

INTRO

What happened to me last night? So many have telephoned, last evening and today, wanting to know why I was late getting on the air, and why I was so out of breath when I did get here, that I guess I'd better explain. Well, I had been shopping during the morning and early afternoon, and my desk was piled up with Christmas packages -- things from the "Five and Ten" -- and when I went out the door at six-thirty, on my way to the studio I loaded up my arms, picked up everything, the socks for Dad, the handkerchiefs for Aunt Lizzie, the hard candy for the kids. In fact I picked up everything -- everything but my news dispatches, my broadcasts notes. And, it wasn't until I got up here that I discovered it. Whereupon I proceeded to step lively and retrieve the notes. And when I got back here, was my face red! That's why I was so out of breath that one lady told me today that my first item sounded so breathless and excited she thought surely that I was announcing the end of the world.

It was the second time in over five years that I've been

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Dec. 18, 1955.

late. The other time was in Chicago nearly four years ago, when I got stuck in the traffic, arrived at the studio two minutes after six; forty-five, and found four Hawaiians on in my place.

Here's hoping it's another four years before I'm late again. And now what's late in the news?

ETHIOPIA

Lots of us would give a good deal to know what's really behind the diplomatic chess game in Europe ^{tonight.} Indeed, with that Paris peace plan now virtually consigned to the waste-basket, the game becomes not so much chess as "hunt the slipper"; ~~hunt~~ the answer to the riddle. It really is a most riddlesome situation. Of course today's developments have been ^{foreshadowed} ~~foreshadowed~~ for some time. And so, though the announcement from Geneva has a lot of "ifs" in it, it ^{is} the most definite declaration we yet have that the scheme concocted in Paris by Sir Samuel Hoare and Premier Laval ^{is} ~~was~~ to be abandoned. ^{It} What Great Britain and France actually told the Council was that the proposal would be withdrawn if either Italy, Ethiopia or the League objected. Now there have been protests from Ethiopia, but no definite rejection. There have been protests from League members, but no definite rejection. As a matter of fact, the gist of what Messrs. Laval and Captain Eden told the League today was this. "If you gentlemen can dig up a better suggestion, the field is all yours. We aren't going to insist upon ours." Thereupon the Council adjourned to think things over.

Here's the big puzzle in the situation. Political observers are saying: "Surely. Premier Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare

must have known that their scheme for ~~partitioning~~ partitioning Ethiopia would meet with a roar of protest." But, did they? ~~The~~ ~~resignation~~ ^{He} resigned ^{And that} Sir Samuel Hoare, this afternoon, seems to indicate that John Bull's Foreign ~~Min~~ Secretary was quite in earnest when he and the wily Laval concocted that partitioning of the Negus' territory. His resignation is the customary gesture of a Cabinet minister when he finds himself in hopeless disagreement with his colleagues.

The conjecture is now, "Who will succeed Sir Samuel, 'Flying Sam', as he is popularly known. The name that suggests itself to most of us is Captain Anthony Eden. But when Hoare's resignation was prophecied last week, the grapevine report was that his predecessor, Sir John Simon, would move his papers back into the Foreign Office.

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And today again there's a bit of real news from the front. Last night we were wondering why Mussolini's war office made such a to-do about announcing a signal defeat of Italian armies in northern Ethiopia. You will recall that Rome also informed the world that the battle was still raging.

Well now it becomes clear why that defeat was so unblushingly announced. It was in order to make the subsequent victory all the more important just as we thought last night. This afternoon's news of the end of that "great three-day battle" of a sweeping victory over Haile Selassie's forces, sounds bigger after yesterday's admission of defeat.

Addis Ababa confirms the battle - bitter fighting. And claims the Ethiopians have gotten behind the Italian lines.

CHINA

The only real bit of novelty out of the Far East today comes from the ladies of China. They are saying to their men folk: "If you can't push those ^{Nipponese} ~~caps~~ back, let us have a crack at it." ^{China gals} They are demanding admission to the state military training schools.

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At present the regulations of the Nanking Government exclude the so-called gentle sex from those establishments. ^{It} During the World War the Russians had a regiment of women. And they ~~had~~ do say it was one of the fiercest regiments ^{on} the eastern front. But when Chinese ladies want to take up the trade of soldiering, a trade that used to be considered rather disgraceful even for a man in China, the world certainly is moving.

