it would be idle to expect much development on that side. But on the creative side of broadcasting, by which I mean the employment of the wireless medium and its combinations as material out of which a new form of art can be evolved, the development is almost all yet to come. We have heard some very queer experiments of this kind; some have contained thrills, and others may have seemed merely eccentric extravagance. The point is that they were experiments, and that they were and are leading somewhere. Broadcasting is at once a reality and a field of possibility; and the more listeners there are who will take an intelligent interest in these developments, the more is to be expected of them. For if it be true that where there is no vision the people perish, it is almost equally true that where there are no people, *i.e.* no receptive and reactive public, the vision is apt, if not to perish, at least to become dim and obscure.



*Chapter II*

## THE LISTENER AND HIS CONDITIONS

WHERE I am writing this, three hundred miles from London, I am looking out of a window facing a rough sea and a cold grey sky, and a line of grey-green hills between them. On the hills are certain dull white specks, not clustered together but scattered; and (although I cannot see it, of course) I know that a tree-pole, connecting a thread of wire to some of them, marks them as being equipped with wireless receiving sets. And each one of those white specks represents the centre, for someone, of the small geographical area of a few square miles in which he or she is living out the span of years called a lifetime,

and beyond which the footsteps of the dwellers will in all likelihood never wander until they pause on the threshold of the great adventure of death.

The impact of broadcasting on lives like these is a matter that cannot but stir rather conflicting thoughts in the contemplative mind. The first and most obvious consideration is: What a blessing to these poor isolated people must be the opportunity of listening to what millions of their fellow-men are listening to, and so being united to them by an invisible bond and having their dull, bare lives enriched! But is it necessarily a blessing? Are the lives spent and lived out within those few square miles necessarily dull or bare? Upon my word, I wonder. It sometimes seems to me that it is only by achieving a very definite emptiness of elaborate things that life can be really filled at all. The theory that people who live hard lives in isolated places have nothing to interest them is





all wrong. For example, nothing could be emptier of human activity than the scene on which I am looking—sand, sea, sky, and grey-green coast hills. Yet, in fact, it is all so important and full of variety that I find it very difficult to keep steadily at my task of writing. I have to look up every few minutes to see what is happening. The surges, rolling in from the north, nevertheless show a tendency to change their direction; the field of grey and green and white never shows the same picture for a minute together. The wind is certainly rising; the loud organ-harmony of the telegraph wires receives every few moments a gusty, staccato reinforcement, as though an extra handful of stops had been drawn. Yes, the wind is rising, it is changing; but how? Is it going to back—to the westward—or will it veer, to the eastward? It is important to me, because what it does will in all probability decide the course of my activities for the remainder of the day.

And that is only one thing in the prospect before me out of a dozen that are of infinitely greater or more immediate interest to me and my fellow-savages than anything we are likely to find in the newspapers or (breathe it gently) in the broadcast news bulletin. I shall not be likely to learn from either anything so interesting as the fact that a cat, walking sedately up the valley from the sea, has suddenly leapt to the top of a smooth wall which I had thought unscalable—owing to its great height—up which the cat soared like a balloon. This is trivial; but of what profound and urgent interest are the smallest things of life when they occur in a solitude; when they, and the wind, and the weather, and the progress of a task, the state of a field, the condition of a beast, and the passing of time in which every minute is an event, are all that is going to happen to you to-day! So let not the dwellers in great centres, where the noises are the noises, not of wind and waste,





but of iron on iron and the continuous explosion of gases in cylinders, the grind of tramcars and the clatter of feet, be too sorry for their isolated brethren who live so far away from theatres and clubs, from cinemas and pubs. I speak not particularly of wireless when I call all these things broadcasting. Newspapers are broadcasting, in that they tend to stamp the same kind of impression on millions of minds; to make the world present the same face to millions of people—instead of its millions of faces. And, of course, organized wireless is the greatest broadcasting agent of all.

The reader must not apply my contrast too deeply or widely. I would but remind him that there is another side to the assumption that to impose even a good thing on the greatest number of minds is necessarily a benefit. It may be that in some of those minds flourish good and beautiful things of their own that, perhaps, had not occurred to the imposer of the Good Thing. In short,

any agency which tends to reduce (or raise) everything to the same level needs to be very carefully watched and handled, lest the mind of a nation becomes the mind of a collection of highly equipped specialists working within a highly organized machinery. There is such a thing as the soul, and it lives in the individual and not in the crowd. In the little white squares across the tumbling waters there live human souls that have some quality of their own which might easily be destroyed by a cheap uniformity, but which neither Fleet Street nor Broadcasting House could create.

It is an interesting speculation how far, if at all, broadcasting has the creative quality of art. If it is creative it has one great element of art; if it is an art it must be creative. But I am inclined to doubt whether, at the stage to which it has so far attained, it is either an art or creative, or whether it is anything more than a medium through which creative





art, as well as many things which are neither artistic nor creative, can be communicated to the listener. It is important to consider this from a listener's point of view, because it may help to mitigate certain disappointments and remove some unfair criticisms of which broadcasting is the subject. Broadcasting is so very wonderful; it is the result of a combination of so many technical marvels; it gives to the individual so much that could hardly otherwise be obtainable by him, that he who is so much enriched by it may be inclined to think that it is something creative and magical in itself. But is it? A telegraph line is not creative; a library is not creative. Nor is a picture-gallery art; it is a collection of works of art which, although they may themselves be creations, have no creative effect until they are looked upon by the seeing eye. So I come to my main theme—the collaboration of the listener in making broadcasting effective. Just as a picture has no life unless it is

looked upon, and a book no life unless it is read, so broadcasting has no life until the listener joins himself to it, when something happens. He is to broadcasting what light is to colour. Have you ever realized that in complete darkness there is no such thing as colour; that you, when you lie in your bed in a pitch-dark room at night, are yourself coal-black? Yes, my pretty friend, your jade eyes and your shell-pink ears and your golden hair are in the dark all black, and your whole fair skin duskier than that of any Ethiopian.

