

HOW TO RAISE A CHILD

THE DISTURBING LIFE—
TO DATE—
OF ORSON WELLES

By
ALVA JOHNSTON
and
FRED SMITH

THE most puzzled people in the United States on Sunday night, October 30, 1938, were the traffic policemen of New Jersey. There were plenty of frightened citizens in America at that time, but the most confused ones were the motorcycle cops on the highways between New York and Philadelphia. At about 8:15 or 8:20 P.M. most of the traffic over those roads suddenly went wild.

Hundreds of automobiles began to flash along at speeds which normally indicate gangsters leaving scenes of assassination. But there were family parties in most of the cars; the women and children couldn't all be gun molls and child racketeers. When a motorcycle man tried to overhaul one speeding auto, he was passed by two or three others. The stampede was in all directions. Nobody would stop for a policeman's hail.

Now and then, a traffic man would catch an incoherent shout that there was an "invasion" or that "the world was coming to an end."

There were puzzled policemen in station houses all over the country, as demands came over the telephone for gas masks and information as to the safest places to hide from the enemy. The second most puzzled group were the switchboard operators, as the telephones suddenly went crazy and began to rave deliriously. Next came the clergy; priests were startled by the rush to get confessions under the wire, and Protestant ministers astonished at the interruption of their sermons by demands for prayers to avert the impending doom of the world. Fourth in the order of puzzlement may well have been hospital attendants who were called on to handle the nervous wrecks and falling-downstairs cases.

The puzzled section of the population was slow in discovering the cause of the panic, because the panic-stricken people had different stories to tell. They had tuned in at different periods during the Columbia network's broadcast of the "invasion" and had many different ideas about the invaders. Some said they were octopuslike Martian monsters armed with



Orson Welles, werewolf of the air-waves, who panicked the populace with his broadcast of the Martian "invasion."

farm, hamlet, turnpike, knoll, swamp and creek in the terrain which the Martian monsters swept over; christened every cop and village loafer who got mixed up in the interplanetary unpleasantness.

It was this change of pace from the particular to the cosmic that paralyzed the reasoning powers of his listeners. The seasoning of little facts of geography and personal identity caused the Welles public to swallow his wildest absurdities. The "specificity of detail" is emphasized as an important factor in the panic in *The Invasion of Martians*, a book to be published early in 1940 by Dr. Hadley Cantril, assistant professor of psychology at Princeton University. This work, in which Doctor Cantril was assisted by Dr. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Dr. Frank N. Stanton and others, was financed by the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, which made a grant of \$3000 for the study of the episode because of its richness in mass psychology. Doctor Cantril described the Welles uproar as "the first modern

panic that has been studied with the research tools now available to the social scientist."

The boy wonder always moves in showers of fireworks, but he was dazzled by his own success in the Martian broadcast. He apparently had had no expectation his little Halloween entertainment would cause people to take to the hills in automobiles loaded with canned goods. The premier infant prodigy had no idea of becoming America's leading *enfant terrible*.

It is Welles' custom to have the original script of his radio shows rehearsed by others and recorded phonographically, so that, as he puts it, "I can hear it fresh aloud." Getting it "fresh aloud," he can grasp the merits and defects of a script better than by reading it. After listening to the recorded version, Welles revises the script. Before he had heard the electrical transcription of the rough draft of *The War of the Worlds*, Welles asked a technician at the Columbia studio what he thought of it.

"Very dull. Very dull," said the technician.

"What don't you like about it?"

"It'll put 'em to sleep."

Welles asked what was wrong.

(Continued on Page 38)

poison gas and death rays. Others thought it was merely the world coming to an end, as per schedule. Others identified the invaders as Germans; still others, as Japanese. Princeton sociologists, who interviewed victims of the panic in the interests of science, found one man who had thought the invaders were Chinese.

