and at 10.35 the welcome announcement went over: "Capetown Station closing down; good-night, everybody, good-night." And then—reaction set in and the next three hours saw a very jolly "christening ceremony." I think that we deserved it!

Aunty Lex, as yet unknown to her big family, was the life and soul of the whole affair. And so Capetown called for the first time. The Engineer, the Director of Programmes, and I were relieved to know that our first public transmission was over, and as evidenced by the shoal of telegrams received the next day, we had been heard in Northern Rhodesia, Transvaal, Natal and the Free State.

I sometimes wonder what the quality of our transmission was like that first evening. But I do know that the Engineer pushed it out "with *some* juice."

I have referred to the numerous letters of congratulation we received in those early days. Let me quote one:

"Most Honoured Sir and Uncle,  
Director of Mysterious Stations (Broadcasting),

I have, with my crystal and the whisker of the prowling tom, listened in all humility to the meanderings of Mr. Monty, the strange noises of the most radiant six, the talks of the Aunt of us all, and to the fashion talks, which, honoured Uncle, are not well understood by our women whose idea of headdress is a big tin which once contained fire fluid.

Oh! most honoured Uncles and Aunts, your nephew Umkolizuta would humbly pray that he may be allowed to defy the atmospheres and talk to the gods of all the hills. May it beseech you, Uncle Remus, to humbly allow my petitions.

UMKOLIZUTA."

Out of consideration for our contract-holders, I let Mr. Um—etc.—etc. down very gently, but very firmly, and so the gods have yet to hear his voice.

Although we had scrambled safely through the first night, the worst was yet to come, and if we had survived the minor operation there was still that more serious operation to face, the Children's Hour. Could we make good or must we "get the bird" from the world's most severe critic—the child? We knew we were quite sincere in our desire to merit their encomiums, but could we "fill the bill?" We had all been warned by Aunty Lex that we must be natural or fail ignominiously. Aunty Lex herself has a priceless knowledge of the way into a child's heart, which she is fond of condensing into two words, sincerity and spontaneity.

Believing that Aunty Lex must know, I carefully selected my first appeal for the faith and affection of our new family. As a child I had loved stories about dogs, be they sad or humorous. So after hours of very serious thought I decided that I

would read a condensed version of "Where's Master?" the story of Caesar, King Edward's favourite terrier. I have always loved that pathetic story, because my knowledge of dogs convinces me that "Where's Master?" was written by someone who "understood."

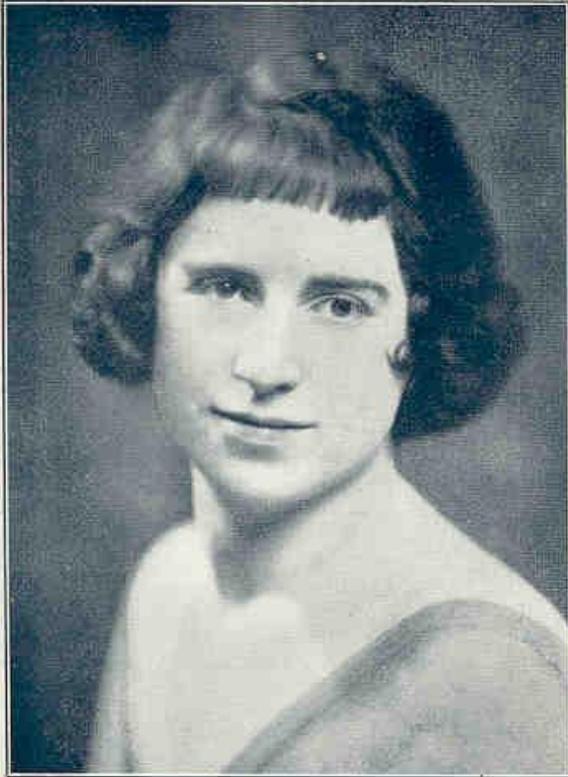
So I approached the microphone, hoping that I might succeed in conveying the author's feelings to the minds of my nephews and nieces. Perhaps I succeeded in some small measure; perhaps I failed utterly. I am still in doubt. Anyhow, the next day I received a very kind letter from a lady who thanked me for the story and enclosed a cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* describing the passage of the King's body through London followed by his favourite charger and Caesar.

Since a mother felt that I had succeeded, I was pleased to think the children had been moved by the appeal of that pathetic story. But, alas! for my dreams! Two days later Aunt Lex received a letter from a nephew, who concluded by asking Uncle Remus to read another funny story!

And so my dreams were shattered. I had failed utterly to appeal to the childish mind, or so I thought. But soon other letters arrived, and I learnt that children like to hear serious stories. I am more than glad to know that they all love dogs.

I will conclude my chapter with the thought that we privileged Aunts and Uncles have a great power in our hands, the power to influence nieces and nephews all over South Africa, and I hope no mother of son or daughter will ever have cause to question our desire to make the fullest use of this great privilege.

AUNTY LEX.  
GLADYS DICKSON, B.A.



"AUNTY LEX,"  
GLADYS DICKSON, B.A.,  
Station Aunty.

As the mere Station Aunty, my recollections of early broadcasting are sadly lacking in the technicalities that add so learned and engaging a touch to those of my colleagues. Would I could tell why the speech choke failed or why the counter poised.

An abysmal ignorance keeps me silent. There seems to be a conspiracy afoot to keep one soul at the station, fair and unsullied by the contaminating breath of wireless jargon. That I have been allotted the position of vestal virgin at the high altar of wireless telephony there can be no doubt, but, believe me, kind reader, 'tis under protest. However, I am happy to have this opportunity of announcing publicly that I *do* know why the microphone is called Round! (I am under no obligation to the engineering staff for this information; it is purely original research among the musty tomes of the Child's Encyclopedia.)

Although I cannot hope these little memories will find their way into the archives of Marconi House, nevertheless they may get a friendly nod here and there, in the distant future, when some of the early wireless enthusiasts foregather and revive old associations by the magical words, "Do you remember?"

Oh! the glorious chaos of those two weeks before we actually disturbed the ether. From a dismal

jumble of planks, wires and fittings, the studio grew into the reposeful blue room we know to-day. How many times would we risk our lives dodging step-ladders and burly carpenters to steal in and see how things were progressing. But the real setting for a comic opera was the Accountant's office. Into this small room crowded a host of enquirers, licence-holders, and messengers. They would stand six deep round the table, asking questions, getting papers signed, upsetting the ink, and generally adding to the cheerful confusion of the hour, whilst in a corner a typewriter syncopated noisily, aided and abetted by the singing of an electric tea kettle. (A prodigious thirst we had in those days!) Above all this babel, the telephone rang out with enquiring persistence, and whoever happened to be near answered, but for the most part it was treated with the contempt it deserved.

The furnishing of the studio staff's office consisted of a broom, a bucket, two chairs and a table, and around this we used to discuss schemes and write out programmes, until the engineers took to depositing stray microphones and valves upon it, forcing us to sit on the bucket or migrate to the window sills. So dependent were we on that bucket that the station wag suggested we should put up a placard, "Be careful, don't kick the bucket." And then those telephone queues! At that time we only had one instrument, and from nowhere a voice would yell out: "Who wants 2436?" Like the wind one would fly, grabbing a calendar, pencil and paper *en route*. In dulcet tones one would begin: "I wonder whether you would care to give a little talk on 'The Gambols of the Gogga'?"

"No, I wouldn't, I'm the piano tuner!"  
Humorous days, those!

Like a delightful nightmare they passed until the calendar began to shed its leaves ominously and the day of opening loomed large. Everyone worked at fever pitch, all concentrating on the question of the moment. Were it installing an amplifier, hanging curtains, or choosing a milk jug, it mattered little—everyone was there to assist. We were almost afraid to go away to eat and sleep for fear we should be needed (such was our forgivable conceit). Any moment one might be required to read for a speech test; hold a bit of wire, offer a hairpin, or interview an artist—it was all in the day's work.

I shall never forget my first experience of listening in. It was the Saturday evening before Monday, the 15th, and raining hard. To the top of St. George's House I toiled, feeling very excited and nervous. A silent suspense hung over the transmitting room. The chief engineer and his assistants moved about on tip-toe, and I felt as though I had strayed into an operating theatre, the only sound to break the illusion being an occasional comforting squeak from Mr. Thomas's boots. The announcer stood at the far end putting on a test gramophone record. Someone signed to me to sit down, which I was only too glad to do, but I arose with painful alacrity when a kindly attendant whispered, "Be careful, miss; them's live wires behind yer!"

A pair of headphones was then clapped over my ears and I went outside to listen in. What an unforgettable moment! With tears in my eyes I turned to Mr. Thomas.

"You *will* explain it all to me, won't you?"

"Yes, yes," he replied fervently, "I will."

Surely 'twas a station Aunt who wrote: "Men were deceivers ever."

Breathless with apprehension we hurried across Greenmarket Square to the Studio, too excited to notice we had forgotten our umbrellas and were getting thoroughly drenched.

Here the rest of the staff was assembled, for the most part shifting nervously about the studio, answering the telephone and trying to look anything but excited.

We proceeded to do some tests. The Director of Programmes contributed a piano solo with his usual brilliance, after which I ventured a humorous monologue to an inspiring audience of six gloomy individuals who sat in various attitudes of boredom. Before I was half way through, three had fled to the control room. The other three bore up bravely to the last sorry jest, but no ripple of a smile disturbed the bleak melancholy of their handsome faces. They just—sat. Without that very human barometer, public applause, I felt utterly lost, utterly miserable, rather like a plum pudding without brandy sauce. Escaping through the nearest door, I vanished into the blackness of the night (at least, I like to think I did).

The 15th dawned. We were all desperately cheerful, heroically determined to keep up our spirits, although each realised how critical would be the results of that evening's transmission. Too nervous to sit through the opening speeches, I arrived just in time for my item.

The Studio was like an oven; the orchestra seemed to have multiplied by tens and dozens; they were everywhere. Treading most of the first violins under foot, I was led to the sacrificial altar—the piano. A kindly oblivion shuts out the next poignant hour (or so it seemed), but what matter these little personal qualms as compared with the glorious achievement of that night? Capetown was on the air. Another foothold won for wireless, another voice raised to carry the message of cheer and goodwill into the waiting spaces of Africa. With prophetic vision Keats wrote:

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,  
When a new planet swims into his ken,  
Or like stout Cortez when, with eagle eyes,  
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise,  
Silent upon a peak in Darien."