Well, something like that is true of broadcasting and the listener. The programmes are nothing in themselves. From the musical point of view, which is where we most closely approach art, they may be regarded as a collection and a collective presentation of great and small works of art. But the music in a week's programmes is not in itself and cannot be a symmetrical and artistic thing; it is a collection placed at your





disposal by the B.B.C. If you saw it all going on in the studios, you would realize this. It is not happening in your room at all; it is happening here in the studios; and if you wished to hear it, and did not possess a wireless set, you would have to journey in trains and cabs and omnibuses at all inconvenient hours of the day and night in order to make it a reality. It is you, really, at some time or other, who have to make your selection by choosing when you will switch on your set; and the measure and manner of your doing that is the artistic measure of what broadcasting is to you. The broadcasting programmes are, in this respect, very like the British Museum or the National Gallery, or a great library. No one who uses a library would dream of beginning at the first book on the first shelf and going steadily through in the order of shelves in the cases. And a great collection like the National Gallery, as many a footsore gazer who has got no farther than the

middle of the Primitives could testify, is in itself nothing but a bewilderment or confusion. The only way to use the library is to select your books; the only way to use the National Gallery is to make up your mind what picture or pictures you wish to see, spend your time with them, and then come away. And the only way to enjoy broadcasting, or to get out of it the art that it has to give you, is to decide what you mean to listen to, and listen carefully and critically to that.

What, then, is to be the attitude of the ordinary listener towards broadcasting? Is he going to regard it simply as a means of filling the vacuum of idle hours, carping at everything that does not make an immediate and facile appeal to him, and being annoyed when the programmes are not continually filled with the kind of items that do so appeal; or is he going to regard it as a great cultural influence in which he himself has an important part to play? One must





definitely think of listeners as belonging to one or other of these categories. In the first class I feel no interest at all; I have nothing in common with them; I find no sense in the things they say and write, as no doubt they would dislike and despise anything that I write; but as I am sure they will not read what I write, that troubles me not at all. My hope lies in the other kind of listener, with whom I do feel that I have a common interest in trying to make the influence of broadcasting in our national life as high and good as it ought to be, both in its value as entertainment and education. I don't know in the least how many such sympathetic readers I can count on; they might be a hundred thousand, or (what is much more likely) only a few thousands—a very tiny fraction of the actual listeners. But if they were only a thousand I feel that they could form an influence that would have a very definite effect on the value of broadcasting.

I must divide what I call the good listeners into two categories: one, the listener who listens by himself, without interruption or difference of opinion as to what should be listened to; and the listener who is one of a family circle, who has to listen to his favourite programmes through interruptions or conversations, or have inflicted upon him matter which he is far from wishing to hear. This second condition is one that really holds broadcasting back from being the influence that it ought to be. It accounts, I think, for the amount of irritation which seems to inspire so many people's comments and views on broadcasting as a whole. Where so delicate and personal and sensitive a thing is a matter of dispute or wrangling, or of being forced to share something you do not want and deprived of something you do, there is bound to be a very maiming and distorting result; there is bound to be irritation; and there is certain to be a desire to find some cul-





prit on whom the listener can lay the blame for what is really the misfortune of the circumstances in which he listens. Of course the broad back of the British Broadcasting Corporation is the natural place for this burden to be laid. For my own part, I deeply sympathize with those listeners who suffer and give tongue to this sense of irritability, but it is really of no use, since the fault lies in circumstances over which they may or may not have some control, but over which Broadcasting House has certainly none. The only decent thing to do where several people have to share the same listening set is to have some kind of voting as to what shall really be the evening programme, or a system of choosing in turn what shall be the main item to listen to.

So it is the solitary listener, or he who can control his company as well as his choice of programme, who really gets the best out of broadcasting and whose

criticisms and suggestions are likely to be the most valuable and helpful. I daresay I am particularly fortunate as to the conditions in which I listen. I have a set built by the B.B.C. engineers for me, and designed specially to give the most perfect quality in reproduction of the two London programmes alone, and maintained by expert engineers. (No, I cannot tell you its name, because there is only one of it.) I either listen alone or in company chosen by myself, and in such company I never listen to more than one programme item at a time, when there is no conversation or interruption; and unless I am listening to it attentively, my set is switched off. So that I am never afflicted by broadcasting; I do not have things inflicted upon me that I would not wish to hear, or if I listen to such items it is as a matter of duty and in a strictly impersonal way. I have told my readers this because I want them to have patience if they think me a little intolerant of the low standards





of listening that I know are so prevalent. I do very much want those standards to be improved; I would like to see a great step forward made, not only in the quality of receiving apparatus employed, but in the attitude of mind of the listener towards the service as a whole.

Now if solitude is the ideal condition for listening, it is nevertheless a selfish method of enjoyment; but I am far from being sure that listening in company, trying as it may be in some ways, is not the most healthy kind of test to which the programme can be subjected. Of course, when I say listening, I really mean listening, and not treating the radio programme as a background to general conversation. But I think that what may be called the cultural effect of broadcasting is enormously increased when the programmes are heard by people in one another's presence. If you can imagine a million listeners in England, each isolated from all the others, and all receiving the broadcaster's private and

secret message for a million private ears, it would be altogether too queer and mysterious. Just as the people who make up the audience in a theatre react on one another, so do three or four people listening together to a broadcast programme.

The effect of something you hear may be very much qualified by the fact that you hear it in the presence of other people and not alone. There are things which you can say to one person and not to a crowd; and it is a fact that some broadcasters do very definitely address the individual, while others appear to be addressing a great gathering. There was a wonderful example of this in certain political broadcasts, when Sir John Simon sounded to me as though he were addressing a very subtle and individual persuasion to me alone; while in the case of Mr. Lloyd George I felt that I was one in a vast crowd, and that we were being harangued as a multitude.





Both forms of address have their uses; but the second form gains very much if you listen to it in company, while the first is better enjoyed alone. And there are things in broadcasting which you would pass over or ignore if you were listening to them alone, but which would not pass muster if subjected to the test of being listened to in company. The tell-tale glance, the meeting of eyes in disparaging or approving agreement, may be most effective. I take it that there is some scientific theory about all this which I do not know. For example, is education better administered to the individual or to the class? Does one learn a subject better by learning it in company or by studying it alone? The educationists apparently believe in group listening, for they form such groups to listen to broadcasting up and down the country. It seems to me, on the whole, that the effect is more fertilizing, so to speak, when listened to in company. Different impressions are produced on different

people, and these, when given expression to, suggest developments and expansions of the subject that would probably not take place in the mind of the solitary listener. So let those overcrowded listeners who may be inclined to sigh with envy over the ideal conditions which I have described remember that in sharing the experience of listening they have the chance of getting more out of it than they would if listening alone.

