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RADIO DRAMA
AND HOW TO WRITE IT

RADIO DRAMA

AND HOW TO WRITE IT

BY

GORDON LEA

WITH A FOREWORD BY

R. E. JEFFREY

PRODUCTIONS DIRECTOR OF THE B.B.C.

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To

THE B.B.C.

TO WHOSE ENTERPRISE IS DUE

THE BIRTH OF A NEW ART

FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH many articles have been written upon the subject of Radio Drama, I believe that this author has the distinction of being the first to publish a work in volume form upon the subject.

The birth of a new art is always fraught with much labour, and speculation as to the development of the new-born is of much interest to all those to whom the word " art " means anything.

Such speculative observations, prompted by some experience in trying to guide and direct the infant art, often hold ideas which become first principles in its development.

Mr. Gordon Lea has set down these observations in such an interesting form that " he who runs may read," or perhaps in this case " he who listens may learn."

This is one of those valuable little books which collate " findings " on a new art, and deliver them to those who seek the knowledge. Apart from the absorbing subject, the author is doing a most worthy service.

Radio Drama has a great future. This future lies not only with those lone souls who spend their time and thought in front of the microphone, suffering

the slings and arrows of uninformed criticism, but also with those millions to whom the microphone, via transmitter, broadcasts their efforts. The listener's part is in learning " how to listen," a most important point.

It is my hope that Radio Drama in its *real* form—not a bastard cultivation from the stage—will become a source of inspiration to its heterogeneous broadcast audience. A little has been done; much remains to do. Public-spirited playwrights especially are required; the broadcast has no nightly box-office. A new form of drama cannot be developed without a new form of play as its vehicle.

In this book we have something which will help to realize the high aim which the B.B.C. has set before it in this most difficult branch of radio art.

R. E. JEFFREY
Productions Director,
The British Broadcasting Company, Ltd.

2, Savoy Hill, W.C. 2.

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RADIO DRAMA

CHAPTER I

THE STAGE-PLAY

THE music of the overture dies away, the lights in the auditorium are dimmed and an expectant hush falls upon the audience. The moments pass, then the curtain rises. We make one last hasty glance at the programme to assure ourselves what the first scene is designed to represent, then we view the stage-setting and try to adjust our minds to the scenic artist's ideas. It is not always easy.

On this particular night we are to watch a performance of *As You Like It*, and the scene upon which the curtain opens is "A Forest." We remember with a pang of dismay that we spent the afternoon in the country and actually had a picnic tea in a stretch of woodland, and now we have to persuade ourselves that the flapping canvas and the obvious gauze before us represent a forest. We ache to find the motley of sun and shadow so characteristic of a wood in sunlight, but have to be content with a blare of yellow light, which flattens everything

into a glaring monotony of artificiality. The wonder is that we succeed. We note, we praise or condemn, according to our attitude; then, as often as not, relegate the setting to the margin of our consciousness and await the entrance of the players, who have to awaken a sense of reality in such a setting.

And then the players appear and speak and move their parts. We may like or dislike the costumes according to our taste. We will praise or condemn the acting by the standard which we know. But we shall regard it as "acting." We shall apportion our liking to the players according as the type of person playing appeals to us. Perhaps we have seen the play before and welcomed a certain actor playing Orlando—but to-night the actor is different, and we say to ourselves—

"I daresay he is good, but he does not look the part nearly so well as So-and-so, who was here last time."

And so, consciously or unconsciously, but none the less certainly, we criticize the production of the play, until the sheer beauty of the play itself makes us forget the inadequacy of its presentation.

It is asserted that no play is complete until it has an audience. This is untrue. One might as well say that a tragedy of emotion between man and wife, enacted in the privacy of their own drawing-room, is not a tragedy, because the general public are not invited to watch it. A play is complete when once it is conceived by its author. But, inasmuch

as this fallacy is still popular, playwrights still construct their plays with an audience in mind. And so plays continue to be made to suit audiences and to be given under conditions that are supposed to satisfy such audiences.

What are these conditions ?

Once the limitations of the theatre are accepted, the conditions are wonderful. There are obvious advantages over all other methods of presentation. If, however, we choose not to accept these limitations, then the very advantages become hindrances to adequate presentation.

Let us first accept the limitations and see what helps the playwright may expect to have for the expression of his play and its interpretation to his audience.

First in importance, the players who shall interpret his play. If he is fortunate and is able to secure the very best, his play will receive adequate expression. If the play was written without any experience of the stage, in the hands of the producer and players it will be moulded to the requirements of stage technique. Let us suppose that it has been written with due reference to this technique, and proceed to enumerate the advantages of such a presentation.

The author may be sure that his lines will be delivered properly—that the audience will be able to hear them—that, where his meaning is not sufficiently intelligible by the spoken word alone, this will be reinforced by the appropriate gesture. A

good actor will often, like the Frenchman, speak with his hands, and many a dramatic moment has been achieved by a silent movement alone or by a simple change of facial expression. The mere words of the play are tricked out with gesture, and the action of the play helped on by movement, and the right atmosphere maintained throughout by the personality of the players. It is this personality and his power of expressing it that makes the actor such a help to the author in the presentation of his play. The characters are "created"—made to live by every artifice of expression known to the actor.

Would the play be anything without it?

We shall see.

This personality can be further aided in its self-expression by the right choice of costume. Costumes can be made to serve much more than the mere indication of period—they can express character and mood and contribute very largely to the creation and maintenance of atmosphere.

The playwright can also secure the help of the scenic artist. His play can be mounted well. The finest artists can be engaged to provide suitable settings for the action of the play. If a forest is wanted, canvas and paint will supply a good imitation; if a storm, various mechanical devices exist for providing it. An interior setting can be built even of three-ply wood and present the semblance of a real wainscot and even be made to sound like

it when tapped. Real fountains can be utilized, and, where necessary to complete illusion, live doves can be trained to confine their flight to the area of the stage. Indeed, if the artist's idea of the forest is inadequate, reality may be attempted by the introduction of live rabbits into the scene. If properly trained, they do not assume star parts and attract all the attention of the audience. I have seen rabbits dive down canvas holes in a most realistic fashion or sit listening to the speeches of Rosalind in the Forest of Arden with their ears cocked at quite an intelligent angle. I have seen temples brought to the ground in ruins on the stage —seen train smashes—horse racing—and many realistic things. I once saw a bathing pool with real people swimming there. Indeed, there would appear to be nothing impossible to the maker of scenes and the designer of properties. In addition to the mere setting, furniture and hangings of any description can be made or supplied and any illusion of reality attempted.

Such illusion is heightened by lighting. The playwright can rely on the electrician's art to help his atmosphere. The old flat lighting, where shadows were obliterated, is becoming a memory. With the more modern methods, there is almost nothing that cannot be suggested by a cunning arrangement of lights; sunsets and dawns, storms and thunder-cloud, are the joy of the modern stage-electrician. The very illusion of sunlight is now possible by

transparent lighting and the cyclorama offers an infinity of invention to the artist in lighting effects.

I have seen the passage of time emphasized in the most cunning fashion, making credible the licence which brings a day within the compass of a single hour. The very mood of a scene can be indicated by the lighting employed. So beautiful is this side of stage-work, that it is a marvel that plays are not written merely to be expressed by this art.

If the play needs still more atmospheric help, the perfumer's art can be called into service. I well remember sitting in a darkened theatre awaiting a performance of *Œdipus Rex* and having my senses gradually attuned to the atmosphere of the play by the wisps of incense-smoke which from time to time were wafted across the audience. I believe that attempts have been made to develop this idea and that perfumes have been employed which were thought to have the same frequencies as the colour-schemes on the stage, in furtherance of the idea that complete harmony is possible only if all the senses of the audience are directed to and concentrated on the mood of the moment.

Such then are some of the principal aids to presentation which an author can expect to assist in the interpretation of his work to a visible audience. But there is one more. I have reserved till the last —music.

Mary Rose, as a play, cannot be divorced in my

mind from Norman O'Niell's incidental music to the play. Like an integral theme, it is woven into the texture so that the whole web is made distinctive by it. This is a paramount example of the atmosphere which music can contribute to a dramatic production. I remember it so well.

Suddenly the theatre was darkened, completely darkened, so that not a gleam of light showed anywhere. From out this darkness grew green music, colouring the mind and pointing the emotions to their destined end. Mystery and twilight were the essence of it, and, as the light grew grey and dim within the framework of the stage, we were prepared for anything of eerie and of spiritual. This is the important point. We were prepared for the Prologue by the effect of the music. Doubtless the play itself would have achieved its purpose without the aid of the music, but it would have been more difficult. Many prejudices in the minds of the audience would first have had to be overcome, prejudices which were routed on the instant by the overwhelming effect of the music. Music can become so integral a part of the play that the two combine and become music-drama, or opera of the more modern type.

There are many other elements contributory to the making of a stage-play. I understand that in one particular case, the stage was carpeted with thick rubber so as to deaden all sound. This produced a startling effect of silence and was largely responsible for the success of a play which depended to a great

extent on a sense of mystery. Almost any effect can be produced by mechanical means.

The stage-play is written for and offered to an audience—that is, to a crowd of folk composed of all types and of all conditions. The play must be such as can appeal to a crowd, as distinct from the individual. This is a difficult thing to do, but such is the power of crowd-psychology, that if the play appeals to a section of the crowd, the disparate elements can be conquered and absorbed into the general atmosphere. An audience may, at the beginning of a play, be a company of individuals, but before long they are by the devices of stage-production welded into one mass with one mind and one emotion. If the play is incapable of this alchemy, it fails to please and becomes a written thing for the solitary patron.

These, then, are the conditions which govern the production of the stage-play, and, as I have already said, within the limitations of the theatre are wonderfully efficacious.

But, is it necessary to accept these limitations? Is there no other medium more flexible?

After all, what is the author out to do?

He has an idea to express—a theme to develop—a moral to point. All he is concerned with is the best means to get this to the general public in the most intelligent and satisfactory form. I am concerned, of course, only with the playwright whose work is to him first of all an art, and only secondarily

a commercial venture. He selects the stage as the medium for his work, because it is a traditional medium. He accepts its limitations, as does his audience, and within them can achieve perfection. But he can break through these conventions of the stage. He can expand beyond the limitations and find a new and ampler sphere.

