

SHORT STORIES FOR BROADCASTING

TUNING in the other day, I heard part of a talk on the Otaki Maoris. Then came a short story. I did not quite catch the title, but by the half-heard vowel sounds I expected a Maori story. It was Welsh. All about a horse that could climb stairs. Probably quite a good story, but as far from Bishop Hadfield and the building of a Maori church as Llandudno is from Bluff. So I switched off, thinking, Why Welsh? Why not New Zealand? A Maori legend perhaps, or, say, that yarn of Roderick Finlayson's about the Maori who thought he could walk on the water. That would seem, from memory, to be the perfect tie-up with the talk that had gone before.

Then on the same day, one of those coincidences which have come to be accepted as part of a pattern brought a book called *Best Broadcast Stories*. Sent by the British Council, published by Faber and Faber, edited by Hilton Brown, they are specially written for broadcasting. Most are high standard material. All different, they yet all conform to the peculiar demands of radio. Short. No involved sentences. Clear-cut characterisation. More often than not, the surprise ending. First and foremost, entertainment, with the best of them showing good psychological insight and sympathy. All readable, which every published story should be, they are also listenable, which every published story is not.

The BBC thinks the short story important enough to warrant the setting up of a special department; and the thought comes, here, surely, is an opportunity for the NZBS to help—no, that savours of patronage—to co-operate with New Zealand writers in presenting New Zealand life to New Zealand listeners.

Our market for short stories is limited by our small number of periodicals; but the daily, hourly demands of broadcasting present a different picture. Instead of Welsh whimsy, here is unlimited scope for the presentation of the New Zealand scene. No one would suggest that imports be cut entirely. The home-grown article would have to compete with overseas excellence. New Zealand writers would be put on their mettle. So that if we do have stair-climbing horses—and there's no reason why we shouldn't every now and again—they might sometimes be New Zealand nags instead of Welsh ponies, while the men who owned them wouldn't be the Evan ap Evanses from Aberystwyth, but the Pete Smiths from Waipukurau or the Joe Blakes from Central.

—Sycorax

Grim Analysis

THERE is a vivid passage in Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence* in which the Arch-Vicar of Belial denounces the "criminal imbecility" of 20th Century man in squandering natural resources. His words came to my mind as I listened to the first of a Winter Course series on *The Use and Misuse of Resources*

in the South-West Pacific, by Professor K. B. Cumberland. Without the Arch-Vicar's rhetoric, but in as stern a vein, Dr. Cumberland stressed the progressive diminishing of the earth's natural wealth. Using Rarotonga as an example, he painted a graphic and disturbing picture of



unnecessary waste and depletion of resources. His calm voice, pleasant, but just a shade too slow to my ear, conveyed so convincingly grim an analysis that Huxley's concept of man's folly and his future began to seem less fantastic. The parallel with *Ape and Essence* was made even stronger when in his second talk, in the following week, Dr. Cumberland contrasted the rigid taboos the Polynesians laid down to conserve the land with the exploitation of the Pacific islands by short-sighted commercialism.

—J.C.R.

From the Studio

I HAVE often wondered why it is that performances in the studio are more exciting to listen to than broadcast records. Is it that the factor of uncertainty operates; that the sound we are listening to is actually being created while we listen? Or is it that it is possible to broadcast a higher range of frequencies than can be recorded, and thus make the sound of the stringed instruments more vital? Whatever may be the cause, I have found the series of broadcasts given by the Musica Viva Chamber Players of Sydney a very great delight. Their art has matured, I think, since their visit to New Zealand last year. Outstanding in my memory was the playing of the A Major 'cello sonata of Beethoven by Theo Salzman and Maureen Jones, one of the most beautiful performances of ensemble music by a stringed instrument and piano I remember.

—D.M.

Tell-Tale Tip

I WAS about convinced by the first few minutes of John Morris's new programme *Sound Business* which started from 22B last Monday. It was a telling little slice of Real Life, beginning with the shrieking of an alarm clock and the nagging of a wife which together drive the weary worker from his bed, continuing to record painfully and painstakingly the various noises that accompanied him through the day and ending with the sleep-happy snores of poor

(continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 22, 1949.



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