

WELLINGTON ROUNABOUT

By "Thid"

NUMEROUS petty annoyances have speckled the usual French polish of life this last week in Wellington.

There was a Courtenay Place conversation piece. I was accosted by someone who described for me in precise detail how a timber saw had removed his left hand. He talked, I think, for about 30 minutes, and conjured up visions of rolling logs and the smell of sawdust according ill with the clatter of trams and the fresh-dusted powders of miladies going to the films. He promised well, until the offer of a cigarette attracted that same left hand, whole as God made it, from a secretive pocket.

There were other disappointments, drops in the bitter bucket: the matter of a two-block ride on a tram, a late discovery of empty pockets, and of the conductor's refusal to be tolerant of an absent mind with the body so inconveni-

ently present; and the matter of looking for a number under "W" and of finding it under "H" instead, after a wearisome journey through the largest city 'phone book in New Zealand.

Sing a Song of Threepence

Louis Golding told me last night (about 10 p.m., on Page 55 of the Penguin edition of "Store of Ladies") about the ineffable order of existence in which food, so far as others are concerned, enters the mouth and has no further history. It is something like this that worries me about a certain lost threepence. The memory of that small coin rankles with all the force of a fortune mis-spent.

It is nothing to lose threepence. A small enough amount, after all, while the radio and newspapers are talking in millions, and Herr Hitler has to do without his coffee. But it is something to lose three-

pence, know where it is, and find convention in the way of picking it up. The tram was crowded. Skirts are so short nowadays. Worse: I think her eyes twinkled.

Trouble With a Bed

My bed collapsed that same day. Only what Uncle Scrim would call the flimsiest of pretexts got me out of bed. Someone had left the radio tuned to 2ZB's early-morning hurry-along. I hurried. I was the only one left to turn it off.

They are devilish efficient in the NCBS. When a broadcast not only wakes you up but also tips you on the floor, sprains your wrist, and raises a bump on your head, you must give it credit.

Time was when I blamed this sort of thing on mixing my proteins and carbohydrates, and drinking during meals. But it must have taken more than bony sole ("sole on bone" on the menu) to snap the thread which has at this moment parted once and for all with my top coat button.

I am disillusioned about Hay, Chapman, Williams, Bryson, and all that mob. In a little book the other day I found that most of my food has its p's and c's already mixed, and I am blown, Mr. Hay, if I hire a chemist to dissect my meals before a perfectly efficient pancreas

gets to work on them. As for the others: they are no wiser, I am sure, than my own very wise palate.

This is only one of many disillusiones besetting my generation. One more mosquito on the back of my neck (and Wellington has no cause to sneer at South Westland when it comes to mosquitoes) and mine shall lie with all those shattered ideals, as the Editor put it not quite so neatly two weeks ago, that make sharp splinters for the tender foot of propaganda.

Only the fact that food consistently remains in my stomach, and generally lies there happily, keeps my head in the clouds. One trace of indigestion, no less than one more exploring mosquito, and I would give myself over completely to cynicism. Not a pleasant prospect.

It's the little things that count.

They Laughed

Ripe for sneering, in the manner of the disillusioned, I was ready, after asking God to save the King, and listening to the broadcast of brass bands announcing the arrival of the day of glory, to leave the theatre in superior disdain during a more or less jingoistic movie the other night. The newsreels found the audience distinctly biased in favour of their own point of view. The main picture frightened my neighbours away after 700 feet, but near the end there was hardly a person did not heave with relish as each gory deed was splashed before them.

Yet I came away relieved. They had shown Herr Hitler with Signor Mussolini. The people should have disapproved. A mild "boo" would not in the circumstances have been out of place. A hiss would have been in the best 1914 manner. Even a frozen silence would have served.

They did none of these things. They laughed.

Since then I have been comparatively cheerful. I have forgiven the bed, the button, the bite, and being broke. Only the memory of that threepence reproaches me.

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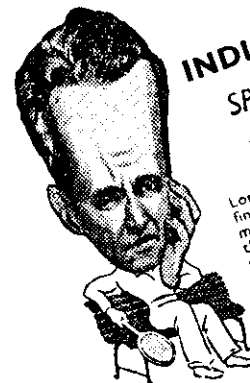
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