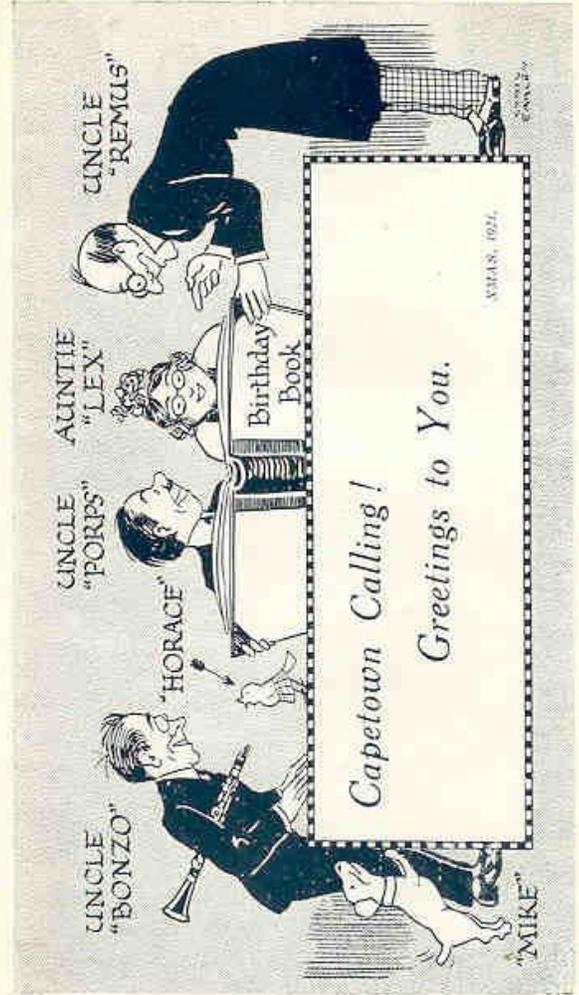
The man who discovered wireless discovered at the same time a magical road that leads to the good in all of us, but especially to the laughing divinity in the heart of a child. He helped us to discover for ourselves that, in spite of differences of creed and opinion, we all travel along this road. For an hour each day it is thrown open and along it rush happy bands of children; on either side grow the gay flowers of laughter, song and phantasy; bobbing in between them are the dear, quaint figures we know so well—the odd but lovable people and animals in our nursery rhymes, the heroes of the days of chivalry, the great ones in history and fiction; there they are, waiting to be introduced to the newcomers and to be welcomed by old friends. The setting sun makes the road shine like golden glass, it catches the light in the children's hair, and it

smoothes out the tired wrinkles in the faces of the men and women who have strayed that way. When the sun has dropped beneath the far end of the road, a friendly voice calls out "Good-night, everybody; sleep well, work well and play well until Grandfather Time brings us our next Children's Hour together."

All too soon *our* first Children's Hour came upon us. One of the Uncles had already received his baptism of wireless in England, so that each of us looked to him for guidance. "Be spontaneous," he kept saying, "Don't worry, just be spontaneous." We were. And the result was spontaneous combustion!

I never quite know how we got through that first hour. We can be thankful that television had not yet arrived—the abject misery on the faces of those perspiring Uncles as they bravely confronted the microphone and delivered witty sallies to South Africa's rising generation would have wrung tears from a stone.

But after that we soon found our feet; every day a well-filled post-bag brought us more and more into touch with our nieces and nephews. We became imbued with the true spirit of wireless aunt and uncle-hood. I confess I began to regard contract holders purely from the point of view of their families. The whole office was in league with me. As soon as a likely *pater familias* appeared, the word would be passed along: "Tell Aunty here's a probable." Armed with the now historic birthday book, I would run my quarry to earth and extract details as to name, age and birthday of offspring. Dear reader, if you happen to have suffered



at my hands, I crave your kindest indulgence; the enthusiasm of a wireless Aunt, having long since overstepped the mark of polite society, has now become proverbial. Nevertheless we realise that, without you fathers and mothers, we should be as a loud speaker without a diaphragm.

We can never adequately express our gratitude for the delightful families with which you have provided us, and we cannot help thinking that the tax on bachelors ought to be much heavier.

I remember stalking six foot three of good, solid manhood one morning and delicately broaching the subject of Jannie's birthday. More in sorrow than in anger, he looked down upon me and murmured sadly: "*Eskuus jeffrou ek is nie getroud nie.*"

However, our family grew by hundreds and thousands and their letters became the most treasured and welcome events of each day. With sublime candour they stated their likes and dislikes.

"Dear Aunty Lex,  
i am jest riting a fue lins to tell you i dont  
like blu beard. i am quit well.  
With love from  
PETER."

"Dear Uncle Remus,  
Please sing me a nice song to-morrow. I  
hope I will enjoy it. Our cat has two kittens.  
I have a new dress.  
Your loving niece,  
NELLIE."

Is there a child in the world who doesn't like animals? We couldn't find one, so we decided to collect a Studio Menagerie (irrespective of our-

selves). Dogs were the first crying need, so we purloined a pair of thoroughbred Maltese puppies as quaint as they were clever. Their antics became a regular part of the day's transmission. Their names were chosen only after profound thought—Mike, short for Microphone, and Phil, for Filament Resister. They were determined to outdo this perpetual reference to cats' whiskers, and soon betook unto themselves a canary, the now famous Horace, who has carolled his way through many a transmission and into thousands of children's hearts. Tarzan, a little marmoset, was next enrolled as the "missing link."

I should mention that Horace, being a temperamental bird, has a little tin understudy in case of emergency. I wish I could convey to you the picture of Uncle Bonzo, on a sweltering hot afternoon, minus coat and waistcoat, standing solemnly at the end of the studio, blowing his lungs out on Horace the Second. It should earn him a life-long membership in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The prodigious growth of our family brought Tant Sannie to our aid. With a rare charm and an instinctive understanding of the childish mind, she has conducted the Afrikaans Children's Hour since its inception with an ever-growing popularity. How richly deserved this is, none are more conscious than the members of the staff. She has our most grateful thanks. In private life, Tant Sannie is the wife of Advocate H. A. Fagan.

The position of wireless uncle requires delicate and skilled handling. But our Family has been particularly happy in the possession of no less than six,

all very talented. They are the backbone of the Children's Hour, and posterity clamours for their names.

First in dignity of position is "Grandfather," who graces all our important ceremonies appropriately garbed (so we have come to believe) in regal crown and ermine cloak. His breezy personality touches our little Hour with a vivid sense of life and fresh air. Like Kipling's Mariner, we find him to be "a man of infinite resource and sagacity." When not fulfilling this high office of state, he is our Chairman, Mr. J. S. Dunn, C.B.E.

We cannot close the subject of grandfathers, however, without mentioning our other one, the very stern and precise studio clock, familiar to all our wireless relations.

Then comes Uncle Remus, who will go down to history as the Uncle who lived solely and exclusively on Tiger Oats and dog stories. His full, decisive voice, his laconic humour and his readiness to fall into the spirit of whatever programme we happen to be doing, makes his presence indispensable. I need hardly say that Uncle Remus is our Station Director, Mr. A. N. Dickson.

And what would the Family do without Uncle Bonzo? They all love his fun, his high spirits, and his capacity for saying the wrong thing at the right time. The Bonzo crest is a crossed clarinet and saxophone. On the former instrument he won world-wide renown before he rose to the heights of a wireless Uncle. He descends these heights every day to become our Studio Manager, Mr. René S. Caprara.

Uncle Porps was one of the first three official Uncles and his name has become irrevocably linked with the singing of folk songs. His repertoire, like his good humour, is endless. With a beautiful solemnity he will sit down at the piano and sing a twelve-verse folk song with a diversity of accompaniment perfectly bewildering in its ingenuity. But I regret to say that this astonishing musical versatility is coupled with an insatiable hunger for cake—as well the Family knows! When not eating cake and singing folk songs, Uncle Porps is lecturing on the Faculty of Music at the University of Capetown under the name of Mr. Victor Hely-Hutchinson.

Were critics to question our right to be called a musical Family, we could not answer them more effectively than by asking them to listen to Uncle Les. Without any warning, he descends upon the Studio every now and then, and commandeering the piano gives us a musical treat of rare beauty. He simply cannot help it, being Conductor of the Capetown Orchestra, and our Director of Programmes. As an Uncle he refuses to tell stories; he keeps forgetting to be aged and pompous and his language is distressingly natural. Unfortunately, the Family loves it and encourages him most shamelessly. Affectionately known to us as "Our Les," he is more widely known as Leslie Heward.

There is no need to remind the Family to listen in when Uncle Fagotto is coming with his bassoon. As assistant conductor of the Capetown Orchestra he cannot come to us as often as we would like, but his cheery spirit is always with us and we love him because he makes us laugh. Mr. W. J. Pickerill is his name.

"Children" is a bewilderingly comprehensive term. We soon found ourselves hunting the dictionary for something more definite, and our research resulted in the inauguration of the "Teens and Scholars' Hours," which we hope are but the nuclei of an ambitious educational scheme, very dear to our hearts.

The glory of the Children's Hour is its adaptability. This has always been my private conviction, so what more natural than to arrive at the studio on Nov. 5th with a mysterious little packet and a box of matches? Not being burdened with a mechanical turn of mind, I never thought to mention this little touch of local colour until walking into the studio for the Children's Hour, when I casually asked Uncle Bonzo to be ready to hold the crackers when I let them off. "Crackers," roared he, snatching same out of my hands and dashing to the telephone. Like an anarchist bereft of his pet bomb, I was left standing, to be led, in an incredibly short space of time, before a court martial consisting of a highly excited engineering staff. "Did I want to blow the whole plant to glory? Didn't I know that——?"

Well, frankly, I didn't, but I didn't dare say so. Under the circumstances I was glad to escape with my life. But imagine my surprise when later on into the studio crept Uncle Bonzo and the Assistant Engineer, guiltily bearing an office tray on which reposed a row of little pink crackers. It is surprising how human even engineers can be. Like two school boys, they let these off at the critical moment, and so for the first time in history was the great Guy Fawkes commemorated on the wireless. It was a proud moment for a certain Aunt.

Oh, that Children's Hour! It is a perilous subject to embark upon—one never knows where to stop. But I cannot close without mentioning the generous and never-failing interest taken in the Family by members of the Committee, the Engineering and Office Staffs. To all and each of them we extend a life-long membership, which is nothing but a deep-laid scheme to keep them with us for ever more. But to be sure of getting our much-maligned, but well-beloved, Scotch Accountant, we offer this honour free of charge. We should, indeed, be lost without his suggestions, his kindness, and his sound common sense. He is never too busy to give a helping hand. I can still see him on the eve of our Christmas party mounted on a rickety ladder, trailing yards of gay streamers behind him, but giving his whole and undivided attention to the work on hand—which seemed to be hammering his thumb to the accompaniment of soft Gaelic incantations.

