

# Sam Small's Dual Personality

STANLEY HOLLOWAY was, when he thought about it, just the slightest bit annoyed. "How did this chap Knight get hold of my character? I asked myself when I first saw his stories. So my agent got in touch with his publishers in New York, and you can imagine our surprise when they replied that Sam Small was the name of a person in a book by Jerome K. Jerome! It had been in print ages before my own Sam was ever thought of."

He was referring to Eric Knight's book *Sam Small Flies Again*, a series of humorous sketches about a legendary Yorkshireman who discovered the art of levitation, which appeared a few years ago. It was the first we had heard of Sam Small's dual identity. But how had his own "Pick Oop tha Musket" Sam originated? "I can truthfully say that my own Sam Small was created quite independently of Jerome K. Jerome," Stanley Holloway continued. "I got the idea of Sam—I'd heard the story in a round-about way from a friend—and Leslie Henson suggested I write a story in monologue form about him. He wanted a surname to alliterate with Sam, and Leslie had a daily help in his flat, a little Mrs. Downtrodden, you might say, whose name was Annie Small, so we decided to call Sam 'Sam Small.' That's how it all started."

Sam has, of course, certain popular characteristics. He's another example of the "little man" of fiction who keeps popping up in various disguises (like Minninnick's Soldier Sam), so that to call him Sam Small, was, as Stanley Holloway said himself, "a natural." The surname fits him like a glove. It is interesting too that whereas Eric Knight's Sam Small is a Yorkshireman, Stanley's is a Lancashireman, although he doesn't claim any particular locality for him. "He's really a general sort of character," he said. "What we call a North Countryman. I made him that because that particular dialect seems to create more humour than any other."

Actually Stanley Holloway isn't a North Countryman himself. He was

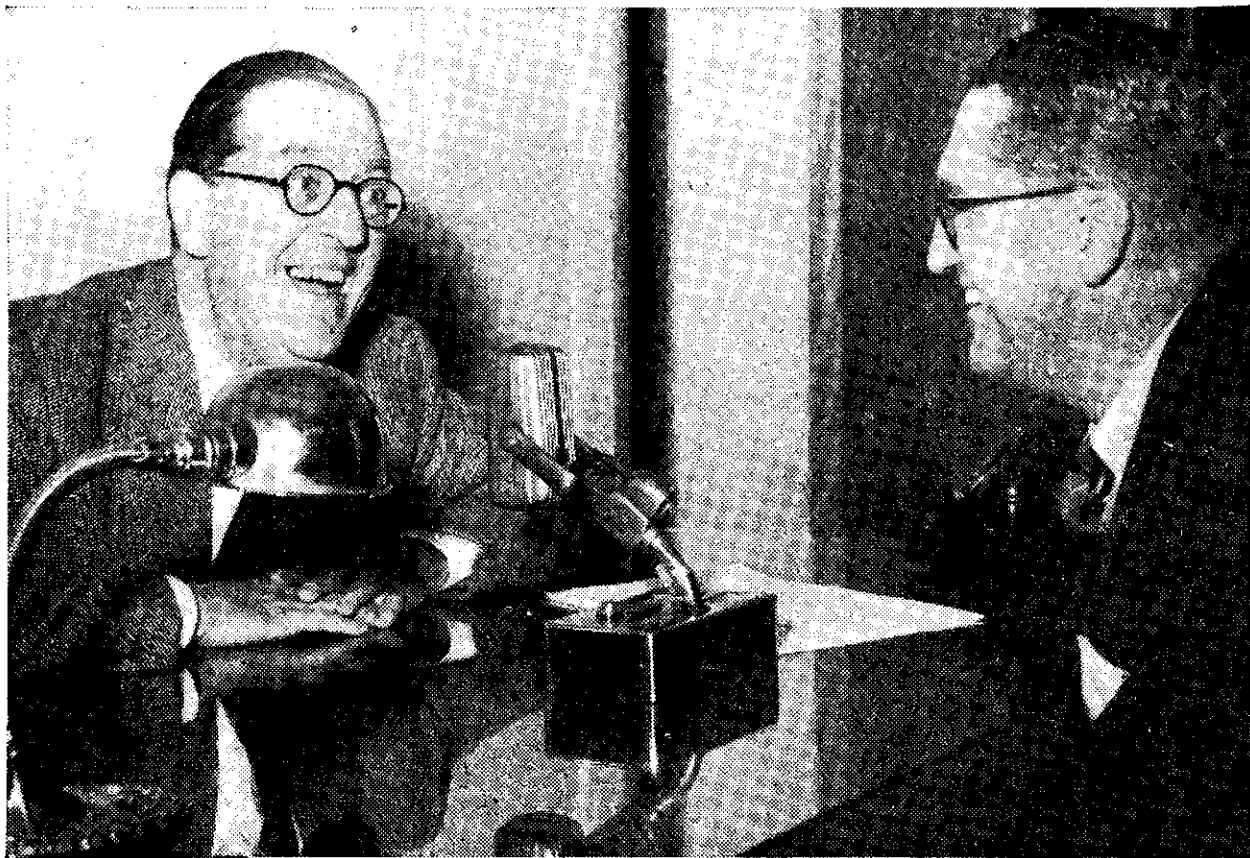
born in London, as he says, at a very early age. He began life as a boy chorister, and in 1925 broke out as a baritone, after studying to be an opera singer in Milan. He served in the Connaught regiment during the war, and while with the infantry in France was responsible for capturing the crew of a German aircraft single-handed. After that he made his professional stage debut—in the chorus at the Winter Garden Theatre, London. Then he joined a show called the Co-optimists,

