

answer, so is Walter. So what? So confusion.

Before the reader concludes that he would be better off investing his money in half as many authentic RCA Victor issues, I hasten to add that this peculiar fruit-cake includes some unquestioned plums, especially Ania Dorfmann's playing of the "Pathétique" and "Moonlight" Sonatas of Beethoven (LBC 1029). The scale is small, as may be expected from this artist; but the details are all in place, the colorations refined, the emotion always dependable. Moreover, the quality of piano sound is quite the best that the house of the listening dog has produced, regardless of price. I also recommend the second side of LBC 1030, on which Byron Janis performs the G minor Ballade of Chopin and a series of Liszt pieces, including the A flat "Liebestraum" and the Sixth "Hungarian Rhapsody." These are played with remarkable poise and power, and superbly reproduced.

The initial list also includes several standard symphonic works played by the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra under the direction of Erich Leinsdorf, which I have not yet heard. I can, however, offer some opinions of other orchestral issues, including the Brahms "Haydn Variations" directed by Igor Markevitch and Tchaikovsky's "Francesca da Rimini" Fantasy directed by Issai Dobrowen on LBC 1010; Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" directed by Markevitch and Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" with Wilfred Pickles as narrator (LBC 1015); and Ippolitov-Ivanov's "Caucasian Sketches," Debussy's "L'Après-midi," and Saint-Saëns's "Danse Macabre" directed by Nicolai Malko (LBC 1019). All, save the last, which uses the Danish National Orchestra, are performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra of England. The interpretative quality in these ranges from acceptable to excellent, with the Markevitch "Nutcracker" and the Malko "Caucasian Sketches" decidedly in the higher bracket.

The only conclusion, from this seemingly purposeless collection, must be that RCA has no fixed attitude as to how this kind of list should operate, and is depending on the consumer to assert a preference. That, however, is an uncomfortable parallel to the kind of newspaper that seeks to follow reader opinion in its editorials, rather than to lead it. I can say, confidently, that all the records mentioned above are well worth the price asked, but for so many conflicting reasons that reason refuses to function. If Victor intends to follow through on this program, it must be held to strict account for the intrinsic value of everything it offers hereafter in the top price category. —IRVING KOLODIN.



BOOKED for TRAVEL

THE BAY WINDOW

SAN FRANCISCO.

I'VE spent the last four days lost in a San Francisco fog, which is as nice a fog as any if you are going to be lost in one. "We don't have fog all the time," local citizens insist, but there is a sign along one of the approaches to the city, large and permanent, that no matter the current state of the weather reads, "Caution—Fog Ahead." Probably no city can boast such a symphonic collection of fog horns. They start to groan their calls as the gray mist rolls in, and my favorite is the one you pass on the ferry from San Rafael to Richmond that moans "B. O."

Perhaps it is the ever recurring presence of the fog that makes the view so dear to San Franciscans. Some say the city built higher and higher on its hills the better to see the land and sea. There is hardly a house in town, Victorian to avant-garde, unpossessed of broad picture windows. The biggest attraction of San Francisco is San Francisco. Men build on the heights above Berkeley across the bay and look down on Berkeley-town with a pilot's eye view. And people inhabit Telegraph Hill, which has wooden catwalks around the hillside to lead you past your neighbor's place, and he and you look down on the Embarcadero where the ships come in and out to the Navy base on Treasure Island.

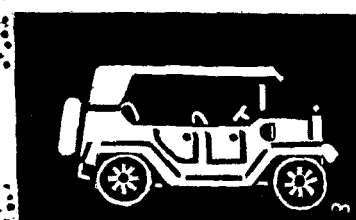
But the topper of all views is from the upholstered crow's nest known as the Top of the Mark, a glass-walled cocktail lounge on the nineteenth floor of the elegant Mark Hopkins Hotel, which sits atop Nob Hill in the lush and lofty section of town. On football nights great crowds form in the lobby to get to the Top of the Mark, and in summer the tourists come in battalion strength to file past the view, as if—one resident put it—it were a bier. Lovers, sophomores, and visiting Ceylonese look out to the delicate towers of the Golden Gate Bridge that holds hands with both sides of the harbor, and over the big-city

buildings and past Chinatown to the Oakland Bay Bridge. The sunsets are magnificent, but when the fog rolls in it makes for a sort of chuminess, an even Alcatraz, an island in the bay is camouflaged with glamour.

Like the rest of Nob Hill, the Mark Hopkins was once crowned with the digs of a baron who hit it rich in the ore deposits that run like underground rivers through the north California earth. He moved out of his nineteenth-floor castle in 1936 and three years later the Top of the Mark was opened. Among those who have copied the idea is the tiny Mark Twain Hotel in Sacramento, which has a bar in the cellar known as The Bottom of the Mark.

SAN FRANCISCO is built on several hills I read somewhere, but there must be more than that. They rise in great inverted V's, tear the clutch out of your car, and if you walk them the blood will race in your veins like alternating current. So you take the cable car, which still rolls uphill in defiance of gravity and of the normal laws of progress which rendered them obsolete a long time ago. But San Francisco is sentimental, and at rush hour the cars still bulge with citizens; local acrobats hang from the handrails and teeter on the running board as the vehicle climbs the dizzy heights taking San Francisco home. The motorman taking us up California Street the other night was busier than an organist with poison ivy playing "The Sabre Dance." He pulled down on the track brake pedal, yanked the grip lever, jumped up and down on the wheel brake pedal, and beat a rhythm on the bell cord. "My, you're careless," he told an automobilist who got in the way. "I haven't hit a car all month and I'm overdue."

