

LISTENINGS

Perpetrated and illustrated by KEN ALEXANDER

FIFTH COLUMN

LISTENERS to the BBC have been warned to make themselves perfectly acquainted



with the voices of regular announcers so that, in dire circumstances, they would be able to detect impersonation by enemy agents.

For example, should listeners hear a voice announcing, "Here der newss iss—ja!", they should regard the broadcast with a degree of suspicion or, at least, treat it with reserve.

Should the announcer continue, "England beaten iss—blime! by yingo!", and

go on to say, "For what use iss it to fight any more the nice German cousins who only peace and happiness wants and kindness for all peoples who to gentle Herr Hitler obeys—not 'arf. I don't fink!", then the listener should ponder on the advisability of checking up on the announcer.

If the broadcast persists with, "Der Windsor Schloss under brotection iss by kind German soldiers and Herr Winston Churchill says, 'Your arms lay down, boyss—ja! For what use iss it to fight der brave gentle soldiers of der Reich—strewth!' In such case the listener should not dismiss any possible suspicion of foul play too lightly.

In fact, doubt might be definitely established should the announcer proceed with, "Der fleet defeated iss by der glorious German navy—dis der tenth time iss that der Hood, der Rebulse and der Renown—sunken haff been; der Air Forces Royal in their hangout stay, saying, 'Der good Herman Goering to England would not harm; der rascally Duff

Cooper it iss who bombs drop on English babies to make der good English der good Germans to hate. Der King Gott save! Ja! You're delling me!"

It may be laid down as a rule that any of the following remarks made by announcer should prompt the listener to doubt his sincerity: "Gott strafe Winston Churchill," "Der tag hass come," "Heil Hitler," or "Theil with Dommy Adkins!"

Especially is this so if such utterances are accompanied by heavy breathing through the nose like a plug-hole in pain.

* * *

There is, however, one particular announcement we would love to hear over the air. It would run something like this:—

"A man was arrested to-day in the Tower of London under suspicious circumstances. He was discovered trying to estimate the dimensions of the Coronation Crown with a tape measure. He spoke with a strong foreign accent and gave his name as Wiffler or Jittler. It was difficult to understand him as he kept bursting into tears. He is being held for questioning. There is a strong suspicion that the man is not quite sane.



ALONE HE DID IT!

Something More About "The Magnet" And Its Author

IN *The Listener* of August 30 we sadly reported that "The Magnet," most popular of schoolboy periodicals, had ceased publication, and that the boys of Greyfriars School—Billy Bunter, Harry Wharton and the Famous Five, and the rest—were no more. But now it seems possible that, as in the case of Mark Twain, the report of their deaths may have been, if not grossly exaggerated, at any rate somewhat too definite. According to "The Times" Educational Supplement of May 25, "The Magnet" has not ceased, but merely suspended, publication at the order of the British Paper Controller. The boys of Greyfriars School are therefore not finally dead but merely in a state of suspended animation for the duration. With victory they may revive.

"The Times" gives some more interesting facts about this remarkable schoolboy journal.

"The Magnet" was what the purveyors of magazines call, in their curious language, a "library." That is to say, every week it presented a complete and self-contained story of about 25,000 words, and this it had done for 32 years without a break.

More than 50,000,000 words must thus have been written about Greyfriars and its inmates—a record compared with which the Bertie Wooster cycle, the Barchester novels, the Forsyte Saga and the "Recherche du Temps Perdu" seem brief and sketchy efforts. It has been popularly supposed that a team of writers was needed to compile this

massive total, ringing the changes week in; week out. But in fact, Frank Richards, under whose name all the stories appeared, is a real person, one and indivisible, who has never faltered once in 32 years in turning out his weekly story, and has then regarded it as a part-time job.

"The Times" ends its note: "Now Harry Wharton and Co. are in suspense,

Deanna Durbin For Opera

According to a report from New York, Deanna Durbin has been placed under contract by the Metropolitan Opera Company, and will make her debut in New York during the 1941-42 season. In the meantime she has to prepare herself to play at least ten operatic roles. Before appearing at the Metropolitan she will make her debut with either the Los Angeles or the San Francisco Opera Companies

but when the Paper Controller is kind again and the mists clear from around Greyfriars, we can be sure that they will still be in the Remove, playing the same practical jokes on the same masters, foiling the schemes of the same rotters, and laughing as before. A new generation of boys will read every line about them, and be the better for it on the whole."

MARIE, MARIE, QUITE CONTRARY

IN company with Hector Bolitho, Noel Coward, and several other writers, St. John Ervine long cherished the desire to write a play for Marie Tempest. And just as Bolitho, the shy lad from New Zealand, saw his dream come true when Miss Tempest played in his "Victoria and Disraeli" (an event already described in *The Listener*), so Ervine finally had the satisfaction of seeing this queen of the English stage performing in a play by him—"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary."

The NBS has produced a radio version of the play, and it has already been presented over National stations. It will be heard in the evening programme from 2YA Wellington on Sunday, September 22.

St. John Ervine admits that Marie Tempest was the first actress in London, when he arrived there, to capture his heart.

Years passed; the first Great War was fought; Marie Tempest travelled far from England, and while she was acting in distant parts of the world, St. John Ervine wrote his play for her. In 1922, when Miss Tempest was on her way home from the East, his dream almost came true. Her return voyage was by way of New York and he sent his play to her there. He learnt that when she arrived in England, she would open with a season of the play. But Marie was contrary. To his amazement and disappointment she changed her mind and opened in a revival of one of her old favourites, "Good Gracious, Annabella" (which, incidentally, she played in Wellington in 1918). St. John Ervine had to wait a long time before his dream came true, but come true it finally did.



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