But there is another influence at work at the reception end of broadcasting which is at least as important as the mental attitude of the listener, and that is the condition of the receiving apparatus itself. I am convinced that the average efficiency of the receiving sets that are being used in England is extremely low. There was some excuse for this a few years ago, when no kind of finality as to principles of design had been arrived at. But I am told that the receiving sets designed and made in this country are





now as good as any in the world and better than most; that their price is very much reduced; that they do not require skill and delicacy of touch in adjustment; that, in a word, they are listener-proof. Yet there are people who can well afford to have the best, who are content to go on using ancient lash-up contrivances, assembled by people who really did not know their job, and which give only a caricature of what is being broadcast. One of the most serious aspects of the matter is that people get accustomed to the particular kind of distortion which their instruments produce, and think that they like it, although they wonder sometimes why they are not more enthusiastic about broadcasting. Personally, I think broadcasting is only enjoyable when one has perfect reception; and it is the listener's duty to take care of that part of reception which is under his control, and to see that his listening set is one that is capable of telling the truth. In these days of low

prices and easy payments, such apparatus is within the reach of nearly everyone; it is all a question of the degree of importance that people attach to it. I know people who will spend three or four hundred pounds on a new motor-car every few years and who would think that twenty pounds spent on a receiving set was an unjustifiable expense. I have no criticism of such a view provided that such people do not listen at all; but for these same people to hang on to some agent of distortion on the ground that they consider it is good enough, is an injustice to broadcasting, to science, and to themselves.

It appears that there is still a large broadcasting public that prefers listening with headphones to the more sociable loud-speaker, because the headphone is the only solution of the listening problem in houses where several people share the same room and have different evening occupations. Those who wish to





listen can do so, isolated, so to speak, with their own headphones, while those who are not interested can read or pursue some other occupation. This is all very well, but it is at the best a negative solution. If people are talking or making any other kind of noise it is bound to intrude on the listener and to mingle with whatever is coming through the headphones in a somewhat disastrous way; and, of course, it does not solve the problem of the alternative programme. If one wants to listen to the Regional and another to the National programme, there is nothing to be done except to provide a separate set for each programme, and few people are enthusiastic enough for that. It is true, alas! that under the present conditions of transmission, listeners in some districts can sometimes get both programmes at once on the same set, with perhaps a dash of German or French thrown in. For them there is no hope, except in the expert electrical engineer.

There is obviously a large number of listeners who suffer a good deal from the company of those who are not interested and have to tolerate the inevitable interruptions and disturbances. One correspondent suggests that in such cases, where one or two members of the family are interested and the others are not, "a room should be set apart for the exclusive use of those who want to listen. In my youth we were all expected to herd together in one room, however different our tastes and occupations. But, nowadays, when young people are continually being labelled as rebels, I think they would be entirely justified in being allowed to listen in peace." This depends, of course, on the powers of insistence of the young people concerned; and in how many houses where this kind of problem is likely to arise, would it be possible to provide a separate room for listening? This, I am afraid, is a counsel of perfection. The real problem remains, in ninety-nine homes out of a





hundred: whether individual privacy in listening is to be attained by means of headphones, or whether listening is to be a social and communal affair from which the unwilling listener must either excuse himself or put up with the infliction for the sake of the others.

Another point of view comes from a friend who recently arrived home from a three-years' exile in India. When abroad he was very much starved for music, as I gather that broadcasting in Madras is almost wholly restricted to "the weird and wonderful gurglings that the Tamil knows as vocal music." This reader is thoroughly appreciative of the benefits of English broadcasting as received through the medium of a really good set; and he is all in favour of listening in company. This, in spite of the fact that he was living with several other men in India who did not share his good taste in gramophone records, so that he has been accustomed to doing

his listening alone. "To come home and listen to good music in an atmosphere that is friendly to one's appreciation is to more than double the pleasure that such music provides. It is not always so much a question of similarity of tastes as of appreciation of one's view-point. Without this, one is more lonely than ever. Listening in company requires more than tolerance—it requires broadness of understanding; and the high-brow who looks down on the low-brow, and the low-brow who just as blindly isolates himself from the high-brow, are uncompanionable listeners." That, then, would seem to be the ideal condition in listening, as in other things—true companionship. A test of its value might have been found in the broadcast of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's eloquent speech on the occasion of a recent birthday dinner. To listen to that alone was to long to share it, not only with one companion, but with everyone with whom one had a sense of community in





values. It was not enough to enjoy it oneself; one would almost have been willing to forgo it, so that others might hear it. And others did; that is one of the benefits of broadcasting; you can share things without yourself doing anything about it. True and intimate companionship is so rare that I am afraid it is unlikely to be of very wide application to our particular problem of the moment. One would almost be tempted to say that, in a state of really true companionship, listening to broadcasting would be an unnecessary resource. But it is true that (if we can estimate pleasure or happiness in terms of volume) the volume of a happiness shared is, instead of being halved, more than doubled. Companionable listening is ideal, not only for its own sake, but because it develops companionship. The first test of all companionship is whether the companions can share a silence; and perhaps the second is whether they can share something that invades their silence.

The more one recognizes the almost boundless possibilities of broadcasting the more acutely does one become aware of—not its limitations, but its positive disadvantages. If only one could *prevent* a certain broadcast from being heard by certain listeners! What peace there would be! What universal delight with the broadcasting service, and what unanimous approval for the patient and long-suffering people who organize and control it! For if you consider the complaints and so-called criticisms of broadcasting, you will find that they arise, not from a failure to provide something that the critic likes, but from the provision of something which he does not like. It is exactly as though, on scanning the daily family dinner menu, you observed that the cook, in addition to providing three of your favourite dishes, had included someone else's favourite dish, which you happen to dislike, or merely not to want. Upon which: "Away with the whole dinner! Discharge the





cook! Get rid of the housekeeper! Let us call in an experienced butcher and entrust the whole affair to him!"

Like most illustrative similes, metaphors, and figurative parallels, this contains a slight element of exaggeration; but it also represents the truth. Read or listen to any of the current chatter directed against broadcasting, and forget the great and, for the most part, silent tide of public appreciation by which it is borne along and by favour of which alone it exists; and you will find that the cause of irritation lies nearly always, not in something wanted and lacking, but in something present and (at that moment and by that individual) not wanted. Hence my longing for some technical device by which one could render certain programmes inaudible to certain people, and so leave unspoiled their enjoyment by those who appreciate them. For it does not add to—nay, it detracts from—one's enjoyment of any-

thing to be aware that someone else is hating it. And it is the vice of a great many listeners (of which it is ever necessary to remind them) that they *will* go on listening to things they know they don't like. Why, I cannot say. Listening to broadcasting, apart from the value or interest of the thing broadcast, is one of the poorest forms of entertainment I can imagine. Is it possible that, after all these years, there are still people who, looking at the contraption of valves and coils which represents their receiver, switch it on in the expectation that *it*, by its mere functioning, will entertain them, irrespective of what is put into it or comes out of it? Anything is possible—even, I suppose, the survival, through years of development, of an attitude of mind which was natural in the first weeks or months of broadcasting—especially on the part of those who had laboriously constructed their own apparatus, and conceived themselves to be in part the authors of the





miracle. If there indeed be any such among my readers, I beg them to read no further.

