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the very second before the mail train pounds the permanent way. Logically, the heroine should marry James, but no, she marries the hero, who probably doesn't need the money nearly so much.

Plucked Strings

DR. CHARLES BURNEY, writing in 1805 of the introduction of the pianoforte, said "We were unwilling to give up the harpsichord, and thought the tone of the pianoforte spiritless and insipid, till experience and better instruments vanquished our prejudices; and the expression and chiaroscuro in performing music expressly composed for that instrument made amends for the want of brilliancy in the tone so much that we soon found the scratching of the quill in the harpsichord intolerable, compared with the tone produced by the hammer." Listening to the recital by Zillah and Ronald Castle from 2YA last Thursday "Handel's Music as He Heard It," I was conscious of progressing in the opposite direction from Dr. Burney. At first I found the tintinnabulation of the harpsichord an irritation, but by the second item, the Sonata in D Major, I was almost won over to the harpsichord because of what seemed to me the elfin brilliancy of its tone. On the other hand, I found it difficult to connect Handel as we know him (alas, our jaded palates) with these horns of elfland faintly blown by the Castles. So a critic 50 years on, reared on a diet of Shakespeare in gorgeous technicolour, may chance to witness a performance of Hamlet in Modern Dress, performed in broad daylight in the middle of Western Springs Stadium (Hamlet as Shakespeare Saw Him), and may turn homewards muttering into his beard, "It may be Art, but it isn't Shakespeare."

Did It Actually Happen?

IT is a pity to seem always harping on one string, and I thought I had finished with *This Actually Happened*, but one of the latest episodes clamoured for comment. It explained, in brief, that the Boxer Rebellion was actually engendered by three American newspaper reporters! These young men, typical of the sort of reporter who tips his hat back at you from so many screens, seem to have gathered just before deadline in a saloon (bar to you) without the necessary story for the papers they, respectively, represented. They thereupon concocted a tale about some imaginary engineers of the white race who were intending to tear down the Great Wall of China, at the request of the Pekin Government, which intended the gesture to represent the lowering of barriers between China and the other nations. This story got into the Chinese papers, and the next thing we heard in the radio episode was a sing-song voice addressing the populace in pidgin English and exhorting them to up and slay the Foreign Devils who intended such sacrilege. Hence, and for no other reason (one gathered), the Boxer Rebellion. A very neat story, altogether; but there was no atom of proof in the radio version that it ever Actually Happened. Possibly it did (the hoax, I mean), but I imagine there were other contributory causes to the uprising. And a few more names, dates, and cross-references would certainly help the veracity of these programmes.

Sea Music

UNDER the heading of *Walt Whitman Suggests Sea Music*, 3YA recently presented a programme of verse and music. The music, however, was

very much more in evidence than the verse—the latter being confined to quotations in the nature of chapter headings before each item. And as chapter headings they served their purpose excellently; one noticed, approved, and forgot them in what followed. This is subordinate sort of work for poetry to do, and I emerged from the programme satisfied with the music but wondering where Whitman had got to. But as a method of presenting a number of musical compositions of similar subject, and of linking them together, the method has much in its favour. It is unnecessary to press the connection between the music and the verse too far, however; one man's "Flying Dutchman" may very well be another's "Submerged Cathedral" where Whitman or anyone else is concerned. As a programme it has the advantage of appealing to those who like Whitman but not Wagner, as well as to those who like Wagner but not Whitman. And if you happen to like both, so much the better; you will not mind if, as in this case, the assorted sea music is merely punctuated with Whitman.

Radio Town Meeting

THE session which has replaced 3ZB's *Radio Round Table* dealt recently with the question of food for Britain—"that by increasing production and decreasing consumption we should export more." This motion was put and seconded by the speakers, who then proceeded to answer questions put by the meeting; listeners were invited to write in giving their opinion, the result of the poll to be announced the following week. I shall not be too surprised when a triumphant voice announces an overwhelming majority for the motion; nor shall I attribute this success wholly to the efforts of *Radio Town Meeting*. On the other hand, the questions raised by this session were in the main relevant and answerable ones—the sort of problems that might easily occur to the ordinary person: for instance, who gets the money when the collected fat is sold, and how does it help Britain if the fat goes to our own factories? The larger issues, such as problems of distribution in Britain, of supplying food to Germany and—of course the turn-round of ships in our own ports, were, wisely, I think, either briefly dealt with or frankly shelved. Nor did there seem to be any way, beyond bare assertion, of convincing listeners that the food saved really does go to Britain. These sessions are well-organised and thoroughly competent within their limits. And even if they do nothing else, they at least serve to keep such matters in the forefront of our minds.

Arabian Night

WHEN the bands of mystery had been finally loosed, the casket of explanation uncorded, and Allah invoked for the last time, I learnt from an unimpressed announcer that I had been listening to *Mazil*, a play by Maxwell Gray, produced by the NZBS. Nay, nay, I felt like saying, surely, by Allah, the palms of the Arabian desert told this one! But current idiom restored, I sorted the story from its embellishments, and found a typical enough Eastern story, centred round Mazil, the coveted mare that Sheik A refuses to part with. Sheik B (the villain) gains possession of Mazil by posing as a beggar and trading on Sheik A's mercy, but gives the mare up when he realises that by his act he has threatened the Law of the Desert. So a moral is pointed and everything ends happily with Sheik A promising to give Sheik B Mazil's foal. This simple story, how-

ever, was completely overwhelmed by the luxuriant crop of language that sprang up round it—even allowing for the fact that it takes more than an extravagant metaphor and a sprinkling of Allahs to give an Arabian setting to a couple of New Zealand voices. But how one overcomes this difficulty without resorting to the clumsiness of an announcer with a verbal backdrop is completely beyond me.

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