

From that time forward, all readers, actors and orators were judged by the art of Edwin Booth.

As the years went on, I added other actors to the list of noble exemplars. Edward Willard, Charles Wyndham, Martin Harvey, Forbes-Robertson, Otis Skinner, Walter Hampden, Julia Marlowe, Mary Shaw, Edith Wynne Matthison, Ruth Draper and others that I might name, carried forward the art of beautiful speech, but notwithstanding their influence, and the teaching of the schools, it still remains true that as a nation we use our voices badly. Our orators are harsh and nasal. Our actors raw in tone and slovenly in articulation.

What is the reason for these almost universal faults? It is quite simple. Most of us are nurtured in homes and communities where rude habits of speech abound. We are the sons and daughters of pioneers. It is not merely a question of the wrong pronunciation of words, it is a matter of local accent, of strident displeasing tone.

The English and French accuse "the dreadful American voice" and they are justified. There is an American voice and it is dreadful. The clanging voices of our tourists proclaim their origin. The best of our speakers when heard in Europe are inescapably American and that would not matter if they were not unpleasantly American.

I heard ex-President Taft make a delightful and diplomatic speech at the English Speaking Union, but I wished his voice were not so sharply nasal. At the Liberal Club I applauded Harry E. Fosdick for his most adroit and eloquent speech, but when the secretary said to me, "His American accent wearies my ear," I was forced to agree with him. The orator's message would have been so much more effective had he possessed a little of the beauty of tone which Edwin Booth would have given it. Most of our orators make a bad showing in comparison with English orators. I am patriotic, but I do not believe in excusing a bad voice because it is American. I would have the American voice distinguished for its charm, not for its stridency.

Recognizing these national shortcomings, the American Academy of Arts and Letters some few years ago established a fund for the award of a medal for good diction on the stage, in the hope of influencing in some degree the use of better spoken English. This medal has been awarded to Walter Hampden, Edith Wynne Matthison, Otis Skinner and Julia Marlowe, to the effect at least of calling attention to their fine voices and to the need of their example in an age of slovenly colloquialism.

During these four years the growing influence of the radio and the radio announcer became a subject of debate, and some of us advocated the establishment of a fund to provide a similar award for good diction on the radio. In an address announcing this medal, Dr. Nicholas Butler, president of the Academy, declared that "The preservation of our English speech in its purity is for the Academy a matter of high concern. To resist the inroads of carelessness, of slovenliness, of vulgarity and of nastiness is a task to which we must constantly and with every effort set our hand. On the stage, on the platform, from the pulpit and in the daily round of life's conversation, English speech is to be preserved in its purity and revealed in its nobility. Those whose task it is to greet the public every day and almost every hour have unexampled opportunity to influence common usage among our people."

With President Butler's statement of the importance of maintaining standards in speech, the members of the Academy were in full accord. To offer a medal for good diction on the radio was a logical sequence to the award of a medal for good diction on the stage, for the radio station, like the stage, has already become a nation-wide school in which the spoken word is the only medium. In the microphone with its army of speakers the Academy recognized a cultural combination of high importance, one that had especial value in teaching English to our lately arrived European immigrants.

The need of this instruction is great. Only those who travel widely in America know how polyglot our nation is. A very large percentage of our people speak a broken English. It is said that when the Continental Congress first assembled, its delegates had some difficulty in understanding one another. Jefferson's accent was widely different from that of Samuel Adams. These sectional peculiarities still persist. In certain rural settlements of German, Russian, Scandinavian, French and Italian peasants only a sadly mangled English is heard and in our great cities there are swarms of tenement dwellers who never hear a correct English word except as it comes to them through the microphone. Even among our native citizens we have communities where the Yankee twang, the Southern drawl or the Mid-Western burr predominate.

All of our old-world visitors, from the Revolution down to the present, describe our "grinding r's," our "barbarous nasals" and our "distorted vowels" and yet we go on using these barbarities long after we have acquired distinction in the art of writ-

ing English. We have laid off certain rusticities in manner, but our Congressional orators are still uncultivated in tone because the communities from which they come are of that quality. Our Senators are as discordant vocally as they are politically. They represent their constituents in their voices as in their votes.

