

CONTENTS

Cover

Title Page

Dedication

1. Branestawm's Broadcasting Clarifier
2. The Professor Goes All Horticultural
3. Penny-in-the-Slot Poetry
4. Ici One Parla die Languages
5. Professor Branestawm and the Babies
6. The Unexpected Tale of Professor Flittersnoop
7. An Apple for the Teacher
8. The Rival Professors
9. Peril at Pagwell College
10. The Adventure of the Ha Ha Hazard
11. Professor Branestawm's Christmas Tree
12. The Peculiar Triumph of Professor Branestawm

Acknowledgement

About the Author

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The Peculiar Triumph of Professor Branestawm

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Illustrated by
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RED FOX

To Sir Allen Lane
who was a kind of Fairy Godfather to the Professor because
he handled the production of the very first Branestawm
book.

Branestawm's Broadcasting Clarifier

THE MAYOR OF Pagwell was reclining municipally in his sitting room listening to a brass band concert, when suddenly the music stopped, and, instead, out of his radio came instructions on how to make a suet pudding.

Dr Mumpzanmeazle was listening hurriedly to a talk on spots while he had his dinner, accompanied by four patients who were waiting to have their hearts listened to. All at once, the spots talk changed to some very spotted music full of hotcha cha chas and pom pa tiddley om pa's.

The Vicar of Pagwell was enjoying an organ recital given by some organ that didn't seem to need any money spent on it, which was quite a change, when the organ unexpectedly gave place to a lot of last year's jokes told very rapidly by someone who didn't seem to see them.

Monsieur Bonmonjay, the Manager of Pagwell Central Hotel, was listening to some highly prancy music to which his hotel guests were politely dancing. Then zonk! The prancy music was swamped by excerpts from the Life of Mary Queen of Scots followed by a strong letter to the Gas Company about quantities of new pence.

An exciting running commentary on international Rugby, which the Pagwell College Games Master was enjoying, changed into a cradle song from three shrill sopranos, and Colonel Dedshott of the Catapult Cavaliers, listening fiercely to the weather report heard it turn first into a most unmilitary song about the Navy and then into a learned discourse on the habits of field mice.

‘Disgraceful, by Jove,’ the Colonel roared, twiddling knobs, which made no difference. ‘Don’t know what the programmes are coming to, my word. What do we pay goodness knows how much a year tax for?’

‘The privilege of remaining away from work when one is unwell,’ said the radio, starting on a talk about insurances.

‘Confound it, sir, where is the weather?’ growled the Colonel, turning everything round as far as it would go.

‘Stormy weather,’ sang the radio, changing its mind again.

‘Pah!’ snorted the Colonel, turning it off altogether.

‘Whereas the difference between points “A” and “B” is exactly half the – um – ah – distance between points – er – “C” and – ah – “D”,’ went on the radio, taking no notice and going all geometric.

‘Branestawm!’ cried the Colonel, recognising the voice.

‘Four shirts, six collars, one pillow slip,’ continued the radio.

It was certainly the voice of Professor Branestawm. But where was it coming from, how was it coming through a turned-off radio and why was it talking about laundry and other nonsense?

‘Boil briskly for three minutes and allow to – ah – cool,’ went on the voice.

Colonel Dedshott fired off orders at his Catapult Cavalier Butlers, and left the house on his horse with the Professor’s voice telling him where to go for his summer holiday.

‘My word! By Jove! Confound it, sir, what!’ gasped the Colonel as he looked up at the Professor’s windows.

Sparks a foot long were dancing round the window frames. Sizzlings and cracklings were taking place. The entire house seemed to be continually being struck by lightning in a small way.

Mrs Flittersnoop, the Professor’s housekeeper, was on her way back from staying with her sister Aggie in Lower Pagwell during the Professor’s last busting up invention. She arrived just in time to let the Colonel in with her. He

clattered upstairs and found the Professor surrounded by unreasonable machinery and supercharged science. Crackle, crackle, pop, bang, whiz, wow-w-w-w-w. Sparks shot about. Retorts and reports were everywhere. The Professor, wearing his five pairs of spectacles and three pairs of headphones, had a microphone which looked like a hat box on legs, in front of him. He was frantically reading out snatches from books, bits from old letters and circulars, and playing small helpings of gramophone records while he scribbled notes on the backs of the letters he was reading from. Now and again he read out his own notes by mistake which didn't seem to matter much, except that they gave rise to a lot more notes.

'I - ah - what, hum, by Jove, yes!' spluttered the Colonel, jingling his medals.



But the Professor was so absolutely neck-tie and collar-stud deep in his experiments that the Colonel had to drop three

flatirons into two tin tanks before he could attract his attention.