Having thus, with a word, isolated the offending listeners, let the rest of us get together and consider how we would deal with them (for their good) if we could. I would like broadcast transmission to be supplemented by its very opposite—a highly directionalized (if you will forgive the word) wave which could be concentrated on one place in one house, even on one room in one house, to the exclusion of all others. My ray would be capable of infinite multiplication, so that it could be directed on thousands of individual spots, although it could never spread or broadcast, and would be neutral to all receiving sets save those on which it was deliberately concentrated. I would have a special programme sub-department, working in intimate touch with the Programme Correspondence Department and the Editor

of the *Radio Times*, to deal with the matter broadcast on this wave-length. This department would be independent of all economic considerations, or of any responsibility towards the public as a whole. Its business would be to analyse complaints and criticisms, and endeavour, on this selective wave-length, to give to those who took out an R.G.B. (Really Good Broadcasting) licence (price *2d.*, but involving the obligation to listen for three hours daily for one month, the duration of the licence) a programme prepared exactly in accordance with their wishes. The number of programmes so sent out simultaneously would, of course, be limited, but the majority of complainers would be studied first. Would that not be a boon, my radio critic? Think of the joy of having, nightly for a whole month, the programme of your own choice, and your own specified conception of Really Good Broadcasting! You may well ask me, at this point, where the punishment would come in?





The punishment would consist in your getting exactly what you said you wanted, and in having to listen to it for a month.

An unknown correspondent described an experience in listening which I imagine is representative of a good many. For several years he ignored broadcasting; never thought about it, except as a kind of hobby of people who had a passion for making things, and for whom little trays of terminals in shop windows had an uncanny attraction. Then someone gave his children a crystal set. He picked up the headphones one day, heard the most delightful strains of music—and fell a victim to something which passed through the various stages of being an obsession, a tyranny, and a habit. Immediately he changed the crystal for a valve set, exchanged that for another and more powerful one with a loudspeaker, and spent all his leisure hours at home in the presence of that inexhaustible familiar. To be brief, he sur-

feited himself with entertainment and instruction. He, who had been in the habit of going to a concert perhaps twice and to a theatre perhaps half-a-dozen times a year, glutted himself with symphony and chamber concerts, with plays and talks and entertainment of every kind. Then he began to think the programmes were not so good as they had been; soon, he was sure of it. He who had forced his family and friends, willing or unwilling, suddenly to listen, on his point-blank demand, to whatever happened to be going on, became one of the deriders of broadcasting. Then something went wrong with his set or his batteries; when he did want to listen he heard only strange or distorted sounds; and so on. Then he chanced to read something from my pen on the abuse of broadcasting and on the necessity for cultivating an art of listening. He resolved to try again. He had his set put right, and as he began to listen again the first thing he heard was a broadcast





of one of the brilliant orchestral concerts of Toscanini. He again marvelled, and realized the possibilities and opportunities at his disposal; and in a more selective and moderate spirit began to listen again. To use his own words, he "got his second wind" as a listener.

Now it is just that "second wind" that we all need to get, in broadcasting as in everything else, if we are usefully to stay the course. Enthusiasm and infatuation are all very well as agents of initiation, but in so far as they lead to excess they lead to disproportion and disillusionment. My correspondent admits that he has never recovered his first rapture of astonishment when he heard the first strains of music through the magic of the crystal; but he admits that listening to broadcasts now has a definite and rational place in his life without which it would be barer and poorer. It is so with everything; the first wonder can never be recaptured or renewed.

Like the song of the angels on the night of the Nativity, it has a quality of which any subsequent harmony can be but an echo. Things become more expensive, more complicated, more deliberately elaborated; and we wonder how it is that they do not appeal to us as they once did. But the first, gasping catch of the breath is not a permanent method of respiration. We must get our "second wind" before we can settle down to a pace that can be maintained. And so with broadcasting. To be obsessed by it is not to use, but to abuse, it. It is a new force in the world; no one knows yet what the effect is going to be of mobilizing the same thought in millions of brains simultaneously. That it must ultimately make for an increasing unity of the human race is almost certain. And in preparation for that, we shall all, nations as well as individuals, need our "second wind."

The world we listen in, I need not remind you, is the world we live, eat, and





sleep in, struggle, fight, love, suffer, succeed, fail, and die in; therefore, everything concerns us. From its beginnings in rather crude entertainment, broadcasting has developed so that it touches life, with more or less reality, at every point. Therefore the listener must learn to take it as seriously as he takes life, always keeping firm hold on those two lifebuoys of the soul—a sense of humour and a sense of proportion. Now there are two things which we all think we can do rather better than the next man. We all know what the first is; the second is, to arrange a wireless programme. You know you think you could, and that you have often said so. Well, I want you to get that idea permanently out of your head. Believe me, there is no man or woman living who could build the perfect programme for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. If you are very clever and experienced, you might do it for a week; and every programme you build would inspire someone with the

idea that he could do it much better. That is part of the secret fun of broadcasting: there is no absolute; there is no finality. Everyone is learning all the time, and the most successful are the people who realize that, and who know that the whole thing is an endless adventure. Everyone who goes to work on programmes at Broadcasting House starts with the same idea: that it is all quite simple, that "all that is wanted" is a "fresh outlook," and other desirable but rather vague things. I have seen some of these reformers at work, and noted the varying time it has taken them to discover that it is not simple, and that when their generalities have to take form in a multitude of items, in each of which a number of human personalities are concerned, what had seemed so easy becomes colossally difficult.