Radio drama is as yet a too little explored field. It opens new vistas of imaginary thought denied either to the theatre proper or the cinema. Limited as it is in one sense, in another its potentialities are limitless. The tyranny of the visual drama has dulled our auditory faculties and our appreciation of the beautiful and sensible in language has been hypnotised by sumptuous stage trappings and exotic colouring. We have lost that fine imagination and nice sense of aural rhythm which kept an Elizabethan audience spellbound to the music of Shakespeare's lines and helped them "to convert this wooden O into the vasty fields of France."

Radio drama can recapture for us much that modern conditions have lost, standing as it does

between the theatre and the cinema. It does not presume to usurp the place of either, but it does claim to be a medium through which only the best in thought and word will ultimately be acceptable to its keenly thinking audience. We have no surer means of safeguarding the purity of our language and the excellence of our drama.

How to convey the usual stage effects in the plays we have already attempted has often taxed our ingenuity to the uttermost. These are now left in the hands of one man, who besides being thoroughly reliable, is a first-rate acrobat. To burst a paper bag (*à la revolver*) at one end of the studio, open and close a door at the other, tear up tissue paper and rattle knives and forks all at one and the same moment requires infinite skill.

We at the microphone had to accustom ourselves to this new phenomenon—the "effects" man. Rushing from side to side like an avenging angel, he proved not a little distracting.

But it was the rehearsals which spelt nightmare for us. We would begin Act I. in the studio; off would go hats and coats and everybody would set to with a will. Presently in would come our Nemesis, the engineers,—“Must have test now.” Collecting our paraphernalia, we would adjourn to the Studio Manager's office for the *dénouement*, to be turned out of there in due course and flung homeless on to the stairs where a passionate love scene would be trodden underfoot by innumerable messenger boys. I well remember one rehearsal carried on against well-nigh overwhelming odds. We began to rehearse in the office; the afternoon sun streamed

in with lavish warmth; most of the floor-space was taken up by a large table at which a heroic soul was striving to write an editorial for "Capetown Calling"; a steady stream of noise was being poured out by a loud speaker tended ever and anon by the Chief Engineer and Studio Manager, who took it in turns to rush in and see whether it couldn't make a *trifle* more noise. It invariably obliged. We yelled, we shrieked, we screamed, but—we rehearsed!

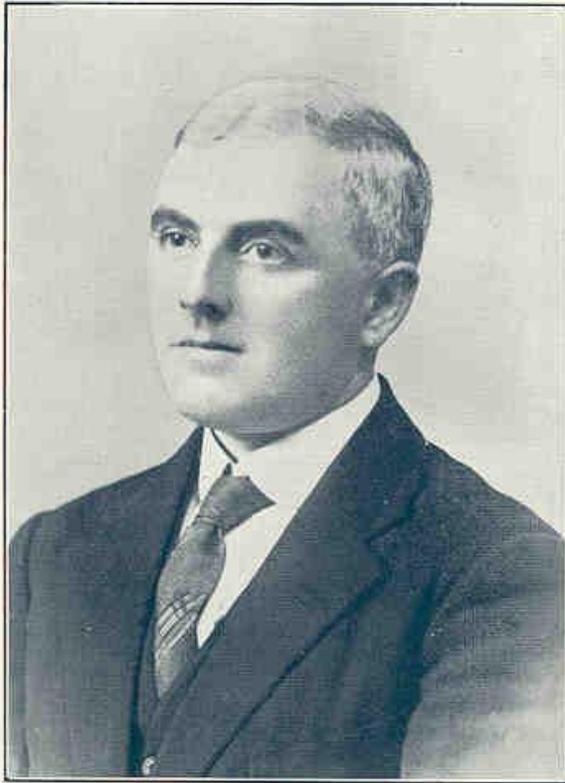
What days those were! I can only find one phrase to describe the spirit of those early days, and it is "all hands on deck." No matter what had to be done, there was always someone to do it. It surprised nobody to find the Accountant working at the controls if the control man was needed somewhere else. I think after a time it hardly surprised the Accountant.

Although inevitable organization has robbed the present of that adventuresome spirit, which pulled us laughingly out of many a tight corner in the past, yet we still cherish an *esprit de corps* which links up all departments into one strong, friendly chain. We draw inspiration and courage from one another.

Be it a programme for a national holiday, a test of new loud speaker (somehow there is always a new one), or a hat for the office boy, it matters not—everybody helps in the great decision. Long may this spirit remain with us!

## THE STATION ENGINEER,

E. O. P. THOMAS, A.M.I.E.E., A.M.I.R.E.



E. O. P. THOMAS, A.M.I.E.E., A.M.I.R.E.,  
Station Engineer.

It was early in 1922 that Broadcasting made its first appearance before the English public, and this through an installation erected by the Marconi Company in one of their experimental departments on the top floor of Marconi House. The writer had the honour of erecting and afterwards operating this station under the supervision of Mr. C. S. Franklin, the well-known short-wave expert.

Looking back upon those days, one is literally astounded at the progress made in all branches of wireless telephony, particularly in regard to the transmitter. The next few years should see great developments in reproduction from telephones and loud speakers, particularly the latter.

In the beginning we used to consider that we had achieved miracles if we had managed to transmit for an hour at a time. And no wonder! The transmitting plant looked like a Heath Robinson drawing as compared with present conditions. For each of these transmissions we had to obtain sanction from the Postmaster-General. Their novelty was such that the enterprising eye of charity organisers was soon turned upon us and we became inundated with requests for transmissions on behalf of deserving institutions such as the hospitals.

We were, of course, only too delighted to accede to these requests, relishing our right to change the historic utterance into "Oh, Charity, what experiments are committed in thy name!"

Furthermore, they gave us the immediate benefit of a general permission from the Postmaster-General to transmit so many hours per day. It was now quite obvious that Broadcasting was attracting attention, and with a view to supplying a public service, the British Broadcasting Co. was formed in November, 1922, but did not function until a month or two later. In the meantime a more or less regular service was being transmitted from the Marconi Station, which had allotted to it the famous call letters 2L.O.

Well do I remember those days when the ordinary carbon granule microphone was used, and the various devices and stunts we employed to overcome "blasting" and "packing."

Speech and song were very clear on this particular type of microphone, but it failed to reproduce the extreme notes of the piano whilst combined vocal and instrumental efforts invariably resulted in the aforesaid "blasting" or "packing." However, progress in reproduction was being steadily made. Very good results in this direction were obtained by having a number of these microphones in the room then serving as a studio and connecting them in groups of two series.

But experiments were not only confined to the carbon granule microphone. We obtained very satisfactory results with the capacity or condenser

types, but this was soon superseded by the now popular magnetophone as designed and manufactured by the Marconi Company.

The policy of the British Broadcasting Company was to establish several main broadcasting stations spaced as equally as possible apart and through them to feed the populous areas. I had charge of the erection of two of these main stations, and the training of the staff for their subsequent maintenance. Not long after my return to headquarters, I was introduced to a distinguished-looking visitor from South Africa, by name Mr. A. N. Dickson. I little thought that he was on the prowl for an engineer to proceed to Capetown, and still less that he had designs on me for that purpose. However, I soon found myself standing sponsor to the Capetown Broadcasting Station and supervising the manufacture of the required apparatus at Marconi Works. In the middle of July, 1924, with most of the equipment on board, I set sail keenly intent on the gigantic task of getting the station in running order by September 1st.

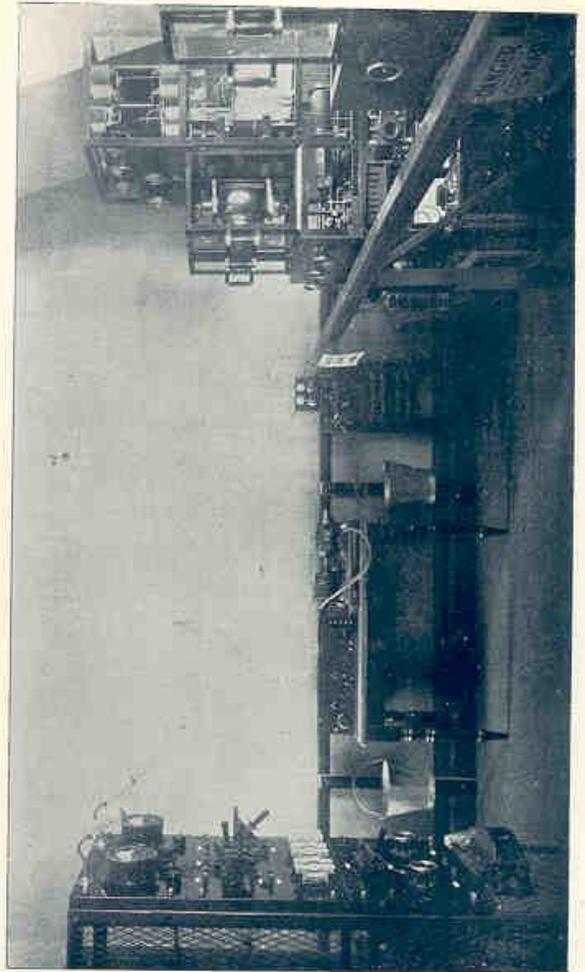
An amusing mistake occurred on arrival, when Mr. Dickson and Mr. Caprara searched high and low for a "Mr. Roberts." In fact, even when I presented myself, they said: "Why *you* are Mr. Roberts and the very man we want."

"Excuse me," I said, "my name is Thomas, and I broadcast." However, they bore me no malice for neglecting to be born "Roberts," and with customary South African hospitality gave me a splendid welcome by taking me round the town, very judiciously leaving to the end the site for the new

station. I nearly collapsed when I discovered it was to be on the fifth floor of St. George's House. The colossal difficulties of installing the plant in such a place were so apparent to me that I felt like taking the next boat home. Anyhow, it decided one thing—the opening date would have to be postponed. Our worthy Chairman and Committee realised this and gave very ready and helpful suggestions for beginning the work of alteration both at the Studio and Transmitting Station. In record time the workmen were on the spot and Capetown Station began to change from the broad-visioned dream in a half-a-dozen men's minds to a sturdy material realisation.

The arrival of the plant from the docks caused infinite trouble. Our accommodation for unloading, unpacking and storing was so limited that permission had to be got from the City authorities to handle the cases on the pavement in St. George's Street, but with strict instructions to be clear of the pavement by sunset. Consequently, the handling of these packing cases with contents necessitated much ingenuity and method, because there was the fear of their being delivered at St. George's Street faster than they could be dealt with, in which case much obstruction and confusion would result.

Therefore, imagine our position when cases began to arrive from the docks, varying in size from 9ft. x 6ft. to 1ft. square. The small cases were easily stowed away, but the larger ones, being in the majority, had to be unpacked on the pavement, contents taken up to the top floor of St. George's House, and the empties nailed down again and removed to make room for further cases.



TRANSMISSION ROOM,  
Showing Rectifier and Power Panels.

