



Peter Dawson was sent pipes for years by a fervent admirer!



Muriel George constantly receives music



(Top) George Allison, who discovered a fan in a strange way. (Centre) Mabel Constanduros, "who receives false teeth for Gran'ma" and (bottom) S. P. B. Mais, whose post produced a live rat!

A LIVE RAT IN THE POST BAG!

By **Peter Davis**

Strange Gifts that Radio Stars receive from their Fans

LETTERS from listeners! Everybody knows how they come in their thousands to the B.B.C. But not so many people are familiar with the red Post Office van that draws up to Broadcasting House at least twice a day to discharge a cargo of parcels.

Some listeners actually show their gratitude to radio favourites in the sheerly practical form of gifts!

One unknown gentleman, for instance, gravely allots a biscuit to his best broadcaster of the week. Jack Hulbert, J. H. Squire, Albert Sandler, Florence Desmond, and others have all been favoured by the biscuit listener. Leonard Henry frequently receives cakes. Tommy Handley was given a Christmas box in the form of a bottle of whisky. Like Henry Hall and Anona Winn, Muriel George and Ernest Butcher continually have parcels of music in manuscript flopping on their mat.

Clapham and Dwyer's Cow!

But some of the presents from listeners are peculiar indeed. Mable Constanduros tells me that people take the Buggins Family seriously, and packages containing false teeth arrive at broadcasting headquarters whenever Grandma loses hers. After S. P. B. Mais had broadcast on "Living Dangerously," a live rat in a basket arrived, with a note, "Now live dangerously!" And Clapham and Dwyer have on several occasions been offered a cow. Fortunately the offer was made in a letter: an animal did not actually arrive.

Christopher Stone, when at the B.B.C., perhaps received more strange presents than anyone. Home-recorded gramophone discs sent by amateur aspirants were not uncommon in his postbag, and after a reference on his part to the Greenwich time pips, six orange pips were sent him in a matchbox. A sachet of dried hops, said to bring good luck, and a mouse-trap—meaning not clear!—were other gifts brought him by the postman.

Pipes for Peter

Peter Dawson, however, runs Christopher quite close. One admirer sent him two hand-worked cushions "so that you can rest your weary head," as the accompanying letter said. Then there was the Pipe Lady. For months, even years, she sent him pipes of all sizes, shapes and colours, and then at length there came a note.

"Do you wish to meet me? If so, I shall be

sitting in the third row of the stalls at the end seat, when you make your outside broadcast from the So-and-So Hall next Monday!" On the appointed night, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson looked eagerly towards the indicated seat. It was occupied by an elderly gentleman!

Again, Harry Hemsley, the child impersonator, made his imaginary character, Elsie, tell listeners that she would be seven to-morrow. The reference was, of course, intended as a joke, but the next day B.B.C. officials were coping with dozens of parcels that arrived for Harry. They were birthday presents for Elsie!

Strange Necklace

Children's Hour officials have many strange presents. Chickens' eggs, cakes, sausages, fruit and chocolates are sent for consumption by Aunts and Uncles. Chief Os-ke-non-ton insisted recently that a Children's Hour official should accept a necklace of grizzly bear's teeth, complete with claws, from him. A Texas listener forwarded six rattles from rattlesnakes. And an Uncle who gave a talk on "Crumpet Carving" was surprised to receive from four Leeds children a crumpet two feet in diameter!

But of all the gifts broadcasters have received, none could have been more acceptable than the one indirectly given to George Allison, the microphone commentator, some time ago. He once sent some trunks to a distant town by goods service, but they were so long in arriving that Allison at last desperately telephoned a well-known firm of carriers, and, giving his name, implored their aid.

When George Radiates

"What!" said the voice at the other end of the line, "George Allison? Not the bloke that radiates?"

"The same!" answered George, "I radiate commentaries and goodwill to everyone!" The result was that the matter of the trunks was straightened out with incredible swiftness and, queerly enough, G.A. was never sent a bill!

Next Week

Elisabeth Ann, Mary Strong, Nurse Cooper, Mrs. Brand, F. R. Castle and Margot will all be at your service as usual. Send them your queries and problems.