What I want to stress is that the chief element in broadcasting is not the artist, not the engineer, not the organizer, but





the listener. In the long run, in matters of supply and demand, people get the service they want or deserve. Good listeners will produce good programmes more surely and more certainly than anything else. And many have not even begun to master the art of listening; they have not even begun to try. An epicure is not a man who opens his mouth and lets in a stream of nourishment. He selects, he rejects. The arch-fault of the average listener is that he does not select. I include myself in the indictment. I am often a bad listener, and lazy about looking ahead. I am too often guilty of "turning on the wireless" without any idea of what I am going to hear, and then being displeased because it is something I do not like. We should always remember this in criticizing programmes: the programme-builder's function is much more that of a provider than a selector of the ideal programme. It is for you to select from the material he provides. It is for him to see that the material is good in

quality and ample in variety; and the test of a programme is (and this must be said over and over again) not whether every item through the day is agreeable and congenial to you, but whether, throughout the whole day, there is not a single item, given at an hour convenient to you, to which it would be agreeable or profitable for you to listen. If you found many days without such an item, you would be right in saying that there is something wrong with the broadcasting programmes. But I doubt whether you would find one such day in a year.

## *Chapter XI*

# VOICES FROM THE WEST

THE farther you get from London, the more broadcasting seems to mean. I have had a good deal to do with it in Cornwall ever since the first broadcast of the Nativity Play from the now famous church of St. Hilary. Since then, plays and a sermon have been broadcast from the same remote source—and always with a response from listeners of quite unusual enthusiasm. The fact is that broadcasting means far more in these remote lives than it does to town dwellers, and I imagine that its influence is correspondingly greater. For example, the annual broadcast of the St. Hilary Nativity Play has had the excellent effect of starting something like an epidemic of these celebra-

tions all over the country. In Cornwall alone I know of five churches where Nativity plays were given in 1931. Now that seems to me an excellent result of broadcasting, and a contradiction of those who say that broadcasting kills initiative, and that people who can always listen to others doing things will not try to do them for themselves. These Nativity plays are of very varying merit, and are imminently threatened by the Scylla of the cotton-wool-snow-and-robins conception of Christmas, and the Charybdis of sentimentality and preciosity. But the quality of them is unimportant beside the value that lies in doing things for ourselves. One night, in a howling, south-westerly gale, I set out to motor the ten miles that separated me from the Land's End, to attend a Nativity play that was being given in the parish church of St. Just-in-Penwith, a large mining village that is the last centre of population in England. The road to it lies high in the centre of the rocky spine

that juts out into the Atlantic; and on this night the wind was shrieking and howling like a legion of devils, and threatening to lift my car off the road. The effect of it opposing us was like that of a steep hill, and one had to charge it on a low gear. On such a night, in such a place, one really did feel that one was far away from everything and everyone. It seemed impossible to relate St. Just with anything in England, so entirely cut off did it seem in this world of howling darkness. But the big church was packed. It was in darkness, too, except for the candles that lit the actors in the chancel; but one felt the presence of that attentive throng like a living influence. The actors were people of the village; the accent of many of them would have rendered their speech unintelligible to a stranger; they had no equipment but whatever understanding or power of expression Nature had endowed them with. And so the whole play had that slightly savage quality that

such circumstances induce. What was remarkable about it was the atmosphere of devoutness, unlike that produced by any ordinary church service. One could feel it, almost like a thickness in the dark air; and when the gale tore at the roof and shook the old walls, and with its moaning voice drowned the speech of the actors, it was as though a spirit not of this world or time had come in response to some invocation.

And the very next evening I was sitting amid another devout throng—half a thousand at least—listening to, or rather watching, the same story being enacted. St. Mary's, Penzance, might be called the mother church of Western Cornwall. Crowning the rocky steeps by Penzance harbour, it has an almost metropolitan dignity. And here, on a more elaborate scale, the Nativity Play was being displayed in the darkened church in a series of tableaux against a background of music. This was the first time the play had been given in the church itself, and

the effect on the audience was obviously profound. One felt that this experience was giving the people a new relationship to the church, making it at once more hallowed and more homely than before; and that in being the scene of solemn and lovely entertainment it embraced a new and larger part of their lives. The white lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament seemed to have a new and added significance in the presence of these acted scenes of the Nativity and childhood of Christ. Our forefathers knew what they were about when they used the church as a theatre.

Only from Cornwall, and only from St. Hilary, could have come that unique and memorable broadcast *The Western Land*. It was, and remains, something quite new in form, and contained a real thrill for people who listened with imagination. It was a conversation between four Cornish workers. It was not written by them, because if it had been

it would be artless; but it was their thought, their speech, their language written out and given back to them to speak by one who thoroughly knew them and their lives. Such a thing is hopeless without art, because, oddly enough, it requires the artist to put realism into a record of fact. We have heard bus-drivers and lighthouse-keepers and others give over the microphone what they conceive to be a picture of their lives; but in my view that failed just because they had not the art to give a picture of anything. They gave what they thought somebody else would write if he were writing about their lives. They echoed what they thought they remembered in other writers. In a word, they took themselves and reality quite out of their talks, and gave us a conventionalized picture with all the real romance and the poetry missing. In *The Western Land* you found the true romance and the poetry of outdoor labour in Western Cornwall most faithfully and

vividly presented in the rich dialect and plangent voices of the workers themselves. This has only been achieved by the intervention of art. Father Bernard Walke, who lives among these people and knows their lives intimately, has the power to put the romance of them into their own words. Of course we are very dependent on weather conditions for an outside broadcast involving so long a relay (for it comes from St. Hilary, where these men live), but with any luck in that respect, I can undertake that it will never fail to open a window out of our own familiar lives into something remote and strange.

One of the charms of this dramatic narrative is the zest in simple work and life that it conveys. It is not every one of us who can be said really to like his work. It may be congenial, it may be tolerable, it may be monotonous; but to few workers is it given to get the chief joy and zest of their lives from

their work. I think you will get the impression from these Cornishmen that they have enough poetry in them to see the beauty and endure the pathos of their own hard lives. You will find a ring of sincerity and of appetite in their voices that cannot be imparted by literary means or inspired by any merely dramatic intention, and that gives another rare interest to this broadcast. When work is just weariness to so many people it is heartening to be reminded that there are still those in our land, away from the rush and roar of town life, who really can find happiness in such hard, simple labour as that of the fields and sea. They are aware that it brings them into contact with the great world of nature, and that *that* is life and reality just as much as the deliberations of statesmen and the sufferings of saints and martyrs. We know that fewer and fewer boys now are being apprenticed to handicrafts. The village smith or carpenter had formerly at least two or three apprentices, but now there

are none. A fisherman at Brixham told me the other day that the sea industry of that lovely port is dying out, and that the sons are not following the fathers in the ownership of the trawlers which, one by one, are being laid away or broken up. It is not that the consumption of fish has gone down or that the sale of it is not profitable. The cause lies in the restless sense of dissatisfaction with familiar surroundings and in the desire to fly away from the familiar to what is thought to be the larger world of adventure. "O that I had wings like a dove!" says the young Brixham fisherman, watching the shadows flowing over the lovely, fluttering sails of his boat; and forthwith packs his cardboard suitcase and takes the train for Plymouth or London. He may think that what he finds there is adventure and an enlargement of life; but it has spoiled him for the rigours and joys of the craft to which he was born. Whatever he suffers or achieves, he will never go back and be a fisherman again.