This arrangement would have gone on splendidly if only we could have found space wherein to dump our empty cases, but we could find none. The situation was indeed critical until Messrs. Rogers-Jenkins came to our aid. Another stroke of luck was the refusal of the carriers to deliver any more freight that day. This left us breathing space in which to tackle the stuff already holding up the traffic in one of the City's busiest streets. By sunset not a nail was to be seen on the pavement, and so ended one of the most exhausting days I have ever experienced.

For the next two days we wrestled more successfully with very much the same problems, particularly the conveyance to the upper regions of the four main panels, measuring 7ft. 6in. x 4ft. x 3ft. I believe those four panels were responsible for more bad language and damaged limbs than has ever before been the fate of mere inanimate matter. We got them into the lift and the transmitting room with just the barest minimum of clearance. The transmitting room itself was strewn with thousands of parts, papers, shavings, etc., and justified the oft-expressed wonder if it really was a broadcasting transmitter in embryo or whether it was the aftermath of an earthquake. Uncle Remus went so far as to inquire whether it was a crockery shop, and how in the name of Marconi I was going to evolve a decent transmitter out of it. The assurance that I gave him was rudely shaken when I took him to the basement to behold the electric machines, which were also in pieces.

Poor Uncle Remus! He went away bemoaning the day he championed the cause of broadcasting. Uncle Bonzo, on the other hand, had very much

more of the "faith that moveth mountains," and at once offered to give a sympathetic hand at unpacking and making more mess. He stuck it for some time until he thought he had better leave to practise on his saxophone in case we should get going sooner than we anticipated!

Out of the rubbish we drew bolts and nuts, screws, pieces of porcelain, glass, strips of metal, wire, and finally a screwdriver and pliers. With the latter we proceeded, Meccano fashion, to piece together the different parts, and slowly but surely there arose out of the scrap heap something in the form of an iron frame work stuccoed with numerous gadgets of porcelain, copper wire, glass, etc.; this at last was the long-expected transmitter.

At the end of four days a home had been allotted to every little item, and with all shavings, paper, and other rubbish removed, we once again began to tread on terra firma.

During these operations Uncle Remus paid us a daily visit and we saw by the expression of his face how rapidly the station was progressing; for instead of the amazed and sceptic look of the early days, it was now a case of a broader smile each day until I began to fear his rivalry with the proverbial Cheshire cat. But his smile had a momentary relapse when the electric generators and switchboards were dumped upon us. Owing to the heavy weight of these machines, they had to be dismantled into three sections in order to get them down to the basement and left in this state until a favourable opportunity occurred for their re-assembly. A few days later, without crane or hauling tackle of any

kind, these four machines were re-assembled and housed in a room only 12ft. square. It was a feat in which all concerned took a great and justifiable pride.

Meanwhile, work at the studio was going ahead with an inspiring swing. I happened to call in one morning and found Uncle Remus engaged in argument with some individual who, in the interests of public health, threatened to cut huge chunks out of the ceiling for ventilation. But Uncle Remus was adamant. His aesthetic nature revolted against such vandalism; besides, he had conceived the idea of a beautiful blue-lined room in which lovely women would be made more lovely and brave men less brave; and he meant to keep his ideal intact; unprofaned by the harsh ugliness of mere ventilation.

Of course, I was dragged into the wordy conflict. I cannot remember how it ended, but I noticed some days later there *were* ventilators in the studio—very small ones.

A fortnight before opening we began the erection of the masts. At first people could not understand them at all. But when their significance became apparent, prophecy of disaster ran through the town like wildfire. "Those who knew" said that they were not being erected vertically, and those who did not foretold a speedy collapse when the south-easters blew. Fortunately, time has proved both parties wrong.

Events were now moving fast and furious, generators were running and being tested, batteries

of all sizes were being charged, and even tests made on the transmitter.

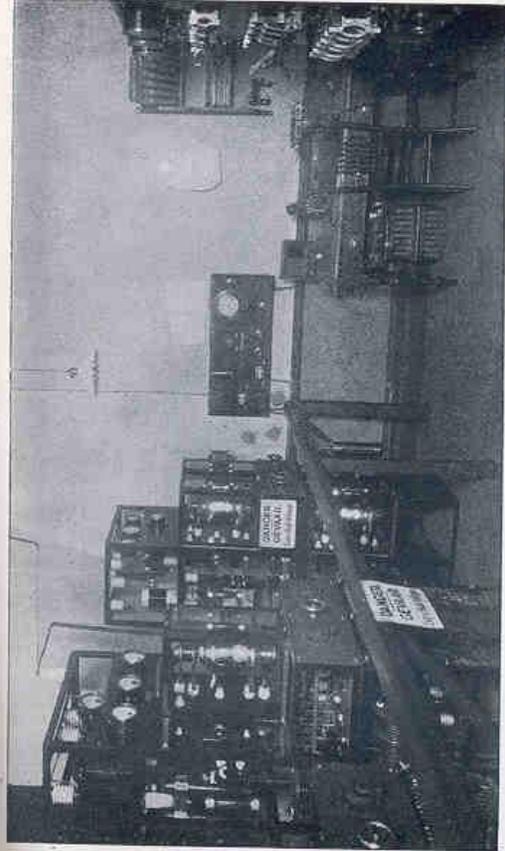
It was during one of these tests that Uncle Remus once again paid us a visit; the look of amazement and pleasure on his face acted as a reviver to us all, especially when he said, "A broadcast transmitter from that old scrap heap; how did you do it? It's exactly like the one I saw at Bournemouth."

Now that the aerial had been erected, there was some prospect of testing under working conditions, and provisional arrangements were made to test that same evening if everything was O.K. Uncle was asked to listen in on the very swagger set he had brought with him from England.

These tests were carried out about four days before the opening date, and they revealed numerous difficulties yet to be overcome before we could hope for any success. These were accordingly attacked with vigour and in the meantime reports were coming in from all quarters about the test transmission including Uncle Remus's experience when he reported that on his receiver at the Visitors' Bureau the strength of signal nearly burst his eardrums.

Being satisfied with the transmitter tests, we now concentrated on the Studio, where draping had to be finished and microphone circuits and amplifiers installed, these being completed just one day before the opening date.

At the last minute it was found that the earth system for the transmitter was not satisfactory, and



TRANSMISSION ROOM,  
Showing Main Accelerator, Modulator Panel, Time Signal Apparatus on the wall.

we found it necessary to open a long trench in St. George's Street and therein place a number of metal plates and connect them to the top storey of St. George's House. The opening of the 40ft. trench was undertaken by the Corporation Electricity Department at 7 a.m. on that day, the plates buried and the trench filled up again about 2 p.m., which speaks eloquently for the manner in which this work was undertaken.

This new earth system made a remarkable difference in the operating of the transmitter, and confidence was running high that all would be well for the opening date, September 15th. A test transmission from the Studio on the night of September the 13th proved satisfactory in every way.

The 14th and 15th of September were anxious and busy days, spent mostly in testing and making adjustments, and on the afternoon of the 15th everything was declared ready for action.

At 5 p.m., when making a final test on the microphone amplifiers, terrific noises, which could not be located, were found to originate in that circuit, and prospects began to look rather gloomy. The official opening, timed for 8 o'clock, loomed ahead threateningly. From hysterical excitement and hope everybody's spirits dropped to blackest despair. Neither Uncle Remus nor I had tasted a bite of food since early morning, and consequently were quite unprepared to cope with this overwhelming catastrophe. He very wisely sought courage in the nearest restaurant, but being the Station Engineer I was obliged to remain and track the trouble, which I am pleased to say was remedied

about half-an-hour before the celebrities arrived. Restored in body and soul, Uncle returned, and hearing that our troubles were at an end, entered whole-heartedly into the spirit of the opening ceremony. Everything went off without a hitch and we went home proud of Cape Town's first effort.

Ever since its inception the Station has been closely associated with the famous Capetown Orchestra. Our great problem was to broadcast its concerts from the City Hall, the Pier and Sea Point Pavilion. Within a very short period all three had been accomplished. At first these outside performances presented many technical difficulties, not the least being the amount of echo present in all of them, particularly the concerts from the City Hall. This, of course, gave rather a distorted reproduction, but it has been overcome to such an extent that any echo now present in the transmission tends to give the reproduction more resonance; in fact, to certain instruments it imparts a more natural tone. These outside broadcasts have become a regular part of the week's programme, and we are compelled to go farther afield for interesting novelties.

A popular feature of distant relaying was that of the Band on the Swedish battleship "Fylgia," when 200 miles out at sea. By kind permission of Captain Eklund, it was arranged that the "Fylgia" should send out a musical entertainment on the ship's transmitter. This was received at Observatory by Mr. Streeter on a wavelength of 1,000 metres and passed along to Capetown for re-transmission. The numerous letters received from delighted contract holders proved how much this relay was appreciated. It was the first of its kind in the history of broadcasting.

The Capetown Station also has to its credit the first relay of a complete Church Service in South Africa. The church chosen to lead the van in this novel venture was the Metropolitan Wesleyan, which from its juxtaposition to the Station lent itself admirably to our plans.

Two other experiments in relaying distant stations were our attempts to relay J.B., the Johannesburg Station, and K.D.K.A., the widely famous Pittsburg Station. Both were received by radio, the output of the receiver, after suitable amplification, being made to modulate the Capetown transmitter. The J.B. experiment was pre-eminently successful, but unforeseen difficulties arose in connection with the K.D.K.A. relay. However, little setbacks like this are very healthy for a young station and serve as a stimulus to further effort. We realise full well that variety is the essence of a sound broadcasting policy. That we have succeeded in providing such entertainments in our comparatively brief existence is a boast none will deny us. But we are not content to rest on our laurels, and we hope that the future will prove we are capable of holding our listeners' interest with yet more ambitious schemes.

In conclusion, I wish to say that throughout these operations I have been very ably assisted by Messrs. Borthwick and Hargreaves, who, as Assistant Engineer and Control Room Engineer respectively, fulfilled their duties with distinction.

To the Committee and the many interested contract holders in all parts of the country I tend my sincere thanks for their unflinching generosity when things did not go smoothly and their keenly appreciated meed of praise when our efforts justified it.

THE STUDIO MANAGER,  
RENE S. CAPRARA.

My first recollection of broadcasting goes back to the days when a very primitive crystal set, after much coaxing, produced first a series of taa-taas and pee-pee-pip-pees; then, one never-to-be-forgotten night—music. That gramophone record, the perpetration of which was eventually tracked down to the efforts of Mr. J. S. Streeter, then just commencing his experiments in wireless telephony, was one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard!

Some time later I got into touch with Messrs. Jeffs and Griffiths, of the British General Electric Company, and then commenced a wildly exciting time. Each Tuesday we gathered together willing helpers and gave a little concert to the growing band of Radio Fans. Ah! those Tuesdays, or rather those Mondays, Sundays, Saturdays, Fridays—in fact, the whole week through—testing and repairing a transmitter which was held together mainly by that best friend of all electricians, black tape. How we worked to make those concerts a success; what disappointments and triumphs came our way; what fun we had!