'Ah, Dedshott, there you are,' said the Professor, pulling ear-phones and spectacles off himself like plums off a tree. 'You are just in time, Dedshott, to see something of the first experiments I am making with an entirely new discovery.'

'Ha!' said the Colonel, sitting heavily on a chair but getting up again at once as the chair had a pointed something on it.

'B.B.C.' said the Professor pressing a switch and letting half a yard of green flame out of a jar.

'By Jove!' cried the Colonel.

'Branestawm's Broadcasting Clarifier,' explained the Professor, permitting purple and green sparks of different lengths to mix together, when they went up in black steam and high speed howlings. 'As you know, Dedshott, the reception of broadcast programmes is sometimes interfered with by the operation of electric trains, refrigerators and other domestic machinery. I have abolished this interference by the simple process, Dedshott, of planning my broadcasting on the same lines as the interference which previously interfered with it. You understand. If trains interfere with radio, then radio should be designed on train lines so - er - to speak, Dedshott. The design of the interference then becomes the design of the broadcasting, and the more it interferes the better.'

'Marvellous!' said the Colonel.

Just then, Mrs Flittersnoop came in to say some gentleman had called from the Pagwell Broadcasting Company.

'Ah yes, - er - show them in, Mrs Flittersnoop, by all means,' said the Professor.

Mrs Flittersnoop showed them in by all the means she could think of, which consisted of opening the door and letting them walk in.

‘Everything is ready for the – ah – demonstration of my non-interference broadcasting system,’ said the Professor, sorting out flashes of lightning into different lengths.

‘It must stop at once!’ said one of the broadcasting gentlemen.

‘This switch,’ said the Professor, ‘controls the atmospheric out-put transformer.’

‘Turn it off!’ commanded another broadcasting gentleman.

‘By making adjustments on this dial it becomes possible to control the tone, volume and balance,’ went on the Professor.

Two of the broadcasting gentlemen sat on the apparatus, which instantly went up in coloured sparks and assorted shrieks.

‘By Jove!’ gasped the Colonel.

‘Tut, tut,’ said the Professor, peering severely over and under pairs of spectacles at the broadcasting gentlemen.

‘I wish, gentlemen, that you would be – ah – good enough not to interfere with the apparatus. It is extremely delicate.’

Another broadcasting gentleman began bashing about the works with a hammer.

‘How dare you?’ spluttered the Professor. ‘You will ruin the work of a lifetime. Good gracious! I – ah – er – stop!’

Crash, wallop, bang! Broadcasting gentlemen set about the Professor’s invention with flat irons, hockey sticks and pokers.

‘By Jove, we can’t have this, you know. Confound it, sir. Play the game, what!’ roared Colonel Dedshott. The Colonel always reckoned it was his job to smash the Professor’s inventions when they got out of hand, but this one didn’t seem to be giving any trouble at all. Most unfair. Considerably unsporting. Zang, biff, whiz! The sparks grew longer and longer. Puffs of smoke began to go up. Soon the Professor’s apparatus was in ruins, and the Professor was dancing with rage.

'I - I - I - have the goodness to fetch the police, Dedshott,' spluttered the Professor. 'Disgraceful! I invite you gentlemen here to a demonstration of the greatest radio invention of our time, and this is how you - um - ah - behave.'

'We didn't get your invitation, Professor,' said the broadcasting gentlemen soothingly. 'We came of our own accord. Your invention has been causing considerable annoyance to listeners.'

'I have removed interference from broadcasting,' cried the Professor.

'You have made yourself a most scientific nuisance with probably the best intentions,' explained the broadcasting gentlemen. 'Nobody could listen to anything but you. But everything will be all right now, I am sure. Good day to you, Professor.' And they filed politely out and went back to the Pagwell Broadcasting Company to arrange more and longer helpings of chamber music.

'Well, that seems to be rather that, what!' said the Colonel.

But if the broadcasting gentlemen thought they had settled things, they were mistaken. The following morning, Mrs Flittersnoop was cooking sausages for breakfast, when they shouted at her from the frying-pan.

The Mayor of Pagwell was about to lay a foundation stone when it burst into a song about roses and love.

The Vicar's second best hat spoke off a sermon all by itself, which might have saved him the trouble of writing one, only it was hanging on the back of the scullery door and he didn't hear it. The scullery door replied with careful instructions on what to do for an escape of gas.

Colonel Dedshott's sideboard issued a warning against leaving off one's woollen underwear too soon, and the tradesmen's entrance at Pagwell Hotel discussed smoke abatement at great length with the nearest lamp post; while the Pagwell Games Master received the year-before-last's

cricket scores combined with the price of Brussels sprouts from a photograph of his cousin Nancy.