And that is happening in many other places besides Brixham. It is happening in Cornwall just as much as anywhere else. The point of view expressed by the men who take part in *The Western Land* is, alas, far from common, either in Cornwall or elsewhere. It is not because the views of these men are representative that Father Walke has enshrined them in this little work of art, but because they are dying out. There still linger here and there men like those whose voices you will hear, who are aware of the meaning and reality of their hard and simple lives, but they are fast disappearing; and it is well that we should hear their voices and know their thoughts while they are still with us and before they have faded into merely a memory and tradition.

There is bound to be a flavour of the strange and foreign if the real "atmosphere" (to use a much-abused term) of remote places and their inhabitants can

be communicated with sincerity. For example, the Sunday listeners who assisted in spirit at a broadcast of Evening Prayer from St. Hilary in October 1931, had an experience that could be found no otherwise than by contact with the remote west. Religion in Cornwall is in a condition quite different from that in any other part of England. Before the Reformation this remote and in some ways foreign population were noted for their devotion to a faith which had rescued them from pure Paganism. When the Reformation came they, in their remote isolation, understood nothing of the political and material agencies that were at work within and around it. All they knew was that they had lost the forms of faith that were familiar to them and had substituted for them something new and strange and foreign. Talk of "innovations"! Here was everything they knew and believed in swept away, and a strange, cold, and largely unintelligible form of worship substituted. Most of

them did not speak or understand English. The Latin of the Mass and of their hymns of devotion they knew; but what was this? The high and polished English of the Prayer Book never touched them; it was something official, something which great people no doubt knew and understood; but all they knew was that they had lost what they believed in and were given as a substitute something that they could not assimilate. Hence that pathetic and hopeless Pilgrimage, and the cry, "Give us back the Mass."

But the hands of the clock are never put back. The new religion, self-supporting, with its tithes and endowments, was independent of their approval or understanding; and to a very large extent the Church of England in Western Cornwall became a dead letter. The people, deprived of the religion they knew, and their faith shaken by its disappearance, fell gradually back into complete apathy, half-way to the Paganism in which the

coming of Christianity had found them. I suppose there was never anything quite so dead as religion here in the seventeenth century. The clergy themselves ceased to take it seriously; they drew their emoluments and amused themselves as best they could. Then, in the darkest hour, came John Wesley, who blew on the dying embers of faith and kindled them into a blaze of pious fervour such as no other religious revival has seen. Chapels began to spring up all over the country, built by the hands of the miners, in which to enshrine this restored treasure which, they felt, had no home or place in the parish churches. In this form religion came back to Western Cornwall, and in this form it still remains. But the blaze could not be kept up. The real spirit of religion, the surviving sparks of which were fanned back into life by Wesley, found something lacking in pure pietism, and in the warm atmosphere, social rather than spiritual, which characterized their community. The mysticism

of a sacramental religion was not there, to keep sweet the spirit of a creed that grew harder and narrower; and the void thus left, like a vacuum, began to fill itself in accordance with an inevitable law. The Oxford Movement began in Oxford; but, even before it, there were clergy in the West of England to whom the Catholic rather than the Protestant aspects of the Church of England appeared as the essentials. As this increasing recognition of the value of tradition in religion developed and spread, nowhere was it absorbed more naturally than by those whom, in a way, the Reformation had hardly touched; who felt dimly that here was the other half of what Wesley had only restored in part. The Catholic and the evangelical aspects of religion, apparently hostile when separated, fused in combination into an evangelical Catholicism which, in Western Cornwall, seems to have brought back to many the old Faith revived by the Wesleyan fire.

The main fact to remember is the *foreignness* to the Cornish people of the Church of England as it came to them. What seems so essentially homely and English to some of us—the stately parish church, the well-endowed vicarage, the respectable sauntering of well-to-do people dressed in good Sunday clothes, across a smiling landscape, to hear matins and evensong—that could never have come from this remote population in a wild, bare land. A savage land needed a savage and crude religion—the pure Mass or red-hot Methodism ; nothing tame or polite, or smug or comfortable would endure, or has endured, for long here. Hence, if you had been present at St. Hilary on that Sunday, you, coming from some rich and smiling precinct, might have felt that you were in foreign surroundings ; but spiritually, I hope, you would have felt at home.

There is something very characteristic and instinctive about our choice of direc-

tion when we are setting out on a journey of pleasure. If you are going for a motor journey from London, for example, and there is no particular reason why you should go in one direction more than another, the imagination will almost certainly turn to the west. Whatever part of the world be native to us, there is something directional in our instinct of movement. We in England, situated on the verge of the Old World, naturally turn westward. All our history has flowed from east to west. Our civilization has swept along the same path, and continues to move ever westward with the sun, while our roots and our past lie in the darkening east. If we want to journey back into time, our instinct is to go eastward, where the dust lies deep over the history of mankind; but if we want new things, our instinct is to turn to the west and follow the pioneer paths that men have followed from the old life to the new.

So to come from great things to small.

## *Voices from the West*

In a desire to travel through England and see the variety of her life and countenance, our first instinct is to start westward from London. It is three hundred miles from London to the Land's End, and it is the same distance to Carlisle. But the one journey is a complete thing, and will carry us to the very verge of the land; the other is but a stage on a road that cuts, as it were, across the directional human stream, leading ever farther and farther away from our familiar centres towards an ultimately inhospitable north. All the activities of manufacturing, and the blank agricultural spaces of the Midlands, lie like a kind of mental barrier in our thought of such a journey; whereas, when we think of the west we think of a steady and smooth progress through what is the heart of England, with English history lying thick about us, and the traces of civilization and of conquest, the marks of extinct races and long-forgotten wars and victories, lying in the tracks of our wheels almost continuously.

