

NOTES FROM LONDON

Gingering Up Empire Programmes

German Competition
Makes B.B.C. Sit Up—
Colonials in Jobs In
London

THE B.B.C. will not officially admit that the German broadcasts are competitive, but there is no doubt that the Zeesen transmissions are going to ginger up the B.B.C. Empire programmes. The German programmes sent out in English are, of course, excessively friendly in tone. But it looks a bit like the old story of peaceful penetration, and there is this vexed question of the lost German colonies to be borne in mind. The Germans are less formal, more intimate than the B.B.C. If the German announcers' humour is somewhat elephantine, he at least attempts to be very human. There is a strong move in certain quarters at Broadcasting House to make the Empire programme more friendly, more emotional. The B.B.C. must not lose its audience to Berlin—especially as at the moment there is sitting a committee which is to decide the whole future of the B.B.C. This committee, under the chairmanship of Viscount Ullswater, was appointed because the B.B.C.'s present Charter expires at the end of next year. Big changes in the Charter are certain. For one thing, the B.B.C. wants more money for its Empire service. At present it receives only 4/9 out of every ten shilling license fee.

BUT it is interesting to reflect that, whatever the future brings in the way of changes at Daventry, reception of the shortwave Empire broadcasts will probably improve, any way. Radio scientists believe that reception of the shortwaves varies according to an 11-year cycle, governed by sunspots. In 1927, when sunspot activity was at a maximum, shortwave reception was extraordinarily good. Therefore, argue the pundits, the next "peak" year for reception will be 1938. We have now passed the worst period in the cycle, and can look forward to steadily-improving conditions.

THE other day I picked up one of the Empire transmissions, and thought I had America. I then found I was listening to Bob Bowman, the Canadian radio commentator, son of an Ottawa newspaper editor. He was describing an ice hockey match in London, in a vivid, eager way novel to English ears. "This is no sissy game," and "Pavlova has nothing on those legs"; these are the sort of exclamations that Bob brings in. He now has a job as one of the Empire News Editors at Broadcasting House. I wonder if this is a precedent, and if we shall find a number of men from the Dominions taking jobs in the B.B.C.'s Empire department? Personally, I cannot help thinking it would



KNOWS AND LOVES THE DRAMA.—Val Gielgud, whose presentation of plays from Broadcasting House, London, has made him world-famous. Several of the B.B.C. recorded programmes heard in New Zealand have been arranged by Mr. Gielgud, who is a brother of John Gielgud, the "greatest Hamlet of the twentieth century."

be a good idea, for it seems to me that the department obviously needs men who understand the Dominion outlook. By the way, when Mr. Cecil Graves, the Empire Director, returns from his visit to Canada in the autumn, I imagine that he will bring with him some new ideas. Should his health hold good, Mr. Graves will have a big future at the B.B.C.

it will be a thousand pities if Mr. Marshall's services are lost to broadcasting because he can find more profitable fields of activity.

AFTER the Jubilee features, the next most important events in the Empire programmes will be the Test match commentaries. Here the B.B.C. has sprung a surprise—and not a very welcome one. Mr. Howard Marshall, who commented so admirably on the Australian matches last year, and who is well-known to Empire listeners for his periodical causerie on England, home and beauty, will not be giving the Test match commentaries. The inside story is that Mr. Marshall asked for expenses that he considered reasonable, and the B.B.C. refused to pay. Instead, they have invited Mr. H. B. T. Wakelam, well-known as a commentator on Rugby and tennis, to cover the South African tests. Admirable as Mr. Wakelam's commentaries usually are,

BRASSO
makes light work