

INTRODUCTION

It is almost proverbial—particularly between parents and children—that you should not take complex things apart in case you cannot put them together again, and this axiom is applied especially to clocks. The assumption is that it will cost more money to undo your misadventures than it would have cost to have had the original fault properly corrected, and that it will be embarrassing or humiliating to present the *dissecta membra* to the professional. Both assumptions may well be correct. Some people will always ignore such warnings, however, and this book is for those who feel so inclined, in the hope that it may make the way a little safer.

For whatever reason, you may find yourself intrigued by the idea of working on clocks or a clock. You can proceed by hit and miss methods, but you may well do more damage than you cure and you will prevent few of the faults which have yet to appear. Before working on a clock you really need to know what type of clock it is, what general principles it follows, where it differs from the general types and why, how many of them and in what order you will have to remove the various parts. Often, for instance, you cannot correct a fault in the striking side without knowing something of the 'going' side, and vice versa. You cannot correct for worn parts if you do not know what their exact shape should be, or in which direction the wheels turn. It will serve little purpose repairing or replacing an escapement if the mainspring or train is wasting power before the escapement is reached. The impulse to oil everything because of a certain sluggishness may be strong but, as a sole cure, it is generally wrong and can do harm. And so on. This sort of general information will be found, after a few remarks about tools and materials, in the first five chapters of this book, along with diagrams of the parts and movements which you may come across.

There are those who do not regard electric clocks as in the province of the clock repairer. A considerable proportion of

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the clocks in existence must, by now, be electrically operated. and it is a proportion which will assuredly increase. If you do not wish to be concerned with this fast-developing area of horology, that is your affair, and it is true that many modern electric clocks do not lend themselves to extensive repair. There will be others, however, and not only those with an interest in electricity or electronics, who will regard electric clocks as being as much their concern as weight- and spring-driven clocks. Therefore a survey of some types of electric clock is given in Chapter 5.

The rest of the book is taken up with practical matters of cleaning, diagnosing faults, and repairs which you can make. There is much in horology, as in any craft, which cannot be taught, let alone self-taught from a book, but books can stimulate interest and be useful for reference, and it is hoped that this book may partly serve these purposes.

I feel bound to notice two changes among many which have taken place in the world of horology since the first edition was published. First, the 'quartz revolution', which may prove almost as significant as the introduction of the pendulum three hundred years ago, has occurred. Except for occasional excellence, the mechanical clock has been largely superseded for domestic time-keeping, replaced by types of clocks whose economics of repair are very different. Moreover mechanical clocks are increasingly bought for aesthetic and reasons other than for time-keeping. Secondly amateur interest has grown greatly and both parts and special services (such as dial restoration) are available far more widely than would have been conceivable even ten years ago. Both of these changes are having a marked influence on the hobby and, indeed, its boundaries with the trade. More people take their interest further, and it is partly for this reason that a new chapter, introducing more advanced work, has been added to this edition.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge a debt to writers on horology, too many to name individually, and to all those whose clocks I have repaired or borrowed for inspection. I am particularly indebted to Mrs. A. Allnutt for the photographs.