Let us analyse stage-conditions and see exactly what these limitations are. Let it be our concern to whittle down the stage-play to its essentials and explore the possibilities of another medium for the expression of them.

We shall find, I think, a new sphere of art, achievement in which will react upon literature to its permanent enrichment.

CHAPTER II

LIMITATIONS OF THE STAGE-PLAY

At the beginning of the last chapter, we adopted a critical attitude to the production of the stage-play, till we decided for the nonce to accept the limitations of the stage as a medium for drama. On that basis we enumerated the advantages of the stage-method, and found them to be a brave array. Now we are again critical and will approach the matter with a fresh mind, unprejudiced by any stage-traditions or theatrical conventions.

The author has a message to give to the world. He adopts the play-form and comes to the theatre to have his play presented on the stage. Having satisfied the manager that his play will yield money, the first thing to decide is a cast of players who shall interpret the play.

If money is no object, then it is tolerably certain that a very fine cast will be brought together. Perhaps the author is allowed some say in the selection. If he be an artist, his selection will be guided by one principle—how best to get his message intelligently delivered to the world. In following that principle

he may select someone quite unknown in the theatrical world because he combines the beautiful voice the part demands with the physical appearance which best represents the character. His choice is laughed to scorn. He is informed that the only person to play that line is the well-known star who has made such leads his particular line. The author will suggest, with all deference, that the said star has certainly the voice, but not the figure. Surely the public could not be expected to accept such maturity as fresh youth, however disguised by the art of make-up. The answer is pat. The public is accustomed to accept the player as a juvenile in spite of his years, and so long as the public is satisfied, that is all that matters. Sorrowfully, the author yields and sees one artistic hope shattered.

And so throughout the selection, it is slowly but surely brought home to him that he is at the mercy of a group of individuals who may have certain qualities which will serve, but who at the same time have certain limitations—little individual characteristics which seem to the author foreign to the characters he had drawn. Even if a company of super-personalities were possible, yet the author has to face the inevitable fact that once they have interpreted his play—"created" his parts—that interpretation is individualized, fixed in the mind of public and critics alike for all time.

Every one knows the ineptitude of casting for provincial tours of London successes. The method

of playing the parts is fixed by that of the London company, even to the last detail of business. Originality is regarded with strong disfavour, even where perhaps it might bring the interpretation nearer to the heart of the author's meaning. With great plays this does not obtain. *Hamlet* is capable of many interpretations—and it gets them—which only serves to show that the play is greater than its interpreters, and that, if it is capable of so many and varied interpretations, each separate interpretation reveals but a tithe of the whole beauty of the play.

Bear in mind that in utilizing the player's voice, you have to bear with the rest of his personality. A play in its first conception is a truth for all—but in its stage-presentation, it becomes limited in its appeal to just that type of audience for which the producer has catered and to which the particular players selected appeal.

Let me make my point clearer.

In adopting the stage-method for the presentation of a play, the author asks an audience to accept many things. He runs many risks. He asks the audience to receive his play well, through the medium of players whom they should find acceptable. If the players are not acceptable, his play is scanted, and they will have none of it. If the players are popular, there is a danger of the audience remembering the players and forgetting the play.

How often have you asked a friend what she

thought of a certain play and received this sort of reply ? :

"Oh ! it was wonderful. It was So-and-so you know, the man with the wonderful profile. I saw him some months ago in a thing of Shakespeare's—I forget what—but he looked just as handsome in evening-dress as he did in costume. You shouldn't miss it."

The personality of the actor might be an intrusion. It is possible for it to obtrude itself in such a way as to spoil the author's intention. The essential thing is, of course, that this personality should be subordinated to the purpose of the play throughout.

On the other hand, the author may be lucky and his play might have its great chance at the hands of a splendid cast, so far, at any rate, as its first adventure into the world is concerned.

Very well, let us concede this—and yet under what conditions must this cast of players work ? We shall take them point by point as we did in the previous chapter and see if those conditions are conducive to the realization of true dramatic art.

The play will need certain settings. The author has fixed his action in a certain scene or series of scenes. In his text, he will have indicated the essentials of such scenes—or, as is the practice of some eminent dramatists, he will settle to the last detail exactly what the settings should be. Whatever be his method, he is ultimately at the mercy of the

scenic artist for the actual stage-set which will be used. Knowing this, he tries to make his action take place in surroundings which are easily represented scenically on the stage. Interiors are fairly easy. They can be painted and fixed so as to present a very credible imitation of a room, with one very obvious and glaring exception. There is always the problem of the Fourth Dimension. Of this more later. But when it comes to gardens, sea-scenes, forests and streets, the author has to be content with much that is only credible by the widest theatrical licence. In the beginning of the last chapter, we chafed at the stage-presentment of the Forest of Arden in memory of the real thing; and, in spite of doves and rabbits and all the paraphernalia of stage-machinery and effects, the net result on the minds of an audience of all these efforts at realism is to wring from it the praise:

"It's a wonderful imitation—I wonder how it is done!"

And then the convention of the missing wall. You are asked to believe that rooms have only three walls. True, we are conventionalized and perhaps we have ceased to notice it. But, whether we are aware of it or not, it makes for unreality. It produces artificiality in the movement of the players. They must never forget that the open wall is filled with eager faces which have paid to see and hear everything, and so they must not disappoint them. They must not speak with their backs to that sea

of faces, nor must they turn on leaving the stage except in deference to that same sea.

Efforts have been made to overcome this problem of the fourth wall, notably in two plays. In *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* the footlights are regarded as the fireplace. This is very ingenious, but the effect is that, when the players sit before the fire, you have the spectacle of people staring straight at you, and, unless you imagine yourself to be a lump of coal or a salamander, you don't get the right angle. The other play is *Youth*, where the open wall is supposed to be the large mirror of a theatrical artist's dressing-room wall, and the player puts on his make-up in front of the audience. Here you have to imagine yourself to be a looking-glass to get the right angle; but this is more feasible. In fact, it is particularly apt, as the audience should reflect the stage. I have always liked to believe this piece of stage-craft symbolic—though I am sure the author never meant it as such.

And then, there is perspective. This is never quite right on the stage. We have to accept a convention. But why should we?

Even suppose we were content to make allowance for all these inadequacies, yet it is difficult to overcome the serious limitation presented by the stage-method when it comes to a change of scene. A lapse of time or a change of scene is marked by the complete cessation of the play. The illusion is snapped and the audience is encouraged to apply itself to

mundane matters, such as food and drink, while the mechanism of scene-shifting is employed behind the closed curtain to prepare for the next episode in the play. The play becomes in effect a serial of illusions and it is only the effect of crowd-psychology that makes it possible for the illusion to be maintained after the first break. This is due to the fact that the atmosphere is maintained in the theatre by the great majority who sit waiting impatiently in their seats for the next act. The few who disturb that atmosphere by climbing over it to the buffet are afforded the privilege of returning to it and being engulfed by it again.

It is clear from this, that the playwright cannot afford to be too extensive in his method. The limitations of the theatre restrict his scope and he must become intensive. This produces a specialized form of art, but, even with the intensive method, the scope is strictly narrowed down to the exigencies of the stage-method. So is a dramatist confined—he can soar only as far as the chains of theatric convention permit. Further he cannot go unless he shatter the barriers and break into a new sphere, find a new medium.

I had much to say of modern lighting methods in the previous chapter, and I have nothing to take away from what I said. It is necessary, however, to realize that such stage-lighting is an art in itself, and in its modern use there is a distinct tendency to exploit it as an independent art without sufficient

reference to the play it is designed to serve. Even if it were properly subordinated to the purpose of the play, yet it can never be anything but artificial. The illusion of moonlight, sunlight, etc., is illusion, and as for candle-light—it is impossible to imitate. If actual candle-light is used, then there is insufficient light to show the stage-action. The audience has again to accept a convention which may be beautiful but is always an exaggeration of reality. This is so even when the most modern methods are employed, but where invention fails to get beyond ringing the changes on red, blue, amber and white, it is pitiably monotonous and mechanical.

We saw that music could be made to play an important part in helping the interpretation of a dramatic work. This remains true of any medium, and is probably one of the essentials of drama. Yet even this is limited in a theatre. The author must remember that the accommodation for an orchestra is limited, and this fact must guide his choice of theme and his setting of it. He could not, with much hope of realizing it, expect to have represented one of his characters listening to the performance of an opera. The limitations of his medium would demand that this be taken for granted or that it take place " off " stage—very much " off " stage.

In times past the " Aside " and the " Soliloquy " were permitted. Convention was content to put up with the obvious crudity and often comicality of them to ease the author's task. So much can be got

over in an aside, and the thoughts of a character are so easily revealed in a soliloquy. But modern drama has ruled them out, not because they are untrue to life, but simply because the stage-method knows no way of making them convincing. We all know that a good deal of life is made up of asides and many a destiny has been swayed by them, nor is the soliloquy the sole prerogative of the madman. Many a soul has found relief in talking to itself. Yet, I repeat, this is an aspect of truth which modern stage-convention makes impossible of development because of the inadequacy of the medium employed.

What, then, remains ?

The one essential in the midst of all these trimmings is the text of the author. And if we go still further and remember that the form of the text is fixed by these very trimmings, the one real essential is something behind the text—the idea or dramatic purpose of the author—a purpose which is capable of expression in text of a different form if only a new set of conditions can be found.

It might seem that here is an impertinent hand daring to pull down a structure which has inspired and housed the bulk of the world's great dramatic literature. Not at all. I am ready to admit that, if this be the only form of structure, if the architecture of it is final and convincing, all the decoration of it is beautiful and wonderful. But I am not sure that it is the only structure, nor am I persuaded that the architecture is the best design.

That which the dramatist wishes to express can be expressed in another way—a way which employs a more spacious structure, whose architecture is ultimately more artistic and nearer truth.

CHAPTER III

RADIO DRAMA

WHAT is this new medium which is to offer greater opportunities to the dramatist ?

