

# 'READING MACHINE' NEW AID TO BLIND

Development of Device Combining Principles of Phonograph, Talkies Under Way.

BY MARTIN CODEL.

Out of radio and its kindred acoustical arts comes now the promise of a "reading machine," a device which for hours without interruption will intone recorded versions of newspaper articles, magazine stories and even full length books. The device is being developed primarily as an aid to the blind, but its tremendous possibilities for general instructional and entertainment purposes are readily apparent.

In its proposed form, the reading machine is a relatively simple adaptation of well known phonograph and talking film principles, but it is expected to be more simple of construction and more compact in size than any other talking machine ever devised.

#### Hailed By Scientific Observers.

Competent scientific observers hail it as the possible forerunner of a "reading robot," which one day will be perfected to scan actual newspapers, magazines and books and read them aloud through eyes that are photoelectric cells capable of transforming printed words into speech by electrical and mechanical means.

Development of the reading machine for the blind is being sponsored by wealthy patrons, among whom are said to be A. Atwater Kent, the radio manufacturer, and Cyrus H. K. Curtis, the publisher. One of the inventors is Morris S. Frank, managing director of The Seeing Eye, an institution at Nashville, Tenn., devoted to the unique purpose of training dogs as guides for the blind.

Himself blind for many years, Mr. Frank is well known throughout the country for his travels in behalf of his fellow unfortunates. He is always accompanied by his police dog "Buddy," who has been trained to be the "eyes" of his master and guides him through traffic and around all manner of obstacles. Mr. Frank's institution is supported by benefactions, and his invention is being developed with outside scientific and financial aid.

#### Is Small Amplifying System.

The reading machine is a small amplifying system that speaks out the recordings from rolled strips of an exceedingly thin film substance called cellophane upon which the reading voice has been imposed. The film is like a motion picture reel, except that it is wider and carries only the sound tracks. One winding will carry thousands of words.

Wide vistas are seen for its exploitation both among the blind and among people generally for, besides being issued daily to carry summaries or full reports of the day's news, it can bring into the home full lecture courses, complete readings of articles and stories, full length plays and books and in fact any intelligence conveyable by the voice. The supply of subject matter would be purchased just as piano player rolls or phonograph records are now purchased.

Nor, strange as it seems, is the "reading robot," which will read from actual printed matter, beyond the realm of possibility. Man has duplicated or sharpened practically all the senses by electrical and mechanical means, for he now has a microphone that can hear, a photoelectric cell that can see and other devices, primarily utilizing the electron tube, that veritably can feel, smell and taste.

It remains only to co-ordinate these remarkable devices along lines of the television scanner, the phonograph recorder and the speech amplifier to evolve an electro-mechanical man who can transmute what his eyes see into speech, just as man's eyes "telegraph" impressions to his brain and thence to his tongue.

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CHILD SOME KILLS MAN