To be entirely fair, I suspect that a convention of college presidents, or of professors of English, would present some of these divergencies, for they too come from localities where peculiarities rather than excellencies prevail. It is highly probable that an assembly of teachers of public speaking might present marked divergences, especially in respect of tone.

Nevertheless standardization is the law of present day progress and the radio is its prophet. As the daily press tends to standardize the written word, so the microphone tends to standardize the use of the spoken word. It is useless to deplore this process. Your task and mine is to see that it proceeds along the highest possible plane. When you realize that it is

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possible for a single voice like that of President Hoover or Colonel Lindbergh to reach nearly eighty millions of people you can no longer ignore this agency.

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every hour of the day and most of the night? Their voices entering the lamp-lit circle of fifteen million homes form an educational staff of almost inconceivable potentiality. They reach millions of individuals to whom no other school is open. They set standards and it is our duty to see that their standards are high, and they should be called upon to promote a better use of the spoken word. It was in the hope of influencing this tremendous agency for culture that the American Academy restricted its award for good diction on the radio to regular announcers of the radio stations.

Meanwhile, before the first year's audition had ended, another equally great instrumentality for standardization was demanding consideration. Suddenly, almost in a night, the silent drama took on voice. The photographed forms began to speak, and the producers at once realized that in order to retain their public the voices of the actors must be as pleasing as their moving pictures and, as the screen had made the forms and faces of movie stars familiar all over the world, so the sound film would

carry their voices wherever the English language was understood.

Granting that the radio and the talking pictures are the most powerful present day instruments for standardizing our common speech the question naturally arises: What shall the standard be? Manifestly it can not be British. The Oxford accent would not be acceptable to a majority of our own citizens and it is equally manifest that we should not promulgate the lingo of the New York subway. Our standard diction should not be that of Vermont, or Texas, the Middle West or any other locality. It should be a blend of the best usage of the Old World and the New.

In discussing this point with Douglas Fairbanks, we agreed that the best speakers of English we had ever known were those actors who had been trained on both sides of the Atlantic, men like Sir Charles Wyndham, Martin Harvey, Forbes-Robertson, Augustus Thomas and Walter Hampden, whose voices blended the music of the best English voice with the clarity and flexibility of the best American voice. Similarly the best women's voices we have are those of Ruth Draper and Edith Wynne Matthison, who have had training on both continents.

If we can put such English on the radio, and on the talking film, we can teach the millions without their knowing it the power and the beauty of our common tongue. These two agencies, the microphone and the film, have inconceivable penetrating and correcting power. It is your duty as well as mine to hold them to their high responsibility as exemplars of spoken English.

Admitting that it will be difficult to find such voices I am certain they can be developed, for one of the greatest dramatic teachers in the East told me that his first talk with every freshman class was to smooth away their localisms. "Before I cast them in any play I make them aware of their vocal crudities, handicaps of which they are usually entirely unaware. I say to them. 'Before you can characterize you must shake off your parochial accent.'" Every teacher of dramatics will confirm this. Theatrical managers still find it difficult to secure young American men who can speak like gentlemen. They employ those with an old world training.

When first the talking pictures success burst upon Hollywood, the producers turned in a panic to near-by teachers of speech, well aware that, no matter how beautifully their crude

little girls and raw young men photographed, they could not speak in character.

On this point we have the testimony of William De Mille who has put this point into print.

"It is interesting, and frequently appalling, to realize how much screen personality may be changed by the addition of voice. The actor's very appearance seems different. Many delightful young women lose all their charm the moment their voices are heard, stalwart 'he-men' may shed their virility with the first sentence they speak, the rolling Western r's give the lie to an otherwise excellent 'society' characterization, and uncultured enunciation destroys the illusion created by beauty. In very few cases does the voice of the screen idol satisfy 'fans' who for years have been imagining it.

"On the other hand, those players who have beauty of voice find a new world opened to them. No longer is it necessary to make personality one hundred percent visual. Actors who for years have been almost unnoticed may arrest attention vocally and convey to the public a charm of personality which they have been unable to do through the eyes alone. It is Judgment Day and many will be raised up while others are cast down."