It is the medium of Radio and the method is that of Radio Drama. Much experimenting has been indulged in since the inception of wireless broadcasting, but it was the British Broadcasting Company, through its Productions Department, that made the first serious attempt to find the right form for radio drama. The B.B.C. soon realized the great possibilities of this new art and created this Department to foster its development. Much excellent work has been done in face of many difficulties : authors are naturally conservative, and listeners are not too ready to sacrifice physical vision in their enjoyment of a play. But, by exhaustive experiment and patient research, many of the difficulties have been overcome. This is witnessed to by the fact that so many listeners everywhere enjoy broadcast plays. There is no doubt that the B.B.C. is in the van in this new branch of dramatic art. There are instances of continental stations and stations in South Africa

and America adopting in the main the methods of the B.B.C. in dramatic production and featuring plays which were first broadcast here. Those responsible for these results have the satisfaction of knowing that their work is appreciated as that of pioneers of a new art.

In spite of the fact, however, that much encouragement has been given to authors to find a possible technique for the radio-play, as yet nothing definite has been achieved. I hope later to suggest two methods for this new form, the second of which offers to my mind the lines along which the final technique of radio drama will develop.

But before dealing with the technique, it is necessary to explain the medium and show in what ways it is superior to the stage-method as a means of conveying the message of the dramatist intelligibly to the world.

We assume that it is the dramatist's aim to create a thing of beauty which shall be interpreted to the world under ideal conditions, or, failing the ideal, the best possible conditions. We have seen that the stage-method is limiting and cramping. Let us see what the radio-method offers.

Since this is in the first instance a comparison with the stage-method, it will be as well to compare the two point by point. The result will be a series of negations as far as radio is concerned—negations albeit of the inessential, bringing us nearer to the bone.

The dramatist can have actors to speak his play, but, unlike the stage-method, they will not be seen.

to give point to the spoken word. All that on the stage is seen as part of the actor's art has to be conveyed by voice alone. This sounds impossible and at first would appear not to be a breaking through of limitations into a freer sphere, but a multiplication of limitations. We must of course admit that radio drama has its own conditions and certain limitations, but they are of such sort that they only hamper the development of the inessential. We shall see later how this is so.

Just as the visible element of the actor's art is impossible by radio, so have we to rule out all actual presentation of scene. The scenic artist can contribute nothing to radio drama. All the art of the theatre is lost in this new medium, and stage-craft counts for nothing. "How is it possible to give a play without scenery?" is the inevitable question—a question, as it happens, quite unnecessary. The radio dramatist can command such a scene and setting for his play, as no scenic artist ever produced could hope to emulate. All that is spectacular on the stage, all the pageantry of it, becomes in radio drama actual and real, with not a trace of the artificiality which is inevitable on the stage.

Lighting is impossible as a distinct art in this new drama, since that is a visual thing. Yet here again we can have real lighting—not an art but an actuality.

The radio drama does not make its appeal to a crowd but to an individual. This widens the dramatist's scope—for what will appeal to a crowd will almost certainly appeal to the individual, but it is by no means certain that what will appeal to the individual will appeal to the crowd. Here there is lacking the help which crowd-psychology may give to the illusion of a play—but there is gained the direct reaction of an individual soul.

Music is possible in this new medium—so that all the help which music can give to a stage-play can be counted on in a radio-play and a good deal more besides. It *is* possible in a radio-play to represent a character as being present at the performance of an opera, and what is more, it is possible to represent it as taking place anywhere. Setting is no difficulty—it can actually take place anywhere.

Such stage-effects as thunder—the racket of a storm—the patter of rain and the swish of the sea are all possible in radio drama, and anything which can be translated into sound.

I promised a series of negations, and we have faced them. What, then, remains ? The medium of radio drama can offer positively the sound of the human voice and all the sounds of nature, either actual or mechanically produced in imitation of nature. In other words, the means of interpreting the dramatist's work are the Human Voice, Music and Sound Effects.

It seems a pitiable array by comparison with all

the paraphernalia of the stage—a poor substitute for all the art of the theatre. And yet is it ?

These conditions make much impossible—much, however, which I consider to be inessential to dramatic art—but they do offer a means of truer interpretation, a medium of finer artistry and a clearer path to truth.

I will explain how.

Instead of a theatre capable of holding large numbers of people, we have an ordinary domestic room. For audience, actually hundreds of thousands of people, not gathered together in one place, but individualized in their own homes. Ultimately the audience is a vast number of individuals, geographically and psychologically disparate. By means of headphones or loud-speakers they "listen" to the play. Objectively, they see nothing, but subjectively they can see everything. This is what the radio dramatist has to bear in mind. Let us see, then, what this method offers to the dramatist.

He writes his play in a form to be discussed later and offers it for radio-production. The only means of interpretation are players, music and sound-effects. Had it been for stage-production, he would have had to select his players for their voices and their appearance. Here appearance does not matter. Voice is the all-important factor. A cast is got together, whose voices are suitable for the parts and flexible enough to interpret any shade of emotion. If the dramatist has indicated the characters clearly in his text, those characters will be clearly conveyed

by the agency of the player's voice to the listener. Nay, more, they will be conveyed in essence, without any of the restrictions which a visible personality might impose. The dramatist will not be worried by any considerations of unsuitability in the appearance of the players, or by any of the individual characteristics which every actor unconsciously develops in movement and in face-expression. What is written in the text will be given pure and untrammelled to the mind of the listener.

Here at last the dramatist may be sure of getting his message direct to the minds of men, uncoloured by the actor's personality. True, the voice of the player may be, and indeed must be, individualized, i.e. it must be recognizable on hearing, so that when heard it connotes throughout the play the same character—but it is much easier to find the right voice for a part than the right person. The dramatist runs less risks by employing this medium. He, as the author of the play, is of paramount importance. There is no danger of it being made an excuse for popularizing certain individuals—it cannot be exploited in the way that many a stage-production can. It is the play, as a play, that counts.

We saw that in stage-work the "Aside" and the "Soliloquy" were incapable of sincere use. In radio-work they can be used with every appearance of sincerity and truth. An "Aside" can in radio drama be made to sound and be absolutely natural, and that and the "Soliloquy" can have as wonderful

an effect as the "still small voice" in the Mount of Horeb. The technique of this is fairly simple and will be indicated in the chapter on Radio Actors.

He may indicate any setting for his play. There are no restrictions whatever. Stage-settings are limited by the possibility of stage-craft and the scene-builder's art. Not so in radio drama. Any scene may be suggested and it will be adequate. A stage-scene is after all only the scenic artist's idea of it, and whether it is our idea or not, there it remains for the duration of the play.

In radio drama the scene is built up in the imagination of the listener, and actual experience goes to the building. Each individual supplies his own idea of the scene, an idea based on reality, and so sees the play in its ideal setting. It will differ in each individual case, but that will not matter. If the scene suggested is a room, in the mind of each listener will be visualized a room he knows and the play will take on a new meaning for him. It will become something intimate to himself, enacted in a setting provided by himself.

All art is an expression of imagination—so that at the best a stage-scene is a second-hand affair—whereas the radio-scene is beyond art—it is reality itself, not an isolated expression of imagination, but imagination itself.

This avoids the convention of the missing wall, the difficulty of the Fourth Dimension—for the scene in the imagination will be real and complete. So also

will the problem of perspective be solved, since no longer has distance to be suggested by artificial means within a narrow compass, but is decided by actual vision and is based on experience.

This removes all barriers for the dramatist. Anything that is conceivable in his imagination is capable of complete expression and interpretation to the imagination of his world. If he wishes to set his play in the heart of a buttercup, the imagination of his hearer will provide the setting.

This opens a new world to the dreamer of dreams, and releases for drama all the things which are difficult, if not impossible, on the stage.

Of course, these ideal settings don't just grow in the minds of listeners unaided. The writer of the radio-play has to stimulate the growth. This is part of the technique of the radio-play which we shall discuss later.

We noticed that to change the scene in a stage-play it was necessary to snap the illusion and bring about a complete cessation of the action. Hence the division of stage-plays into acts and scenes. This is unnecessary in the radio-play. A change of scene can be accomplished instantaneously without a break. More than this, the transition from one scene to another is possible of presentation. Suppose the characters to be leaving home by motor for the theatre. In a stage-play, you would see them leave the house—hear (off stage) the bark of a motor-horn and then wait till they changed the scene

to show them again at the theatre. If an accident happens en route, you learn of it in the theatre scene—you are not present at it except in retrospect. In the radio-play, however, you would accompany the parties all the way and be present at the accident and hear all that happened between the house and the theatre. Illusion once created need never be broken in the radio-play. The dramatist can be as extensive as he likes, since the whole world or any part of it can be his setting.

I have said that the radio-play is written for and presented to the individual. This has an enormous advantage over the stage-play. It permits—nay, encourages—the full and natural reaction to the emotions of the play. As a member of an audience, an individual's reactions are hampered by those of his neighbour, and the result is that his reactions are controlled by the reactions of the crowd. You may, for example, be in antipathy to a certain sentiment uttered by a character—think it silly perhaps and not at all witty, on the other hand another member of the audience finds it so funny that he explodes into mirth, and so hearty and spontaneous is his laugh that, before you know where you are, you find yourself laughing with him. So is the house made to "rock with mirth." In the quietude of your own room, you can react truly and naturally and so be sincere. All this makes for truth and reality.

The dramatist, realizing this, can write truth, knowing that truth will respond. He need not trim

his theme to suit a crowd-psychology. In conversation with a friend you can use a direct method, an intimate method, which would not be suitable for an orator's platform. The radio-play gains just this intimacy which a stage-play can never hope to have.

Music can be used to help in the production of radio drama in a way quite impossible on the stage. If the dramatist wants a background of grand opera, it can be supplied direct from Covent Garden. Only a travesty of this would be possible on the stage. Any musical background can be arranged in actuality —or music can be woven into the play in a way more natural and artistic than is possible on the stage. This opens up vast possibilities. The horizon of the dramatist's dreams is widened beyond all knowledge.

And then there are sound-effects. I shall have more to say of these later. Suffice it at the moment to say that these should be used sparingly. An ounce of suggestion is worth a ton of imitation.

For convenience and economy, many sounds which could be given actually are imitated by mechanical means, but, although great progress has been made in this direction, much remains to be done.

This then is a new medium for drama, richer in its possibilities than any medium hitherto known, waiting for the dramatists who shall conceive plays worthy of it. Here is the demand; whence comes the supply?