BENES

At last, a
~~Well, it's interesting to have at least one~~ real peace story
to talk about. Everything is harmonious in Czechoslovakia. Dr.
Eduard Benes ^{*has been*} ~~was~~ elected President, to succeed the beloved Masaryk.
No bones broken, no fuss, no feathers flying, none of the disturbance that was feared. In short, one run, no hits, no errors.

Thus in its brief existence the Republic of Czechoslovakia establishes the fine republican tradition that its Presidents shall be men who have come up from the ranks. The story of Eduard Benes has several points of similarity to that of Thomas Masaryk. Like his predecessor, the new President was raised in poverty. Masaryk's father was a coachman in Vienna. ^{*He*} Benes was one of a family of eleven children, born to a peasant farmer in what was then Bohemia. Little Eduard apparently was not ^{*of*} much use with the hoe ^{*in*} ~~around~~ the paternal ~~fields~~. In fact, he was so clumsy that Papa Benes said in disgust: "You'll never make a farmer - all you're good for is teaching." ^{*And*} ~~As history turned out,~~ that was a break for the boy. He was allowed to go to school. Again, like Masaryk, he distinguished himself as a brilliant scholar. He did so well that eventually he went to the great Sorbonne in Paris.

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He met his brilliant predecessor, Dr. Masaryk, quite early in his career. They soon acquired a mutual respect. The influence of Masaryk over Benes has been strong ever since. After he left the Sorbonne, the new President became a lecturer on sociology and philosophy. When the War broke out, he was on the faculty of the University of Prague. The War and the inevitable collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy provided the big opportunity for both Masaryk and Benes. They foresaw what was coming and began working for Czechoslovakian independence from the beginning. Benes narrowly escaped arrest by the Austrian police. Indeed, there was a price on his head. There's a legend that he saved his life by jumping over a sleeping watch-dog and running like blazes until he crossed the frontier into Switzerland.

When the Treaty of Versailles created the Republic of Czechoslovakia, Dr. Benes, who had been one of its foremost spokesmen in Paris, became the new country's first Foreign Minister. His achievement in holding the job ever since establishes a remarkable record.

It is interesting to learn that the new President of

Czechoslovakia is democratic not only in origin, habit and thought, but in principle. Dictatorship, he believes, is bound to end in catastrophe. Personally, he is a man of simple habits, hates putting on the soup and fish, likes home life. Not much of a mixer. He was born near Pilsen, but never drinks ^{Pilsener.} ~~beer~~. Maybe that's why there was some objection to his election.

GOMEZ

A lot of ambitious gentlemen in the United States, were galvanized into activity today by the news of the death of Venezuela's dictator. I mean, of course, Venezuelan exiles, adventurers, soldiers of fortune, who at this moment are busy, scheming for ways and means of grabbing some shreds of the dead ruler's mantel. So long as Huan Vethente Gometh - Iron Man Gomez to us - was alive, they hadn't a chance. But Venezuela's iron man left no heir, - I mean no successor. So if you had a chance to be in certain cafes in New York and New Orleans this afternoon, you would have seen excited groups of men jabbering and planning.

I wonder where that fire brand, General Rafael Nogales, is at this moment? It's a safe bet he's spouting fire over the death of Gomez.

The Dictator's Cabinet met the first thing this morning and elected the Minister of War, General Contreras, as Provisional President of the country. He will hold the reins until the Venezuelan Congress gets together to elect a President to serve

until April, Nineteen-Thirty-Six. At that time, theoretically, a general election will be held. But many things may happen in and around Venezuela before that date.

General Gomez was an extraordinary character, a man of great, if somewhat ruthless, ability. There's no Horatio Alger element in the story of his life. His parents were rich though not born in the deep purple. Indeed, they say the future Dictator taught himself to read and write.

Like his predecessor, the stormy petrel, Scipriano Castro, Gomez was a wealthy rancher, or Haciendado, with large estates and multitudinous cattle in the valleys of the Andes. There's sardonic humor in the rise of Senor Gomez. He was Vice-President while Castro was President. Castro made the mistake of taking a trip to Europe, leaving Gomez in charge. The job proved to be so much fun that the Vice Presidente decided to keep it. He notified Castro that he needn't come back. And Castro obeyed - never returned. And Gomez never made Castro's mistake of trusting his subordinates too far. That is, he never took a vacation.

