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By
PRINCESS
ALA TROUBETZKOY

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WELLINGTON ROUNDABOUT

By "Thid"

Those Others

MOST often, those others are only faces that pass in the street. There is other business to be done. There is no time for remembering that this is living, or that these ciphers really are people, with blood that flows and limbs that move to given orders. There is the office to be reached, or home to be revisited for an hour or two of an evening, sleep to be welcomed.

There is no time—every minute must be hurried, used to the last second. If this is not done now it must be done to-morrow, and to-morrow there will be no more time than to-day. What else can there be but strain and hustle?

In all the year in the city there were only two minutes of silence. Now even they are gone. On November 11, eleven o'clock of the morning passed around me in Wellington as if it had been mid-day, on any other day. The city must go on.

No one ever asks where. No one says: "At last, it is done, let us look at it, let us be satisfied for a moment."

People in the Streets

When the trams stop at night, the taxis start. When the taxis stop in the morning there are the milkman, the dustman, the watercart. When they are done the trams come again. Then all the people in the streets, hurrying, hurrying. Then the newsboys, raucous. The radios from shops. The trams all the time. The newsboys again. The theatre crowds. The late trams. The last trams, then the taxis again. And all the time people walking, people talking, people making haste, people saving seconds, people arguing, people debating, people stealing, people cheating, or feverishly being honest, or busy at charity, or doing good variously and precariously, people getting dirty, or washing themselves, or preening and pruning themselves, admiring themselves, loving themselves, hating themselves.

They are fascinated, and fascinating. They cannot stop. They must go on, wound up tight, until the years loosen the spring at last and one by one they drop out of time, their works scattered,

their bones with the worms. In the end, when their friends have frantically hurried to make up the spare minute for the last drinking of wine and weeping of tears upon the corpse, when the last handful of earth has been thrown, then there will be peace.

So It Goes On

But as one goes, another comes. . . . When the old bones wither the young bones grow. Busily, hastily, the baby becomes the child, the child the youth, the youth mature, and it goes on.

We complain, of course, bitterly. We have known Wellington has the better of us, as Dunedin, Christchurch or Auckland has the better of you, or Sleepy Hollow of you, and you, and you. But we have done nothing about it.

We know that the darkness of streets lying damp beneath blinding tall buildings is not for us, and yet, as units among the similar millions, we live and work in it. We know that every noise we hear shortens the space of time in which we may remain among the things we find beautiful, and yet we suffer it and do nothing in the cause of silence.

We know that the dust and smoke will ultimately choke us as surely as the particles of quartz will choke the miner. Yet we keep at our burrowing, as he does, to gain riches. We know that speed will wear us down in the end. We have our motors, our cars, our aeroplanes. Carefully, we husband them within their resources. Yet we do nothing for ourselves. There is no time.

Conversation Pieces

And what do we get out of it all?

Two conversation pieces for the answer:

Mrs. Hei: And how's young Jim?

Mrs. Bei: Doin' fine. Got a good job, and taken up with a nice smart bita' skirt; 'I be outa my way soon, will Jim.

Mrs. Hei: I never thought Jim'd be the one t'get hooked. Never seemed t' take t' parties and the like. Pass me that spoon will y' please Mrs. Bei.

Mrs. Bei: I always said these cakes was all in the mixin'. If y' beats too long it goes to pieces—y' never saw the like—and if y' don't beat it, it's like a lump'a lead. Did I put the soda in? Well, as I was saying, Jim's doing pretty

well for hisself. I will say for Jim he liked his drop a beer, although, *mind you*, he allus came home sober and give his mother somethin' for board, like. But now he's took to havin' it in better comp'ny. They has their parties, and it's all nice, and as far as I knows—well, there's nothin' what y' might say there shouldn't be.

Mrs. Hei: What y' mean, shouldn't be? I'm sure Mrs. Bei y' brought Jim up better'n that. Course, y' can't be *narrer* these days. It's what I allus sez—

Mrs. Bei: They likes their bit'a love and cuddle, y' know. No 'arm done and all's well that ends well, I sez.

Mrs. Hei: What I hates is when they take a drop too much more'n they ought. It's real bad for parties. Can I have that salt please, Mrs. Bei? Y'ave t' watch it. They gets drunk, dahn they sits, and looks stoopid. It spoils everyfin . . .

The Other Kind, Too

A record of the above may be inspected in my peculiar shorthand by any accredited parties (Form XYZ, 1a).

And at the other end of the evolutionary scale:

First genius: Have you read X. . . ?

Second: I don't quite go in for that sort of thing.

First: I think he's marvellous—I mean to say—he gives you a sort of—it's rather like—well I think—he has the most wonderful ideas about—I mean to say . . .

Second: A. . . 's rather like that, you know. I'm sure he gets his style from B. . . , and I know for a positive fact that he's not always reliable, whatever they say about him—it's just a lot of silly hero-worship when it's all boiled down—but he gives the fairest and clearest argument you'll find anywhere. And, you know, he writes the most *beautiful* prose I've ever read, anywhere.

First: I'm not quite sure where I've come across him, but he is good, I mean to say, isn't he? What was that he said about something?—the blue sound lurking through the—what was it—something like that—do you know it?—an absolutely wonderful bit of—it was in—

Second: I know what you mean. You know, the French are the most delightful people. They have a sense of humour like nothing else you'll ever meet anywhere.

First: Rather inclined to the lavatory, are they not? But they are a marvellous people. Gee, I think the French—they're absolutely wonderful, the way they—

Second: I've got a little thing here I'd like to show you. I'll translate it for you.

First: Oh, yes, love to. That's a marvellous magazine, I mean to say—

Next week, dear readers, we shall probably go to the Zoo.

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