CHAPTER IV

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE RADIO-PLAY

(1) The Narrator Method

There lies in radio drama an opportunity for our great ones to establish a new form—to perfect a new technique. It is practically virgin soil, rich in possibility, and it is the property of anyone who will till it. The richest culture will win the richest fame.

Perhaps the final form which this technique should take will only be decided after exhaustive experimenting, unless (and this is possible), by a flash of genius, someone hits on just the right thing. Meanwhile, the general form of the radio-play is already determined by the conditions of the medium. The fact that everything depends on sound, and that everything in the play must be translated into and conveyed by sound, suggests at once the general principle that somehow or other, all that is seen on the stage must be incorporated into the radio dramatist's text. Entrances and exits must be prepared and made clear when they happen. It must be clear which character is addressing which, and at every

point there must be sufficient indication of mood and action.

In a phrase, everything which in a stage-play you would miss if you closed your eyes, so long as it is essential to the understanding of the play, must be added to the text of the radio-play and be spoken by the radio-actors, or given in the form of sound-effects.

This is not so difficult as it sounds. In the time of Elizabeth there were no stage-sets such as we know them to-day. The scenes were not indicated in any way other than in the dialogue, and lighting was most inadequate. But this was sufficient to stimulate the necessary picture in the minds of the audience. I dare to believe that the scene supplied by the imagination of the audience in those conditions gave Shakespeare's text a fuller significance than many an elaborate setting of more modern times. And note the effect on the text of the play. Knowing that the help of stage-scenery was lacking, Shakespeare indicated the scenery in his text, with results of beauty which all lovers of Shakespeare know.

One of the first essentials, then, in radio drama is to indicate somehow in the text of the play the scenery and surroundings of the action of the play.

Secondly, when you have only hearing to rely on for giving you the actions and movements of the play, it is clear that all action must somehow be indicated in the text, or partly in the text and partly by sound-effects.

Again, the appearance of the characters must be

indicated, their costume or anything about them which is germane to the clear understanding of the people and the period.

This general form can be particularized in two ways. Possibly there are other and better ways, but it will suffice to describe two forms of technique which may serve for the radio-play.

The first is what I call the Narrator method. I don't think this very good—but it is almost the only satisfactory method of dealing with established plays which are written in the stage-form and must, therefore, be considered as a necessary form. This is no confession of weakness. It is a mark of strength. Although the radio-play, as such, must be cast in a different form from that of the stage-play, yet the medium of radio is so flexible that it can accommodate the stage-play in the stage-form, and the Narrator method is the way in which it can be done.

But why consider such a method, when it is only useful for adapting stage-plays to the requirements of radio ? I have already anticipated the answer in a former chapter, where I admit that, until radio drama finds its great author, all the great dramatic literature of the world is in the stage-form. This is realized and the Narrator method makes it possible to give of this great treasure to the radio listener in an intelligible form.

Some stage-plays seem almost to have been written for radio. This is pre-eminently true of the work of Maeterlinck, where reiteration and the objectivity

of his characters' utterance are almost sufficient to get the play over without the help of a Narrator. In most cases, however, this help is needed.

This method has also been used for an original radio-play, and this is the way of it :

After the announcement of title and cast, which is the present method of introducing a play, taking the place of a programme in a theatre, the Narrator's part begins.

He reads a mind-picture and gives such indications of the dramatic situation and of the characters as prepare the listener for the fullest appreciation of the opening of the play. This mind-picture takes the place of scenery and setting, and then the actors act the play.

If the play is cast in the form of episodes, comparable with the acts and scenes of a stage-play, then the Narrator bridges each episode with suitable description. In this way, the action is never actually dropped. The interest is carried on from the end of one episode to the beginning of the next by the Narrator.

This will be made clearer if I give actual examples of the method :—

THREE EPISODES FROM " UNDER TWO FLAGS "

The author of this radio version (S. G. Jones) explains his method in a prefatory note :

In order to present sufficient of the story to make the episodes chosen understandable, the play is introduced by a

synopsis, in narrative form, leading up to the first scene. Continuity of action is also ensured by linking up each episode with the one immediately following by means of a brief narration of events.

Then the play begins with the Narrator speaking as follows :—

NARRATOR. Into the Chasseure d'Afrique, that famous regiment which for ages had fought the wars of France on the dark Continent, have drifted from time to time many men for whom life in their own country has proved too hard, or for whom circumstances have rendered a change of habitation profitable. Something of the pitiless character of Africa crept into their souls, making them as merciless as herself, stern and exacting, hard as steel, ravenous of blood as vultures. Yet it was this regiment, honoured with the scars of a thousand battles, that numbered amongst its company Cigarette, that brilliant little *vivandière*, and Louis Victor, erstwhile Bertie Cecil of Her Majesty's 1st Life Guards, known to his comrades as " Bel-à-faire-peur." His brother's disgrace, shouldered for sake of a promise made to a woman, had brought one here—the necessity to live, a constant association with the barracks and the Spahis, and a boundless patriotism, had conspired to bring the other. Something of his old imperviousness remained to Cecil, something of his old habit of command, rendering him unsuited to the fierce discipline of the army of Africa. A man such as he was, excelling in the arts of war, a consummate horseman, and an evident aristocrat, was sure to incur the displeasure of his superior officer, a man of mean parts, yet good at his trade. This man, nicknamed the " Black Hawk," gave outward expression to his fierce hate by countless little tyrannies, calculated to provoke a man of Victor's temperament to some overt act of retaliation. From such act, however, Victor had for long abstained, assisted in his course by the sage councils of Cigarette, who was interested in him in spite of herself, since, having heard him term her " unsexed," she considered she hated him. But at last, that iron restraint had been broken, broken by an insinuation

more base, more dastardly, than any that had gone before, and smouldering hate had burst forth into fierce flame. Victor was taken away to be tried by court-martial for violence against the person of his superior officer, whilst Cigarette was left to await the result with anxious heart and troubled mind. The message came, brought by a carrier pigeon, but Cigarette could not read, and by an irony of fate, it was to Victor's own brother, Berkeley Cecil, that she came for its interpretation.

And without pause, at once the first dramatic episode is acted, beginning like this :

CIGARETTE. Monsieur, wilt thou read this for me ?

CECIL. It is for you, little one, and signed " Petit Pot-de-terre. . . ."

and so on, till the end :

CECIL. Can his life be saved ?

CIGARETTE. His life may : his honour shall.

This ends the first episode, and immediately the Narrator carries on the story :

NARRATOR. Then swiftly as a swallow darts, she quitted him, and flew on her headlong way, down through the throngs of the mart, and the noise and the colour, and the movement of the streets. She rode out of the town straight through the scorch of the midday sun, along the sea-coast westward. The dizzy swiftness of her flight would have blinded most who should have been carried through the dry air and under the burning skies at that breathless and pauseless speed, but she had a long route before her : she had many leagues to travel, and there were but four and twenty hours, she knew well, left to the man who was condemned to death. And even of them some must have flown by since the carrier pigeon had been loosed to her. She could not tell *how* long he had to live.

She swept by cantonments, villages and soldiers on the

march ; nothing arrested her. The horse was reeking with smoke and foam, and the blood was coursing from his flanks when she reached her destination at last, and threw herself off his saddle, demanding to be led to the Marshal of France. The Marshal, leaning against a brass field-piece, turned to her with a smile in his keen, stern eyes.

And again, without pause as before, the second dramatic episode is acted :

MARSHAL. You, my young *décorée*, what brings you here ?

CIGARETTE. Monseigneur, I have come from Algiers since noon——

and so on till :—

MARSHAL. My child, Africa has shown me much heroism, but none like yours. If you fall, *he* shall be safe, and France will know how to avenge its darling's loss.

CIGARETTE. Ah, France !

There is no need to show this method further. The third episode is bridged to the second in the same way, and the whole play ends on the dramatic and not the narrative note.

This was a specially prepared version which proved very effective as a radio-play. It embodies partly the form of the novel or story, the more dramatic portions of which take unto themselves independent life and become plays. This is certainly a possible form, but one which does not encourage dramatic unity. It has, however, the advantage of variety and is certainly clear. I have no doubt that this will prove to be a popular form to many writers of radio-plays, but, as a form, it is at the best hybrid.

Scenes from "Peer Gynt"

This radio version of *Peer Gynt* was necessarily abridged. It consisted of six scenes.

The sequence was maintained by a Narrator, who described sufficient of the action, not included in the selected text, to make the whole story clear. It will be interesting to see the shape of this.

Narrator. The first scene introduces us to Peer Gynt and his mother. Peer, a tattered, young vagabond of twenty, comes jauntily down the mountain path, followed by Ase, a little old peasant woman, who is angrily scolding her son.

Here follows Scene 1—A Norwegian Farm.

Narrator. Peer Gynt goes to the wedding and succeeds in carrying off the bride, but he soon tires of her. Pursued by the villagers, he hides in the mountains. He is haunted all the time by the memory of Solveig, a beautiful and innocent, young girl with whom he had exchanged a few words at the wedding. In the mountains he falls into the clutches of the Trolls, who are the hideous goblins of Norwegian folk-lore. They try to turn him into a Troll like themselves; with difficulty he escapes, but they leave their mark on him for life. In the following scene we find Peer pursuing the Troll King's daughter, who is luring him on to her father's palace.

Here follows Scene 2—In the Hall of the Mountain King.

Narrator. Rescued from the Trolls by the sound of the church-bells rung by his mother and Solveig, Peer seeks shelter in the forest, where he builds himself a log-hut and lives as an outlaw. Our third scene shows Solveig coming to join him there; but his past crops up and destroys their dream of happiness. The scene opens with a descriptive musical interlude entitled "Morning."

Here follows Scene 3—A Hut in the Forest.

NARRATOR. The fourth scene takes us back to old mother Ase. Her farm has been sold up, and only a few sticks of furniture are left. We find her ill in bed, with no one but her neighbour Kari to care for her.

Here follows Scene 4—Ase's Death.

NARRATOR. Peer goes abroad, amasses vast wealth by various dishonest means and then proceeds to spend it in travel and enjoyment. He has numerous adventures, during one of which he sets up as a prophet in the Arabian Desert. The following music is played while he sits among his adoring slave-girls and watches the dance of Anitra, daughter of an Arab Chief:

"Anitra's Dance."