The truth is displeasing speech is a handicap in any walk of life. A lawyer or business man may succeed in spite of an ugly tone but he is carrying a useless load. The young man or woman eager to succeed on the talking screen or the radio can not afford to cherish their local accent. When a speaker is only a voice, he must needs be a good voice. This is especially true of the radio which strips every singer and speaker of all adventitious aids. The voice of the actor on the screen must be in harmony with his character. The queen must not have the accent of a Texas cow-girl. When a romantic character employs a vulgar intonation he does himself as well as the character an injustice. This the talking motion picture producer now realizes.

You will understand that we are not working for the benefit of the radio speakers, or the actors, or the talking screen, we are saying that through these agencies we can blunt the accusation that all Americans have dreadful voices. When a cultivated American speaks English with the intonation of a European peasant he leads his hearers astray. The Old World immigrant is not trying to corrupt our speech, he is working to acquire it, and his great teachers are the public schools, the radio and the talking screen. Standardization does not mean the destruction

of individual charm, but it should mean the spread of correct and pleasing English speech.

The English managers of the radio took account of its effect on the common speech of England a year before the American Academy voted its award, but the Committee which the English appointed was purely advisory and dealt only with pronunciation of the word. It had nothing to say of accent or tone, although England has more than a score of local accents. The difference is in the status of the Cornishman who uses a vernacular and the American who speaks with a Mid-Western "flat a" and "hard r." The one is not a representative of England to the outside world while the other is held to be typically American. Our social system permits our badly educated men or women to carry an atrocious accent all over the globe. Education with us does not insure an educated manner of speaking. Some of the ablest men I know have detestable habits of speech. The cultivated Englishman on the other hand is unmistakably a man with a background. I don't know how John Masefield acquired his beautiful intonation, but Lord Balfour got his by inheritance and through early training. I am told that certain of the elementary schools in England foster a standard tone and that schools like Eton and Rugby foster a charming tone.

In listening to the members of Parliament I am always delighted by the colloquial ease of the speakers. It is true some are of the good old hesitating type but most of them, even those representing labor, speak in richly modulated voices. As I listen I compare them with our senators who with a few exceptions are raw and harsh, retaining local peculiarities of speech not pleasant to hear. As I sit in at New York banquets where speakers of other nationalities are mingled with our own, I find the American toastmaster almost always inferior in tone. Eloquent, ready, witty and full of humor as they often are, they sound "hick" in contrast with the cultivated Chinaman, Spanish-American or Englishman, unless our orators chance to be of the rank of John Finley, Bliss Perry and Augustus Thomas. The best political speaker of the campaign, so far as I listened in on the radio, was Senator Bingham of Connecticut. Most of the voices were bad. Nearly all the fine voices I know are the result of Old World contact. George Gray Barnard, Frank Chapman, John Finley, all have had training in Spain, France or England.

Why should a crude unpleasant speech predominate? After all our language is English, however much we may talk of mak-

ing it American. What warrant have we for debasing it? To glorify our slang and whang is not a very high plane of national intelligence. If we are to have an American English let us make it a musical English, not a whining flat corruption. How shall we do this when the majority of our people are without home-training in the art of speech?

Our hope is in the public schools, but how much attention can they give to the cultivation of a pleasing tone? They teach the pronunciation and the meaning of words but quality of tone is ignored for the reason that the teachers are themselves in most cases woefully unqualified or so over-worked that they can lend no aid in the development of charm.

Then come the universities with their departments of public speaking and the colleges with their dramatic departments but at their best they reach only a fraction of the students and few of them definitely teach the art I am trying to emphasize. For one reason or another nothing is done to lighten the vocal handicaps of the pupils, only in certain private schools of oratory like Emerson College is any part of this work attempted. The proof that it is not being done is to be found in the clamor of our people when brought together at receptions and dinners and teas.

The stage has been a great school but of late years, dominated by New York audiences and managers, most of our actors are no longer exemplars of good speech. In making our award for good diction next year we shall have some difficulty in finding a man on the stage who belongs to the class of Hampden or Otis Skinner. They are mostly careless mumblers, realistic reproducers of slovenly and unlovely speech. In order to find an actor to play the part of a gentleman, the managers look to England. In listening last year to a beautiful little play, "The Cradle Song," I was greatly pleased by the melodious, quietly authoritative voice of the actress who was Mother Superior of the cast. Later I was told that this was Mary Shaw. Hers was a colloquialism which was at once truthful and touched with nobility. She made me feel once again the decline in diction on the present day New York stage which largely caters to a people with no respect for the tradition of the English stage.

