

# BIG FAN MAIL FOR FIVE BBC NEWS READERS

## Magic Voices Now Known By Names

SINCE the news readers of the BBC began announcing their names with every bulletin, the BBC has had to open a new department to deal with fan mail, writes a London "Daily Mail" reporter.

The names were given so that listeners might become familiar with their voices in case an enemy country tried any radio trickery. It was never expected that anyone of the five men reading British broadcast news would rival, let alone displace, film stars in fan mail popularity. But that is just what has happened.

The BBC thought they had got speakers whose voices concealed their

personalities. They know better now.

When Frank Phillips was taken off news - reading recently, Broadcasting House was deluged with queries asking if he were ill or had been injured or killed.

The stream of tablets, mixtures, and prescriptions which flowed to Broadcasting House after the night that Stuart Hibberd coughed, was a mere trickle compared with this flood of anxious inquiries.

### Liddell—Dart Player

The senior news-reader is 32-years-old London-born Alvar Liddell. He arranges the duties of all announcers, and takes his turn at reading the news. Alvar tried various jobs, including working in a bank and acting on the stage and in films,

before he went to the BBC as an announcer in Birmingham in 1932.

He has been at Broadcasting House for seven years, and his hobbies are singing Lieder and playing darts.

Alan Howland has a perfect recording and broadcasting voice. Many people who heard him reading the news for the first time, recognised his as the voice which had accompanied all the sports pictures in British Movietone News.

But I wonder how many recalled the days around 1927 when he was heard as "Columbus" in the Children's Hour?

### McLeod—Barrister

The other day I was listening-in in a friend's house, when over the air came the words: "This is the one o'clock news. . . ." and my friend interjected, "and this is Joseph reading it."

Joseph MacLeod, barrister, author, private tutor, lecturer, and play producer, went to Russia to study what was being done on the Soviet stage. On his return, he broadcast a talk on what he had seen.

That with, two further talks in the Children's Hour on birds, made him an announcer. Joseph is a Fellow of the Zoological Society.

### Belfrage—Actor

"The voice with the bite in it" they call Bruce Belfrage, who came to the BBC after 12 years on the stage in London, Canada, the United States and South America.

At first he was in the Drama Section, casting and hiring players. He still does that in what is comically called his "spare time."

Frederick Allen's eyes sparkle with fun. His mouth seems to be just on the point of breaking into laughter.

Freddie, former concert and variety artist, teacher of elocution, adviser to music publishers, radio actor and singer, is now first relief news reader.

## LOOK BEFORE YOU LISTEN

### A Run Through The Records

By B.W.

#### £12,000 Birthday Gift

WHEN Yehudi Menuhin was a boy, he had no greater admirers than the Wall Street banker, Henry Goldman, and Mrs. Goldman. On Yehudi's twelfth birthday they gave him his choice of a collection of rare violins. One of the instruments selected was a Strad. violin, dated 1733, with an inscription indicating that it had been made in Stradivarius' ninetieth year. Although Yehudi tried some of the finest fiddles in America, and that means in the world, he came back again to the Strad. Mr. and Mrs. Goldman then formally handed over the lovely instrument which cost them £12,000.

On Wednesday, February 12, listeners to 3YA will hear Yehudi Menuhin, violinist.

#### Mother's Day

A GOOD story is told of Sir Henry Wood and an American prima donna who came over to sing under his baton. At the rehearsal, she produced her own band parts of an aria by Rossini. The parts were so cut about as to be almost undecipherable. Sir Henry called a halt: "I am very sorry," he said, "but these parts are impossible to read." "Why, I've sung this aria all over America!" cried the indignant lady. The situation, already delicate, was complicated by the intervention of the singer's mother, who stalked on to the platform to give her views on the matter. "I am very sorry," said Sir Henry, "but I do not conduct mothers!" Mamma was escorted from the platform.

On Friday, February 14, Sir Henry Wood conducts the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 3YA's programme.

#### Lord Elton's Secret

THE chief feature of Lord Elton's talks is the fact that young and old are equally enthusiastic about them. Some time ago, Lord Elton explained why. He said that from the first, he found himself reverting to more or less trivial occurrences, or the memories of the past to which they were apt to give rise. More and more he found that the letters which began to reach him from all kinds of listeners were themselves shepherding him into those channels. And he was surprised to find that, for some altogether inexplicable reason, it was possible to speak more intimately of those highly personal trivialities to the unseen audience behind the microphone than it would have been to even a familiar friend visible on the other side of the fireplace.

4YA listeners will hear a talk on "Guy Fawkes' Day" by Lord Elton, on Wednesday, February 12.

#### Veteran Recorder

THE famous instrumentalist and conductor, Debroy Somers, was actually born within sight and sound of a British military band. At the early age of three, he spent all his time in the band room where the instruments were kept—and he tried most of them. When he was four, the band paraded for a march, and young Somers was under the big drum, and only discovered and hauled out after the band had gone quite a long way. But in the end, he got his way. The day came when he was able to join a small band that recorded for Bulldog records. This unit made three dozen records at seven shillings and sixpence each, the leader sharing the proceeds among the members of the orchestra. As at this time, Somers played not only the piano, but the xylophone, oboe, and various other instruments, he certainly earned his share!

1YA listeners will hear Debroy Somers Band on Monday, February 10.

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