

"Improve your reception, they said . . . it's the vertical aerial that counts, they said . . . don't blame the NZBS, they said . . ."

Yesterday's Theatre

()LD men "full of days" not seldom seem a little drunk on the past. Their words have the relish they feel for times past, and their attitude is expansive. Listening to Sir Compton Mackenzie's two sessions *Beaux and Belles*, I felt pleasant, inclusive informality about his excursion back to the gaiety of the 1890s and 1900s. However, despite the lively voices and the well-disciplined choruses, one felt the prompting presence of Gilbert and Sullivan beating everything out into an almost martial rhythm, ultimately monotonous. Lady Hicks spoke with amazing crispness for one of her age, and if her singing flagged it was nevertheless possible to evoke from her rendering of "The Honeysuckle and the Bee" echoes of the vast applause with which it was once met. I liked, too, the liberal in Sir Compton, who, looking from his cab window, saw the poor wrapping themselves in newspapers to keep warm, and who commented briefly that times were better now than then. —Westcliff

UPROAR IN DUBLIN

WHEN Sean O'Casey wrote *The Silver Tassie* controversy raged in Dublin. O'Casey had made his reputation with plays about the troubles in Ireland which, produced at the Abbey

Theatre in Dublin, did much to restore the fortunes of that famous little playhouse. *The Silver Tassie* was his first play about the First World War, and the directors of the Abbey, where the public regarded him almost as resident playwright, rejected it.

The poet W. B. Yeats, who was one of the directors, wrote to O'Casey: "You are not interested in the Great War. You never stood on its battlefields or walked its hospitals, and so write out of your opinions." To this O'Casey retorted: "Do you really mean that no one should or could write or speak about a war because he has not stood on its battlefields? Was Shakespeare at Actium or Phillipi? Was G. B. Shaw in the boats with the French or in the forts with the British when St. Joan and Dunois made the attack that relieved Orleans?" Interest was added to this conflict when C. B. Cochran produced the play in London with Charles Laughton in the leading part of Harry Heegan.

Adapted and produced by Raymond Raikes, this tragi-comedy has turned out to be very well suited to radio, especially in the scene behind the lines in Flanders, where O'Casey introduced symbolic characters and used to great effect the chanting of verse by soldiers; and when it was broadcast by the BBC. Raikes received a letter of congratulation from O'Casey. It is now to be heard from NZBS stations, starting from 3YC at 9.30 p.m. on Thursday, July 15.

THE WAITRESSES

*IN the alp-white kitchen lurk
three snow-women with blonde hair
three not abominable, only stone and dead,
and none to carve or bury them anywhere.*

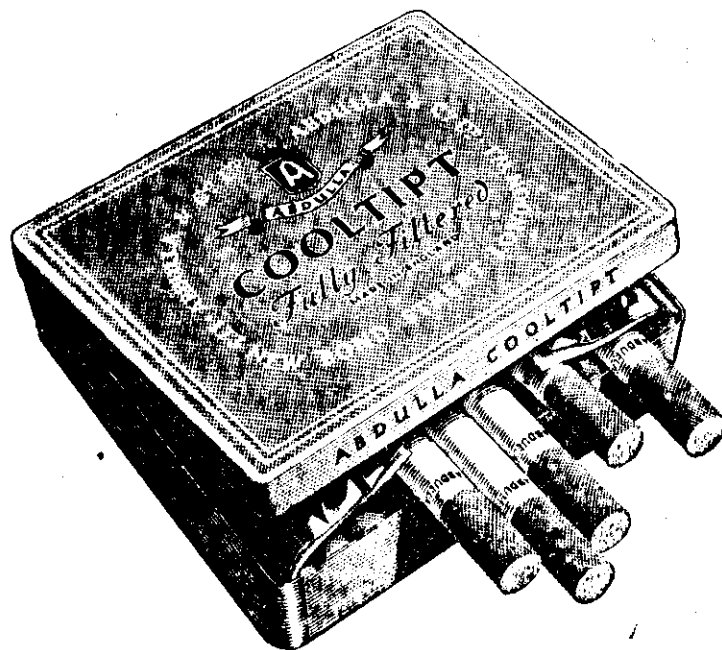
*Marvellous in white at each meal
they break through the opaque door
that springs of a sudden back home
sheathed like a claw in the snow-white wall.*

*They do not see their face in the door
nor read their death who play nursemaid
to naked oyster and old man egg humpbacked
and drained on a blanket-end of bread.*

*Only bleached and dead the three cradle food
that will first twist and break in their mouths
then flow through the heart and not ever fit or warm
the abominable winter shape of their thirst.*

—Janet Frame

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 9, 1954.



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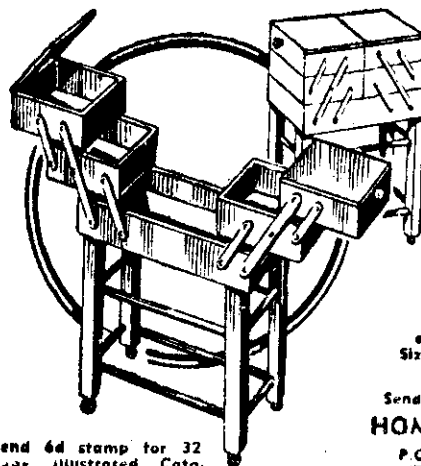
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