Scaring a Nation

THE wonder boy had broken loose again. Orson Welles, the child wizard, had had another brainstorm. This time the bizarre bratling had gone in for popular science. After having Harlemized and gangsterized Shakespeare, he had decided to put Orson Welles effects into the solar system. The twenty-three-year-old earth shaker had taken *The War of the Worlds*, an old-fashioned thriller written by H. G. Wells in 1898, and given it a modern treatment, using a combination of newscast and newspaper styles. His success in scaring the nation resulted from the capable handling of the old familiar earmarks of credibility. He gave names, addresses, occupations and other minute details; identified each

HOW TO RAISE A CHILD

(Continued from Page 27)

The technician said: "No human interest. Where's the love interest?"

It was luminously self-evident that the plot was short of love interest. The only action was that the armor-plated superdevils from the red planet exterminated all but three or four earth inhabitants and then died of colds in the head, because the armor, though protecting them against machine guns and cannons, didn't keep out germs. The routine method of introducing the boy-meets-girl angle would be to cause Mr. America to marry the Queen of Mars and spend the honeymoon on Venus, but Welles has too much artistic conscience for such a compromise. He agreed with the technician, however, that the piece was dull.

Albert Schneider, business manager for Welles, predicted that the young maestro would hurt the prestige of his Mercury Theater and of the Columbia Broadcasting System by putting such insipidities on the air; Schneider later showed the courage of his convictions by going to sleep during the Sunday-night broadcast. Welles was gloomy about it all. Had time permitted, he would probably have discarded the Martian invasion in favor of something lively. While revising the script, it occurred to him that the broadcast would take place on the night before Halloween. Seizing on this as a pretext to excuse the Martian hocus-pocus, he wrote an epilogue saying that the broadcast was the Mercury Theater's way of "dressing up in a sheet and jumping out the window and saying 'Boo.'" The question whether Welles intended to scare people may eventually be decided by juries. Lawsuits have been filed by persons who claim to have been hurt during the Martian reign of terror. The strongest part of the defense is that the broadcast was announced in the radio columns of newspapers as a dramatization of the H. G. Wells novel and that this was explained at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the performance.

Charlie McCarthy's Dual Role

The dial-twiddling habit was responsible for most of the trouble. The majority of listeners tuned in late and missed the announcement that the broadcast was fiction. Charlie McCarthy was both the hero and the villain. By his near monopoly of the air at this hour, he saved tens of millions from the Welles frightfulness. He is the villain, however, because he held the dial twiddlers with his wisecracks until after the rival network had introduced the Martian invasion as an H. G. Wells fantasy; then, yielding the microphone to singers, Charlie released the dial twiddlers to tune in on the eyewitness picture of world destruction without having advance notice that it all came under the head of entertainment.

According to the Gallup poll, 9,000,000 people heard all or part of the Martian broadcast; according to the estimate of the Princeton sociologists, approximately 1,750,000 people were frightened. At any rate, while Welles was grinding away at what he apparently considered an intolerably dull routine, strange things were happening around the country, samples of which are as follows:

Public-spirited citizens of Providence, Rhode Island, telephoned to the local

utility demanding a blackout. A Pittsburgh woman tried to drink poison, saying, "I'd rather die this way than like that." A linotyper of Selma, Louisiana, running in the dark, caught his chin under a neighbor's clothesline and thought he was hit by a death ray. A Mobile woman, getting the news on returning from the Greater Mobile Gulf Coast Fair, said to her husband, "I had a premonition that we should have gone to church instead of the fair." A colored woman, later interviewed by the Princeton sociologists, recalled that there was half a chicken left in the icebox, and said, "We might as well eat it now, because we won't be here in the morning." The staff of the Memphis Press-Scimitar rushed to the office to get out an extra. Misled by neon lights in the distance and by the gasoline-and-rubber fumes on the highways, many residents of New Jersey claimed to have seen and smelled the Martians, who were supposed to have landed near Princeton. A man ran into the Press Club at Princeton University saying that he had seen the Martian space ship explode and had observed animals jumping from it. The town of Concrete, Washington, got a double dose of terror, as the local power-and-light plant broke down just as Orson Welles was saying that the poison gas was choking him.