‘Dear me, this is most extraordinary,’ muttered the Professor interrupting a spot of part singing by his five pairs of spectacles, ‘but most instructive. I must write a paper on it though I cannot account for it.’

‘Will you have a chop for dinner, sir?’ asked Mrs Flittersnoop.

‘Chop the wood into short sticks and tie into bundles,’ replied the mantelpiece.

‘Begging your pardon, sir?’ said Mrs Flittersnoop.

‘Er, yes, yes, of course,’ said the Professor.

The curtains broke into a stirring military march just in time to herald the entrance of Colonel Dedshott, whose medals were arguing about the price of coke.

‘Good morning, sir,’ said Mrs Flittersnoop.

‘Weather will be milder throughout the day. Mix carefully with a wooden spoon and if the matter is not attended to without delay, we shall take steps to lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to pom tiddley om pom tanta ra ra pom,’ answered the coalscuttle.

‘By Jove!’ cried the Colonel. ‘Built your invention again Branestawm? You’ll have the Pagwell Broadcasting Company round, you know. Risky business, what!’

‘Dedshott?’ said the Professor suddenly jumping up and beginning to walk rapidly up and down while the furniture played selections from famous operas. ‘I believe you may possibly be right. Be good enough to come with me, Dedshott. This matter must be - er - sifted to the - um - ah - bottom.’

The Professor shot hurriedly out of the house followed by the Colonel, who understood nothing as usual, but intended to be there when it happened.

Professor Branestawm walked very determinedly into the high class premises of the Pagwell Broadcasting Company. Reception gentlemen swept forward to meet him with forms

to be filled up. He ploughed through them. Two commissionaire gentlemen came out of cubby holes to stop him. But they caught sight of Colonel Dedshott, and seeing he had more medals than they had, they stopped to salute before throwing him out. By the time they came unsaluted, the Colonel was clattering up the stairs behind the Professor who was muttering scientific conversation to himself.

Along corridors they charged. Past doors, from behind which came the sound of typewriters and tea. Past notices which said 'Private' and 'Keep Out' and 'Do not Enter', and 'Turn back at Once'. Ladies of all ages shot past them carrying baskets of broadcastery business. Then the Professor pushed open a door marked 'Broadcasting Apparatus, Deadly Private', and they arrived in a room full of machinery.

'Kindly fasten the door, Dedshott,' said the Professor arranging his spectacles and taking two folding hammers from his pocket.

'What's the idea, Branestawm?' asked the Colonel.

'It takes the form of retributionary action, Dedshott,' said the Professor. 'It is only logical that as officials have destroyed the apparatus with which I was apparently causing, quite innocently, a certain amount of disturbance among listeners, I should in turn - ah - dismantle the apparatus with which seemingly the Pagwell Broadcasting Company are causing even more annoyance.' He brought down his hammer on the machinery, which gave him a puff of smoke for his trouble.

'This is against the law, you know,' protested the Colonel, taking the other hammer and sloshing away with sparks going up in strings all over the place.

In the meantime, the broadcasting gentlemen had gone to call on Professor Branestawm again. They burst into the Professor's Broadcasting Room with hammers of their own. But they fell back in dismay. There was no apparatus there.

Strange. Professor Branestawm wasn't causing the unwanted broadcasts. Neither was Pagwell Broadcasting Company, although Professor Branestawm thought they were.

Professor Branestawm and Colonel Dedshott were hard at it, full steam up. Smash, bang, wallop, crack. Bits of apparatus flew about. Smoke and sparks. 'By Jove, sir!' Crash! 'This is - um - ah - only just I think.' Sizz, pouff, wowo! 'By gad!' Jangle, jingle.

Twice the Professor hit the Colonel on the medals by mistake. Once the Colonel nearly hit the apparatus with the Professor.

Then the door flew open and broadcasting people flew in upon them.

'Do your worst, by Jove!' said the Colonel throwing out his chest so violently that six medals shot off and landed in a cup of tea someone had with him.

Then Mrs Flittersnoop arrived with the police, most of whom were friends of hers or related in complicated ways to sister Aggie.

Purple pandemonium raged. In the middle of it the Professor was hit with a penetrating idea. He saw what was the matter. Perhaps too late, but still, he saw, which was something. But he couldn't make himself heard. Then a heavy clock struck going-home time. Instantly nearly all the broadcasting people disappeared in the direction of hats and coats, and the Professor and the Colonel were left with two very rarified broadcasting gentlemen in fancy waistcoats.

'The saturation of non-screened bodies with radio waves,' cried the Professor, waving spectacles.

'What say?' asked the broadcasting gentlemen.

'Don't you see?' cried the Professor. 'My broadcasting apparatus was intensely powerful. It had to be in order to overcome interference. Continual broadcasting from it