I remember the day when Griffiths, dodging about under the bench which supported our 50-watt Heath-Robinson transmitter, layed hands on the wrong wire and had to be artificially respirationed.



"UNCLE BONZO,"  
RENE S. CAPRARA,  
Studio Manager.

And the night when the gallant band of musical helpers from the Capetown Orchestra, in order to make some special concert a success, found it necessary to rehearse after a concert at the City Hall. So enthusiastic were they that the rehearsal was progressing merrily at something about 12 ack emma: tests were being made "on the air."

About this time the D.X. merchant's whistle was beginning to be heard in the land; Buenos Aires had been picked up successfully, and the B.B.C.'s carriers were gently flirting with Capetown aeriels.

Somehow, the word "Buenos Aires" got to our temperamental microphone. The result as told us by one of the victims was amusing. He had been searching the ether for the elusive Buenos Aires when he heard the magic words quite plainly; then faint music!!! Hastily donning a counterpane and a pair of sandshoes, he rushed into the stilly night and mustered his nearest neighbours to come and listen in to "Buenos Aires"! They did so with fitting expressions of solemnity and wonderment, until a voice came drawling through: "AIV closing down, good-night, or rather, good-morning, everybody."

But those were days before the advent of official broadcasting, so I must not expatiate on them, although they were full of achievement and enterprise, glorified by the intense personal enthusiasm of men like Messrs. Streeter, Griffiths, Jeffs, Oxenham and Hegarty. We all owe them a debt of gratitude we can never hope to repay; such is ever the fate of pioneers!

However, my first recollection of the present Association was the morning Uncle Remus (then plain Mr. Dickson) and I went down to the docks to meet one Roberts, said to be of the finest brand of engineer that Marconi House could produce. We searched the upper deck, we scoured the lower, we ransacked the customs, but no such celebrity could we find. Everybody seemed to have left the boat, except the cook, the crew's cat and ourselves. Thirst and disappointment were driving us shorewards, when a swagger little gentleman of ruddy countenance and iron grey hair stepped forward and said, "Is this Mr. Dickson? I'm Thomas." Great sighs of relief from the deputation of Uncles, the mystery was solved, our hero's name was not Roberts.

However, "a rose by any other name is just as sweet," so we did not mind. About that time the temperature of this fair land seemed to be bent on showing us what it could do. I must say it succeeded extraordinarily well. I shall never forget the heat as we cast off all superfluous clothing and set to work unpacking the cases of machinery on the fifth floor of Stuttaford's building. It was there the transmission room grew into shape. From a pretty good imitation of a jumble sale, it soon became an engineer's paradise. The four panels stood along one side of the room while the switchboards took up most of the floor space on the other. But of this the public saw nothing; the only evidence of life exhibited was the erection of the two towers which grew with magical swiftness day by day. Although there was little or no time for testing, the Committee were determined not to break faith with the public, and during

the last week everybody at the Station worked like ———!

The great day arrived, heavy with the possibilities of success or failure. We all tried to smile encouragingly at one another, but it wasn't easy.

The official opening took place that evening. I remember getting down to the Studio in good time; there wasn't a soul about. I wandered into the big blue room; it looked more like a lethal chamber than a studio; I stood reverently in front of the microphone. I almost prayed to it: "Would all go well?" I turned thankfully to look at the bowls of pink carnations, which seemed to break the oppressiveness of the scene as does a pretty nurse in a dentist's waiting room. After what seemed an eternity, the orchestra began to roll up; they were all nicely packed into the Studio; the windows were closed and everything ready for a repetition of the "Black Hole of Calcutta" when the notables arrived: Mr. T. Boydell; the Mayor of Capetown; Mr. J. P. J. Brunt, on behalf of the Administrator, and Dr. Bennie Hewat, on behalf of the Publicity Association. They assembled in mystified silence before the microphone: the Announcer stepped briskly forward: "Capetown Calling. Our first item will be 'Land of Hope and Glory.'" The Musical Director raised his baton and the Capetown Station was launched to the strains of Elgar's stirring music. Miss Eveline Fincken sang the words as only an artist, conscious of the significance of the occasion, could sing them.

Speech followed speech, item followed item, the telephones rang incessantly, the temperature rose

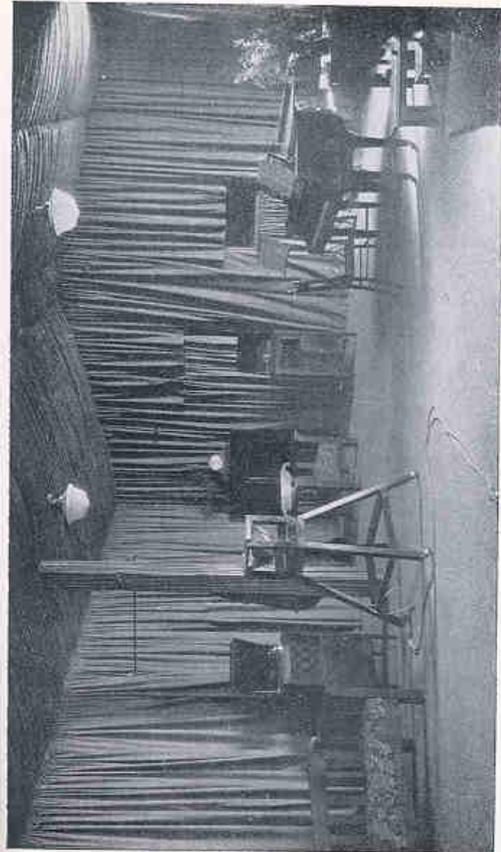
by leaps and bounds, and our first concert came to an end. And so to bed, exhausted, but happy.

The next afternoon a more exacting ordeal awaited me—I was to become an Uncle. But I first had to find a name: "Bonzo" was someone's despairing suggestion five seconds before the microphone switch went in on that momentous afternoon.

Dear male reader, you have not yet been a wireless Uncle. Do not gloat over this. For the voice of Auntie Lex is heard echoing through the vaults of time; her siren-like tones draw you some day to the Studio. You become an Uncle and—you are never the same man again. Some day a special Act will be passed to restrict the number of Station Uncles to a mere thousand or so.

However, "to return to our merinos." That first Children's Hour passed. How, I do not know. I have a feeling that our attempts at humour might have filled the average child with a sort of fiendish glee, but did very little to add to the gaiety of nations. There was one child, though, to whom it was valuable. Little Clarence was in the depths of despair, for five o'clock had come and there was yet no chance of doing his one good deed. Languidly donning his newly acquired headphones, he listened. Gradually his expression changed: first astonishment, then triumph: HIS HOUR HAD COME. Perspiration poured down his face, as with set teeth and glaring eyes he stuck it out to the bitter end, and thus earned absolution for many moons!

Gradually things became more shipshape; we evolved a scheme for the arrangement of pro-



THE STUDIO.

grammes, and set to work to achieve it. But still we were dissatisfied with the quality of our transmissions. There was a flaw somewhere, but where was it? It was a question that kept us awake o' nights, and found us at the station long after office hours. We had not discovered the rift in the lute when a great Trade Demonstration Night drew near. It was to be held on the Monday. The previous Friday, Saturday, and Sunday we hardly saw our beds. The engineering staff looked fit to drop; even our usually robust Committee looked haggard and wan to a degree. The great night came upon us and still we had not solved our problem. The trade had organised this demonstration on a huge scale; to the four corners of the earth sped their demonstrators, heavily laden with super sets. "A Wireless Set in Every Home" was their slogan. They were out to convert the unbelievers and reconvert the faithful. But as Omar says,

"The worldly hope men set their hearts upon  
Turns ashes—or it prospers."

This time it did not prosper; in fact, it must have been this night that the speech choke finally gave up the ghost. Places like Paarl and Stellenbosch could not get so much as a squeak. I believe at the former town it was only the persuasive eloquence of our Chairman that kept 200 disappointed citizens from marching *en masse* to Capetown and demanding our blood.

However, after this, we became more than ever determined to improve our quality. The engineering staff seemed to be imbued with heaven-sent energy and they worked well-nigh day and night.

But still we did not seem to have made any marked improvement until one day, unbeknown to ourselves, we awoke, like Lord Byron, to fame.

It was a dance programme, I well remember, and we had been playing strenuously in the sweltering studio for two hours, when I was called to the 'phone. "Listen to this," shrieked the Assistant Engineer from the transmitting room, "It's real pukka broadcasting." I listened too dumbfounded to reply. He was right; it was first rate. Only waiting long enough to learn the reason for the wonderful improvement, I rushed back to the Studio, yelled the glad news to the Jazz Six, and in two seconds we were playing our very souls into

"It ain't going to rain no more,"

with a special verse for the engineering staff,

"Now that we modulate plenty of 'juice,'  
It ain't going to rain no more!"

This success decided us to venture on our first relay other than from the City Hall. We chose as our first experiment the Sunday afternoon Pier concert by the Capetown Orchestra. Owing to the sympathetic co-operation of the Post Office, we got a line through in three days from the time of application. Shall I ever forget the solemn procession down Adderley Street on that Sunday morning? We had searched since dawn for a conveyance of some kind and at last had secured a ramshackle waggon drawn by two tired-looking nags.

Laden with microphone and sundry mealie sacks full of wireless paraphernalia, we climbed aloft, the driver, the control man and I; and the hearse pro-

ceeded slowly towards the pier. Having arranged things to our satisfaction, we adjourned to a well-earned lunch and silent prayer. However, our most sanguine hopes were realised: the relay was an overwhelming success judging by the congratulatory wires which poured in next morning.

High with hope, we boarded the Pier the following Sunday; everything was in readiness for another success, when the wind arose with malicious intent, and blew the Orchestra back to town and the microphone almost off its perch. The extraordinary thing was that for five consecutive Sundays the wind made both concert and relay impossible. I often wonder why!

Our first relay of a Thursday Evening Concert from the City Hall is worthy of mention. We only put the line through at 6 p.m., so there was no chance of a test. The microphone was placed in one of the bays near the stage along with a few of the audience and the control man. On the opposite side of the stage a temporary 'phone in direct communication with the Station was erected in a little alcove. Here the Station Director was seated with his ear glued to the receiver. To anyone in the audience who knew nothing of the experiment taking place that evening the tinkling telephone accompaniment to a Haydn Symphony must have sounded novel, to say the least.

The Orchestral concert at the Sea Point Pavilion was our next venture and was an instantaneous success and was particularly enjoyed by up-country listeners. One can well imagine how that first Sea Point relay might appeal to a backveld farmer.

