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Source: *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 33, No. 5, (May, 1962), pp. 244-251

Published by: Ohio State University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1978202>

Accessed: 29/06/2008 17:15

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Raid on the Faculty

A "Halls of Ivy" Script, Unused and Unretouched

By CLYDE W. PARK

THE radio and television program known as "The Halls of Ivy" had educational and dramatic associations that make it well remembered. In the opinion of many, it was in its way a landmark in educational public relations. During the half hour it was on the air, typical campus situations and problems arose to confront the witty and urbane president of Ivy College, Dr. William Todhunter Hall, whose resourcefulness was always equal to the occasion. Dr. Hall, in the person of the late Ronald Colman, was ably assisted by Benita Hume as the Doctor's wife Victoria and by a supporting company of irrepressible students, more or less eccentric professors, and loyal though sometimes opinionated college trustees.

In retrospect, it becomes evident that the great success of the "Halls of Ivy" program was due, not alone to superb acting, but to the magic of Don Quinn, who made the scripts come alive through his unparalleled skill in characterization and dramatic construction. Week after week, to plays that were expertly turned out by his script editors Milton and Barbara Merlin, he added action and characterization to develop the story and give it naturalness, and introduced innumerable light touches that heightened the dramatic effect while they gracefully avoided certain risks that are inherent in the treatment of college material. The academic flavor was authentic but without pedantry. Philosophy and psychology were well represented, but they were worked in so unobtrusively that their full significance was appreciated only as an afterthought. Intellectual content was rich and abundant, but there was no obscurantism to puzzle or frighten a "middle-brow" audience. On a somewhat higher level, the alertness of the best-educated and most intelligent listeners was challenged by poetic and historical allusions or by Dr. Hall's sly puns and brilliant epigrams.

The "Ivy pattern" proved to be an excellent way of presenting ideas on education that needed to be called to the public's attention. Among the themes that needed to be brought into the open was the luring of college teachers from their posts by business and industrial corporations or by service organizations. In protest against this prevalent and growing practice, the writer drafted an "Ivy" script entitled "Raid on the

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Faculty." It appears here, somewhat abbreviated and of course untouched, in approximately its original form. Inasmuch as the "raiding" theme is even more timely now than when the story was written, perhaps the script may have some interest for present-day readers.

PART I

Musical introduction, "We love the Halls of Ivy," etc.

ANNOUNCER. Welcome to Ivy—Ivy College, that is, etc. Every hard-working executive welcomes an excuse to play hooky. In the spring, with the coming of outdoor weather, the temptation becomes irresistible. Dr. William Todhunter Hall, President of Ivy College, has accepted the invitation of Professor Hocking, of the English department, for an afternoon of golf. While awaiting Professor Hocking's arrival, Dr. Hall is at his home, lingering over a demitasse at the lunch table and listening to his English actress wife Victoria:

VICTORIA. You know, Toddy, you haven't been yourself lately. You've been jumpy and lackadaisical by turns. I've thought of prescribing simple home remedies like sulphur, sassafras, and juniper juice. If you'll break out of the office and get some fresh air and sunshine, it may not be necessary.

DR. HALL. I'll gladly do anything to avoid such fearsome medication. But I'm afraid even golf won't take my mind away from the pile of unprocessed papers on my desk.

VICTORIA. Just wait till I finish my Correspondence Manual for overworked executives. It will be full of short cuts and buck-passing devices. For example, "Dear Sir: Your interesting questionnaire will be referred to our specialist in that department when he returns from a year's leave of absence"; "Dear Madam: The transcript of your son's grades has been approved by the football coach and is now in the hands of the Committee on Admissions"

LOUISE (*bringing an extension telephone from an adjoining room and carrying on a three-way conversation as she comes*). Just a minute; I'll let you talk to Dr. Hall himself It's the chairman of some committee—wouldn't give me his name Shall I clear now, Mrs. Hall? I hope you can get some avocados when you go to market this afternoon Hang on, here is Dr. Hall now.

DR. HALL. Yes, I remember. . . . I was afraid of that. . . . No, of course not Very well, I'll be right over.

VICTORIA. Methinks they plan to spoil my lord's half-holiday. I'm as full of forebodings as Calphurnia.

DR. HALL. The Committee on Curriculum is deadlocked after a luncheon meeting, and some points must be decided before the new catalogue goes to press. Of course I'll have to meet with them.

