

The Man Behind the Counter

"PERSONALITY," as anyone who has been a week in broadcasting will tell you, is one of the most abused words in the dictionary. Torture it often enough and it will jam any self-respecting typewriter. Yet now else would you describe the influence that gives *Book Shop*—the fortnightly book session from main National stations—its flavour? Since *Book Shop* first went on the air late in 1951 listeners throughout the country have become familiar with the voice which introduces it and an attitude to life and letters which it expresses, but not everyone knows that the man behind the voice is Arnold Wall, Talks Officer at 3YA.

Arnold Wall—who (for the record) is a son of Professor Arnold Wall—has been in broadcasting only about two years. Before that he had a distinguished career in the R.A.F., and when *The Listener* called recently to talk to him about *Book Shop* it asked him first about those years between leaving Christ's College and coming back home in 1951. Mr. Wall said he went straight from school to the R.A.F. in 1926, and served in England, India, Iraq, France and Germany. Besides this he has seen something of Italy, Holland and Belgium. Flying operations over the North-West Frontier of India in 1931 won him mention in despatches. In the same operations he lost his right eye and has been "grounded" ever since. Mr. Wall's wartime jobs included running a training school and starting the R.A.F. catering service. In Germany after the war he spent two years on equipment work, including the supply of spare parts during the Berlin airlift. After the airlift he was awarded the O.B.E. In his last year in Germany, at Second Tacti-

cal Air Force Headquarters, he worked on the re-establishment of the Air Forces of Occupation on a war footing. He retired from the R.A.F. in 1951 with the rank of Group Captain.

With 25 years in the Air Force behind him, Mr. Wall was still only in his early forties when he returned to New Zealand and joined the NZBS. Quite new to broadcasting, he finds it an endless adventure. Outside office hours Mr. Wall (who is married and has a young daughter) has as recreations "fenestration, cookery, Francophilia, rehabilitating a Canterbury Plains farmhouse and 'living in New Zealand.'" His interest in his farmhouse is part of an interest in country life generally which shows in his preference for country programmes. He has also written talks which have been heard in programmes for women from 3YA and other stations, and radio short stories. These latter were done "for sheer amusement," though he will tell you seriously that he thinks the good short story told in the first person is the best form of spoken entertainment on the air. In *Slightly Out of True* he has done his best to encourage it.

Though *Book Shop* has in some respects become very much Mr. Wall's programme, he was quick to give credit for it to Keith Hay, Senior Talks Officer at NZBS Head Office. It was Mr. Hay, he said, who devised the form which *Book Shop* took at the start, and which it has kept to, more or less, ever since. This form, as *The Listener* said in announcing the session, includes one review of about 10 minutes of a recent book likely to interest the general reader and one or two short talks on topics related to books. Books and reviewers are not selected by Mr. Wall; but he is responsible for the short talks which make up the rest of the "sandwich"

and in 44 editions of *Book Shop* has not yet used the same speaker twice. "Of course, I'm always glad to hear of new people for these short talks," he said, "but I think there's an endless wealth of talent to be mined." Topics for the short talks may include any original approach to any subject directly or indirectly connected with the written word, and a glance through a handful of scripts which Mr. Wall took from his files showed that *Book Shop* contributors had taken to heart the invitation to roam freely in this wide field.

"One of our problems in *Book Shop* is to maintain a balance between men and women and North and South Island contributors," said Mr. Wall. "This is sometimes difficult. Another problem is getting talks of just the right length to make up the programme." When we asked him about the age of his contributors he surprised us a little by saying that apart from some children who had broadcast there had been only one or two speakers under 30—which wasn't, he seemed to think, as good a state of affairs as it might be. "A few of the speakers are in their thirties," he said, "but they're mainly in their forties and fifties." The use of children in the session had, he thought, been extremely successful, and he hoped to do it again. "I brought



ARNOLD WALL

He finds broadcasting an endless adventure

them along mainly because you hear so many people saying what kids should read—I thought we should let them speak for themselves."

Competitions of a more or less literary kind are another *Book Shop* innovation which listeners will remember. There have been about half a dozen of these, and entries have fluctuated from six to 30. Verse competitions have been markedly more popular than prose competitions, though competitors have not by any means all been "literary" people. Another interesting fact about the competitions is that women competitors have outnumbered men by about four to one. Getting down to cases, Mr. Wall said that competitions for verse "On Contemplating the Ashes of Your Library" and "On the Discovery of a Live Moa" had been among the most successful from the point of view of numbers—each had attracted between 20 and 30 entries. The most recent competition in which listeners were invited to write a letter to an author barely veiling their dislike of his work while seeming to congratulate him on the appearance of a new work had proved one of the most difficult.

Book Shop, we suggested to Mr. Wall, was the sort of programme that might stimulate more response from listeners than most; but he said that in fact there had been little listener response. However, some of the letters that have come in have had interesting consequences. Mr. Wall has formed several highly-diverting pen-friendships all over New Zealand as a result of the programme; and it was through *Book Shop* that Dennis McEldowney wrote to 3YC and made it possible for that station (and later others) to offer listeners his unusual series of talks *The World Regained*.

Book Shop will be heard during the next few weeks as follows: 2YA, 8.35 p.m., this Friday (May 15); 2YZ, 5.57 p.m. this Sunday (May 17); 1YA, 8.28 p.m., Wednesday, May 20; 4YZ, 9.15 p.m., Wednesday, May 20; 1YZ, 5.0 p.m., Sunday, May 24; 3YZ, 9.30 p.m., Monday, May 25; 3YA, 8.0 p.m., Wednesday, May 27. *Book Shop* is also heard from 4YC.

Alan Loveday Opens N.Z. Tour Next Week



ALAN LOVEDAY AND RUTH STANFIELD

NO longer a boy, though still something of a prodigy, the violinist

Alan Loveday is back in New Zealand for the first time since leaving to study in England 13 years ago. He will give the first performance of a 10-weeks' tour when he appears with the National Orchestra at Christchurch on Thursday, May 21. But this will not be his first performance under the baton of the National Orchestra's guest conductor. He has played under Warwick Braithwaite before, with the London Symphony, the Scottish, and the BBC Symphony Orchestras. The young violinist's tour will include five performances with the orchestra, and 27 recitals with his wife, Ruth Stanfield, as accompanist and associate artist. With the orchestra he will appear in the four main centres and in his former home town, Palmerston North. The solo recitals will be in the four centres and in Oamaru, Invercargill, Rotorua, Hastings, Gisborne, Timaru, Blenheim, Hawera, Wanganui, Whangarei, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Tauranga, Napier, Nelson, Greymouth, Ashburton, Masterton, New Plymouth and Te Kuiti.

Alan Loveday began playing the violin at the age of three. When he was nine he was auditioned by the visiting Budapest String Quartet, whose members were so impressed they gave him a benefit performance and opened the fund which enabled him to study overseas. In England, Alan studied under Albert Sammons, first privately, then at the Royal College of Music. His first important public appearance was in 1946, when he was aged 18. Since then he has fulfilled many concert and broadcasting engagements, playing under such noted conductors as Sir Malcolm Sargent, Sir John Barbirolli, Dr. Reginald Jacques and Warwick Braithwaite. The last-named considers him one of Britain's leading violinists, and an artist now approaching the height of his powers.

With the National Orchestra, Alan Loveday is to play Tchaikovsky's Concerto in D, Opus 35 (Christchurch and Palmerston North), Mozart's Concerto in A Major, No. 5 (Dunedin), three movements of Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* (Auckland), and Khachaturian's Concerto (Wellington).