Among those interviewed for the Princeton treatise on mass psychology was a woman who refused to be reassured by her husband. When he demonstrated that jazz bands were broadcasting from other stations, she retorted, "Nero fiddled while Rome was burning." A Jewish woman who had previously come to feel that all catastrophes were aimed at the Jews, told the scientific workers that she had felt a sense of relief on learning that the Martians were mowing down their victims without regard to race or creed. One woman reported that through the blackest moments she kept saying to herself, "Well, anyway, I won't have to pay the butcher bill." A German family, picking up a few things and starting to run, had its plans disorganized when one of the children ran back into the house to rescue a canary. A working girl, who had saved up \$3.25 toward a pair of shoes, spent it on a railroad ticket and traveled sixty miles before she learned that it was only an Orson Welles holiday. The least frightened listener was Mrs. H. V. Kaltenborn, who knew, she said, that if anything big were really happening, her husband would be on the air interpreting it.

After Welles had started the stampede, various factors helped it along. Mobs love panics. Persons questioned in the scientific survey confessed that they "derived a certain satisfaction or pleasure" from their terror. Another factor was the news-bearer instinct. A professional nobody enjoys the momentary illusion of being a somebody when he is first with the news. Hardened nonentities never had such a chance of gaining temporary importance as in spreading the tidings that the world was coming to an end. Some commentators thought that Welles had merely exploded latent hysteria over the European situation. Republican philosophers found that the panic resulted from national jitters caused by the epileptic policies of the New Deal. A psychoanalyst, who gave his views to

Princeton inquirers, laid the blame on sex imbroglios. One university sociologist said the explanation was that all the intelligent people of the country were listening to Charlie McCarthy. Hitler and the Nazi press traced the uproar to the naïve contents of the American mind.

Orson Welles has a profound theory. The most terrifying thing, he says, is suddenly becoming aware that you are not alone. In this case, the earth, thinking itself alone, suddenly became aware that another planet was prowling around. Welles has another theory—namely, that the last two generations are softened up because they were deprived in their childhood, through mistaken theories of education, of the tales of blood and horror which used to be a part of the routine training of the young. Under the old system, according to Welles, the child felt at home among ghosts and goblins, and did not grow up to be a push-over for sensational canards. But the ban on gruesome fairy tales, terrifying nursemaids and other standard sources of horror has left most of the population without any protection against fee-fi-fo-fum stuff.

The First Citizen of Mars

Welles had nearly finished the broadcast before he detected that something was wrong. Through a glass partition in the studio he observed the entrance of several policemen, and he also noticed unwonted activity at a battery of telephones.

As soon as the broadcast was over, attendants hurried over to inform him that there were long-distance calls for him.

The first message was a threat of death from a chamber-of-commerce official of Flint, Michigan, who asserted that the population of Flint had been scattered far and wide and that it would take days to reassemble it. The next message gave statistics on the broken tibias and fibulas of Western Pennsylvania. Hundreds of dollars were paid to the A. T. & T. that night for the privilege of swearing at Welles. One telephoner called Welles, "You beauty," but none of the others paraphrased the claim that he was born out of wedlock. The thing grew serious as the death toll mounted. It was around twenty at ten P.M. Later research indicated that there had been no fatalities, but at the time Welles regarded himself as a mass murderer. But whether a wholesale killer or not, he had to get to the Mercury Theater to direct a dress rehearsal of The Shoemaker's Holiday. The infant prodigy has always had the ability to abolish instantly all subjects except the one he is concentrating on. For three or four hours, while he was drilling his cast, he was unconscious of everything else; on walking out to take a smoke, he was surprised to see his name in bright lights racing around the bulletin board which girdles The New York Times Building. Welles mentioned this on returning to the theater; somebody said he was crazy. He sighed and continued with the rehearsal, which went on until three or four A.M. The next day he apologized and explained all day long.

The chief victim of the panic is Welles himself. He is branded for life as the Mars man. People bear down on

(Continued on Page 40)

**THREE-WAY
FIRST AID**
—THE MODERN IDEA!

**FOR
BURNS**

**FOR
CUTS**

**FOR
SKIN
IRRITATIONS**

Unguentine is the antiseptic that's a burn remedy—the burn remedy that's an antiseptic! It gives one-two-three relief in the modern manner:

1. It contains **Parahydracin...* fights infection without stinging or staining the skin.
2. It is soothing, anesthetic; quickly helps relieve the pain of an injury.
3. It stays in contact, and promotes healing, usually without a scar.