Meanwhile, in the little log-hut in the Norwegian forest, Solveig patiently waits for the promised return of her lover. We see her sitting and singing at her spinning-wheel.

Here follows Scene 5—The Hut in the Forest. Solveig's Song.

NARRATOR. Many more years pass and at last Peer Gynt, an old man, returns to his native land. He has lost his wealth, but he is still strong and active, with a fine opinion of himself. He has never given a thought to Solveig, who, though now blind and old, still waits, believing he will return one day. When we meet Peer Gynt in our final scene, he is watching a passing funeral procession, and he is shortly afterwards confronted by a mysterious Button Moulder who proves to be none other than the Angel of Death.

Here follows Scene 6—The Forest. (Many years later.)

This is not the same as the other. It is the stage-form, made clear for radio by the help of a Narrator.

It is clear from these examples how the Narrator method works, and it is easily seen from the second

of them how valuable it is for adapting stage-plays for radio. By this means, it is possible to give abridged versions of long plays ; excerpts from well-known works can in this way be knit together and made coherent. But, as a form for original radio drama, it is not good. It falls far short of the second method, which, for lack of a better name, I propose to call the Self-Contained Method. It is along the lines of this self-contained method that the future technique of radio drama will probably develop.

CHAPTER V

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE RADIO-PLAY

(2) The Self-Contained Method

By the self-contained method I mean a form which is self-explanatory in every detail, a form which needs no Narrator, no programme, not even the announcement of a mind-picture. It will indicate scenery, character, costume, all action—everything in fact which is necessary to the complete mental vision of the play, in the text of the play itself, with such additional help as may be required from music and sound-effects.

This is the drama that is "overheard." It can be made as startling and realistic as if the listener were overhearing something in the next room through a half-open door—with this advantage, that the people in the next room obligingly let the eavesdropper know *all* about it.

For the sake of the dramatist who desires to write in this form, it will be as well to enumerate those things which must be translated into speech, which, in the ordinary way on the stage, would be seen.

Scenery and Setting.—The setting of the play must

be indicated by the characters themselves. This may sound absurd, and could be very absurd if wrongly treated. But, as I hope to show shortly by an actual example, this can be done quite naturally and effectively. The characters should be made to see everything objectively and to think of what they are doing objectively, so that this will appear in their speech.

The method is employed in Charles Reade's *Masks and Faces*, but there it is quite unnecessary, and, because of that fact, appears childish and otiose in a stage-play. But a similar method, used with greater subtlety, can be employed in the radio-play and be made to produce an illusion of naturalness.

These indications of the scene in which the play is enacted must not be given all at once. For example, this would be crude :

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Jones. May I come into your beautiful room ? Thank you. I notice you've been spring cleaning. What a lovely paper—all those dragons and cherry-trees ! Is it Chinese ? I've seen another just like it, but the colours were different. In the other paper, the dragons were jade, but I see yours are purple. They match your curtains admirably. Oh ! what a good idea—you've got your writing-table in the window—and I see——"

and so on, giving a word-picture of the room and its furniture. This, I repeat, is crude, though it indicates something of the method. To do it naturally, it is only necessary to give a general indication, sufficient for the mind of the listener to supply its own details. In the above, all that was wanted was

to indicate a room—the listener would at once visualize the sort of room he knew—for him, the ideal room. If there were any specific details about the room that had to be noted—details germane to the action of the play—these could be indicated, as and when necessary, in the development of the dialogue. After all, when we enter a room, we do not take in all the details of colour and furniture at once. This is a gradual process. So it should be in the radio-play.

Appearance of Characters.—Here one should be very careful. In the example I give later this problem is easily solved—but in a general way the dramatist should be cautious about suggesting too much of his characters' appearance or costume. If he wishes to indicate that a particular character is well dressed, it would be unwise to suggest the details, as the author's idea of being "well-dressed," although doubtless conforming to convention, may not be the idea of many of the listeners. Let each listener endue the voices of the radio-players with the ideal appearance the character suggests to his mind, and let him in his mind clothe the character accordingly. Here is where great artistry is required to give the right illusion, an artistry which will differ in each experiment made by radio dramatists. Just as Exposition is necessary in some form or other in all drama, and, just as the actual method and artistry of its treatment differ according to the genius of the dramatist, so in the radio-play this illusion of appear-

ance and costume is necessary, and the method of achieving it must be determined by the theme of the play and the individual genius of the dramatist. The general method is clear—that it should be done by means of the dialogue in a manner to stimulate the listener's imagination.

Bound up with this is the difficulty of making it clear to the listener which character is addressing which. Of course, much can be done here by selecting players with very distinctive voices. At the same time, it is not always easy for the listener to remember who is who. The author should arrange from time to time that characters are addressed by name, so that, if the listener's memory should weaken, it is given opportunities of being refreshed and of correlating voice and character.

Action of the Play.—When I first produced radio-plays, I started out with the theory that plays which depended mainly on witty dialogue and very little on action would be more intelligible to the listener and so be more successful. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the contrary was the case. By a mistake, the first play I produced for radio was one full of action. The dialogue did not give much indication of the action, but it did give some. I added certain other necessary sign-posts to guide the imagination of the listener, and put the play over, dreading the verdict of the following day.

Let me quote the opinion of one listener, which set my fears at rest, and gave me the indication that the

imagination of the listener is a very powerful factor in the production of radio-plays. He said :

" That was a splendid play you gave last night. Do you know, I could see everything that happened in that room. It was as clear as though I'd been there. The atmosphere was remarkably life-like."

I have since proved this in my own experience. Plays of action are probably more successful by radio than on the stage. This is the very thing that seems, on first thoughts, to be impossible, but which, by following the right form in preparing the radio-play and remembering the unlimited response of the listening imagination, is not only possible but capable of complete success.

But indications are necessary. These are of two kinds. Those which are woven into the dialogue and those which are given by sound-effects. Now, since sound-effects are not always as intelligible to the listener as they are to the one who produces them, the first method is much superior to the second. Better still, indicate action in the dialogue, then reinforce that spoken indication by sound-effects. Here again, crudity must be avoided. It is not so difficult as it might seem, to give these indications, but they must be given naturally, or at least so artistically that they seem natural.

Facial expression on the stage is used to show moods and even thoughts. In radio drama, thoughts can be expressed by the Aside and Soliloquy. This is not retrogressive, as was pointed out in a previous

chapter. It is simply that in radio drama we have found a medium suitable for the sincere development of this integral factor of life and action.

These, then, are the things which the radio dramatist must incorporate into the dialogue of his play. The method of doing it is in general quite clear—the actual detail must be decided by each individual writer.

I will give an example of this self-contained method, which perhaps will make the whole matter clear.

This play was announced as follows :

"You will now hear the Repertory Company in a radio fantasy, entitled *Pierrette*."

In the interests of art, I do not think it advisable to announce casts—as, if listeners should know any of the players, they will visualize them as they last saw them and possibly so spoil illusion. The play, excerpts from which follow, received no more announcement than the above, nor was a cast published, so that listeners were entirely dependent on learning the scene, the characters and all about it from the dialogue itself.

Let's see how it was done.

The first thing the listener heard, after the announcement, was—

The sound of a girl's voice, humming a refrain. This song is punctuated at intervals by a clicking sound.

From a distance comes a man's voice, calling, "Pierrette—Pierrette."

The humming ceases and the girl replies, "Ye-es."

Before proceeding, let us analyse this. We have met two characters—one is a girl, whose name is Pierrette, the other is a man who is some distance from her.

The distant voice proceeds and asks :
" Where are you ? "
The girl's voice replies :
" I am here, Joey, in the garden."

Now, we have learnt that the man's name is Joey and (very important) we've got the scene quite clear. It is a garden. So far this is quite general, but in a moment our vision will be supplied with some details.

The distant voice speaks again :
" Where-abouts ? I can't see you from the house."
The girl replies :
" Between the sweet-peas and the hedge."
Speaks the man :
" Whatever are you doing there ? "
The girl explains :
" Cutting flowers. Come and give me a hand."
He calls back :
" All right."

The picture is now almost complete. Here is a garden with a house in it and the garden has a hedge round it, and near the hedge are sweet-peas. It is a sheltered spot, since Pierrette was hidden from the house. *And* we now know what the clicking sound is—it is Pierrette cutting flowers. Let us proceed. It is rather fascinating, this fitting of each piece into the mosaic.

There is a slight pause, while Pierrette hums and clicks, then Joey's voice is heard drawing near :

"The path's all weeds again, I see, Pierrette."

Pierrette replies :

"I know."

So we see that the garden is like any other garden, not too well kept.

Joey's voice, now as near as Pierrette's, is heard again :

"Ah—here you are. I couldn't see you from the window."

Pierrette explains :

"The sweet-peas have grown so high—and I'm not so very big—am I ? "

Joey agrees :

"I suppose not—but you're very, very pretty. Ah—if only I were younger."

Here we learn with interest that Pierrette is dainty and small and pretty, and that Joey is old. What more does the imagination want ? They are both traditional characters, and so we can visualize their appearance quite easily, but, lest there should be any doubt, see how it goes on.

Pierrette speaks :

"Now, Joey, don't be silly. Why, whatever have you been doing ? Look at the grease on your ruffle."

JOEY. I thought I'd like a sip of the gravy that was left from dinner, and I—I spilt some."

PIERRETTE. Oh ! Joey—and it's nearly tea-time. How could you ?

Now we know the time of day, and we definitely know that Joey is wearing a ruffle.

Continues Joey:

"It doesn't look bad, does it? I still look like the nice, clean clown I used to be."

PIERRETTE. Yes, you old dear. You'll always be a clown. You'd better borrow one of Pierrot's ruffles. I want you to look nice for tea.

So there is a Pierrot. We now look forward to hearing him. We know that he wears ruffles. We've just heard so. And so the picture, the characters and the action develop in our minds and all quite naturally and all through the medium of the spoken word. Let us see in greater detail how action is indicated. Joey talks at great length and so enthusiastically about food that he forgets to cut flowers. We probably missed the clicking, but in case we didn't, here we are:

PIERRETTE. You aren't cutting any flowers, Joey. We must hurry. Pierrot will soon be back to tea.

And later we are treated to the perfume of the flowers and the colour.

