

N.P.S. photograph

WHEN you meet friends of Asquith
M. Thomson—and they're pretty
numerous—one of the things they're
sure to mention about him is his remarkable talent as a storyteller. Listeners will remember his

STORYTELLER recollections of school break-ups and school concerts, and next week he's to be heard (YA-YZ link, April 30) giving an amusing account of his experiences as a sub-enumerator in last year's census.

"Tommy"—as he's known to Open Microphone—didn't get off to a very good start that day, for the first woman who opened the door to him told him to go to blazes and take his rubbish with him. As she explained later, she thought he was "one of those religious people." Strangely enough, he says, no one else jumped to such theological conclusions, though he was suspected of being several other sorts of people. Mr Thomson (left) has many incidents to relate, and he ends with one that will puzzle and entertain listeners as much as it still puzzles him.

WHEN Harry Secombe of The Goon Show was playing on the London stage not long ago in Rocking the Town, Swansea people who came to town for the show liked to go backstage and recall with SEAGOON him their schooldays

when he was not considered good enough to take part in the end-of-term play. Scarlet fever, it seems, had left him very short-sighted. On stage at school he would bump into the scenery, so he was given a job painting it instead of acting. In those cays his sister was the family comic, and when she started taking him along to church socials to help with her act he wasn't at all eager—he suffered badly from stage fright.

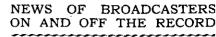
According to Eric Johns in Theatre World, Harry used to write verse that wouldn't scan and short stories that no

Open Microphone

editor would buy. That was in his early teens. His comic genius first started to bloom when, aged 16, he went to work in an office. He often got into trouble for taking off his boss on the phone, and it was on an office outing that he first appeared in London, giving an impromptu one-man show.

In North Africa during the war Harry maintained this reputation as a clown, and in Italy he met Spike Milligan. Back home he decided he had had enough of office work and would try his luck on the stage. At a Windmill audition he turned on his shaving act -one that has been pretty consistently successful with audiences ever since. In it he is a boy shaving for the first time, a man shaving with ice-cold water and a bad case of nerves. The management liked the act and asked him what salary he wanted. Twenty pounds a week seemed fantastic to Harry, but it was the first figure he thought of, so that's what he asked for. He was accepted and signed up-for six shows a day for six weeks.

It was during this spell at the Windmill, at a social club close by, that Harry used to talk with Michael Bentine, Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers about new ways of making people "Over those coffee cups," Eric Johns, "the original goon type of humour was evolved." The ideas they worked out Harry tried out in the provinces—not always with great success. One manager who wasn't amused sacked him with the words: "You're not going to shave in my time." Then he went on the air and started to sing, and his popularity spread. In The Goon Show Harry Secombe is, of course, the central figure, Neddie Seagoon. A writer in the London Observer recently described him as looking but not sounding like an owl that has taken benzedrine. People who know Harry off stage as a friend and a family man say he is exuberant and kindly - a pretty good sort of guy to know.



THE New Zealand mezzo-soprano Mona Ross, who has spent the last four years with the Carl Rosa Opera Company, was a busy visitor to Wellington recently. Miss Ross studied at

the Royal College of Music, and as she was completing her studies there the College opera cirector asked the Carl Rosa directors to



N.P.S. photograph
MONA ROSS

come and see her work. She was accepted immediately, and since then has sung all the leading mezzo roles, including Carmen, her favourite. Now she is back for six months' holiday with her parents.

Her favourite is Carmen

When we met her at the NZBS Concert Section Miss Ross had been

discussing arrangements to appear with the tenor Richard Lewis and the National Orchestra in the Verdi Requiem. She was also making plans to join the New Zealand Opera Company for The Consul, in which she will take the important role of the Secretary, and for Amahl and the Night Visitors. We asked about any other appearances. "Well," Miss Ross said with a laugh, "I'm not committed to anything else—I've simply got to have a holiday."

I AST year New Plymouth earned itself national attention through what is thought to be the first New Zealand performance of Gluck's opera Orpheus and Eurydice. The man responsible for this was William Komlos, who was recently in Wellington as guest conductor of the National Orchestra for a studio concert. Mr Komlos told us there had been "quite a lot of con-

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BBC photograph

THREE Goons get camera-happy at the 1956
National Radio Show, from which they broadcast
an edition of "The Goon Show." From lett: Harry
Secombe, Peter Sellers and (in foreground) Spike
Milligan