This brings me to a restatement of the great and growing influence of the radio which can not be upper Broadway. Like a great magazine it must be national, it must serve widely separated communities, and I am happy to state that the managers of the two greatest radio organizations, The National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting Company, are

co-operating most cordially with the American Academy in the effort to raise the standard of the announcers' speech, for they realize he is to be a great factor in the inculcation of better spoken English.

Finally we now have the talking screen which is likely to dwarf all other agencies by the universality of its appeal and the direct inspiration of its actors. The boys and girls of today adore the movie stars as I, in my youth, adored Edwin Booth and Madame Modjeska. As I was instructed by those great artists, so the youth of today can be inspired by Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. There is magic in their silent dramas; let us hope there will be equal magic in their vocal films. It is heartening to be told that other producers for purely commercial reasons are hurrying to secure actors whose voices will harmonize with the characters they are to depict. It will not do to have the gorgeous picture queen utter her commands in the voice of a girl from the Wabash.

It is possible for the talking film to bring the voice of Walter Hampden and Ruth Draper to every nook and corner of America. The scope of this invention is limitless. It will carry the American language all over the world, along with American shoes, hats and cigarettes. It is because of the almost universal infiltration of the talking screen that it threatens to subordinate the legitimate stage. It offers seats within the reach of the many. Improvement is certain to result from such instruction. The radio speaker and the actor on the sound film will set new standards for such communities as magazines have set new standards for domestic architecture and interior decoration.

What is culture but a growth in comparative knowledge? In a community where standards of taste are local, excellencies are accidental, but as a single noble building in an ugly town establishes new measures of architectural value, putting the flimsy local shacks in their proper places, so a beautiful speaker either on the screen or over the air may be an inspiration to all those who are minded to put away their unlovely habits of speech.

Let no one fear a dead uniformity of excellence. There will be no loss of character when we abandon our faults. The mastery of speech technique will set the speaker free as the mastery of the painter's technique sets the artist free. As a nation we can only gain by developing a melodious tongue. I urge upon you as representatives of the art of speech to take your mission

SALVAGING DEBATE

By A. CRAIG BAIRD

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A seven-minute speech delivered at the meeting of National Association of Teachers of Speech, Hotel McAlpin, New York, December 30-31, January 1, 1929-1930. This talk was one of eight in a symposium on "What the Profession Most Needs."

I AM ASKED to talk on "Salvaging Debate." Salvaging debate implies a general shipwreck. It visualizes a crew of college debaters clinging to the masts, argumentation teachers casting out life lines, with perchance some educators, yea, even some speech brethren, standing idly on the beach. I need not quote statistics or cite evidence to remind you that the picture is a false one. The seas are still calm—if they can ever be calm where debating holds sway. But debating does need, if not salvaging or salvation, at least stimulation. Argument still has a stout heart, but it bears the scars of battle. Its accusers have damned it because it has spread far and wide the doctrine of competitive debate, because it has presumably harbored sophistry, because it has reversed the educational philosophy of analysis first and synthesis last, and because it has injected a never-say-die element into every discussion.



A. CRAIG BAIRD
University of Iowa

Where and how shall we apply the stimulant? Shall we speak of decisionless debates? Of tournaments? Of releasing attractive publicity? Of instituting compulsory attendance at debates? Of entertaining far-wandering teams? Of a string of victories? These programs properly managed will certainly augment the power of debate among the student-body politic. In any case, and here is the point of my speech, the ultimate source of reform must be in the class-

room. The true stimulus in debating will come from an efficient teacher of the subject. Let us focus on this teacher and his course.

Item one: The argumentation instructor is first of all a teacher and not a coach. His duties and privileges will and should include the direction of public teams. By training and temperament, however, he will also be an educator in the classroom.

Item two: The chief purpose or end of his course in the curriculum will be to teach oral controversy or discussion. As one interested in controversy he will have a vision of our democracy progressing through discussion to the solution of its recurrent problems of races and tariffs and peace pacts, industrial and international. This argumentation instructor will envisage his course as furnishing a technique in oral discussion for the free and fair handling of these issues. And I have said that his chief purpose should be to teach ORAL controversy, stressing the art of effective speech.