PIERRETTE. Cut some of those purple ones—yes, and those deep red. I've got all the white I want. Oh! (*sighing*) don't they smell beautiful?

And at once we are surrounded by the smell of sweet-peas—we know it so well, and the hint was enough. Now this:

JOEY. There, there (*comforting Pierrette, who is sobbing*). Pierrot will, when he sees the flowers. I'll cut some more. We'll smother him in flowers and then you'll forget that he's only got his old costume on——

PIERRETTE (*laughing*). Oh! Joey—there'll be none left.

Don't—don't slash the flowers like that. I think we've got enough now. You go in and see that the kettle's ready. He'll be here in a minute, and I'll arrange these flowers.

JOEY. All right.

He rustles away. Then Pierrette sings: "Pierrette went to her garden."

Then we hear the song which she hummed at the beginning and realize that the music is acting as a very strong unifying element in the construction of the play.

At the end of the song we see how a new character is introduced.

PIERRETTE (*calls*). Joey!

JOEY (*in the distance*). Ye-es.

PIERRETTE. Is the kettle boiling?

JOEY. Very nearly. It's singing.

PIERRETTE. So am I.

JOEY. I heard you. Aren't you coming in?

PIERRETTE. Not yet. I think Pierrot's coming down the lane. I can hear him singing. Yes, it's Pierrot. I can't see him—the hedge it too high—but that's his voice. Listen——

And then we hear Pierrot singing in the distance.

PIERRETTE (*calling*). Joey, come quickly and lift me up. I want to peep at him over the hedge.

Another verse of Pierrot's song, then—

PIERRETTE. Joey, do hurry.

JOEY (*out of breath*). Here I am. I've lifted the kettle. What do you want?

PIERRETTE. Lift me up quick. It's Pierrot. I want to see him.

JOEY. Dear me, we *are* excited. There you are then.

PIERRETTE (*staccato*). Oh——

JOEY. What's the matter?

PIERRETTE. I've scratched my hand on the hedge. There was a sharp piece.

JOEY. Now steady. You're quite light, but Joey's getting old. Sit on my shoulder—that's right. Now—can you see?

PIERRETTE. Yes, and—Oh——

JOEY. Another scratch?

PIERRETTE. Put me down—quick. I—Oh——

(There is the sound of a hurried scramble, and much heavy breathing on the part of JOEY, and gasps from PIERRETTE.)

JOEY. Whatever *is* the matter, Pierrette?

PIERRETTE. Oh, Joey—Joey—he's on the other side of the lane with—with C—Columbine.

JOEY. Well, well—that's all right. Perhaps they met and are walking home together, and——

PIERRETTE. But—but—they're k-k-kissing! Oh, Joey——

(*She is sobbing freely now.*)

Can't you see the whole thing? The realism can be assisted by sound-effects to represent the crackling of the hedge and Pierrette's scramble. And then we hear Pierrot and Columbine speak at some distance.

PIERROT. Won't you come into my garden, Columbine?

COLUMBINE. Pierrette's garden.

PIERROT. MY garden.

COLUMBINE. Why should I come into your garden?

PIERROT. I have some red roses growing there.

COLUMBINE. Oh—there's Harlequin coming down the lane. Don't let him see me here.

PIERROT. Come into the garden——

So we are introduced to another character. We also have learnt that Pierrot grows roses. We see more of the garden shortly.

PIERRETTE. Which way are they going ?

JOEY. Ssh—ah—they've passed behind the rhododendron bush—they're going the other way. Now don't let them see you till I get Harlequin.

Then later, Joey pokes his head through the hedge and talks to Harlequin in a hoarse whisper, and, after much persuasion, finally :

JOEY. Come into the garden. Slip in through the gate and come down here by the sweet-peas. Don't let them see you.

Here are all the characters in the scene now and the play runs its appointed course, till, at the end, the atmosphere is once more emphasized by Pierrette :

PIERRETTE (*to* PIERROT). One more kiss in the perfume of the flowers. Oh—I am so happy.

And then they both sing " Pierrette Went to Her Garden," and the sound of it fades away towards the house and tea. The music functions again, giving artistic unity to the whole story.

I have quoted largely from this experimental play of mine to show a technique which is possible and which has actually been tested with success. Everything that is necessary for the listener to know for the full appreciation of the play is in the dialogue, and sound-effects are only brought into service to help atmosphere.

Perhaps a better technique will be found, something simpler and more satisfactory. Meanwhile, this technique of the self-contained play seems to me the

most complete and artistic for the medium of radio drama in its present stage of development. Here is a fascinating form, full of the richest possibilities, waiting for the artists who shall bring it to perfection.

CHAPTER VI

THE LISTENER'S PART

MANY references have been made in the foregoing chapters to the listener's contribution to the success of radio drama. This is of such vital importance that it merits a short chapter to itself.

In the theatre, all the human senses can be called into service to assist the human mind to appreciate the play; in radio drama, the sense of hearing only is used. All that could be received through the other senses has to be supplied by the imagination.

Let us review them and estimate the advantage to the listener of the single method of sense-reception over the multiple method of the stage.

The practice of giving a mind-picture to the listener, before the play is actually performed, is a weakness. It is necessary, of course, when plays written for the stage are given by radio, since the technique of their writing will not include the essential indications of the scene. But a mind-picture in legitimate radio drama should be quite unnecessary. In fact, it is likely to militate against the full appreciation

of the play on the part of the listener, and should be entirely abandoned. We shall shortly see why this is so.

We have seen that in the theatre a member of the audience has to be content with the scenic artist's idea of the setting of the play. It requires a definite adjustment on the part of the spectator. If the programme has warned him that the scene is a forest, it is inevitable that a general idea of it has formed in his mind before the curtain rises. The actual scene disclosed, when it does rise, may be a bitter disappointment or it may be a delightful surprise. But, whereas it may please some, it is bound to disappoint others.

In the radio-play, the listener has merely the suggestion that the setting is a forest, and at once his imagination supplies the ideal setting. He visualizes any forest he knows, or his favourite wood, and, in so visualizing, gathers round him all the atmosphere of the forest. In the theatre, the budding imagination is nipped by the artificiality of the scene and the obvious imitativeness of it—the imagination of the radio listener is encouraged to its fullest flower. The radio-play, then, properly constructed and properly produced, stimulates imagination. This is of great value to the listener. It makes for originality of thinking, and is a powerful factor in mental development. It makes also for a fuller enjoyment of the play, since the ideal setting is provided for the action of it.

I wonder how often you have read a stage-play before seeing it on the stage? If ever you have done so, you will remember the disappointment of the actual show. You compare it with the ideal presentation of it which you saw in your own mind as you read it, and you generally find that the stage version comes far short of your own.

One of the reasons of this is that in the theatre the arbitrary separation of players from audience by a row of footlights destroys intimacy—intimacy which is sometimes essential to the proper appreciation of the play. In radio-work, this intimacy is pronounced. The listener is in direct touch with the player—there is no intervening convention—no barrier. Soul speaks to soul. As we look forward to the cosy hour when we can converse naturally and without restraint with our friends in the intimacy of understanding, so can we look forward to a radio-play, knowing that we shall meet mind to mind and heart to heart interesting characters, and we cannot but be refreshed by it. We can make the joys and sorrows of the radio-character much more our very own than ever we can those of the stage-character.

I have already indicated how the reactions of the listener to a radio-play are more sincere and true than those of an individual member of a theatre audience. This makes for greater appreciation. The listener can abandon himself entirely to the atmosphere and emotions of the play unhampered by a crowd-

psychology. This is most important in the development of character.

The mind-picture was condemned earlier in the chapter as likely to restrict the listener's enjoyment of the play. This is true. To offer a mind-picture is to prejudice the imagination of the listener, besides being outside the unity of the radio-form. It is the same as hearing a friend's version of a stage-play then going to see it on the strength of his recommendation. We often find that we do not laugh at the points he promised us we should, but at very different points, simply because our reactions are different from his. But this makes for a sense of disappointment. We expected to laugh at certain things and found we did not. Now, had we not been prejudiced, we should have laughed at the things which called for it and thoroughly enjoyed the play, because our reactions were not unnecessarily shackled beforehand. Mind-pictures should only be necessary when adapting stage-plays for radio.

The use of the single sense of hearing for radio reception makes for intensity. Concentration is possible in the highest degree. The multiple-sense reception of a stage-play tends to diffuse interest. Sometimes the scenery overwhelms the dialogue—sometimes the stage-tricks of one character upset the balance of the scene, and frequently the effect on the audience is one of some confusion. In listening to a radio-play, however, the listener naturally subordinates everything to the theme and action of

the play, since his imaginative contribution is controlled and directed by the play itself.

The result of all this is a strengthening of the imagination of the listener—the deepening of his powers of concentration and the widening of his emotional and intellectual sympathies. By the very fact that the listener is called upon to give so much of his own personality to the radio-play is his enjoyment and appreciation of it intensified.

On a narrower basis, the listener learns to love the spoken word more, he realizes the magnificence of his mother-tongue and the flexibility of it, and he gains through the medium of the human voice a mental pageantry of colour and delight which no artist in the world can emulate.

CHAPTER VII

SOUND-EFFECTS

I HAVE nothing to say of Sound-effects in detail. There is a definite technique required, which the experts in these matters are striving to frame. Indeed, the B.B.C., through its Productions Department, has made great strides in this branch of radio-dramatic art and achieved results of atmosphere and realism that are quite wonderful.

My concern in this short chapter is to indicate the part which sound-effects should play in radio drama.

I have already said that "an ounce of suggestion is worth a ton of imitation." The bulk of the atmosphere can be transmitted by means of dialogue, and actual sound-effects should only be used to assist the suggestions in the text of the play. I have heard a listener say that he preferred to hear the voices of the players come out of silence; they were then to him like jewels against a background of black velvet. This is perhaps a rare taste and would not appeal to the majority. Some help is needed to ease the tension on the mind of the listener.

When broadcasting develops still further, it will

be possible by means of dual microphone arrangements to supply any actual background required direct from Nature or from reality. This is possible now, but is a very expensive matter, and, after all, perhaps it is not really necessary. These backgrounds can be provided by mechanical means in a startlingly realistic fashion. I know of one interesting case. A little girl who was listening through headphones suddenly put them down and went to the outer door of the house and looked out into the night. When she returned with a puzzled look on her face, her mother asked her what was the matter. She replied that she thought it was raining hard—she had heard it over the phones and went out to verify it. It was not raining outside. It was the background to a radio-play which she heard. Instances can be multiplied of the wonderful realism which can be achieved by sound-effects.