Be Modern! Be Prepared!
Always keep a tube of soothing antiseptic Unguentine in the kitchen, instantly ready for cuts or burns... another in the tool compartment of your car... and an all-important third tube—or the economical jar... in the family medicine cabinet.

Tube 50¢
Jar \$1.

UNGUENTINE
FIGHTS INFECTION • RELIEVES PAIN
PROMOTES HEALING
Norwich
REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.



Welles at bay before a pack of reporters.

(Continued from Page 38)

him like ten thousand Ancient Mariners on one wedding guest and hold him while he listens to their Martian stories. He can detect a glitter in the eye of every stranger; from the nature of the glitter, he can figure to the split second how long it will be before the stranger comes over and opens a Martian conversation. Welles sees on nearly everybody a burning time fuse which at a given moment is going to burst into a Martian epigram or question. He is a pathetic figure today.

Out in Hollywood there are four time fuses burning on nearly everybody Welles sees. The first leads up to Mars; the second, to why he wears a beard; the third, to how he landed the most extraordinary contract in Hollywood; the fourth, to how he comes to be only twenty-four years old. No other newcomer's arrival in Hollywood ever caused so much indignation as Welles'. It is difficult to understand why. His beard is considered an intolerable provocation, although Hollywood is the whisker capital of the nation, with its assortment of Vandykes, Burnsides, Dundrearys, Piccadilly weepers and House of Davids, which actors are always growing for period roles. Ordinarily, a man could walk down the street carrying his head in his hand, or drive a chariot drawn by a gnu and an okapi, without attracting attention in the stunt-sated cinema colony. But the picture people take Orson's beard personally. Most of the columnists have foamed at the mouth about it. It worked on the feelings of the easy-going Big Boy Williams to such an extent that he took out a knife and cut off Welles' necktie in Chasen's restaurant.

The Beard of the Prophet

Somewhat more understandable is the bitter resentment at the fact that Welles has the nerve to be only twenty-four years old. Hollywood today is a sort of Old Infant Prodigies' Home. During its first two decades, the picture business was rich in child colossuses. Thalberg was tremendous before he was old enough to vote, and Zanuck was terrific at twenty-five. But the growing complexity of the business has made it more difficult for baby genius to forge ahead. David Selznick and Pandro Berman were around thirty before they won the infant-prodigy rating. It is in the nature of things that the superannuated infant prodigies and their cohorts should disapprove of a fresh young infant prodigy.

Welles' youth might have been condoned if it had not been for his extraordinary picture contract. Probably more screwball contracts have been written in Hollywood than in the rest

of the world put together, and ordinarily the most fantastic of them attracts no attention, but the Welles contract has caused a furious war of words. It provides that he should write, produce, direct and act in the pictures he makes; it pays him \$150,000 a picture plus a percentage of the gross; it stipulates that neither the president nor board of directors or anybody else can interfere with him in any way. No one in authority over Welles has the

right to see the work until it is completed.

This would seem to concern only Welles and the picture company, but that is not the way Hollywood sees it. There it is everybody's business. The idea that such a contract should have gone to a twenty-four-year-old carpet-bagger



Many of the citizens of Grovers Mills, N. J., fled in terror of the Martians, but William Dock, 76, was ready to sell his life dearly.

with a beard is considered a menace to the public welfare. The thing has become a branch of California's migratory-worker problem; Welles and the actors he has imported from his Mercury Theater in New York are looked on as a lot of gilded okies. One cinema-trade paper inquired on its front-cover page, CAN IT BE THE BEARD? It reviewed the rather imposing list of Welles' Broadway failures; then, by the simple device of classifying all the Welles successes as failures, it gave him an artistic rating of zero and cried out that such things as the Welles contract were not to be borne. Columnists opened fire on Welles for everything that he did. He was simultaneously attacked for being a recluse and a playboy, and was charged with snubbing Shirley Temple.