Item three: He will teach not simply technical debate but discussion as well. He will equip the lawyer of tomorrow and the debater of today. Even more to the point he will stress persuasion, public discussion, and committee discussion. Growing out of this suggestion is another one.

Item four: Our instructor will teach from the vantage ground of the newer philosophy of education, which calls for an identification of education with life and in this case for adjustment of the entire debating project to the needs of the world in which we live.

Item five: Our instructor will go at his teaching from the angle of the later psychology, especially social psychology, with much attention to the audience and to audience participation. (This suggestion means emphasis on audience voting.)

Item six: He will utilize in the classroom and in his direction of extra classroom debating the educational device of competition.

Item seven: His course will be robust in content. The weak will falter, but the strong will go forth with a serviceable tool and with open eyes.

Item eight: The students in this course will respect truth as a goal. They will lessen their prejudices and increase their skill in discrimination of arguments and attitudes.

Item nine: The students will develop systematic methods of investigation. They will have if not creative imaginations at

least added facility in analysis. These students will shun the merely spectacular, exhibitional, and strategic.

These nine recommendations mean that these students in company with their instructor will have a genuine educational experience. Such a course Emerson describes in his "American Scholar" when he speaks of types of American Colleges: "They can only serve us when they aim not to drill but to create; when they gather from far every ray of genius . . . and by concentrated fires, set the heart of their youth on flame."

If courses in public discussion are thus presented as an educational adventure for undergraduates, debating will continue to develop as an educational enterprise. It will draw to its self hardy souls among the students. Incidentally it will help us teachers who sometimes sit perched on our stools beset on one hand by decisionless debates and on the other by the critic judge.



University of Iowa Debate Team Tours England

Information contained here was given us by the Service Bulletin of the
University of Iowa

THE University of Iowa engaged in its first debating tour of England in May, 1929, under the auspices of the National Student Federation of the United States and of the National Union of Students of Great Britain. These organizations sponsor each year one American University debating tour of Great Britain. The traveling expenses of the Iowa team were met by contributions from alumni members of Delta Sigma Rho, student organizations, Iowa Alumni, and friends of the University. Entertainment in England was provided by the various entertaining institutions.

The Iowa team, composed of Herschel G. Langdon, L1, Burton A. Miller, A4, and Louis F. Carroll, L3, engaged in nine debates with British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. The discussions were conducted according to the British plan with an audience vote on the merits of the question, the argu-

ments of Iowa winning in seven out of the nine debates. The itinerary of the team as reported by Louis F. Carroll follows:

The three speakers left Iowa City on Tuesday, April 22. On Thursday they were entertained at luncheon at the Western Universities Club, New York, whereat they were photographed and interviewed by the press and otherwise treated beyond their ordinary stations in life. Thursday evening the team was entertained by the same group at a dinner theatre party. The three men sailed the following night, Friday, April 26, on the Cunard ship "Caronia."

May 4. Upon arrival at Plymouth, the team proceeded immediately to London by train (at 80 miles per hour) and were adequately and hospitably met at Paddington Station by representatives of the National Union of Students. Arrangement had been made to accommodate the men in private homes. They were particularly fortunate in their assignment to a charming and wealthy hostess, who provided them an entire floor including a sitting room, art gallery, and even a gas heater.

May 6. The first debate was held at London Day Training College, a normal college, at 4:30 Monday afternoon. It was preceded, as was subsequently found usual, by a deliberate and friendly stuffing of the speakers with tea and pastry. The College Union president asked to vary the program by holding impromptu debates upon a number of subjects. The Americans graciously consenting, brief debates were held on the topics "Matrimony should replace the classics in the college curriculum;" "The English climate leaves much to be desired;" and "This House favors a policy of reduction of naval armaments." The Iowa team conducted their side creditably, especially when opposing each other. The Americans adjourned to a dinner dance given by the American Universities Union at the English Speaking Union.

Carroll and Miller lunched with Lady Struthers, who is much interested in America and Americans. She has been hostess on occasion to every American ambassador to St. James since Choate.

Langdon lunched with Sir Ernest Benn in Fleet Street and received an autographed book from the famous publisher.