These, however, should always be strictly subordinated to the play itself. There is a danger of overdoing it. This merely produces noise and is not only unpleasant but highly inartistic. Properly controlled, they are invaluable as an aid to the creation and maintenance of atmosphere.

Before leaving this subject, let me make a suggestion as to the possibilities of dual or even multiple microphone work. We could have a military band transmitting through one microphone, a crowd acting as a holiday crowd through a second microphone, and through a third players acting a scene on

the seashore with suitable background effects. If all these microphones were artistically controlled, a wonderful picture could be given of the seaside: the band playing on the promenade, the ever-present crowd enjoying itself, and the particular episode being enacted in these surroundings. Anyone with the slightest imagination can see at once the many variations of this combination which are possible.

This is a very simple instance of the enormous possibilities of effects by radio. Practically, nothing is too difficult, a fact which gives an almost unlimited scope to the radio dramatist.

CHAPTER VIII

RADIO ACTORS—THEIR TECHNIQUE

It may not be realized that there is a definite technique required for radio acting. It is a difficult technique and can only be outlined here. Later, we shall be having teachers of radio acting and teachers of radio voice production, and then, perhaps, there will be handbooks on radio acting, which will give details of the art.

The first necessity is absolute control of voice. Elocutional tricks are useless—they are insincere and impress their insincerity on the mind of the listener. The essential thing is that the voice must be produced. Aspirants to the art of radio acting must realize that the basis of the art is the human voice. This is capable of being trained to a perfection of production. Within its physiological limits, any voice can be made beautiful and perfect That should be the first aim. Develop the voice to the highest degree of tonal beauty. Having done that, gain absolute control over it, so that it is completely flexible. The voice should be made so sensitive an organ that it can respond to any emo-

tion, convey any shade of mood or thought. It should be capable of an infinite variety of inflection and of an almost imperceptible modulation. A false inflection, a wrong intonation, and the mental vision of the listener is distorted. I do not mean by this that the player should become, as it were, a disembodied voice, but a voice that conveys an irresistible sense of personality.

Here is the all-important point. In the ordinary way, with vision, there are many ways of expressing personality. In radio acting this expression must be narrowed down into the voice. Actually the result will be, not to limit the expression of the personality, but to expand the power of the voice so as to make it a completely satisfactory vehicle for that expression. This is not the place to discuss it, but probably more than the voice is radiated. Personality " goes over " in subtler ways than by mere sound. This is something to remember when acting before the microphone. The player should concentrate his thinking as well as his voice on the part he is playing.

The player's attitude to his audience is very important. On the stage, he is conscious of his audience, acutely conscious, but he develops an art to conceal it. In radio he should also be conscious of his listeners, but in such a way that he does not consciously radiate the fact. It is as well to remember that ultimately the acting is for the individual, and this should determine the method. It should

be intimate and completely and naturally sincere. Ease and naturalness are essential to success.

The radio-player should not " act " in front of the microphone ; that is, he should not act as though a visible audience were present. He may think by so doing he is getting atmosphere. He is not. He is only dissipating his energies through channels which do not transmit, and so leaves less energy to be transmitted through the only channel that matters—the voice.

Neither should a producer of radio-plays encourage audiences to be present at his performances. If he does, his players have to play to two distinct and dissimilar sets of people. This imposes two sets of opposing conditions, and the players succeed in satisfying neither. The player must concentrate on the unseen audience, if he is to be *en rapport* with it. This applies of course to the playing of radio-plays. Stage work that is broadcast is in a different category altogether and has nothing to do with the development of radio technique.

Parts need not be committed to memory. Indeed it is much safer that they should not. Even the best of us are liable to forget, and to hear a " prompt " in the course of a radio-play would kill all illusion. The parts are read from script or from books. Here is a difficulty. The player should know his part thoroughly so that, although reading, there is not the slightest suggestion of that fact radiated. So well should he know his part that he has attention

to give to his thinking and the regulation of his consciousness. Care should also be taken in turning over the pages of the script or book. Nothing is more likely to snap the atmosphere than the sound of several hands simultaneously turning over crackling pages. The noise they make in transmission can be alarming. No unnecessary movement should be indulged, and, of course, it is the most heinous of crimes to whisper with other players when there is a rest in the part. Everything should be rehearsed beforehand to the last detail, so that questions in the studio are unnecessary. This is as much the burden of the player as of the producer. Just as on the stage, ease and confidence make for good work, so in radio, complete knowledge of what to do and how to do it, when to give utterance and when to preserve absolute silence, are essential. These things are perfected by experience, but they can be learnt beforehand.

The radio-player should keep the volume of his speaking voice constant. He may indulge as much inflection as he will, but if he drops the voice at the end of sentences, he will not be easily heard. Variation in strength can be obtained by altering the position with respect to the microphone. This is how the Aside and Soliloquy can be made so convincing. A whisper will transmit perfectly if given at the right position to the microphone. Judge of the intimacy that can be achieved between player and listener in this way. No more stage whispers, but

the real thing. The right position for these voice variations can only be determined by experiment. It will differ in each case, according to timbre of voice and the acoustics of the particular studio.

This subject is a vast one, and a handbook on it will be at once a handbook on voice production and on psychology. To such a handbook must be left the details of the radio actor's technique. Suffice it here to say that his aim must be to radiate personality—the personality of his particular part—to convey atmosphere by co-operation with other radiating personalities and to do all this through the medium of the voice.

CHAPTER IX

EFFECT ON LITERATURE

I AM not aware that any radio-plays have as yet been published in book form. Perhaps it is too early to expect it, since the development of this new form is not yet very far advanced. And yet it will be very interesting to have the first experiments in the new art preserved in a permanent form. They should become, in the fullness of time, of extraordinary literary interest. Inasmuch as radio drama is a new form, it is bound to have a great effect on literature. It puts words to a new use.

In this chapter, examples will be given of the literary form which radio-plays could take, and we shall find that, so far as verse plays are concerned, something between the accepted form of the published stage-play and the epic is discovered. When the radio-play is published, it should preserve its distinctive character, otherwise the contribution to literature would be small.

Let us see first the form of the stage-play, when published as a book. Before the reading of plays became popular as a practice, authors took very little

rouble with the form of the printed version. Such play as *Masks and Faces*, already referred to, would seem to have been published for the sake of possible players of the parts. To the layman, only he actual dialogue is fully intelligible. The stage directions are couched for the most part in stage argon, which to the uninitiated might just as well be in hieroglyphics. The player understands it, and, upon the bare suggestions of the author's cabalistic signs, he builds a structure of movement and business which, in the acted version, makes the actual text of the play intelligible.

This is the opening of *Masks and Faces* in the published version :

ACT 1.

Scene I. 2 G.—The Green Room of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. A Fireplace C., with a looking-glass over it, on which a call is wafered. Curtain rises on MR. QUIN and MRS. CLIVE seated each side of fireplace.

Follows dialogue, then :

Enter SNARL and SOAPER L 1 E, QUIN and CLIVE rise.

A producer can appreciate this sort of thing, but the general reader finds it bewildering, and before long, gives it up in despair. It is not very descriptive ; it is certainly not illuminating and it has no literary value. It is like a map of a piece of country-side —scientific, as compared with a picture of the same country-side which would be artistic.

More recently, however, the form of a published play has become literary and much more attractive. Plays are printed nowadays for the general public to read, and they are prepared in such a way as to supply to the reader all that would be seen and heard in the stage production of them.

The published version of my own play *Reconstruction* opens as follows :

ACT I.

Scene : Ian Lanton's study. It is about three o'clock of a winter's afternoon, and the study fire, which is on your right, looks eminently cheerful and desirable. Within the circle of its ruddy glow are two large easy-chairs and a deep-seated Chesterfield couch. Evidently the owner of the study is of the opinion that physical comfort conduces to mental activity. Signs of the latter are not lacking. There are piles of manuscript music on the table in the middle of the room, and little heaps of books, obviously there for reference. It is a dull day and very little light comes in through the window facing you. But, as soon as your eyes are inured to the comparative gloom, you are aware of bookshelves on either side of the window, literally overflowing with books. The piano on your left, near the door, is also burdened with much music and again books. . . . You get an impression that the place is inadequate to the man. His interests are too large, too vital . . . they are ever expanding. Not that the room is untidy. The literary disarray is somehow held in harmony by the spell of that resident personality. The pictures are few and choice . . . mostly Medici prints, and the space above the fire and the mantel itself are devoted to a display of photographs, many of them unframed. In the recess to the right of the fire is a small bureau, above which a mirror; on the other side, a smoking-table bearing a

red-shaded electric lamp. The place is full of comfortable glows and warm shadows, the only relief being a marble bust, which stands out white and clear, near the door, and a few white flowers which adorn the table. Apparently, Ian Lanton does not object to sharing his study with others of the household, as there is some knitting lying on the couch and a book of embroidery . . . an art most probably not included in his own repertory.

(The door opens, and the MAID shows in the REVEREND TIMOTHY BRIGHT.)

MAID. Miss Lanton will be down directly, sir.

REV. Thanks very much.

(The MAID departs, closing the door. BRIGHT goes over to the fireplace and begins to study the photographs on the mantel. He is perhaps about twenty-eight, though his fresh complexion and sprightly bearing suggest a much shorter age. The Cambridge manner has been much complicated by a two years' sojourn in a theological college in the provinces; and, on the whole, he gives an impression of martyrdom . . . as though his calling demanded a certain amount of natural self-repression. Altogether, quite a lovable personality. His native youthfulness is surprised into action, as his roving eye catches sight of a small portrait of Lydia Shortte on the mantel. He takes it up eagerly.)

REV. Hello! . . . H'm!

(Youth is suddenly guilty and hesitates, then emerges triumphant . . . he kisses the photograph quickly, sighs and lays it down again. Age and the dignity of his collar persuade him to seek mental calm in the perusal of the knitting book; but ever and anon his eyes wander back to the silver-edged picture of Lydia. Under another sudden stress, he abandons the knitting book and is just about to salute the photograph again, when the door opens to admit CAROLINE LANTON. She is tall, somewhat angular, of uncertain age and movements, rather striking, and not unattractive in appearance.)