It was vain for him to protest that he was growing a beard for the purpose of playing a part which required a beard; the overwhelming sentiment was that the beard was a deliberate act of aggression.

Welles' extraordinary contract was a triumph of the policy of being hard to get. Hollywood started after him four years ago with an offer of \$300 a week. It gradually raised the bid until it was about thirty times the original offer.

Welles pleaded that he was interested in other things, but finally yielded to an incredible bid. Hollywood wanted him because his Broadway productions, both the hits and the failures, have been marked by boldness, originality and superlative craftsmanship. The hard-to-get policy was easy for Welles to follow, because he had determined in the beginning not to go to Hollywood until he had an idea that he believed in. He finally decided that he could bring his whole artistic equipment into action on a film version of Conrad's Heart of Darkness. In addition to his producer-director-actor-writer capacity Welles is his own chief scenic artist and property man; in his two latter roles Heart of Darkness was irresistible, with its luxuriant tropical settings and its mysterious jungle business. Production difficulties, however, caused a postponement of this film in favor of a thriller with the tentative title of The Smiler With the Knife.

Welles is the head boss and the green hand in his unit at the RKO studio. In his capacity of new boy he spends his evenings studying picture technique;

make-believe than most old-timers of the theater. Starting as a two-year-old Belasco managing cardboard actors, his subsequent twenty-two years have been mainly devoted to the study and practice of showmanship. He virtually turned his prep school into a repertory theater. After stock-company experience in Dublin at sixteen and road-show experience with Katharine Cornell at eighteen, he reached Broadway at nineteen, and crammed two or three lifetimes of experience into his five years there. His devotion to the theater touched a high when he put in a summer vacation writing a book on the drama solely for his own instruction. After reading the book with great admiration, he destroyed it. Some radio stars regard one performance a week as an intolerable chore; Welles has done as many as twenty-five a week in his spare time between producing, directing and scene-designing Broadway shows.

Radio Flying Squadron

Welles was twenty when, in 1935, he started on his radio career by appearing on the March of Time with a condensed version of Panic, a play in which he had acted on Broadway. He gradually became a member of a select group of anonymous radio artists who shuttle about from station to station, taking part in many programs every day. Grabbing every assignment that he could get at fees ranging from forty dollars to seventy-five dollars an appearance, Welles was earning around \$1000 a week within a year after his debut. It is only by intensified chiseling and corner-cutting that the members of this flying squadron can get through their programs; the hardest part of their existence is that of thinking up alibis for failing to appear at rehearsals and conferences when their daily schedules are full of conflicts. Because of the pressure of this life, Orson frequently looked at his script for the first time after the show had started. He didn't know whether he was a hero or a villain until he found himself engaged in good or evil deeds; on some occasions, when he was shot or drowned, it came as a bigger surprise to him than to the audience. In a way, this is the ideal technique for mystery shows; if the actor doesn't know what is going to happen to him, it ought to be difficult for the audience to predict it.

When he started rehearsals for the Negro version of Macbeth, early in 1936, Welles was broadcasting off and

(Continued on Page 45)



Welles examines a set for his new film, Conrad's Heart of Darkness. In addition to being chief scenic artist, he is also the property man. He is also the producer. He is also the director. He is also the star—which explains the beard.

in his capacity of big chief he spends his days directing his night-school teachers. This is all in character. From his earliest infant-prodigy days Orson has always lectured teachers and instructed specialists in their specialties.

For his second film, Welles wanted to make Pickwick with W. C. Fields, but that great actor was under contract elsewhere to play the part of Dickens' thrice-gorgeous old fuddy-duddy. Welles found himself enthusiastic about Hollywood. When a New York friend asked him about it at the RKO studio, Welles pointed to the wilderness of cameras, lights, sound apparatus and other engines of the talkies.

"It's the greatest railroad train a boy ever had," he said.