Also we go with the sun, and there is something pleasant in that. I constantly make this journey between London and the end of Cornwall in one day; it is a long day, and its character varies according to whether I am travelling east or west. With sunrise at seven, I set out from London with the sun, and have him with me practically all day long, only outstripping him a little to reach my destination a few hours before he goes down into the western sea. But going east is another matter. He is low on the horizon, burning into my eye, as I start the long journey. We meet and he passes me overhead somewhere in the middle of Somerset, and is three hundred miles behind me when I draw up before my door in London. On the one journey we have kept company; on the other we have passed and saluted one another like travellers who are accustomed to the road and expect to encounter their regular fellow-voyagers at about the same time and place. When I first began to make

this journey, the road was one long ribbon of strangeness, as impersonal as the lines of a railway. It began with one familiarity and ended with another; but otherwise led through a kind of desert of the unknown. But as I made the journey more and more often, bits of it began to spring into memory and familiarity; more and more places and views on the way became customary and friendly to my eyes; and from thinking of the road as three or four sections—as from London to Salisbury, from Salisbury to Exeter, from Exeter to Bodmin, and from Bodmin to Penzance—it began, in my mind, to be crowded with a hundred familiar points of passage, so that little villages whose names I have never before realized or remembered became as important to me in their punctual reappearing in my line of vision as the great towns had been; until now the whole road is familiar to me. Every corner, every rise and fall, every bridge and stream, almost every tree or plantation of trees, swims

without surprise and without strangeness into a vision the memory of which has been trained by attentive scrutiny, repeated over and over and over again, of every inch of the road between London and Penzance.

As the life of the road has revealed itself to me more and more, so individual people whom I pass at the same time, in the same place, become here and there familiar; I miss them if I do not see them in my flashing passage, and wonder, sometimes quite anxiously, if they are well, or if some calamity has befallen them. I see the children going into morning school in Hampshire and coming out in Somerset or Dorset; I see them going back after dinner to their little toils in Devonshire, and bursting out like an eruption of joy on to the roads of western Cornwall—the same places, the same hours, the same children; and I often wonder if any of them recognize the car that so often passes them as they trudge along the road, and what they

would think if they knew that I looked upon the sunrise in London that morning and may see the sunset off the Land's End in the evening.

I believe that one of the secrets of the popularity of broadcasts from these remote places is that it is a kind of spiritual travel, and gives people who in the circumstances of their lives can never move far from one spot, a sense of freedom and release.

## *Chapter XII*

# MASS-PRODUCTION AND INDIVIDUALITY

THE making of programmes is in England in the hands of an extremely complex and, on the whole, competent organization with a tendency to function as a kind of government department rather than as an agency of creative art. But the volume and complexity of the material to be dealt with require a degree of administration which makes it almost hopeless for an individual personality to stamp itself on the programmes. And I have come to the conclusion that any real stimulating or effective assistance in programme-building on the part of independent outside agencies is, and has been proved to be, impossible. A continuous

and searching inside criticism exists in the organization itself, and hardly anything comes from outside which has not already been thought of, adopted, or tried and rejected. Broadcasting in this country is no longer in its childhood. It has necessarily been conducted by amateurs because it was a new thing, its technique had to be discovered and studied; those studying it necessarily have had to practice on the public. They have learned a great deal; and the public may very well leave them alone for a little while as regards the details of their work, and turn their attention to larger matters of principle and policy.

For my own part, I am frankly no longer interested in broadcasting merely from the point of view of whether we ought or ought not to have less jazz band music, whether Talks are more popular than Vaudeville, and matters of that kind. I am interested in broadcasting chiefly in a twofold way: first, how it is being

developed as a national influence; and second, how it is being developed as an art in itself. These are two very important aspects on which I invite the readers of this book to fasten their attention, because the more the influence of broadcasting is understood and felt, the more efforts will be made by various outside organizations, from political parties downwards, to get hold of it and use it in furtherance of their own particular aims. The more broadcasting succeeds in establishing itself, the more severe will this pressure become. Various agencies in the world we listen in will discover that we are listening; and when we will not listen to them, they will try to make us hear them through our loud-speakers. While broadcasting is in its present hands I am not very much afraid of these influences; but they are bound to be present, and as they increase something like statesmanship will be required to deal with them.

Do you realize to what extent already

broadcasting has established itself, not merely as a source of entertainment, but as a powerful influence in national life? For one thing, it has changed the face of musical England. Before it came into being, music in England was a Cinderella; it was the private preserve of a comparative handful of rather high-brow people who could afford to go to concerts, and of a few groups, principally German, who supported a few orchestras, mostly consisting of foreign players. The openings for instrumentalists were few and far between and very poorly paid. Now all that is changed. Orchestral playing is now a lucrative profession. No doubt this is partly due to combination and organization on the part of the profession, but such combinations would not be worth anything to their members if there was not ample material to work on, and to give musical employment. There are now British orchestras consisting entirely of British players all over the country. Every composer who has anything to say

now has a chance of being heard—which was not true even ten years ago. The B.B.C. has laid on music, like water and electric light, in every home; good music, too. You may or may not think that this is a good thing; you cannot deny that it is a very important thing, and that it will have very far-reaching effects on the mental outlook of the English people.

That is one side of broadcasting. Another side concerns the general cultivation of the public mind through the medium of talks, lectures, discussions, criticisms and organized study and exposition of certain subjects—not all of them by any means of a popular, but some of a highly complex and recondite character. The world is pathetically full of missionaries, anxious, above all things, to preach their particular gospel. Broadcasting is, of course, the ideal medium for that, and so we need not be surprised that, if we listen consistently enough, our ears will be, figuratively speaking, sprayed with every kind of information, every kind of

opinion, every kind of persuasion. All this is quite new. Beforehand, the individual was himself practically the arbiter of what he should receive in this way. Unless he took the trouble to search out books on every subject under the sun and read them, he was only informed about things in which he took some predisposed interest. But broadcasting has increased by some very large percentage that kind of education and culture which consists in becoming accidentally and superficially acquainted with all manner of facts and all manner of subjects. The consistent listener never knows what he is going to hear next from his radio cabinet; and the general result to the individual is all the difference between living in a hut in the wilderness and frequenting daily a crowded assembly where every kind of subject is discussed and every kind of news exchanged.