Resting on his stoep after a hard day's work under the uncompromising rays of the Karroo sun, we can picture the old farmer putting on his headphones and waiting for the welcome voice from Capetown. It comes at last and he turns contentedly to Anna: "Listen, Anna, this is the Capetown Orchestra playing at Sea Point. You remember when we were down there. Wasn't the water cold, *allemachtig!*" The Orchestra stops and the confused sounds in the headphones sort themselves out in his mind. The swish of the waves, a dog barking, the Sea Point train leaving Clarens Road Station: "Hooo! Shoosh—shoosh-shoosh-shoosh." Gone is the sun-baked scene before him; in its place he sees the swell of ocean in the moonlight. Silently he registers a vow that, drought and locusts permitting, he will be there himself next year! Such is the magic of Radio!

Mr. Thomas has written a most interesting article on our first church relay, so I will say nothing about that, only add that I knew all the hymns, a fact worth recording!

Our relay from the Swedish cruiser "Fylgia" presented points of special technical interest. In brief, the ship's band transmitted their evening's programme; this was picked up by Mr. Streeter and re-transmitted from the Capetown Station, so that the humblest crystal user could hear historic tunes like "Annie Laurie" and the Swedish National Anthem played on a battleship a couple of hundred miles out at sea.

I seem to have been talking to you for a long time: but, indeed, I feel as though I could go on for

ever on this fascinating topic. However, one must always consider the other fellow's point of view, so I shall stop, but not before assuring you that, like Alexander, we are ever looking out for "further fields to conquer."

THE ACCOUNTANT,  
HECTOR M. KERR, A.L.A.A.

---

I am repeatedly reminded by members of the staff that I owe my present position to my Scotch origin; but I "hae ma doots." Personally, I think it was the good nature written large upon an otherwise unattractive countenance. However, after perusing this chapter, the reader may judge for himself.

But, seriously, to look back upon the first six months of broadcasting, I have only to look round this office to realise what strides have been made in construction, development and organisation. My most lasting impression of those first six months was the amount of hard work that was put in all round and the cheerfulness with which it was accomplished. All, from the Chairman down to the office boy, seemed imbued with the spirit of the Station first and self second. By this spirit only were difficulties overcome and many a long, tiring day brought to a successful close.

I find it hard to believe that six short months ago this very office was the happy hunting ground of a few enterprising spiders. The Station Director and I called upon them one morning in August of last year, but soon left to meet the Chief Engineer, Mr. Thomas. This gentleman we found at the top of St. George's House,



"THE SCOTCH ACCOUNTANT,"  
H. M. KERR, A.L.A.A.

where, hidden behind a packing case, he was busily checking shipping specifications and occasionally passing a large pocket handkerchief over his much-perspiring brow. He seemed sublimely unconscious of the chaos around; in fact, I dared to think he looked thoroughly happy and almost in love with the state of affairs. This impression was very soon confirmed when I learnt that the erection of a Marconi wireless station was almost second nature to him—he had stood godfather to so many in various parts of the world. He smiled a cheery good-bye as we left him in the midst of packing cases full and empty, partially erected machinery and a floor strewn with awe-inspiring assortments of —er, well—dingbats.

To open the Station then seemed as impossible as the time-honoured jest about the camel attempting the needle's eye. I ventured to express my misgivings to the Station Director. "Don't worry," he said, "Thomas isn't doubting this time, so we needn't."

His faith was justified. The engineering staff put in something like 80 hours a week. By the 15th the transmitting set was completed.

On Saturday, August 16th, the first contract fee was paid by Dr. van Rensburg, of Carnarvon. The following Monday the offices at 142, Longmarket Street, were opened and the staff turned up prepared to cope with a heavy rush of eager contract holders. Barricaded behind typewriter and receipt book, we awaited the first hundred thousand. They must have missed the way, because we had lots of time in which to put the new typewriter through its

paces and practise our signatures on the virgin whiteness of the blotting pads. The half-dozen or so contract holders who called each day did little to ruffle the disconcerting tranquillity which seemed to have descended upon us. Glad was the day when an important consignment of machinery very conveniently arrived without the usual documents. Tackling the problem with the pent-up vigour of two weeks, we, with the help of the Bank, soon had it out of the Customs. September soon came and with it the anticipated rush. From 9 until 5.30 the procession in and out of the office never ceased. From 7.30 until 11 p.m. I would wrestle with accounts and contracts, interrupted by the ever-clamorous telephone and the good-natured chatter of the artists, who, taking compassion on my loneliness, would stroll in to have a chat.

There can be no doubt that the decision of the Committee to permit the installment system had a lot to do with popular enthusiasm. How we struggled along under the circumstances I cannot think. The office furniture practically did not exist, and the office staff consisted of a lady typist—a host in herself, I admit—and the writer. Correspondence began to increase, and took up most of the typist's time, which left me alone to wrestle with the mathematical feat of simultaneously signing contracts, writing the receipts and collecting money. Small wonder that mistakes were made, but the greater wonder is that there were so few.

The courtesy and consideration shown to us by our visitors was very largely responsible for this. Their good humour helped us tremendously, and I well remember the day a certain coloured man came

to pay a contract fee. The name on the licence was Murdoch McKenzie. One of my countrymen turned to his neighbour and said: "There is some Black and White in this office, but not much hope of getting any out of either of the two Scotchmen present."

The official opening of the Station swamped the office with correspondence, telegrams literally poured in from far and near, and the telephone never stopped ringing. It had only been installed three weeks, and had already used up a year's subscription. An increase of staff was imperative. However, we all pulled together and somehow we got through the day's work.

The office, partly, I suppose, because it leads into that Holy of Holies, the Studio Manager's office, holds a unique position at this Station. It is brought into touch with every possible phase of the Station's activities. Contract holders, artists, studio staff—they all know it. Its attractions are, no doubt, manifold. That is why, I suppose, it was not strange when in the early days of pandemonium, a soft voice breathed into my ear, "Do please lend me a pencil." I lent it, lent—did I say? You have only to know Aunty Lex to realise I never saw that particular pencil again, nor many another. But pencils are mere trifles compared with the other things she has wheedled out of me for that beloved family of hers. "Oh, Mr. Kerr," says she, "I'm having a little party this afternoon; do you mind if I put a few cups, just a few, on your counter? So little space outside." I would return to find a formidable array of crockery and glassware out on the counter, and a fine assortment of cream cakes on my table.

I often wondered whether it was a teashop or an office I was running.

And then those competitions! "We must have beautiful prizes this month, Mr. Kerr; it is a *very* hard competition." The end of the month comes. "Now just look at these six children, wonderfully clever. I do think they deserve consolation prizes, don't you?"

But I am proud to think I was accountant enough to withstand her blandishments. She arrived one morning bubbling over with enthusiasm for the Christmas season. "Such a happy time it should be. I do think we might give the Family a party, don't you, Mr. Kerr? Nothing very elaborate; just a simple little Christmas party in the City Hall." But some severe mental arithmetic soon quenched her enthusiasm and saved me many a sleepless night of juggling with books that wouldn't have balanced. An accountant, the dictionary will tell you, is one who reckons; but in a broadcasting office he is one who reckons if he can. The contempt of the ordinary musician for the eustachian tubes of his immediate neighbours is proverbial, but it is nothing to that of the broadcast musician. I violate no canon of truth when I tell you that the sweet combination of clarinet, bassoon and loud speaker is not at all unusual in this office any hour between 11 a.m. and 11 p.m.

As for the devotees of Radio drama, I blush for them. It is all I can do to prevent contract holders from withdrawing their contracts when our conversations are supplemented as follows:—

Unsuspecting Client: "Good morning, I want to pay my fee."

Me: "Certainly, sign here, sir."

Male Voice from inner room: "Kick the fellow downstairs, do you hear?"

Unsuspecting Client: "Er—er—w-what's that?"

Another Voice from inner room: "Father, it is your long-lost son!"

Me: "They're only *actors*, sir."

Male Voice from inner room: "Liar! one word more and I'll cut you off with a shilling, too!"

Me: "Thank you, sir; that's all we want this month."

The other Voice from inner room: "If you think we want your filthy lucre, you're mistaken!"

Unsuspecting Client: "Er—yes—good morning—I think I'll send it by post next time."

Voice from inner room: "What!?! You—" (crashes, bangs, alarums and excursions, exit unsuspecting client precipitately).

In conclusion, I should like to record my appreciation of the fine generosity with which the public entered into the spirit of those pioneering days. With but few exceptions the criticisms received were helpful and constructive, and WE SHALL ALWAYS LOOK back to those days with pleasurable feelings.

THE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES TRIES  
TO FORGET.

LESLIE HEWARD.

Five years ago, I shared a Shaftesbury Avenue flat with an acquaintance of mine. Being enlightened young fellows, we thought that a Box and Cox affair might suit us very well, so I never saw anything of him except late at night or early in the morning.

One night, however, as I went to tuck him in bed or borrow his corkscrew or something, I found him comfortably esconced between sheets with some mysterious appliance fixed to his ears. I remember they used to stick out rather, and, of course, it was obvious this must be a new electric treatment for the correction of such malformation.

"Poor fellow, does it hurt?" I asked him, as his face had that far-away, half idiotic, semi-pained look which we now see has become the characteristic expression of all wireless listeners-in, but his only answer was to hand me the appliance.

I heard a voice—"Now children, dears, I hope you enjoyed Uncle Katawampus's story about the Scr—cc—teh—clk—k—k—scr—r—r—r—awp!—" Then after a series of piercing shrieks and car-splitting whistles there was an awful silence. I expected the moaning of the wounded and dying to follow this apparently dreadful accident, but my friend explained to me that 'they had closed down.'



"UNCLE LES,"

LESLIE H. HEWARD, Musical Director Capetown Orchestra.

"They"?—"Closed down"? I invited.

"My dear chap, have you never heard of wireless?" he incredibled.

"Rather," I aired, "dats and doshes, iddy-umpty and ae emma and the pip and all that."

"No, you poor little dear," he pitied, "Let me tell you. It all started with a man called George Stevenson . . ."

Or perhaps it was Garibaldi he said; I don't quite remember, but anyway he told me all about it at great length, and, after that, there was no stopping me. We met often. He became my friend and our Boxing and Coxing ceased. I helped him cheat the licence collectors. In about a year's time I congratulated him on the fact that his ears had confirmed more to the contour of his skull. . . .

But in a year's time many things had happened besides the mere re-shaping of an auricular appendage. I had myself broadcast (or broadcasted), and I had met Uncle Katawampus! Let me explain.