The city's greenery is Golden Gate Park, a great expanse where ferns and fan palms and eucalyptus grow, and there is an Oriental Garden where you sip tea from Japanese cups, stroll through pagodas, and look at Bud-



as. There are windmills along the great Highway that runs aside the beach, set there to trap the breezes of the Pacific. And the coarse green air of the stunted cypress trees is rushed back against the hills, wind-blown by the breezes that lately caressed Hawaii. Seals play on rocks and yards from shore. From the Cliff House, which is a restaurant, you get a striking panorama of the waves stacked up and waiting to make the last run to shore and unravel themselves on the broad beige beach.

When San Francisco isn't admiring itself it is eating, and sometimes it does both at the same time. The international hodgepodge has created places like Fong Fong's Bakery-Lunch and that relic of the frontier, Hong Kong Inn, a Chinatown chop suey joint. It has the greatest Chinese settlement outside of China, and the local housing project has a Chinese arch, characters on the walls, and is called Ying Yuen, which means Tranquil Garden.

Take Ernie's on Montgomery Street, clothed in walls of red damask and where all the lights are candles. Its star came around the Horn in '94 when the restaurant was the Frisco Dance hall and the floor upstairs housed an establishment of dubious repute. Now the atmosphere is elegance personified, and Mario, who makes the crepes Suzettes, breaks into the romantic minor strains of "Vienie Su," a song, like Mario, born in old Italy.

You can singe your ulcer with quesadillas or Chiles Rellenos at the Papagayo Room at the Fairmont Hotel, which parrots with the tortillas. Tropical birds walk the tiny streets of a miniature bird village past a typical city monument dedicated to "The Wrong Brothers, Wilbur and Orville. First Birds to Walk." You can test your spelling and your pancreas with auerbraten and kartoffelpfannkuchen at The Shadows, on Telegraph Hill, which is Greenwich Village with a view. Skipper Kent's decks out the head waiter in a white linen suit, has that Tahiti look including a waterfall, not to mention the best fried prawns encountered up to press-time. The Tonga Room, also in the Fairmont, goes the Skipper one better. Its dance floor is set alongside a swimming pool and once every half hour a storm comes up out of the machinery across the bay and rain falls from the ceiling into the pool.

ALSO in the Fairmont is La Ronde, a cocktail lounge made to look like a French carousel, which actually goes around with the tables and the customers aboard. Toulouse-Lautrecs are pasted on the white brick walls, the waitresses are done up in abbreviated



—TWA Photo.

The Bay Bridge—"even Alcatraz is camouflaged with glamour."

bloomers and net stockings, and there by the door is a gendarme with real beard and mustache. "Bonjour Mesieurs, 'dames," he says as he swings open the portal. "Entrez, je vous en prie. On vous attend," which of course means "Get inside y'bums, we're just waiting to get your scratch."

The Ritz-Old Poodle Dog has that wonderful Paris smell, and when anybody orders fried cream flambé, a bell rings and the house lights are lowered in a genuflection to French gastronomy. The Domino Club in an alley at Trinity Place is absolutely covered with nude oils, including one known as Gloria, who exhibited herself at the Golden Gate Exposition of 1939 and through a trick in lighting was made to appear as if she breathed.

There is a place on Broadway called the Boccie Ball, where you hear operatic arias in front or step in the back room to watch wrinkled Italians play boccia, which is sort of like bowling on the green. Or you take Golden Gate Bridge lined with amber bulbs out to Sausalito and stop at the Valhalla, a Victorian fantasy by the water mixed up with legends of Jack London and operated by Mme. Sally Stanton, a lady renowned in these parts because of her former occupation. And when the eating is done in San Francisco it's time to head for Larry's for a cappuccino, which is hot chocolate emboldened with rum or cognac.

For those seeking the lusty San Francisco immortalized by M-G-M, the original Barbary Coast still exists along one street known as the International Settlement. Some of those saloons that catered to buccaneers still exist, and it is said that there

is still evidence of some trapdoors leading to the harbor through which bouncers of a hundred years ago were fond of dropping inebriates. Waiters are still done up in green striped shirts and handlebar mustaches, strip shows abound, and the main difference between then and now seems to be that these days it is the pirates who own the places.

—HORACE SUTTON.

TRAVELER'S TALE

PRUDENT GUIDE TO IMPUDENT CITY: The author Edward Hutton by temperament and choice does not look with favor on Tarzan-historians. His book, "Florence" (David McKay, \$4.50), is concerned with things, persons, places of the city, and he goes to great pains to describe them, and, less frequently, his response to them. Very much like a man who worships his beautiful and talented wife, but cannot bring himself to praise her publicly, Mr. Hutton often describes his city-love in a laconic fashion, convinced that the mere description will be more than sufficient, that anything else would be gilding the lily. Not that he can restrain himself forever. When you've been reticent so long, you want to make up for it when you do talk. And so Mr. Hutton seems sometimes too dry, sometimes too exuberant. Yet he knows Florence, and even with its lack of good photographs this book can become indispensable to all who have an interest in that magnificent and impudent city.

—SERGE HUGHES.