

# THE IMPERFECT ALIBI

(Written for "The Listener" by E.M.S.)

**B**OB switched off his wireless at the end of the commentary on the news, which was rather dull he thought; in fact all the commentaries seemed more or less dull since poor old Macdonell had passed on.

He decided on a short walk, getting back in time for Radio Newsreel at nine o'clock. Letting himself out of his flat, he set off. In the little house next door, he noticed that old George's light was burning. He wanted to let old George know about that new Athens station he had picked up. Oh well it would keep until he had completed his walk.

There were few people abroad at that hour, mostly soldiers and their girls, standing close together in the partial darkness afforded by the entrances to shops and business premises.

Just ahead a man, muttering aloud and clasping a newspaper-covered parcel, weaved an uncertain course around a corner and passed from sight.

As Bob passed one recess, somewhat darker than the others, a girl giggled suddenly and gave a little excited scream. As he turned sharply at the sound, the girl's companion turned as if to glance about the street, and Bob caught a fleeting look at his face.

Well I'll be damned, he thought as he passed by, if that isn't George then I never saw the old devil in my life.

Old George, that model of most, if not all of the virtues, and with a girl! You had only to mention the fair sex to old George, and he shied off like a skittish horse. On one occasion, long since, when he had suggested their taking a couple of girls to the pictures, the confused and stammering man who had got out of that little adventure forbade any further incursion into the realm of petticoats.

Give old George his wireless, pipe and books, and he considered the world, or the rest of it, well lost.

It must have been some trick of lighting, he mused, as he walked on, trying to puzzle it out, but no, damn it all, it was old George. You couldn't mistake that face. He would swear to it if need be.

He paused suddenly, as an idea came to him. There was one obvious way of proving it. He turned homeward. He would call in and see old George for himself. He would find the old devil, of course, listening in.

The little fish and chips shop he noticed, was open — the window containing the usual depressing display of symmetrically arranged bottles of soft drinks, a few forlorn looking tins of food and some dead flies.

He stopped, considering treating old George and himself to some supper, but, as was usually the case, those bottles



put him right off. He could not, for the life of him, see the connection between soft drinks and fish and chips.

The arrangement seemed to be the customary thing in most of the fish and chips shops, a sort of trade mark, but it never failed to irritate him beyond measure. To blazes with them. In one shop he

had recently noticed, the proprietor, even himself apparently convinced of the futility of the bottle and tin arrangement, had contented his artistic soul with a simpler display. In his otherwise empty window, exactly centred upon a piece of rather dubious oilcloth, stood one lonely potted aspidistra.

He shrugged and resumed his homeward walk, the smell of stale fat pursuing him for quite a distance.

**A**RRIVING before the little house, he rang the bell, which was promptly answered by his friend. Greetings followed as they made their way to old George's den. Bob glanced keenly at his friend, but could notice nothing unusual, just the same old stolid stick-in-the-mud.

The chair was drawn up at the wireless which, Bob noticed, was not switched on. Going closer he noted that old George had been, as usual, pottering about on shortwave.

"Been out?" asked Bob. "It's perfect out to-night."

"No," answered old George. "I've just been doing a spot of listening in."

"Anything good from London?" queried Bob.

"Nothing special," replied his friend. "I waited for Big Ben at nine o'clock and then gave it best for the evening."

"Yes," remarked Bob. "Good old Big Ben and his nine booming strokes."

This, he thought, was where he had got old George, hook, line and sinker.

"Oh, no," corrected old George, "ten strokes. Remember they are on British Summer Time now."

"Ah, got you, you delicious old liar," shouted Bob.

"Davenry doesn't broadcast Big Ben at nine o'clock. Come clean, now, you old scoundrel! Who was the girl?"

## ZB's PRESENT FAMOUS OLD MELODRAMA

**T**HE presentation over the ZB stations of "The Silver King" as a radio serial, will revive pleasant memories for many theatre-goers of a generation or two ago.

Written and produced by Henry Hermand and Henry Arthur Jones, it was originally produced in London at the Princess Theatre in 1882, where it ran for twelve months, and brought considerable theatrical prestige to Jones. It was brought to New Zealand three years later by that enterprising actor-manager, George Leitch.

As frequently happened in those days, the tour started in Dunedin, and after playing there and in Christchurch for four weeks, "The Silver King" was presented in the old Theatre Royal on the site of the present Police Headquarters in Johnston Street. The play was also presented on the occasion of the opening of the old Opera House in Manners Street, where the Regent Theatre is now.



Danver, Queenie Ashton is Nell Danver, Ronald Morse is "The Spider," Lou Vernon is Crips, and Arundel Nixon is Geoffrey Ware.

The story, of course, is melodrama in the good old Victorian style. Pretty Nell Hathaway is the purest, prettiest young woman that was ever pursued by a villain, and by the same token Geoffrey Ware is the blackest villain that was ever hissed by the gallery.

"The Silver King" is Will Denver, who, falsely accused of murdering the rascally Geoffrey Ware (he had plenty of cause to), escapes from England to America, and after many hardships, finally strikes it lucky in the mines of Nevada, where he discovers a fabulous silver lode. His wife, the ex-Nell Hathaway, suffers all his vicissitudes with him in true melodrama tradition, and how the two make good, and how wrong is finally made right, makes a thrilling and often amusing tale.

It was in Wellington, too, that "The Silver King" was produced for the last time in 1915. In the meantime, of course, it has been played frequently by amateur companies.

The radio serial is a faithful adaptation of the stage play, and the principal roles are filled by artists who have starred in many well known radio plays. Harvey Adams plays the part of Wilfred

"The Silver King" starts at 12B on February 26, at 22B on March 5, at 32B on March 12, and at 42B on March 19.