I was then working on the stage with a touring opera company, and during the broadcasting of the various scenes it was Uncle K.'s splendid duty to speak into a little private microphone (I'll explain what that is later—I quite understand you won't know these difficult technical things) telling what was happening on the stage. Well, he didn't know and I did, so I shone with a reflected glory as I whispered into his ear certain phrases for him to repeat to the listening-in multitude. I shall always

remember the thrill which ran through me when I sat in the prompt corner and prompted him with "Enter Mephistopheles in about two seconds; he comes up through a trap door."—"This here fellow just coming on out of that Castle's called Manrico: he's very unhappy just here because his nurse a long time ago mixed him up with another baby and he doesn't know who he is. Very sad. It should be a castle really, but we haven't a church; however, you needn't tell them that. Look out, he's going to sing."—"Tales of Hoffman, yes. No, I don't know who he was, but he told tales. The next scene's very good; a Pub." And so on, etc. Very fine experience. And I once actually coughed into the instrument myself!

But not only that, a greater experience befel me. I was promoted to conductor and I *performed on the wireless!* I had shoals of letters—well, one at any rate—telling me somebody liked it. Oh yes, and they asked if I could subscribe something to some new Guild or other, I remember. I was glad to, of course, and admired their consideration of my modest feelings when they refrained from replying to pour out their heartfelt gratitude.

The next step in my wireless evolution was a letter I received whilst on the same tour asking if I was interested in an Orchestra at a place called Capetown in South Africa, and did I know anything about broadcasting; signed, Smith, Smythe and Qsmith, agents. Agents for what? thought I. Obviously another new guild for providing Zulus with clothes or lions with Zulus or something. I would gladly have subscribed, but I read the letter afresh, and it didn't mention that they liked my

performance or anything. I should hardly say I was piqued, but I thought I would go and argue with them about this lack of common courtesy. I did; and to cut a long tale short they—

But you know the rest. I was thrilled. An orchestra! Wireless! I would buy a book about it. I interviewed Savoy Hill. Uncle K. took me into his sumptuous office. Dozens of typists clicked away in the most fascinating syncopation. Uncle K. pressed a button—a beautiful female slave ran in with a pencil and a wad of paper—he drawled at her:—

"Dear Sir,

I do not like your singing. You cannot have an engagement with us.

Yours contemptuously,

—and again—

"Dear Madam,

We can offer you a series of six engagements at £500 per time.

Toujours à toi,

UNCLE K."

—and many others. I was spellbound. Lighting his cigar with a rejected offer from the Fordian Opera Syndicate of Neb., Ill., U.S.A., he took me to lunch at the Rockefeller restaurant. I say he *took me to lunch*. I was a great man at last. I would do all this, turn down important contracts and light my Coronas with them, dictate letters, offer artists fabulous fees, ring bells and have beautiful female slaves to do my bidding. I dreamed of wealth; enormous riches should be mine. I treated Uncle K. to a bottle of *Moët et Chantung*, or whatever it is,

on the strength of it, and then he took me back to the inner sanctum of the studio.

It is a thing I cannot speak of. Such dread secrets as were there revealed to me are not for the ears of the crowd. Plebeian eyes are not permitted to penetrate the veil which must be drawn over the mysteries enacted in that temple of sound. The Marconic secrecy which shrouds the barbaric rites performed there is not divulged to the vulgar herd. Sufficient, let it be, to say that my word as to the erection of the Capetown Studio, when I did finally arrive in this country, was accepted implicitly and with reverence. Or at least it would have been if only the Studio had not already been built. It was very lucky that they seemed to have done the right thing, though by what fluke it happened I cannot imagine. Perhaps in an unguarded moment whilst interviewing Smith, Smythe and Qsmith, I had mentioned a few vitally important details such as the dimensions of the arm chairs in the Studio, the colour of the flowers, the brand of tea to be drunk, and the uniform of the Commissionaires and female slaves, and it had been cabled immediately before Capetown had a chance to make mistakes. I don't know. Anyway, I found that I was relieved of a deal of trouble and was amazed at the willingness with which it was agreed I should not overwork myself.

Small points of my own invention in which a distinct departure was made from the already accepted traditions of the London Studio, I, of course, insisted on having altered. An indiarubber block underneath the loud pedal of the piano should be replaced by a wooden one in order to give greater

resonance. The placing of the Orchestra should be slightly altered in order to enable the brass players to get out quickly at the interval. An electric light box on the conductor's stand should, by means of a series of buttons, display certain legends to the orchestra at the will of the conductor. There was "STOP" and "START" and "NIET ROKEN," and "PAS OP," and "ONLY ANOTHER TWO MINUTES, BOYS," and many others that I forget now. The reason these alterations were not actually carried out was—well, I had better not say too much about red-tapeism in this country or my article would never stop.

But not only had I this to cope with, but I received a nasty jolt when I realised that we had only one room for an office and that there was but one lady typist in it. I was shocked at the lack of enterprise displayed. No one had money to burn. I couldn't even find the cigars, and most of the artists stupidly refused my offers instead of my refusing theirs.

Well, I would show them, anyway. The advertisers would stand by us. I knew they would. I was confident. I—well, they didn't. The foolish people wanted to see the value of our advertising before they let us have charge of their soap or pills or what not. Very shortsighted.

However, we would show them. In disgust I turned to my own job and played with the Orchestra. An orchestra of thirty already doing ten shows per week, including rehearsals, was to be asked now to do fifteen and to be in two places at once as a regular thing. They had to play Jazz as

well as Symphonies, chamber music as well as the popular outdoor type of thing. This was expecting one to make bricks without straw. However, I needn't have worried, for each member of the Orchestra, after I had really examined him carefully, turned out to be an already made brick in its final state, and I did no manufacturing at all beyond a hot afternoon of calculation as to how to chop him into two and send half to the Studio and half to the City Hall, and a hectic hour bargaining for saxophones and banjos, and handing them over to certain men with a request to get on with it. They held them uncomfortably at first like young fathers holding their offspring for the first time, but they now know the right way up, and some of them can even get a semblance of a tune out of these instruments. A difficult thing when you think what a saxophone is.

Meanwhile, people were finding that, until we actually started, they somehow couldn't pay their licences, and for some curious reason of shyness or I know not what the piano makers and the gramophone companies wouldn't present us with their best instruments for nothing.

Did they imagine we might not be a success? Why, the very fact that I was connected with the affair ought—er—well, of course, as I explained, it was not for me to put that view to them, but there you are, or rather, where are we?—Exactly.

Well, anyway, we would show them.

We did. The great night arrived. We were all assembled. A Minister of Agriculture (or some-



THE CAPETOWN ORCHESTRA.  
Conductor: LESLIE HEWARD.

thing) spoke. A prince (I think it was) made a speech. An *Archbishop* prayed. (We would show them!) Then we played a lot of beautiful music. Singers sang. Humourists humorised. Reciters recote. Although it was very hot, no one swore. Not a sneeze was heard. There were no wrong notes (as far as I can remember). No one laughed at the advertisements. In fact, the atmosphere was cathedral-like.

We then sent messages to England and to Holland and to Lapland and, I believe, Mars, and, oh yes! the Studio Manager, who had learned Spanish specially for the occasion, sent a message to Los Angeles or Sierra Leone or wherever it is the famous Broadcasting Station lives. I remember quite well a few disjointed words, "Bustéd . . . un gran fiasco" . . . "Havabanaña" . . . and so on, meaning, of course, something about wishing them the same great success as we were sure to have ourselves.

And we closed down and drank H. A. S. Been's champagne and danced and shook hands. I even kissed someone, but I don't remember whom. We didn't break a bottle of wine over the microphone; but it was said next morning we ought to have done.

Oh! we were a great success that night. Yes, just that night we had enormous success. The only thing was that the telephone wasn't working. We must have missed a lot of messages. In fact, I know we did—I was told so next morning.

Next morning, however, after having slept the sleep of the just, I merely strolled to the office; I

would not rush. I had all day before me to open wires from Peru and Punjab and Pernambuco. They were there—at least there was an office full of letters—the wires would be underneath, no doubt. Ah, yes, Muizenberg—put it aside; Salt River—not interesting; Woodstock—stand down Woodstock; Sea Point—where are the foreign ones? Retreat—come, come; Simonstown—dash it, I'll open some of these anyway, but how dull; all in our area.

Simonstown:

Ah, yes:

"Dear Sir,

If you think you're going to get anybody outside a lunatic asylum to . . . . ."

What was this? Let me don my glasses; incredible! . . . . . there, that's better. We'll try again.

"Dear Sir,

If you think you're going to get anybody outside a lunatic asylum to pay a licence for what you put over last night, you never made a bigger mistake in your life.

Yours disgustedly, . . . . ."

Good heavens! My sight must be wrong! Or—I had heard of hallucinations—had I worked too hard and overtaxed my brain? Let me see another.

Salt River:

"Your last night's concert was a *howling* success."

Ah! it was only too true! Feverishly now I opened letters which I had hitherto contemplated leisurely.

Woodstock:

"Q.: What would you do if you had a wireless set?"

"A.: Sell it and buy a steam whistle."

St. James:

"Will you please add your name to enclosed petition to Minister of Public Health urging a new law preventing cruelty to listeners in?"

Bakoven confined itself to one word:

"Rotten."

Kalk Bay also did the same, only it was a different word. There were dozens of sellers of wireless sets claiming compensation from us for goods returned by their customers.

At this point, the Station Director burst into my office weeping copiously. With trembling fingers he pressed into my hand a letter from the Superintendent of Police requesting that—but the whole subject is too painful to disclose. We, the station staff, henceforth walked about like broken men. We took to drink (it will take us a long time to overcome the hold it got on us). We were virtually dead. I personally not only died, but buried myself beneath the rapidly increasing pile of condemnatory letters that flooded the office.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here the narrative should end, but, through a kind thought of my typist, I was granted a resurrection. Rushing in and taking in the whole horrible situation at a glance, she opened a window and let in the South-easter, which sent my paper grave

flying about Greenmarket Square, and at the same moment she rendered artificial respiration by reminding me that, at any rate, I could still dictate letters. It had been my ambition, it was the only glory left to me—I seized the opportunity and lifted up my head again. I let off steam. I dictated brilliant replies to all those flying letters—what need to know what was in them; we could guess.

Three days later, in the middle of a terrific stamp-licking orgy, there was a knock at the door. With a blare of trumpets in sailed three wires from Wigan, two from Buenos Aires, one from Timbuctoo, and 1/2 from the Great Bear, all testifying to their perfect reception of our excellent first night's programme!!!

