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"FASTEST SHOW ON EARTH"

The Amazing Tommy Handley

PASTER than the American shows, as Bob Hope is said to admit, and, as some think, more truly crystallising the English comic character in terms of pure radio than anything else on the air, Itma, the Tommy Handley show, has reached amazing heights of popularity. An English journal says that when Itma went on the air one Thursday recently, more than 12,000,000 people tuned in to a programme which climbed a new peak of fantasy.

By lunchtime on Sunday, when the show was repeated, Skipper Tommy Handley, with straw in his hair (he was back on the farm again) had played to almost half the population of Great

Britain within a week.

Handley has developed a new line in humour. While the rapid fire cross-talk comedians of old New Zealand vaudeville days surprised with their speed, Handley travels verbally at such a rate that only by regular listening can one enjoy the full range of his comedy.

In a recording heard recently from 2YA, Handley's script writer, Ted Kavanagh, an Aucklander, and a brother of Paul Kavanagh, of Wellington, told listeners that he set out in life with the idea of becoming a doctor. He went to Scotland as a medical student, and came "perilously near to the final of his course." He learned a lot about human nature and now, for many years, he and Tommy Handley have been associated. They are still on speaking terms.

Once a "C.T."

Handley is a Liverpool man. After school he entered a corn merchant's office where, he says, he learned to flick corn with incredible accuracy at adjacent office windows. Then he became a commercial traveller by day-and by night. Finding that he could make more in one night entertaining than in six days of selling toys, he entered the theatrical profession seriously.

In London he expected managers to fall on his neck-but found himself pushed into the chorus at Daly's. Then he managed to secure the job of understudy to the comedian, and, when the latter was "off" (through eating a surfeit of lampreys or something) played the part. Since then he has never looked back-except at a pretty face, he says, or to see if a policeman was following

During the war he served with the Kite Balloon Section of the R.N.A.S. and after demobilisation played in the mus-ical comedy "Shanghai" in a concert party and finally in his famous musichall sketch, "The Disorderly Room." A memorable occasion was the Command Performance at Windsor on the birthday of Princess Elizabeth.

The Mythical Geekee

Nearly 40 years ago Handley was walking down to the landing stage at Liverpool to eat his mid-day lunch when he saw the name on the door of a haulage contractor's office. He forgot it, but

(continued on next page)