



(C) Punch

"You know perfectly well what kit of drums"

(continued from previous page)

wholly satisfying integrity, his loneliness and estrangement, that I am now resolved to repair at once my ravaged education by reading him again. "I hope," said Russell at the close of his talk, "I have made him shine for others as he shone for me." That I should so want to read him now is the best tribute I could pay to Russell's delicate evocation of the spirit of a man he so greatly revered.

### The House of Atreus

SOME years ago, I saw Peggy Ashcroft play Sophocles' *Electra* at the Old Vic. It was an enormous and shattering experience, colossal in scale, the characters huge abstractions rather than persons, with a battery of formidable and implacable gods behind them impassively recording their doom. It was therefore with the deepest interest that I listened last week to the BBC production of the *Electra* of Euripides. The play moves with the tremendous stride of Greek tragedy, but is both smaller in size and more human than in Sophocles' play; the gods, too, are much reduced in scale and act upon *Electra* and *Orestes* with a bewildering capriciousness. *Orestes*, for example, learns from a supposedly infallible source, the God Apollo at Delphi, that he must slay his mother Clytemnestra. After the deed is done, it is explained to him that Apollo was wrong, and he must now atone. One thinks of Gloucester in *King Lear*:

"As flies to wanton boys,  
So are we to the gods: they kill us for  
their sport."

The production seemed to avoid all the faults of *Richard III*. There are very few characters, and no changes of scene; nothing checks the pressure of the terrible events, and that these events are known in advance, far from diminishing the power of the play, reinforces its striking power at a deeper level of the imagination. The cast, especially the *Electra*, were splendidly adequate to the towering action, and I would like to have known who they were; unfortunately, they were anonymous.

—B.E.G.M.

### This Side Suspense

JAMES MASON in Patrick Hamilton's *Money with Menaces* (2YC, February 10) had no particular edge over any of our local NZBS lads hissing hate

into the conniving distortion of a telephone, nor was Patrick Hamilton's play much more than run-of-the-mike chiller. Its technical monotony (the burr-burr of the telephone, the silken menace of the kidnapper's voice) had the fascination of a chalk-line for a chicken, keeping us this side suspense, but the agony was in no way cumulative. The end, however, was worth waiting for, combining surprise value with poetic justice. But, had it been earlier it would have been kinder, both for pulverised victim and mesmerised audience.

### Five Years of NATO

IN listening to 22B's Sunday night *Defence of the West*, mammoth and steamrollerish as an armoured division. I feel I paid for all the sins of omission committed when I beheaded the news straight after the headlines. But I paid willingly—it was a good programme. First broadcast in April, 1954, to mark (one feels "celebrate" is not the word) five years of NATO, it came to us up-to-the-year rather than up-to-the-minute, but it gained increased validity from the fact that its cautious predictions and reasonable hopes have been fulfilled. It was certainly a programme commanding respect. First for NATO itself, that initial-studded association of nations beginning as "a gleam in a planner's eye," and now numbered off from the right and cross-sections and channelled into divisions and supply-lines and Strategic Headquarters. Second, to the BBC and producer Laurence Gilliam, who shaped this material into a programme with form and striking power, and told it in close-lipped military terms, including only a modicum of planners' piety.

—M.B.

### Whiskery Misery

IF whiskers were a danger to health, or a menace to man's precarious foothold on this planet, I should send my bristles down the plughole every morning with a whoop for the triumph of man over nature. Instead, I am obliged to send them down with a snarl at my defeat. I am defeated by a damfool convention which condemns me to this miserable chore winter and summer, every day of my life.—R. A. Copland, in *Here's My Discomfort*, an NZBS series.



**ROBINSON'S LEMON BARLEY WATER**