VICTORIA. Curses! In that case I'll drop you off as I go to market. And perhaps I'd better lay in a supply of sulphur, sassafras, and you know what.

DR. HALL. Very well, then, we'll be off. Louise, please explain to Professor Hocking when he calls to take me out for golf.

LOUISE. You mean, I'm to tell him the golf game is off?

DR. HALL (*off mike*). Yes, please.

Musical Bridge

(*Doorbell rings.*)

LOUISE. Good afternoon. Are you the golf appointment?

PROFESSOR HOCKING. I believe I might answer that description.

LOUISE. Dr. Hall's golf game is off.

PROF. H. I'm afraid my game is off, too; it never was very good.

LOUISE. Dr. Hall can't go with you. There's a terribly important committee meeting. I didn't hear all they said, but it seems that something has gone wrong with the cur-curriculum. (*She speaks the word hesitantly and in a hushed voice, as if it might be a term of questionable propriety.*)

PROF. H. That *would* be serious. (*Telephone rings.*)

LOUISE. Excuse me a minute. Dr. Hall's residence . . . Oh, it's you, Mrs. Hall. . . . She's locked the car door with the key inside at the Drive-In Supermarket. . . . You think Dr. Hall has the other key in his pocket? . . . She thought maybe you'd know where that committee is meeting. . . . She says they don't have any avocados . . . I want her to get back before long so I can get the pork chops and scalloped potatoes ready for dinner.

PROF. H. If I can be of service in this emergency . . . (*Telephone rings again.*)

LOUISE. Dr. Hall's residence. Yes, Dr. Hall, he's here now . . . Is your automobile key in any pocket you have on? Mrs. Hall has hers locked in the car at the Drive-In Supermarket. If she doesn't get back soon there won't be much for dinner . . . He says the key's in the right-hand pocket of his old topcoat that hangs by the side door next to the garage entrance. . . . Yes, I'll get it and give it to him . . . Hang on, I think he wants to talk to you.

PROF. H. (*taking the phone*). That's perfectly all right, Dr. Hall. I understand the situation. But I did want to get together with you for some incidental conversation. I'm not exactly seeking advice, but sometimes when I am arguing with myself I like to have a referee. . . . Why, yes, if you like, I'll be glad to have dinner with you this evening. . . . No, it won't be exactly pot luck. I've been getting a preview of what's cooking, or will be after Mrs. Hall is rescued from the Supermarket.

LOUISE. If you're taking the key to Mrs. Hall, I won't keep you. She knows I've got to get the meal started. . . . I *could* have Waldorf salad.

Musical Bridge

PROF. H. An excellent dinner. I feel a bit conscience-stricken, Mrs. Hall, over having maneuvered myself into a place at your table without an invitation from the hostess. Of course, after Dr. Hall had invited me, there was nothing you could do about it.

VICTORIA. That's perfectly normal. When Dr. Hall asks me, "What are we going to have for dinner?" I ask him, "Whom are we going to have?"

DR. HALL. For your peace of mind, Professor Hocking, please disregard the cannibalistic implications of that last question. We don't go in for *that* kind of pot luck.

VICTORIA. He tells me *whom*, I tell him *what*, then I tell Louise *how much, how many, and when*.

DR. HALL. You see, it's a sort of Tinker-to Evers-to Chance combination. Usually chance plays a major part in determining what shall be served—on the home plate.

LOUISE (*entering*). Shall I clear now, Mrs. Hall? I'll be right back Glad you liked the Waldorf salad.

DR. HALL. You remember how Frau Bismarck used to dismiss official visitors by rushing in to tell the Chancellor it was time for him to take his medicine? When Louise asks, "Shall I clear?" it is her diplomatic way of saying "Scram! Vamoose! Get the heck out of here!"

VICTORIA. In Shakespeare's words, "The time invites you. Go, your servants tend."

PROF. H. Or, from another play, "Stand not on the order of your going, but go at once."

DR. HALL. At any rate, we can transfer our table talk to the living room.

(Closing music and commercial message ending the first half)

PART II

DR. HALL. Professor Hocking, you had something on your mind. Would you care to resume your argument with yourself in our presence?

PROF. H. It's one of those "Roads of Destiny" situations that we all face, sooner or later. . . . I've been very happy at Ivy.

DR. HALL. That sounds like the opening sentence of a farewell speech.

PROF. H. It hasn't quite reached that point, and I hardly think it will, but the time for decision has come.