where he sang ballads for six years before going on the halls as a single act. He soon established his name in the theatre world as a revue artist, and a long series of stage appearances followed in revue, musical, comedy, and pantomime.

"I was one of the earliest broadcasters in Britain, too," he said. "I remember one afternoon, I was due to give a group of baritone numbers and in between each bracket of songs a young fellow played a few items on the

leading character actors. He has appeared in over 50 films, including *Major Barbara*, *This Happy Breed*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Brief Encounter*, *The Way to the Stars*, and *Hamlet*. He says that at present there is a purge on in the British film industry, where they are cutting out a lot of dead wood. He thinks it will do a lot of good.

Billy Mayerl, who is with him on the tour, is described as the composer of a thousand numbers. He is certainly heard on the air nearly every day from some station or other in this country, and his best-known compositions include his *Four Aces* and *Aquarium* suites, and the numbers "Bats in the Belfrey," "White



STANLEY HOLLOWAY (left) shares a joke with Hilton Porter in the course of an amusing interview recently broadcast by Station 12B.

## ★ Recital by Schola Cantorum ★



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

FOR many in Wellington, recitals by the Schola Cantorum are events of the year, and their performance in the Town Hall on Wednesday, June 15, will be enhanced by the appearance of two prominent visitors, Ruth Pearl (violin) and Peers Coetmore (cello), with Alex Lindsay (violin), Winifred Stiles (viola), Clement Howe (piano), and Julian Hemmingsway (bass). The entire programme will be devoted to the works of Vaughan Williams. It includes his *Dona nobis pacem*, a cantata written for soprano and baritone, chorus and orchestra, and based on three poems by Walt Whitman with sentences from John Bright and the Scriptures, which has been described as the most individual and impressive of his choral works. The *Mass in G Minor* and the *Benedicite*, written for soprano solo, chorus, and orchestra, with words from the *Song of the Three Holy Children* and a 17th Century poet, are also included. The first half only of the concert (from 8.0 p.m.) will be broadcast by 2YA.

'cello. Although no one took much notice of the fact then, his name was John Barbirolli. That shows you how long ago it was."

He gave the first of his "Sam" and "Albert" monologues when he was at the London Palladium. "I thought it might be a good idea to break up the act a bit with some spoken pieces between the songs, and the first monologue I did seemed to write itself. It only took me 10 minutes." Although he says he hasn't done any variety work for several years before his present tour, his records have been high favourites with New Zealand audiences for a long time. "Pick Oop tha Musket," "Alt! Who Goes There?," "The Lion and Albert," "Recumbent Posture," "Brown Boots," "With Her Head Tucked Underneath Her Arm," "Ole in the Ark," and "Jonah and the Grampus," are some of the best-known of them.

### In Films

Since 1933 his film career has run parallel with his stage successes, and he is now regarded as one of England's

Heather," "Marigold," and "Sweet William." He is at present under contract to the BBC, and has, of course, made hundreds of records, both solo and with orchestra.

He studied at Trinity College until he was 15, and in his last year is said to have shocked his teachers by playing what was then a new style of music—syncopation. His talents were first noticed by Bert Ralton, leader of the Savoy Havana Band, and he was given the job of pianist with Ralton's orchestra at the Savoy Hotel when he was only 18. He became the first pianist to broadcast syncopated piano solos, and his regular features on the air are said to have kept listeners glued to their crystal sets. His semi-classical syncopations for piano opened up a new era in popular music.

In 1925 Billy Mayerl, still a beardless boy of 23 years, started his now-famous School of Piano Playing. Since then he has had over 100,000 pupils, amongst his more distinguished being the late Duke of Kent, and the Infanta Marie Christina of Spain.