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the heir to a baronetcy and all its millions is stolen away from her future ancestral home by her true former lover—with the help of chloroform. But the beauty of this incredible situation is that it is put prosaically and logically into a perfect framework of the ordinary and commonplace. She is stealing the Honourable Mary's husband, without love, therefore he steals her, like a thief in the night. It is a minor and transparent example of this writer's method, which he has used with such great success on a larger scale. And it is a recipe which never fails, even in such an insignificant fragment as this one.

He Pulled Out a Plum

TIME goes on, and This is still Actually Happening. My credulity has more than once been strained by these incursions into the facts of history, but on the whole, and taken with a modicum of salt, these programmes are good Sunday evening entertainment. The story of the Death Cheaters and their attempt to resuscitate a hanged man by means of an elaborately fitted hearse appeals both to one's love for the gruesome and to one's interest in a sporting chance. The other story in this particular programme dealt with the original Jack Horner and his famous pie. The idea, it appears, was Henry-the Eighth's—a pie stuffed with the title deeds of confiscated church property to be served to his favoured nobles. Jack Horner (who is known to posterity in general long before they have heard of Henry) prepared this rich and indigestible dish, and in doing so helped himself to the juiciest plum in it. Like so many of Henry's affairs, this makes an intriguing tale. It proved one thing, however, that I have always suspected—that "the corner" was merely due to the exigencies of rhyme, and had no historical basis.

Aboriginal Songs

THERE is something wildly primitive about the Australian aboriginal songs presented by Clement Q. Williams. It is a long step from the first attempts of mankind to make vocal music to the raucous rendition of the latest popular song; in between these extremes, somewhere, fits in the chant of the native, and of this type of music the aboriginal song seems a strangely individual example. It is not sophisticated—indeed the very piano accompaniment, subdued though it was, seemed an anachronism; but it is not simple either, the few intervals and notes of the chant being so combined and fitted to the words as to give intense effect to the varied emotions expressed. The aboriginal song is a much purer type of folk-tune than the song usually regarded as the typical product of the Maori, and it is time someone presented us with a few examples of the original Maori chant, with its quarter-tones, in order that we might see just how unprimitive and unoriginal our so-called "Maori" music has nowadays become. As yet the Australian aboriginal song doesn't seem to have been overwhelmed by the weight of European harmonic and melodic idiom—or perhaps Mr. Williams has been long-sighted enough to collect his material in

quarters where the music of the aboriginal people is still pure and unadulterated.

Opera by Debussy

SOME time ago in these columns I made a plea for the inclusion of the lesser-known operas in the Sunday night series from 4YA, with a particular hope that sooner or later we would hear Debussy's *Pelleas and Melisande*. Most of us have at some time or other seen stage performances of the more hackneyed operas; if we haven't we have heard concert and radio performances of the famous arias, and can say, probably, that we know *Carmen*, *Faust*, and *Il Trovatore* by heart. I doubt if many of us can say the same of *Pelleas and Melisande*. To anyone not conversant with Debussy's style, to anyone not completely in love with this composer's intimate and characteristic idiom, this opera might well prove impossible to listen to. I was, however, fascinated by every moment of it, and regretted greatly the necessity of having it compressed in length, in order to fit the programme. This meant that the last scenes were practically omitted, a mere commentary taking the place of some of the most important music of the opera. The strange, unearthly atmosphere of the story, with its almost monotonous recitative and its setting in grim and sombre castle and woodland, came over in the radio presentation with tragic effect. This was an occasion when the lack of vision added to, rather than detracted from, the listener's pleasure. Debussy's music, evanescent and subtle, is the perfect medium for the expression of such a story, and any stage presentation of the opera would have to be perfectly presented to reach the heights of imagination already attained by the music alone.

Concert Publicity

WHEN that rare type of visiting artist, a violin virtuoso, comes to play for us, it is all the more satisfying to have him preceded by the kind of radio publicity which has been given Isaac Stern. After all, what we really want to know about an artist are not so much the details of his (or her) personality, taste, concert tours in other countries, etc., but rather "What does his (or her) playing (or singing) sound like?" The Isaac Stern publicity organisers answered this question for us by playing for us many of his and Alexander Zakin's recordings, especially the works to be performed on their New Zealand tour. In any case at least the publicity attained its object, as I changed my mind about the Dunedin concert and attended it only after I had heard the artist on the radio and had decided that he was too good to miss. Another point of publicity about this tour, which might well be copied by future sponsors of artists, was the selling of concert programmes in advance from the box-office. One of the persistently annoying things about visiting artists is the regularity with which they refuse to publish any details about the works to be performed—until, perhaps, the day of the performance—so that, in most cases, one just books a Seat for A Concert, without knowing what composers are likely to be represented therein. Persistent connoisseurs can make a point of acquiring a programme before the concert from other sources than the newspapers, but it is a sad reflection on the public taste that most concert-goers are content to book their seats and wait patiently till they find out what they are going to hear.

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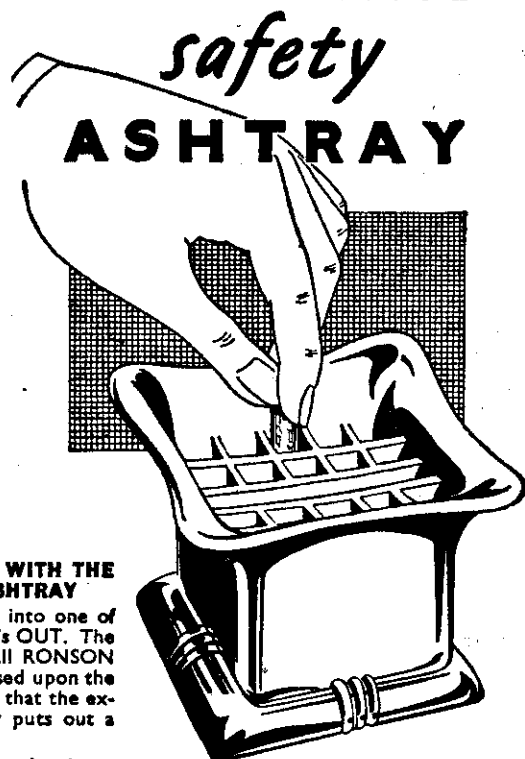
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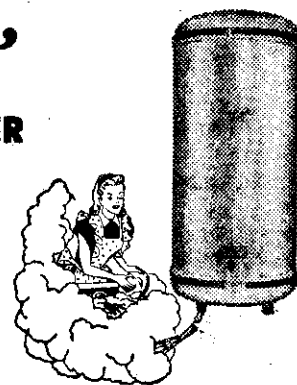
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