VICTORIA. What you seem to be saying is that you don't expect to leave

Ivy College, *but*. That *but* is the part that arouses my feminine curiosity.

PROF. H. Before I say more about it I must make one thing clear. It's been under consideration for some time, but I've kept it to myself. I really wanted to consult you, Dr. Hall, but only when the subject could be brought up in a casual way and talked out informally. I understand that some professors get an offer elsewhere and use it as a pry to gain advancement in their present positions. That seems to me a cheap trick, and I certainly wouldn't consider playing "hard to keep" on that basis. If I decline to make a change, I hope to remain at Ivy at my present post as long as you are willing to put up with me.

VICTORIA. If your problem isn't Ivy versus some other college, it must be teaching versus some other occupation?

PROF. H. Yes. The alternative job would put me in charge of a national organization, with a chance to carry out some ideas I have for improving their printed matter and public relations. It offers a tempting salary and travel allowance, plus an opportunity to work with many influential people.

DR. HALL. I'm afraid a teaching job at Ivy suffers hopelessly by comparison with all this. Are there still other inducements pulling you away from us?

PROF. H. My prospective employer plays up one argument which he considers his trump card. He says I am now at my highest market value, and that this is my big chance to escape from the Ivory Tower.

DR. HALL. With the door of opportunity wide open, can it be that you still wish to remain?

PROF. H. I might answer you this way. I wrote a sonnet once that began with the line, "Happy are willing slaves that love their chains." That may be my case.

DR. HALL. Where was your sonnet published?

PROF. H. In my waste basket. I decided that it contained too much truth and too little poetry.

DR. HALL. No doubt you have thought the whole matter through carefully. Have you found any grounds for dissatisfaction with your profession as such?

PROF. H. With the actual teaching, no. In my outside contacts I have been irked at times to find that some people think a man teaches only because he is incapable of doing anything else.

DR. HALL. I know. The old Shavian epigram, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." You hear it often from people who can quote better than they can think.

PROF. H. Then there are the stock definitions used by toastmasters: "A college professor is a man who has a Phi Beta Kappa key on one end of his watch chain, and no watch on the other end." And many

people think "Absent-minded professor" is one word, like "Dam-yankee" in the Deep South.

VICTORIA. College presidents, too, can be absent-minded. When Dr. Hall has a faraway look at the dinner table and flourishes his salt shaker over his coffee cup, I know his mind is occupied with some grave administrative problem.

DR. HALL. The Philistines who say ridiculous things about professors are *non campus mentis*, and there is no hope for them. But the great majority of non-college persons look upon faculty people with respect, and I believe with a certain amount of envy. And don't think college presidents escape the deflating descriptions quoted by toastmasters. I heard it said the other day that a college president is "either a general in civvies or a politician in waiting."

VICTORIA. Don't forget the one who said, "A college president is a receiver in bankruptcy."

DR. HALL. I called him on that. He is the fund-raising manufacturer whose efforts recently provided a cost-of-living bonus for Ivy's faculty.

PROF. H. Evidently I've been oversensitive. In view of what you have said I'll withdraw my remarks concerning Philistine condescension toward professors. It wasn't a major factor, anyway.

VICTORIA. I'd be interested in learning some things that are on the pro-Ivy side of the ledger. What's *good* about professing?

PROF. H. In the first place, I like being in a community where there is a prejudice in favor of intelligence. My colleagues have their eccentricities, just as I have mine, but they are perfectionists in their own fields, whether they are investigating the origin of a word, the identity of a fossil, or something else. I find contact with them pleasant and stimulating.

DR. HALL. I quite agree with you, but I can think of other contacts, also.

PROF. H. I was coming to that, Dr. Hall. What counts most, of course, is my interest in the students. When I hear about leaders in science, business, and other fields who were in my classes only a short while ago, my chest swells with pride, for I feel that I have a share in their achievements. Then there are personal touches like the letter I had yesterday from a boy in an army camp, thanking me for introducing him to Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*. He has a copy with him in the barracks.

DR. HALL. You seem to have done a good job of arguing things out with yourself.

PROF. H. As I told you, I wanted to talk with you about all this if it could be done in an incidental way, but somehow the opportunity never came. It is almost as if you have been avoiding me.

DR. HALL. Let us just say that I wanted you to reach your own decision in your own way.

PROF. H. Then you knew about the "secret" offer that was tempting me all this time?