The paradox about Welles is that, although only twenty-four years old, he has had a greater experience in the world of

(Continued from Page 40)

on from ten A.M. until nearly midnight. He could not start rehearsals for Macbeth until after midnight, because the theater was in use in the evening. He would work in Harlem until eight A.M. or thereabouts, then hold a conference breakfast and then speed downtown for a ten o'clock broadcast. For several days running he was never out of his clothes, but this ended with his breakdown at a radio recital of a poem of Browning's. He got not only every word wrong but every syllable wrong, and the station cut in with an organ recital. Welles always tries to top everybody; on this occasion he succeeded in adding obscurity to Browning.

Welles produced the black Macbeth in co-operation with John Housman, who was staging plays for the WPA. The idea of doing the tragedy with a colored cast was suggested by Mrs. Welles. Because Christophe, the famous black emperor of Haiti, had been a man after Macbeth's own heart, the action was transferred from Scotland to Haiti. The Birnam Wood that came to Dunsinane was a jungle of palms and bananas. The three weird women were translated into sixty black witch doctors. Welles, always a prey to an exacting artistic conscience, obtained genuine voodoo practitioners who slew goats with strange rites in order to get skins for the witch drums. Welles made it a point of assembling a cast of persons who knew little or nothing of acting and nothing whatever of Shakespeare. He wanted actors who, after mastering the import of the Elizabethan phraseology, would utter the words in their own way, instead of imitating other actors.

It was an arduous enterprise in various respects. During a rehearsal Welles tried repeatedly to silence one of his colored aids who kept on holding a conversation in the center aisle. Finally, Welles said, "If you won't be quiet, I'll have to make you," and climbed over the footlights. He was seized and dragged away just in time. During the early stages of the argument the aid had taken out his razor, opened it and thoughtfully tied the handle to his wrist, so it would not slip after the first slash.

A Harlem Hero

There were other troubles. One faction in Harlem thought the whole idea was not only a degradation of Shakespeare but a setback to the cultural progress of the Negro in America. The rehearsals progressed in the midst of threats and intrigues. Welles was compelled to squander most of his large radio earnings on the show because the WPA auditors loved to make a prolonged diplomatic negotiation, with exchanges of notes and ultimatums, over the matter of buying a paper of thumb tacks. But the opening night of April 14, 1936, was a grand one. The police had to be called out to handle one of the furriest and most expensive first-night crowds in history. All was forgiven; Welles became a Harlem hero. Most of the critics were impressed. The supernatural business and the battle scenes were tremendous. The voodoo set proved to be thorough-paced troupers. One dramatic critic had let loose a blast against the Government for blowing the money of taxpayers on this kind of thing. When this was translated to the voodoo doctors, they held ceremonies around a witches' cauldron full of their own ingredients. "We fix 'im," explained the head

doctor. "Give 'im beri-beri." Voodoo prestige soared when, a few days later, the critic died. An ailment of long standing, however, not beri-beri, was responsible.

Welles and Housman produced two other WPA successes—Doctor Faustus and Horse Eats Hat. They encountered trouble in 1937, however, with Marc Blitzstein's operetta, The Cradle Will Rock, which undermined the capitalistic system with light music. The operetta had been approved and financed by the WPA, but that organization suddenly lost its nerve. Before this date, the WPA chiefs had been fairly audacious in backing pink theater propaganda, but they became thoroughly frightened when congressmen and others began to murmur. The Blitzstein operetta was supposed to have all the dynamite of Beaumarchais' Le Mariage de Figaro, which, according to some historians, touched off the French Revolution. After investing considerable sums in The Cradle Will Rock, WPA chiefs began to put obstacles in the way of producing it.

When Welles got ready to stage it anyway, they rushed emissaries to New York and padlocked the theater a few hours before opening time. Welles and his actors found themselves locked out as the audience was arriving. This furnished Welles with a chance for some typical Welles fireworks. Assuming the mob of ticket holders that he would produce the show that night, Welles sent out a general alarm for theater owners, and finally engaged an empty showhouse. A piano was moved in, so that Blitzstein could play his world-overturning melodies.