May 7. Luncheon with Mr. MacAdam, Secretary of the National Union of Students, followed by a matinee.

May 8. The Iowans went by train to Reading, 30 miles west of London. They were quartered in the Reading University men's dormitory, which looks like the original of the Iowa Quad-

rangle. They ate for the first time in an English university common dining hall. Their first glimpse of cricket was had in the afternoon and the unanimous conclusion was that it is not so much of a game as a gentlemanly endurance contest—i. e., after a day or two one captain is gentleman enough to call it off. In the evening reduction of naval armaments was debated. Iowa opposed the motion with two main speakers, which motion lost 200 to 100.

May 9. To Oxford in the morning. Luncheon with Quentin Hogg, Union President, and other Oxford students. Hogg, son of the Lord Chancellor of England, took his guests on a long and interesting automobile ride.

A magnificent dinner preceded the debate. The Oxford men were resplendent in tail coats and white vests. The hospitality was warm but the climate was not. Iowa debated again before a goodly union audience and a full gallery, on naval armaments. Two things were noteworthy: (1) that the second Oxford speaker spent his entire speech in upbraiding the Conservative party; (2) the main speakers were conducted from the hall after their speeches and given refreshments while the debate from the floor went on for two hours. The motion carried by a small margin.

The team lived in the colleges, each man in a different one. Langdon in St. John's drew a gas heater and Miller in Christ's Church had a nobleman's room and a valet. Carroll lodged in Trinity College.

May 10. A short tour of Oxford and then north by train to Birmingham. Met by three jolly students, including a charming girl. Debated at 5:30 p. m. against reduction of naval armaments but the motion carried. No foreign team from America or England had won here in years. Here again most excellent private homes were opened to the Iowans.

May 11. Correspondence day. The team visited Birmingham U. and wrote letters. Attended the famous Civic Repertory Theatre in the evening.

May 12. A young lady and the Union President escorted the team by auto through the Shakespeare country. A delightful relaxing trip.

May 13. Traveled from Birmingham to Manchester. Quartered in a small hotel near the Manchester Union and immediately began filling the gas meters with English pennies. The team spent the afternoon by themselves inspecting the very large and somewhat drab city. The Union Committee entertained at a

smoker in the evening and did it well. The committee must spend much of its time rehearsing songs, for the renditions were polished and well memorized.

May 14. A good debate in the afternoon in which Iowa disapproved of nationalism. The opposition was "ragged" by the Union members, who were polite, however, to the visitors. The motion made by Iowa carried after some excellent speeches from the house. Here the procedure included two main speeches by each side, a prolonged discussion from the floor, and a final summation speech by each side. A banquet and a play entertained the guests after the debate.

May 15. To Newcastle-on-Tyne from Manchester across northern England. The team was met by the Union President, who introduced us to three young ladies, a hostess for each man. Thereafter the Iowans met only upon serious occasions. Through a mishap in the Prince of Wales' schedule, the Iowa team visited Armstrong College a day behind him, but the hospitality had not been exhausted. Miller and Carroll had a ride to the mountains on the Scottish border. Langdon met an amateur photographer of note and became engrossed in a temporary hobby.

A splendid dinner-dance at the Union occupied the evening. The men and women at Armstrong were especially fine hosts and hostesses. The Americans found that the English girls could dance extremely well.

May 16. To the North-East Coast Exhibition just opened by the Prince. Major Seagrave's car was an interesting exhibit. Then an after-tea debate on reduction of naval armaments—the best of the trip on that subject. Iowa, as usual, opposed a reduction and the motion lost by a small margin. The members voted by filing to the right and left of the house at the end of the debate.

May 17. Down the island to London. Miller and Langdon left immediately to go to a country place south of London. Carroll stayed in London and went to a farm near Ipswich for the Whitsunday holiday.

May 20. Monday. The team assembled and compared notes at Cambridge. As at Oxford, the men were quartered in colleges, Miller and Langdon in Trinity and Carroll in Kings. The weather was beautiful and Cambridge wove a spell about the visitors. The team went to Duxford, a Royal Flying Corps airport, for luncheon with the Commander, a magnificent fellow whom Miller and Langdon had met over the week-end. A very interesting show was put on by bombing and pursuit planes. In the evening

