

MASTER OF TONGUES

A YOUNG New Zealander was once asked by Leo Tolstoy how many languages he knew. He admitted to 36. Later he was to add to this score and by the time he died he was master of 58, including Old Irish, Japanese, Tagalog, Egyptian, the Cuneiform inscriptions, Hittite, Albanian, Basque, Chinese, Swahili and Hausa. He was once telephoned by the Prime Minister of Tsarist Russia with the request that he resolve a misunderstanding between some St. Petersburg agents and a group of travelling Papuans. This he did, speaking with equal facility the tongues of both groups.

The New Zealander was Harold Williams, an Auckland-born journalist who became foreign editor of *The Times*. His grasp of international affairs was such that he became confidante and adviser to statesmen and diplomats. Lloyd George, Austen Chamberlain and M. Herriot consulted him. Litvinov described him as Russia's greatest enemy.

The latter tribute was won by Williams's consistent advocacy of western intervention in Russia in the years following the revolution. Russia was, in fact, one of the New Zealander's chief interests. He spent many years there in Tsarist times, and wrote a history of the country.

Born in 1876, Williams was the eldest of seven sons of a Methodist minister. At 20 he followed his father into the ministry, but found himself unsuited to the vocation and travelled to Germany to study languages. After taking his degree, he entered journalism as an assistant foreign correspondent for *The Times*. From then on the acquisition of languages became secondary to the task of news-gathering and, to some extent, news making. Williams regarded it as relaxation, a pleasant relief from the strain of reporting Europe's stormy political scene.

When Harold Williams died *The Times* spoke of his "irreparable loss to the paper," and Sir Robert—later Lord Vansittart—said: "Of his great gifts of

thought and knowledge I will say nothing. They spoke for themselves to all who ever knew him, and to many who did not. But if ever, during a long and loving friendship, I had been able for one day to believe that I had a character like his, it would have been a happy day for me."

The Amazing Harold Williams, a documentary about the famous New Zealander, will be broadcast from National stations during the next few months. It was written by Oliver A. Gillespie, and produced for the NZBS by Bernard Beeby. William Austin takes the part of Williams, and the narrators are Charles Sinclair and Briton Chadwick. The programme will be heard first from 1XN at 9.30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 3.

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Clues Across

1. His rag may become obtrusively bright.
4. Strange sounds to proceed from organs.
8. Confused Romans might be held to this.
10. Wearing a waistcoat, to employ one's money?
11. "... and tell her, let her — an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that" ("Hamlet," Act 5, Scene 1).
12. Reverse an implement and find spoil.
14. "Thy soul was like a —, and dwelt apart" (Wordsworth, in a sonnet on Milton).
15. Soothes.
17. Control from repose round a means of travel.
20. Avoid.
21. Else in fishy form.
22. Machinations.
24. Mad, sir? (anag.).
25. Pass please?
26. "Something is — in the state of Denmark" ("Hamlet," Act 1, Scene 4).

27. "Hail to thee, blithe —! Bird thou never wert" (Shelley, "To a Skylark").

Clues Down

1. "I'll put a — round the earth in forty minutes" ("A Midsummer Night's Dream," Act 2, Scene 1).
2. A change of one letter in 8 across gives the first word of the title of a book by James Hilton (the second word is "Harvest").
3. Exchange.
5. Tear.
6. Business or theatrical representatives.
7. Surgical wire or thread.
9. Whirlpool.
10. Fine fable becomes too great for words.
13. Keepsake.
14. Fishing net suitable for use in this French river?
16. First name of Mr. Goodman.
17. Reddish brown.
18. You may keep it or lose it; if you keep it it's good, if you lose it it's bad.
19. Maintain.
22. "Woodman, spare that —" (George Morris).
23. A lisp may be a mistake.

No. 684 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

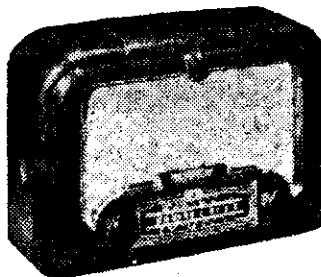
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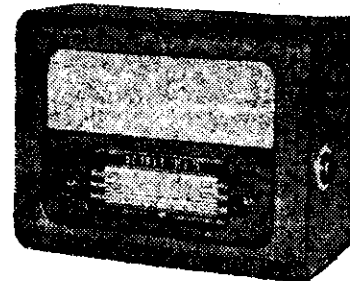
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