With this exploit Welles again hit the front pages of the New York papers. The formerly audacious left-

wingers of the WPA turned out to be a lot of stuffed shirts under the skin. In their zeal to save America from the WPA theater, the WPA sent an ax brigade to chop and smash their own stage settings in their own padlocked playhouse. Big glass pillars of neon lights and the other expensive stage equipment of The Cradle Will Rock were destroyed in a Carrie Nation raid. Several weeks later, Welles staged the show under private auspices. America survived, but the operetta didn't. The situation, however, might have been reversed, except for the fact that Welles, by a typical miscalculation, produced the piece in a theater so small that, even if it were filled to capacity at every performance, the box-office receipts would not pay running expenses.

After this experience, Welles refused to use his surplus radio earnings to support the Government any longer, and devoted them to the Mercury Theater, Inc., which he and Housman organized. Welles set off the fireworks again with a sceneless plain-clothes Julius Caesar, made highly contemptuous by the fact that the conspirators appeared to be a lot of golden-tongued Chicago mobsters rising against a modern dictator of the Hitler-Mussolini type. He stirred the critics, but not the public, with his impressionistic Danton's Death. Presentations of the Elizabethan farce, The Shoemaker's Holiday, and Shaw's Heartbreak House added to his prestige.

Last spring, in collaboration with the Theatre Guild, Welles made his most ambitious effort. Boiling down Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, Henry V, the three parts of Henry VI and Richard III into one monstrous show called Five Kings, he tried to stage the story of England from 1377

to 1485, including the fall of chivalry and the rise of the commoners. The production money ran out before it was half rehearsed, and this half-baked Cardiff Giant of a drama failed in an early stage of a road tour. Welles played Falstaff. Ashton Stevens, who has seen all the Falstaffs of the last forty years, said that Welles was the only actor who had risen to the part during that period. Opinions of other critics varied. They generally agreed that Welles had marvelous gusto.

The Golden Touch

One of the various departments in which Welles can lick all creation is that of being perpetually penniless with an enormous income. After Five Kings, he was full of theatrical projects and in urgent need of \$15,000. He sought to hock a \$40,000 inheritance which comes to him next May. With his usual eccentric approach to his problems, he took Tallulah Bankhead for his financial agent. Starting after her evening appearance in The Little Foxes, she held banking hours from one to six A.M. Marc Connelly, who lived in the same hotel, was summoned to her apartment at three A.M., but could not find \$15,000 in his pajama pockets. Sherman Billingsley, summoned from his Stork Club, decided that he was not running a pawnshop for impending inheritances. Miss Bankhead kept on smiting rocks of finance until daybreak, but no bank rolls gushed forth. Dashiell Hammett claimed to have a big bagman staked out at The Plaza. Taking Welles over there after breakfast, Hammett greeted the quarry with "Hello, sucker," and the man froze up like the governor of the Bank of England. Welles took a plane for Chicago, where his guardian, Dr. Maurice Bernstein, arranged to get the loan from a Chicago bank. Welles met two bank executives who behaved like hearts of gold; they were willing to waive technicalities and fork over the \$15,000 on easy terms, but during the conference a telephone call from Hollywood came for Welles. A motion-picture magnate had been trying to reach him, and Welles had left word to switch the call to the bank if it came at the conference hour. The Hollywood man offered Welles \$100,000 to produce a picture. Welles refused. The magnate asked how much he wanted.

"It isn't the money," said Welles. "A hundred thousand would be all right. But there isn't any point in talking about it until I have a story that I think I can do."

The two Chicago bankers eyed each other and smiled sardonically. It looked as if Welles were having himself paged with the \$100,000 offer in order to build up his credit. They reconsidered on the spot and wouldn't lend him a cent.

Welles finally raised the money by a brief vaudeville appearance in The Green Goddess. Then, hitting on the idea of filming Heart of Darkness, he went to Hollywood.

The immediate ambition of Welles is to develop his Mercury Company four ways—in pictures, Broadway shows, radio presentations and phonographic recordings of classics for school use. Planning moderate-priced Broadway drama, he needs the Hollywood gains to offset the probable Broadway losses. His ultimate but concealed ambition, according to some of his associates, is to be a college president.

Editor's Note—This is the last of three articles by Messrs. Johnston and Smith.



"Oh, some petty quarrel, I imagine."