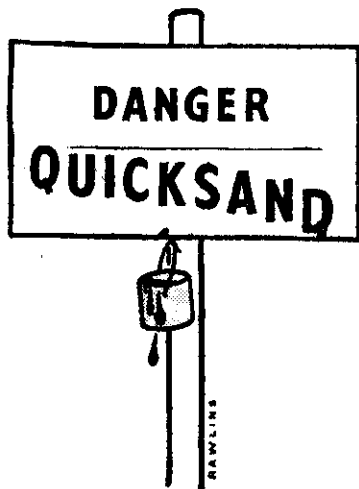




(C) Punch

music of Borodin wholesale, and setting to the melodies some imitation Cole Porter lyrics. I've sometimes felt that we might hear the Polovtsian Dances a little less often in dinner music and other sessions, but I'd cheerfully hear them every day rather than endure again *Kismet's* perversions, "Not Since Nineveh" and "Stranger in Paradise." Nice work if you can get away with it—this kind of thing—but nauseating if one happens to like Borodin. I can hardly wait until they do *King Lear* over with the help of the *Nutcracker Suite*.

Honey Bee, Honey Bee

I WONDER how many people who enjoy radio documentaries apply to them the same criteria they apply to novels and plays. It is easy to become satisfied with the merely competent second-best on radio as with reading, and it takes a really first-class work to show many of us the inferiority of our normal fare. To me, Nesta Pain's

Honey Bees (1YC) was as superior to the ordinary radio documentary as real honeycomb is to the children's sweet of that name. I think I had heard or read before every fact in this session, and memories of Fabre, Maeterlinck and even Dunsany floated through my mind as I listened. Yet Miss Pain's quite extraordinary gift for radio presentation, for selection, and for dramatisation made it all seem new, exciting, compelling and awesome. I can't decide just what element it is in her work which gives it its special distinction. I suspect that it is simply, genius; and I see no reason why this quality should not show itself sometimes, anyhow, in a medium which every now and then startles us into recognition of the fact that it can be an art.

—J.C.R.

Fobbed Off

IT is always so enjoyable to hear the voice of a person you've admired that it sometimes takes a while to realise you're being fobbed off with a voice and precious little else. I am thinking of Joyce Cary's BBC talk, *The Novelist and His Public*. It was interesting up to a point to hear him describe a writer's public, composed of people who read everything he writes, even if they hate it, and who may just as well be busy housewives and dockers as intellectuals; to hear him aver that even Ethel M. Dell was sincere, though detective-novelists are not, that juvenile delinquents don't read and that all novels are about morals. It was interesting, as I say, up to a point—the point at which it became apparent that it could all have been said by someone with vastly less talent than Joyce Cary, and that most of it had been. There was little distinction either of style, of thought or of point-of-view. You get used to the idea that first-rate radio

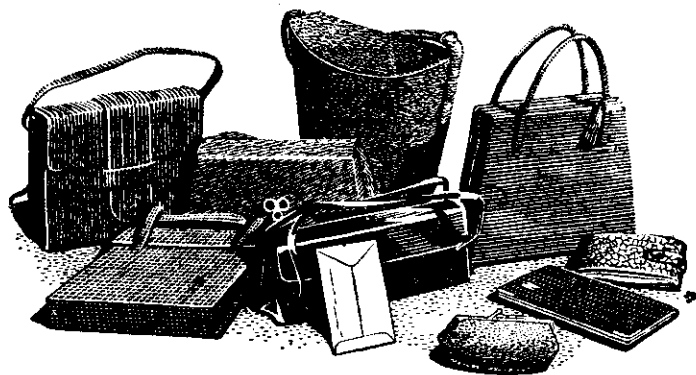
usually turns out to be second-rate anything else, when considered as a bare script divorced from the personality that puts it across. This wasn't even first-class radio.

Earlier Opos

THE Pocock family has given us some good listening of late: son, with his *Golubchik* and his *Joan of Arc*; father, with his Women's Session talk, first heard from 3YA, on some ancient fore-runners of Opo. His stories from Pliny, elder and younger, though the younger had pinched his story from the elder, sounded like most of those fantastic old natural history legends at which we smile with the assurance of superior knowledge; but they also sounded re-

markably like the Opo story, which may give us pause. There was one notable difference, however. When a dolphin made friends with the boys of Hippo (now Bizerta, west of the Bay of Tunis, or the Bey of Tunis—the radio makes such words regrettably ambiguous), so many Government officials flocked to see it that the townspeople killed it to save the expense of putting them up. Opononi seemed less worried by their influx of sight-seers. There, perhaps, even Cabinet Ministers paid their way. I hope some resident of Hokianga heard Professor Pocock's appeal to find out from the next friendly dolphin whether they really do prefer to be called "Simo," meaning snub-nosed.

—R.D.McE.



Good Reward

People lose money every day. Newspapers frequently carry advertisements offering rewards for money lost in wallets, purses, and handbags. Amounts lost may vary from "a large sum" and "five-pound notes" to "annual holiday pay", and the rewards offered may range from "good" to "generous".

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Ghost Story as Chamber Opera

AT the first performance of Benjamin Britten's "chamber opera" *The Turn of the Screw*, Colin Mason, critic for the *Manchester Guardian*, described it as the great occasion of the 1955 Venice Festival. The audience was very responsive. "Clearly their practice in Pirandello stood them in good stead, and they fell outside into dozens of little groups, gamely, ingeniously or obscurely explaining and counter-explaining, and all ready to die rather than look blank."

The opera will be introduced to New Zealand audiences from 2YC on Sunday evening, May 13. The action takes place in an English country house

during summer and autumn, and the characters concerned are Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper; Flora and Miles, the children; the new governess; and the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, a former manservant and governess. The opera starts with an orchestral prologue and is then neatly divided into two acts with eight scenes in each. Each scene is linked by an orchestral interlude which

tions on a twelve-note theme introduced in the prologue. The variations of this theme have a special significance in that they represent through the revolution that the tone-row undergoes, "the turn of the screw." In the last scene the theme appears in the bass in the orchestra, first eight notes, then ten, then eleven, and finally as Miles cries "Peter Quint, you devil," the twelfth.

The libretto by Myfanwy Piper, John Piper's wife, is very faithful to the original. She has made one important addition to the story. In the story (by Henry James) the ghosts are silent and their silence is part of their horrible quality. They constantly appear menacing, though apparently inactive, and yet one is conscious of their will-power steadily overcoming the sweet and the good. The governess is convinced that they do hold long conversations with the children, so the librettist decided to give words to them. As the rest of the libretto is in prose she has separated them from the ordinary world by making them speak in verse. *The Turn of the Screw* will be broadcast at 8.5 p.m. from 2YC on Sunday, May 13.



HENRY JAMES