With a great shout of joy I let in the Southeaster once more; and my brilliant replies followed the no-longer-worthy-to-be-noticed letters. We lived again and put our backs into the thing. We discovered a screech choke had been wrong and we rectified it. We actually received a congratulatory letter from Potchefstroom. Somebody there had at last learned how to use his set. We oscillated with pride. We broadcast (or broadcasted) a classical concert. Great success, only slightly marred in the hall by the ringing of electric bells throughout the concert, the erection of an enormous Eiffel Tower blocking everybody's view, and the violent signals of an operator in multi and a cigarette from a prominent bay down to his colleague, if he happened to be sitting still in his place in front of the platform. We only had fifty letters from the subscribers about it and only three thousand from listeners-in; but they have both got

over it now. The subscribers see no operator or Eiffel Tower and hear no electric bells, and I believe some listeners in don't even close down any more on Thursdays. According to a recent plebiscite, our Jazz is least popular, so I have imported a new instrument called the Wonk-horn, which combines the mellow tones of the gas jet and the shoehorn with the dainty percussion of the tooth-piccolo and the contra-typhoon. Things are bound to look up after that. Advertisers now are dying to have us shout to the world the superiority of their oats or their face cream. Each member of the Orchestra needs no more his four or five pseudonyms adopted so as to avoid monotony, as there are dozens of outside musicians awaiting the honour of performing for us.

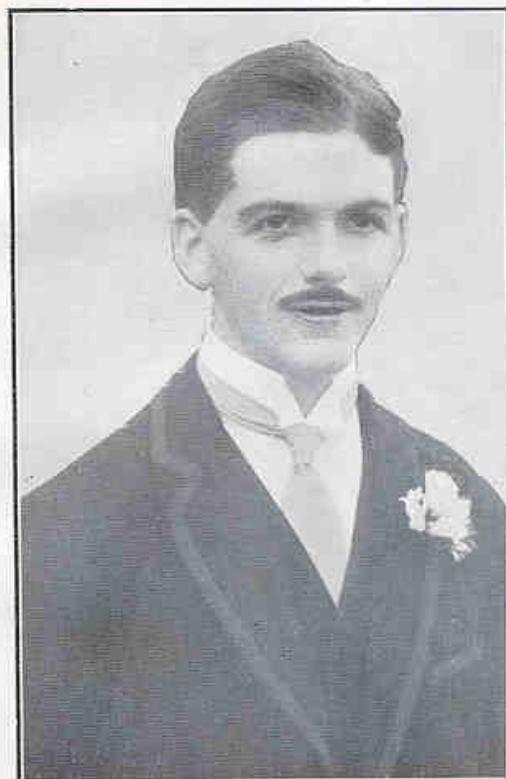
We have now a waiting room for artists. We give them tea, though I still have quarrels about the brand. We are happy, however. Our heads are beginning to swell again, and, to cap all, let me quote a recent report of a contemporary broadcasting station in this country, which states that a loss of four thousand pounds has been sustained on the first year's working, and then say that I am happy to be able to announce officially that *we* have not lost as much as that. In fact, a man paid his licence last week. That he is deaf is of small consequence; the money is there, and if anyone would like to see it, it is on exhibit in J. N. X. Chambers from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.

And so my dreams of wealth may be realised at last. Who knows?

STRICTLY UNOFFICIAL.  
 UNCLE PORPS.

Let me say at once that I am only a dabbler in wireless. I am not on the permanent staff at the Studio, I can with difficulty distinguish a valve, and I never touch any of the knobs or buttons for fear of sending the Studio up in a cloud of smoke. You know the sort of person who comes round every now and then and lends a hand at any odd jobs that are going; the sort of person whom you can't very well tell off for doing things wrong, because after all he's only an amateur and he's doing his best; the sort of person who will insist on being useful, like the officious jolly uncle at the Christmas party? Well, that's the sort of person I have been at the Studio. Perhaps you have too; if so, we are brothers in arms.

Yes, arms is the word; speaking at the microphone is like putting up a show against an enemy whose forces and disposition you can't calculate—that is to say, there may be none of them there; but there may be a huge crowd hanging with a voracious joy upon one's every error. Fortunately, they can't get back at you direct; but they can (and do) relieve themselves of a few opinions down the telephone. That telephone at the Studio ought to be hung with crêpe; it has been the medium of many blasted hopes and damned disappointments. Somebody rang up once and requested that Mr. V. C. Hely-Hutchinson (this is the revised version of my



"UNCLE PORPS,"  
 C. V. HELY-HUTCHINSON.

initials; I myself usually put them the other way round) should be drowned before he played any more Chinese puzzles. One in the eye for the high-brow. I must say, though, that some people have been kind enough to write to the Studio and say that they enjoyed a thing I played; but somehow they always seem to do it by postcard. The telephone is the terror; the instrument of ill-omen, above which should be printed: "All hope abandon, ye who listen here."

It is the privilege of all oldest inhabitants, and similar characters, to recount the adventures of their flighty youth, such as how they fell into the village pond in 1853. None of these adventures have the least interest to anybody else, but the old fellows simply can't help telling them. Probably it is what they get their old-age pension for. I am not myself the oldest inhabitant of any community, though I very nearly was at my boarding-house, but I do consider myself one of the veterans of broadcasting in Capetown. This title is entirely self-inflicted, and I am very proud of it. It is no mean feat to have become a veteran at twenty-three. Perhaps, if I live to a hundred and three and everybody else is dead, I shall be able to call myself the grand old man of broadcasting in Capetown, and talk about the first time I transmitted Saint-Saens' "Carnival des Animaux" to the lions at Groot Schuur. All I want just now, however, is to claim the privilege of all ancient persons to tell an entirely uninteresting story on the ground of antiquity.

Very well, then, here goes. One day (it is so long ago that I have forgotten the exact date), at four o'clock in the afternoon, during the month of

September, 1924, word arrived at the College of Music in Stal Plein, asking that someone should come down and play the piano at the Studio for half an hour, from half-past four to five, at the Demonstration Transmission. As there was a drug in the market, I went down, ascended two flights of stairs at J.N.X. Chambers, entered the Studio, waited till I was announced, played three pieces, and then went away and had tea. Now, did you ever in your life hear a duller story than that?

That, of course, is how the adventure would have appeared to you, if you had been an eyewitness. I have left out my own sensations during it, which entirely alter the complexion of the story. To begin with, I went down to the Studio in the same sort of spirit as a child swallowing gunpowder, to see what would happen. When I got there I was much impressed with a spectrum of different coloured lights and a large board proclaiming "silence." Beside a door, which was locked, was a black and coffin-like arrangement with wheels and handles and all modern conveniences, which someone was manipulating, and which I took to be the electric-shocking machine. As I stood expectant, this expert turned his face towards me that I might know it again, (he had large blinkers over his ears), and cautioned me on no account to use the loud pedal in playing. He then turned a handle, on which the coffin emitted a subdued gurgle and one spark, unlocked the door and ushered me into the Chamber of Horrors.

Now, the loud pedal, as it says in the Bible, is an abomination unto the Lord, but a very present help in trouble. To play without it, if you are

slightly out of practice, is like trying to do up a suit of clothes without any buttons. I was, therefore, much perturbed on entering the Holy of Holies. I was still more perturbed when I got inside, as the whole room was entirely and completely blue. There was blue felt on the floor, blue curtains all round the walls, and blue hangings on the ceiling. The windows were all shut, to keep the noise out (or in, I forget which), so the atmosphere was blue too. I have since learned that the object of blue is to deaden the sound and subdue the performers. It is most effective. The only pieces of comic relief were one red light, in the extreme north-west corner, and a pane of glass, through which was visible the face. The face still wore a contented air and the blinkers, so I assumed that its owner was quite happy giving himself electric shocks.

I believe the highest emotion is that which destroys all memory. I must have experienced it that afternoon, for I cannot remember how, or what, I played. I recollect that the red light reminded me of a railway signal, and hence of that pleasant life I had left behind me; also I think I must have used the loud pedal, for the face was at times violently contorted, as with too many volts. I have never found out what the Demonstration Transmission was demonstrating; perhaps it was me. In this case I have no doubt that it was a unique demonstration. In only one particular is this version of the story the same as the other; when I left the Studio, and stepped back out of the æther into the lower air, I only had tea.

Since this epic occurrence, I have grown more or less used to transmission, and have even begun

to accept it as quite a normal thing. (Very probably those who have listened to my transmissions have not, but that doesn't matter; I am the veteran this time and these are my experiences.) I have got used to keeping cheerful in a blue atmosphere. I have become well acquainted with the face, and the coffin, and can watch them exchanging compliments without emotion. I have explored the inner and the outer offices, in which are several financiers, both male and female, a kettle, and a pleasant air of licences. They give me tea when I am thirsty. I know the meaning of a volt, though I have never handled one. In a word, at the Studio I receive both entertainment and instruction. What more could an independent investigator require?

There have been some great moments at the Studio. Once, when the entire Orchestra was seated in it, and a lady was singing, all the lights went out. But the lady and her accompanist finished the song in the dark. After all, black is not much gloomier than blue, is it? At another time there were thirty-five small boys in the Studio at once, all singing. The windows were shut, as usual, and the atmosphere was so nauseating that you can finish this story for yourself. On December 31 a number of us congregated in the Studio, turned on all the taps and tried to send New Year greetings to England. I don't know if England ever got them, but we all had a great time.

During the two months the Orchestra was away, their place was taken in the Studio by a mystic and anonymous body called the Studio Trio. Of this combination, the violinist and 'cellist were hardy annuals, but the pianists were periodicals,

and took it in turns. I was one of the periodical pianists, and of course we got blamed by the listeners for each other's mistakes. I came very well out of that, but it was a mortifying business all the same, as all my friends used to tell me (without knowing about my connection with the trio) how uninteresting the concerted items were when the Orchestra was away. We got very keen, as a trio, on one or two particular pieces; one of them was "Destiny," and another was a thing called "Gavotte Tendre." We played these with great delicacy and sentiment, only we nearly spoilt it the first time by laughing at each other. One night, after we had played a few of the winning Eisteddfod compositions and had an hour or so to fill up, we played all the winners (our "winners" I mean) in quick succession. We knew them well by this time, and were so carried away that I think this was the best piece of performance any of us ever took part in. On the other hand, we admittedly gave at least one rotten programme. There are times when things simply will not go right, and we were as subject as anybody to their influence. But I remember some kind listeners sent us an encouraging postcard the day after we first played "Destiny." These things do buck one up when one is working in the dark and gazing for inspiration into the blue.

As a self-constituted veteran of broadcasting, I suppose I ought to hazard a few remarks on the future of broadcasting. "Opinion of foundation member: predicts bright future for broadcasting," as the reporters would put it. Well, I'm not going to. I am not a weather prophet, nor yet a calculating machine; not in the week-ends, anyhow. This isn't an official article; if it was, I might try and

marshal some spurious facts and draw from them several unfounded conclusions. It is a record of my supremely uninteresting experiences as a veteran (don't forget that) of the blue room. Besides, all veterans' conclusions are wrong; nobody would be a veteran if he wasn't too decayed to think straight, and if I thought crooked posterity might have me up for libel. If you want to know what broadcasting is coming to, isn't it up to you to find the answer yourself? You're a licence-holder, aren't you?



*Cape Town Station  
now Closing Down.*