CAR. How d'ye do, Mr. Bright?

You will notice the difference in manner. Here we get a complete picture of the place and see the movements of the characters. We can gauge their appearance and almost see the expression on the face —all things which are necessary to the full appreciation of the dialogue. This method stimulates the reader's sense of hearing (he hears the dialogue spoken); it encourages his sense of sight (he sees the characters from the description of them). The important point to note is that in reading plays in this form, the stage-directions and descriptive portions are read, as it were, silently in the mind. One *sees* the words. But the dialogue is *heard* in the mind. The form of the stage directions is literary and that of the dialogue is dramatic.

The literary form of printed plays has been brought to a high degree by such dramatists as Mr. Bernard Shaw and Sir James Barrie. Indeed, in the published version of their plays, we get much more than can be given in the theatre. Not only do we get a complete picture of the action, but we are treated to the author's comments on it and on the characters—in some instances, a sheer delight.

In radio drama we have seen that the whole action of the play is conveyed by means of sound; in stage drama by sound and sight. Should the literary versions of the two forms differ? They need not. But, if the literary form of the radio-play follow that of the stage-play, it ceases to be truly a radio-play. On reading a radio-play we should *hear*

every word that is printed. If at any point in it we *see* the words merely, we are not getting the true appeal. If it is found necessary in the printed version to amplify, explain and make comment, then the transmitted version is proved to be inadequate.

It may be objected that so far as the text of the dialogue is concerned, the reader will *hear* the written word, but how to put the sound-effects, which are not vocal or articulate, into words ? For example, in the radio-play, a character goes out of the room. In the published version this might read :

" He went out through the door."

Obviously the reader would *see* these words, although, in the radio version, the fact was probably emphasized and made conclusive by the sound-effect of a door closing. This is where the literary form must be adapted. It should be made to read somewhat as follows :

" The door slammed with a bang after him."

The reader *hears* this and so gets the right medium.

This is important. It means that the readers of radio-plays will expect to get from the published version the same sense of vocal beauty, the same sense of drama uttered as they do from actually listening to the play. The author has then to develop a style and form which will make the words of the play spring from the printed page into actual sound in the mind of his readers. There may at first be some floundering ; but ultimately we shall find a new

literary joy—a new enchantment in this development of dramatic form.

The greatest effect will be, however, on the literary form of poetic radio drama.

In the production of poetic drama on the stage, the producer should, to preserve the right atmosphere, see that scenery, movement, lighting and everything is rhythmic, like the dialogue itself. The whole show should be poetic, the spirit as well as the body of it. This is not always so. And it never is in the literary form of a stage poetic play. In the published version, although the dialogue is in verse, the stage-directions are in prose. This is perhaps legitimate in the case of poetic drama written for the stage, since the visual elements might be quite prosaic.

But in poetic drama written for radio, if it be done in the self-contained method, there is no other element than that of poetry made vocal. Since the medium is sound, the whole atmosphere of the play is poetic. Any printed version which departs from this atmosphere is false. If it follow the fashion of the published stage-play and help action and sound-effects by prose descriptions, it will be inartistic. The whole thing should be in verse. It may not matter whether the descriptive part follow the same metre as the dialogue—but it should certainly echo the same rhythm, or at least strike harmony with it. This will preserve throughout the right poetic atmosphere and bear a true resemblance to the actual transmitted play.

An example will show what I mean.

This is an extract from my short, blank verse play, *At the Eleventh Hour*. The situation is that Hildegarde, King of Gaulmonde, who is at the very point of death, has sent for his son Tamelund to attend his death-bed. Tamelund has been in banishment for three years because he married Philippa, daughter of Elvenir, hereditary enemy of the House of Gaulmonde. Tamelund imagines that his father, now nearing death, will become reconciled to Philippa, and they are both present in the ante-chamber leading to the King's bedroom. The King will not remain in bed to wait for death, but, with the help of his physician, Landrage, drags himself to the door which connects the two rooms.

In the stage version, it runs as follows :

TAMELUND. Wait a moment . . . so——

(The KING appears in the door, where he leans on the door-frame and on LANDRAGE. He is ghastly—at the very point of death—so weak that LANDRAGE has to hold the cup of wine.)

HILDEGARDE. At last, we meet, daughter of Elvenir
And ere I die, I'd have you drink to me——
To the honour of the House of Gaulmonde—drink.

PHILIPPA. The honour of the House of Gaulmonde——

HILDEGARDE. And
Eternal peace to the soul of Hildegarde——

PHILIPPA. And peace to Hildegarde——

HILDEGARDE. Now drink——

(HILDEGARDE watches her raise the cup and drink, then he signs to LANDRAGE to raise his own, then gasps with a harsh laugh.)

HILDEGARDE. And I——
I drink to the confusion of the House
Of Elvenir——

PHILIPPA. Ah, Tamelund—I—stifle——

(She gasps and tears at her throat in her effort to breathe, and staggers. Tamelund is so appalled at the change in his father that he does not notice Philippa at present.)

HILDEGARDE. So is the shame of Gaulmonde done away—
And Elvenir will laugh no more—no more—
'Tis Gaulmonde now that laughs—ha—laughs—and—laughs—
At El—ven—ir——

(HILDEGARDE'S attempt at laughter ends in the death-rattle, and he sags on to LANDRAGE, who removes him out of sight into the inner room.)

PHILIPPA. Ah, God—I—Tamelund——

(She staggers to her knees, then falls prone.)

(TAMELUND turns at her cry and rushes to her, raising her in his arms.)

TAMELUND. What have they done?—My love—Philippa—speak—Philippa—Philippa——

(A pause.)

She—she's dead—
My father mixed the wine—he mixed the wine—
In hate he mixed it——

(He lays her down and makes a savage movement to the bedroom door.)

Fiend of Hell——

(LANDRAGE appears at the door barring the way.)

LANDRAGE. The King
Is dead—Long live the King.

TAMELUND (*dazed*). The King is dead——

(Then he bursts into an hysterical laugh, looks into the room, then at PHILIPPA, then with an inarticulate cry, falls sobbing on her body.)

SWIFT CURTAIN.

If this were rewritten for radio, the dialogue would be given somewhat as follows:

TAMELUND. Philippa, drink not. Wait a moment—So. My father's coming, dragging foot by foot

Across the room. So weak he is, his hand
Holds not the cup from which to drink to you;
But Landrage carries it.
Ah! see—he's here.

LANDRAGE. Upon the door-frame lean, my lord, and rest
And let my arm supporting you behind
Stem dissolution of your energies
At this last moment.

HILDEGARDE. Thank you, Landrage—So.
(You hear him cough and gasp for breath.)

PHILIPPA (*in a low voice*). Oh! Tamelund, it frights me
—in his face
The grey of death is creeping.

TAMELUND. Courage, child.

HILDEGARDE. At last, we meet, daughter of Elvenir,
And ere I die, I'd have you drink to me—
To the honour of the House of Gaulmonde—drink.

PHILIPPA. The honour of the House of Gaulmonde——

HILDEGARDE. And
Eternal peace to the soul of Hildegarde——

PHILIPPA. And peace to Hildegarde——

HILDEGARDE. Now drink—
'Tis meet a King who staggers on the edge
O' the grave should wait while youth and beauty drink.
So—Landrage, hold the cup near to my lips,
For she has drunk my will. And I——
I drink to the confusion of the House
Of Elvenir——
(He laughs harshly and by a gesture knocks the cup to the ground.)

PHILIPPA. Ah, Tamelund, I—stifle——

TAMELUND. Father, such a change—nay, speak to me—
Let death hear words of peace and find your soul
Washed of all malice. In your eyes a hate
Is lurking still—Oh, ere it be too late——

HILDEGARDE. So is the shame of Gaulmonde done away—
And Elvenir will laugh no more—no more—
'Tis Gaulmonde now that laughs—ha—laughs—and—laughs—
At El-ven-ir——

TAMELUND. My father——
LANDRAGE. Strength has failed—
He may not speak again——
TAMELUND. No, Landrage, no—
Take him not back to bed until he speak.
Landrage—Landrage—bring him back to us.
Philippa, did you see—he seemed to crumble
And sag on Landrage. Now they've gone—and—ah!
PHILIPPA. Ah! God—I—Tamelund——
TAMELUND. Philippa—why—
What ails you? Wine alone brings not such pain.
I do not understand—why do you kneel?
And clutch so at your throat? Come to the couch—
See, I will help you—Lie not on the floor.
Can you not move? Philippa, speak to me—
Ah! God, what have they done? Philippa, speak—
Philippa—Philippa——
TAMELUND (*after a pause*). She—she's dead—
My father mixed the wine—he mixed the wine—
In hate he mixed it——
Fiend of Hell——
LANDRAGE. A moment——
TAMELUND. Aside, Landrage, and let me to the King.
You hear? Why do you bar the door?
LANDRAGE. The King
Is dead—Long live the King.
TAMELUND. The King is dead.
Philippa too—and I alone am left.
Philippa, hear—you cannot leave me so—
I never kissed you—never—See me now—
I kiss your eyes. Let your dear soul return
And take the kiss—and then in taking it
Perchance a little word—a little sigh
To let me know—Philippa—to let me know——
(The last thing you hear are the sobs of TAMELUND.)

You notice the descriptions are still in the stage drama style. But, to be artistic, they should be

poetic and connote throughout sound. Like this perhaps :

HILDEGARDE. Thank you, Landrage—so.

Then on the word, his strength collapsed,
And in his throat the breath was locked
Till, piling like a flood it burst
In gasps and tearing coughs—and then
Philippa, speaking to our soul.

PHILIPPA. O Tamelund, it frights me—in his face
The grey of death is creeping.

Here, I venture to think, is a new literary form—one which is full of great possibilities. It maintains the rhythm and poetry of the play and is a faithful representation in type of the play as it would transmit.

The radio drama is born and is in its cradle. How will it grow ? Shall we recognize it in its maturity from its present beginnings ? Whether we do or not will not matter much, so long as its maturity is full of vigour and beauty.

Here is the new clay for moulding, but where are the Potters ?

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