I should like my fellow-listeners to undertake, each on his or her own behalf, a little task of analysis. In thinking of

the part that broadcasting plays in your individual life, ask yourself this question : What kind of programme item is it that most appeals to me, and why ? For the moment you may ignore the particular divisions of programme matter such as orchestral *versus* solo music, military bands as opposed to talks or plays, and so on. I mean that you should think of some item that has very specially appealed to you and consider the reasons for it. I think you will come to one very definite conclusion, *i.e.* that the item which has had most appeal to you has been something which either has a very definite frame or setting, which cuts it off sharply from the background of ordinary life, or that it is inspired and infused with some very strong or definite personality. It is this quality of personality (I dislike the word, but I am going to use it because everyone will understand what I mean) which I particularly want to consider in relation to programmes.

The moment I begin to think of this

in connection with broadcasting, a number of popular broadcasters come to my mind. What is it that these men, who are so widely separated in their views of life, have in common? Surely it is that they have the power of creating a kind of atmosphere in which they speak, and which makes what they have to say produce a quite different effect upon us from what it would produce if the same words were uttered by someone else—or (in the case of atmosphere such as that which surrounds the Cornish broadcasts) if the same thing were done in a different framework, or without a framework at all. One can find an analogy for this quality of personality in the region of material manufacture. This is a day of mass-production, in which things exactly alike are turned out in vast quantities by means of a high degree of organization. What quality is opposed to mass-production? Individual craftsmanship. And what is it that gives the articles turned out by an individual craftsman—a Chinese

lacquer bowl, a Stradivarius violin, or even a pair of English shoes fashioned and built by one workman from beginning to end—a distinction which the mass-produced article cannot attain, and for which we are willing to pay in hard money? Nothing but this quality of craftsmanship, which puts the signature of personality on the work as surely as if the maker had signed it with his name. I dare say there are all kinds of economic virtues in mass-production, but I am not an economist, and I am more interested in individual excellence than in mass efficiency. All the mass-production in the world could never produce a Stradivarius violin or a Ming dragon bowl. What it can do is raise the general standard of things of a common kind, so that at least they will not fall below a certain degree of beauty or excellence; and, of course, it will make them cheaper. Now there is mass-production in broadcasting as in everything else. A large part of the programmes, in whatever

sphere it is—music, talks, drama, education, entertainment—is turned out with a scrupulous care that it shall not fall below a certain average. In our case this average is kept so high as to make our broadcasting service admittedly the best in the world. But high as it is, the craftsmanship of certain distinguished people stands out clearly above the mass-production of the general average.

Now when you have made your analysis and decided what is the particular quality that has endeared your favourite programme items to you, you will realize how wonderful it would be if every item on the programme could be endowed with that magic appeal. Theoretically there is no reason why it should not. It is the ideal of the broadcaster to escape from mass-production and to give the stamp of craftsmanship to all his work. How to do it? That is the difficulty. It is one thing to recognize something when we see it; it is quite another to

produce it when we want it. This individuality or personality is a shy bird which has to be sought for in places far from the glare of publicity. There are people who regard publicity as an almost divine benefit in itself, and that to be very much talked of and written about is the hall-mark of excellence and the goal of every artistic ambition. Whatever bearing this doctrine may have on the trade of selling a mass-produced article to as many people as possible, it has no artistic value whatever, and in matters of art, publicity is almost a synonym for vulgarity. For art is individuality; it is the gift of the rare and the few, not of the commonplace and the many. Therefore listeners will hope that the B.B.C. will do more and more in the way of research to discover and exploit two qualities that have already given distinction in many of its programmes. It is the individual framework and setting, with the personality behind in the background, which gives intimacy and

character to what is done. England, I am sure, is rich beyond all estimate in atmospheres and personalities that can give their message to the world through the microphone and yet themselves retain their quality of remoteness and isolation which is really the source of their distinction.

One of the strangest and most delightful things about broadcasting can only be experienced by those who use the microphone. I refer to its wonderful power of picking up the threads of acquaintanceship among people whose lives have perhaps only touched at some remote point in the past, and have since been so widely separated as to make the likelihood of a renewal of contact remote indeed. You sit alone in a quiet room and send your voice out, not in any particular direction or to any particular person, but into the whole ether; and here and there someone sitting in a room far away recognizes the voice and remem-

bers some remote moment of contact with the speaker, and writes and tells him so. Thus a living touch is re-established between human personalities that until that vibration went out into the ether were utterly divided, and as unconscious of one another as though neither of them had ever been born. By no other means can this be accomplished in anything like the same degree. The largest audience to which the actual voice of any speaker is audible is a matter of a few thousands at the outside. In a theatre or a church it is a matter of hundreds; but in broadcasting it leaps into millions. In the small actual audience the chance of such a spiritual recognition is so small as to be very unlikely; but when an individual speaks to millions of his contemporaries, it is far from unlikely, if he has lived at all a wide or full life; above all, if he has had other contacts with a large public, such as an author has, for a period of, say, five-and-twenty years, the probability of his voice

calling up some remote and long-forgotten human contact is very considerable.

I have just recently had an experience of this kind. A letter reached me from the principal lightkeeper of a lighthouse on a remote and storm-swept isle off the coast of Britain, and he reminded me of something that had completely passed out of my life and memory as though it had never been. Namely, of a certain summer night when I kept the middle watch with him in the Lizard Lighthouse at the extreme south point of England. That was twenty-seven years ago, when I was writing a book in which a lighthouse was one of the features. During all those years my friend had, in some pigeon-hole of his brain, kept a memory of me and of that night, and of the subsequent day when the Lizard cricket club played Cadgwith, and my friend's brother rescued the Lizard from disaster by taking nine wickets for thirty runs. As my friend says, " we have both had

many ups and downs since then." I have been over half the world in the throng of life, and he has spent those twenty-seven years in various lighthouses round the coast—all very lonely places. From the Lizard he went to the Longships, then to the Scilly Isles. He passed the years of the war sitting beside his lamp on a Devon foreland; then to Lowestoft for eight years; and now for three years he has seen every day the Irish Mail on its way between Kingston and Holyhead. Forty years of such a life must have an effect upon the mind and character very different from that of the lives of most of us. Time and solitude are things necessary to the life of the soul, and the lightkeeper has both in abundance. And so much silence must render him very sensitive to the character and individuality of human voices.

My friend tells me that he is in excellent health and has 403 cliff steps to climb and a suspension bridge to cross to reach

his stormy outpost. I have always had a great love for lighthouses and an affinity with those who live their lives in the solitary splendour of a world that consists of sun, sky, sea, tides, and rocks. To evoke this letter was like evoking a bit of my dead self. It had all completely departed from me; but the sound of my voice in that stormy lighted chamber unlocked the reservoirs of the ether, and gave it all back to me from the limbo of dead and departed things.