

Don Gamble. Merle Gamble's voice grows richer with maturity and her singing is always delightful. Her husband has a strong baritone, a little on the "plummy" side. The string tone, however, was really beautiful, with a splendid pizzicato bass. Some of the songs could, I felt, have been left on the shelf for good but I suppose one can't have everything.

—D.M.

## Not Frightfully BBC

WHAT'S source for the screen is source for the radio, and if David O. Selznick can do it so presumably can Edward Lucy of the BBC; but it is not surprising, seeing that Hollywood got the idea first, that there should be a strong aromatic aroma about the BBC feature *The Walls Are Down*. The programme aims at presenting in dramatic form (not so dramatic as in *The Snake Pit*, thank goodness) the experiences of a patient in a modern mental hospital. The hero's case-history runs true to form over a course strewn with Libidos. That he wins through to sanity in the end is largely due to the ministrations of a competent woman doctor, who says with felicitous banality (when he protests that her explanations of his subconscious seem a little far-fetched) "But the subconscious is far-fetched, Mr. So-and-So." A fascinating programme, but with little of that crisp sense of destination characteristic of recent BBC excursions into medical fields. And occasionally guilty of the woolly portentousness of statements such as "Every minute of our lives each one of us is moving either nearer to or further away from a mental hospital." Which gives those of us who flatter ourselves that we are moving further and further away a dreadful sense of having no place to go.

## Plus Ca Change . . .

AFTER so many Monday nights spent listening to people speaking for the people of New Zealand it was rather pleasant to get back to 2YA's discussion session *Speaking for Ourselves*. The panel is new, though well-seasoned, but some of the questions, alas, are as old as radio, and turn up as regularly and insatiably as Hamlet's father's ghost or a State House applicant. There was, for example, that well-ventilated veteran about Freedom and the Modern Child, there was the tried and true New Zealand Characteristics question, and two (Development of Secondary Industries and State Control of Armaments) which have the seldom-worn look of the second-hand bridal gown. Each member of the panel, eager to win his spurs, dashed valiantly into the fray, and it was not his fault if his contribution had a familiar ring, since Euclid himself would agree that the number of sides to a question is strictly finite. I suggest that it is up to listeners to see that their brand-new panel is supplied with brand-new questions. Then they can sit back comfortably, and have their viewpoints sharpened for them.

—M.B.



## Politicians' Dream?

BBC programmes inevitably come to us a little late, but occasionally lateness may be almost an advantage. This was decidedly the case, I thought, with the programme on the East African groundnuts scheme, broadcast on Sunday, November 27, from 4YA. Listeners who had been reading in their daily papers a day or two before of the storm enveloping Mr. Strachey in the House of Commons over this very scheme, must have felt themselves in a position of knowing superiority to the narrator, talking so innocently of the scheme in its days of youth and enthusiasm. At the same time I felt that the radio programme illumined and corrected the newspaper report. From the men on the spot we heard the story of the difficulties which



have sent the estimate of cultivated areas down to one-fifth of the original and the costs soaring to twice the estimate. The result might have been foretold. Indeed, one speaker said, "If a year more had been spent in planning the scheme, it would never have been begun, because the planners would have said it was impossible." But, plainly, he would not have had this happen. It is sometimes worth while to attempt the impossible. There is a sense in which even the unprofitable may be said to pay.

## Classical Cacophony

THE afternoon Classical Hour is usually of interest only to women, not because of its contents, but because of its time. Election Day afternoon provided a rare opportunity to hear an attractive programme of Purcell, Pergolesi and Haydn from 4YA. At first all went well. Sir Henry Wood's arrangement of snatches of Purcell is an old record, but a constant delight. As for the Pergolesi, listeners must be getting a little tired of being coyly reminded that the Oboe Concerto is played by Evelyn Rothwell and "her husband," Sir John Barbirolli; but there's nothing coy about the music. Then came disaster. The Marian Anderson recording of the Haydn songs is not a good one, the surface is far too shrill and nearly all the effect of her lovely lower register is lost. The record that followed, a new one of Haydn's London Symphony with Dobrowen and the Philharmonia Orchestra, was far, far worse. The last movement in particular was a horrifying jungle of sound, apparently being hacked about by strong men with machetes. The noisy surfaces of these recordings were commented on by overseas critics at the time of issue, but the Haydn is only one among many of the newer records which tax the resources of most sets.

—K.J.S.

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