He kept steam up constantly in his private yacht, ready for a getaway, if necessary. But he never left his country. For that matter he seldom visited his capital, Caracas, never took any chance of running into a coup d'etat. Most of his time he spent at his own hacienda, separated from Caracas by five hundred miles of jungle and swamp. There he would hold court, administering patriarchial justice, sitting in a wicker chair under an old rubber tree. There to~~he~~ kept a private zoo. One of his favorite sports was ticking tigers and the ladies.

But his real favorite pastimes were cock-fights and American movies. He saw a cock-fight every Sunday morning of the year. To the movies he went religiously five times a week, even if he had to see the same film over and over again.

In appearance he was thin, wiry, with keen, blazing eyes and grizzled mustachios. If he was a tyrant, he was an exceedingly intelligent one. He avoided another mistake made by Castro, the mistake of confiscating the property of foreigners; a custom that had kept Castro in constant hot water with foreign

powers. Dictator Gomez did just the opposite. He encouraged foreigners to invest, especially in the oil fields. Then he put a tax on every barrel that went out of the country. As a result, Venezuela is supposed to have the soundest money in the world. What's more, she has a balanced budget and a surplus in the national treasury. In fact he made it a country with no ~~un~~ unemployment. What's more, the farmers pay no land taxes. Gomez also built the best highways in Latin America, partly perhaps because he enjoyed riding over them himself in his large fleet of expensive American cars.

Also he made himself the second richest man in South America. The only man on the continent more wealthy than Dictator Gomez was Simon Patino, Bolivian tin king about whom we had a romantic startling story several weeks ago.

Gomez had twelve thousand people on his personal payroll. He paid them something like fifty-two thousand dollars a week -- more than two and a half million a year.

He had made his brother Vice-President, but the brother

was murdered by political assassins in Nineteen-twenty-three.

And that leaves Venezuela today without a dictator for the first time in half a century.

ACCIDENTS

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A hundred thousand lives ~~are~~ lost in the United States every year by accident. That includes not only traffic casualties but things that happen in the home. As I ~~had occasion to~~ mentioned a few weeks ago, more people are killed in their own homes than on the open road. This is due to one cause or another -- slipping in the bath tub, handling electric fixtures ~~that~~ with wet hands, fires, and so forth. The government feels that many of those accidents are preventable. Hence, the conference that is going on in Washington today. Taking part in it were representatives of Governors of twenty-five states, national safety organizations, newspapers, magazines, traffic experts and safety directors.

The Chairman of the Conference is Mr. Roper, the Secretary of Commerce. His first suggestion was an exceedingly sound one. Uniform driving regulations in every state is one thing we need. So said ^{the} Secretary, ~~Roper~~. ^{And, as we know} The same idea has been urged by the Sun Oil Company in these broadcasts for a long time. ~~To a like end,~~

^{FF} The Automobile Manufacturers Association has made a donation of almost Fifty-five thousand Dollars to Harvard University. The object is to promote research in street traffic. This fund will

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make possible the awarding of fifteen fellowships of twelve hundred dollars each. These will be given to enable the men selected to put ~~xx~~ in one year's study at the Harvard Bureau of Street Traffic Research.

One of the most important committees in the National

Safety Conference is that which will study accidents in the home.

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Father falling down the back stairs; son home from the Junior Prom, falling up the front stoop - and so on.

BRIDGE

There's an amusing rumpus in the bridge world. It's all about that World Champion Bridge between France and America, the finals of which get under way at Madison Square Garden on Monday. It seems that the rumpus was started by Ely Culbertson. Maestro Culbertson is not a member of the American team that's to play the Frenchmen. The Energetic Ely doesn't approve of the contest and so wrote to the promotor of the affair, a colorful party known in the sporting world as Mike Jacobs who promotes box fights. Mr. Culbertson protested that the World Championship Match should be cancelled. He said the contest commercialized bridge. Tut tut. And dead, dear.

Whereupon Mr. Mike Jacobs took up the cudgels, and replied to his uncommercial brother Culbertson in a long letter, of which I am going to read you only a few words. To wit:

"As one promoter to another", says Mike to Ely. "I am amused at your holy horror over the prospect of commercializing a sport which I am informed has given you a couple of million dollars."

Brother Jacobs adds a postscript to his letter, saying:

"The World Championship Bridge Match will go on!" for the good
of mankind and Mike Jacobs.

To which he might have added:

SO LONG UNTIL TOMORROW.