DR. HALL. There have been rumors, of course, one of which even mentioned today as the date when your appointment was to be announced. But my first information, received some time ago during a visit to New York, came from a reliable source.

PROF. H. You mean from the Chairman of the Foundation?

DR. HALL. Yes. At first he seemed to think that a raid on the Ivy faculty was a compliment that I ought to appreciate. He even asked me to use my influence to sway you in his direction. The best I could offer him was a hands-off policy.

PROF. H. So you really have been avoiding me?

DR. HALL. I told him that your happiness and usefulness for the future, whatever post you might hold, would depend upon whether you had come into the situation through your own free choice. Incidentally, I made a small wager with him concerning the outcome in your case.

PROF. H. That reminds me, Dr. Hall. I once heard you give a ten-minute talk on "Freedom of the Will" that had more meat in it than a whole evening's lecture by Hans Driesch.

DR. HALL. I take it that you have made up your mind.

PROF. H. Yes, I had to decide by tonight. I'm expecting a long-distance telephone call, and I asked that it be transferred here . . . (*Doorbell rings.*)

VICTORIA. I'll answer. Why, it's Larry Price. Come right in, Larry.

DR. HALL. Hello, Larry. How is the distinguished editor of the *Ivy Clarion*?

LARRY (*brisk and breezy to the nth degree*). Never better, Dr. Hall. I'm here in line of duty. Good evening, Professor Hocking. I've been tailing you for the past half-hour.

DR. HALL. The typical newshound on the trail of momentous events.

LARRY. You know our reporters' slogan, Dr. Hall. "All the news before it happens."

VICTORIA. How do you manage to be so premature, Larry?

LARRY. We specialize in tips, advance information, hunches, even gossip, and we're always prepared for anything. If a janitor gets pneumonia, we write up his obituary, just in case, and then hope we won't have to use it. Suppose an instructor's wife is going to have a baby. One of our efficient distaff reporters follows the case all the way from pregnancy to accouchement. If twins arrive, it is good for a half-column story on the front page, with a two-deck headline.

VICTORIA. What if there is only one child?

LARRY. Then it's a sixth of a column on an inside page. That's simple addition, not multiplication. . . . Professor Hocking, you are the sub-

ject of a front-page article in our next issue, which goes to press tomorrow morning. It's very important, so I'm handling it myself. I have it written already, except for confirmation and a few minor details.

DR. HALL. May we be enlightened as to the content of this sensational article, or is it still beneath the wraps of journalistic security?

LARRY. The headline reads, POPULAR ENGLISH PROFESSOR CALLED TO IMPORTANT POST, and the lead says, "Word has just been received that Dr. Warren T. Hocking, Professor of English at Ivy College for the past seven years, has been appointed . . ." Here I'll have to ask you to supply the exact title, Professor Hocking. In the *Clarion* office we insist on accuracy.

PROF. H. I must congratulate you on your journalistic enterprise. You are really a few jumps ahead of me.

LARRY. You haven't heard all of it yet. I've written an editorial saying how much your work has been appreciated, and that if there was time and it would do any good, a petition would be presented by Ivy students asking you to reconsider, but of course it would be no use because no one could be expected to turn down such a big opportunity, and . . . well, you get the general drift.

DR. HALL. Might it not be possible that Professor Hocking's case, like the janitor's illness, could take a turn for the better? . . . (*Telephone rings.*)

PROF. H. Excuse me. That is probably the call I was expecting.

DR. HALL. Larry, I predict a great future for you in metropolitan journalism. You have an uncanny faculty for being at the right place at the right time. But my guess is that the article you have prepared so carefully this time will have to be killed, unless you want to go ahead with it and print a retraction later.

LARRY. You mean Professor Hocking isn't leaving, after all? Anyone who would turn down a job like that would be crazy in the head . . .

PROF. H. (*returning*). Well, the die is cast, and I'm very happy about it.

VICTORIA. Score one for my woman's intuition. Larry, Dr. Hall was right. You're going to need another article.

DR. HALL. Mr. Editor, do you suppose you could find space for a guest editorial? I feel one welling up within me.

LARRY. Sure thing. The article I wrote will be no good now.

DR. HALL. And may I suggest a two-deck headline for your substitute news article, BELOVED PROFESSOR TO REMAIN AT IVY—RENEWS PRESENT LEASE ON IVORY TOWER.

LARRY. That one will be set in bigger type than the other.