

Butler Ellis Parker

Solander's Radio Tomb



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By *ELLIS PARKER BUTLER*

"Pigs Is Pigs" Butler quite surpasses himself in this story. The intricacies in radio are so great, and the changes occur so quickly that no one can afford to make a will wherein a radio provision figures. Once we thought of having a radio loud speaker installed in our coffin to keep us company and make it less lonesome. After reading this story we quickly changed our mind. The possibilities are too various.

I first met Mr. Remington Solander shortly after I installed my first radio set. I was going in to New York on the 8:15 A.M. train and was sitting with my friend Murchison and, as a matter of course, we were talking radio. I had just told Murchison that he was a lunkheaded noodle and that for two cents I would poke him in the jaw, and that even a pin-headed idiot ought to know that a tube set was better than a crystal set. To this Murchison had replied that that settled it. He said he had always known I was a moron, and now he was sure of it.

"If you had enough brains to fill a hazelnut shell," he said, "you wouldn't talk that way. Anybody but a half-baked lunatic would know that what a man wants in radio is clear, sharp reception and that's what a crystal gives you. You're one of these half-wits that think they're classy if they can hear some two-cent station five hundred miles away utter a few faint squeaks. Shut up! I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to listen to you. Go and sit somewhere else."

Of course, this was what was to be expected of Murchison. And if I did let out a few laps of anger, I feel I was entirely justified. Radio fans are always disputing over the relative merits of crystal and tube sets, but I knew I was right. I was just trying to decide whether to choke Murchison with my bare hand and throw his lifeless body out of the car window, or tell him a few things I had been wanting to say ever since he began knocking my tube set, when this Remington Solander, who was sitting behind us, leaned forward and tapped me on the shoulder. I turned quickly and saw his long sheeplike face close to mine. He was chewing cardamon seed and breathing the odor into my face.

"My friend," he said, "come back and sit with me; I want to ask you a few questions about radio."

Well, I couldn't resist that, could I? No radio fan could. I did not care much for the looks of this Remington Solander man, but for a few weeks my friends had seemed to be steering away from me when I drew near, although I am sure I never said anything to bore them. All I ever talked about was my radio set and some new hook-ups I was trying, but I had noticed that men who formerly had seemed to be fond of my company now gave startled looks when I neared them. Some even climbed over the nearest fence and ran madly across vacant lots, looking over their shoulders with frightened glances as they ran. For a week I had not been able to get any man of my acquaintance to listen to one word from me, except Murchison, and he is an utter idiot, as I think I have made clear. So I left Murchison and sat with Remington Solander.

In one way I was proud to be invited to sit with Remington Solander, because he was far and away the richest man in our town. When he died, his estate proved to amount to three million dollars. I had seen him often, and I knew who he was, but he was a stand-offish old fellow and did not mix, so I had never met him. He was a tall man and thin, somewhat flabby and he was pale in an unhealthy sort of way. But, after all, he was a millionaire and a member of one of the "old families" of Westcote, so I took the seat alongside of him with considerable satisfaction.

"I gather," he said as soon as I was seated, "that you are interested in radio."

I told him I was.

"And I'm just building a new set, using a new hook-up that I heard of a week ago," I said. "I think it is going to be a wonder. Now, here is the idea: instead of using a grid – "

"Yes, yes!" the old aristocrat said hastily. "But never mind that now. I know very little of such things. I have an electrician employed by the year to care for my radio set and I leave all such things to him. You are a lawyer, are you not?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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