

IT'S THAT MAN AGAIN!

(Special to "The Listener" from the BBC: by SYLVIA DUNCAN)

TOMMY HANDLEY is a frequently. His name occurs so prop of the ether. British radio listeners would wonder what had happened if Tommy did not crop up somewhere pretty

often that whenever he puts on a show it is called "It's That Man Again." The idea was originated before the war when the show contained an unusual

radio feature called "Man Bites Dog." The idea of this was that if a dog bit a man it was not unusual, but if a man bit a dog it was a different story altogether! "It's That Man Again" was the last big variety show to be produced in the famous St. George's Hall before the Variety Department disappeared into the country at the outbreak of war. St. George's Hall, alas, is now an empty shell.

When the BBC was first evacuated, Francis Worsley, the producer, and Ted Kavanagh, the author, found themselves scheduled to produce the variety series "It's That Man Again"—yet again. The layout of the show was changed, Britain was in the midst of a big transition from peace to war, and excess of evacuated officialdom was on hand, so they decided to "cod" it and give Tommy Handley an office — the Office of Twerps — and made Tommy himself the Minister of Aggravation. So successful was this that Tommy actually had letters addressed to him—T. Handley, Esq., The Office of Twerps — and delivered at the Office of Works, a few yards up the road from the BBC building. Tommy's Office of Twerps flourished valiantly. It ran for a long period. But



BBC photograph
TOMMY HANDLEY (right) resists the sales talk of Horace Percival

now Mrs. Tickle, the charwoman, played by Maurice Denham, has long since been claimed by the Army, and the office boy, Lemuel, now graces the ranks of the R.A.F. in the person of Sam Costa. Even Tommy's girl friends, of which he originally had three, have now been rationed down to two

So "I.T.M.A." brings happiness to thousands of troops throughout the world, and you listeners at home who are away from your boys may know that these are the people who lighten their hours and help to pass the minutes that every day bring the final return home nearer.



BBC photograph
TWO "GANGSTERS" (Sydney Keith and Jack Train) stage a hold-up

VISITING MUSICIANS

(Continued from previous page)

done with Mr. Matthews taking the solo part (Brosa having been soloist in the first performance proper, in New York). In an interview with *The Listener* he recalled an amusing experience connected with this concerto.

He and his wife were on their way to America, and about three-quarters of the way across he tuned in to London on the ship's radio, and heard the Britten concerto.

Mr. Matthews just began to say how impressed he had been with the fine performance when his wife interrupted — "Be modest now!"

The performance he had heard was a recording of his own playing, made without his knowledge. Perhaps because of imperfect reception Mr. Matthews had failed to recognise his own interpretation of the concerto!

In America the time passed quickly, rushing from one concert to another, renewing acquaintances—Barbirolli in New York (where he conducts the Philharmonic Symphony), Eugene Goossens in Cincinnati, Benjamin Britten, and other English musicians, who are now in the States.

Mrs. Matthews's career began when she left Perth, her birthplace, at the

age of 16, on a scholarship to the Royal Colleges of Music. In London she studied the piano with Eric Grant, then had lessons from Tobias Matthay, and later from Solomon. Egon Petri, after reading press notices of her playing, wrote to her from Poland, and she was to have had lessons from him when Poland was invaded.

Her namesake and countrywoman, Eileen Joyce, who is in London now,



DAME MYRA HESS
She acted as Cupid

married and a mother, but still playing in public, was known to Mrs. Matthews since her childhood in Western Australia.

"Solomon is playing marvellously now," Mrs. Matthews said. "He is right in his prime. But do you know who is the best pianist in England now? Clifford Curzon; he is marvellous."

"I've discovered a relation here in New Zealand. After our first broadcast someone rang up from Christchurch and said 'Have you got red hair,' so I said 'Well, it inclines that way,' so then he said 'Then you are a niece of mine.'"

Mrs. Matthews has a special bent for playing contemporary music, and feels that as it was on her playing of modern music that she made her reputation, she should be playing some to New Zealand audiences. She had played a quantity of Schonberg, Stravinsky, and Kodaly at concerts, and wondered whether she would be able to obtain such music in New Zealand, as her music was unfortunately on another boat, bound for no one knows where.

In New Zealand the Matthews will play violin and piano music from their classical repertoire, and may do some concerto work with the NBS Orchestra. They will be heard from 2YA at 9.25 p.m. on Tuesday, February 3, and at 8.19 p.m. on Friday, February 6; also from 3YA at 3.15 p.m. on Sunday, February 1.



BBC photograph
ALL UNSUSPECTING: Tommy Handley and Jack Train