

THIS WASN'T AMERICA

NEITHER of my two cousins had been born in New York. Mrs. Broad was a Californian and Mr. McLay was a Southerner, but with a zeal peculiarly American they had evidently decided before my arrival that, should I miss anything in their capital city, why, it would not be through any oversight of theirs.

"Well," said Mrs. Broad, as she let in the clutch with precision, "I guess we'd better take her straight to the Empire State."

"Guess so," said Mr. McLay laconically. He wasted nothing. I discovered later, not even the cheap commodity of words. We glided away from the wharf into the morning city.

The air on the top of the Empire State Building was very cold and a winter mist did not improve the visibility. Mr. McLay's approach, however, was brisk.

"There," he said, pointing, "is the Chrysler Building, the R.C.A., Woolworth's Building, East River, Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn, Downtown—the Wall Street area, the Hudson River and Staten Island way over, if you can see it. And that's the anti-suicide wiring," he added gloomily.

"Yes," I said, my eyes on the tiny red and orange cabs crawling along the streets far below. Mr. McLay gazed moodily over the city. He thought he should make it clear, he said, that he was no lover of New York. It was a durned Yankee town, and everybody in it lived too fast. Moreover, it was too big. If I had been able to come South now, that would have been really something. There, he intimated, throbbed the true heart of America. We looked for another moment at the narrow confines of Manhattan Island.

"If you can't go sideways you have to go up," said Mr. McLay and, from our icy perch, his contention seemed unarguable. We went to keep our lunch appointment with Mrs. Broad.

THE cool, conservative air of the exclusive club closed about us and our feet sank into the deep pile of the dining-room carpet. Noiseless Negro waiters pulled out chairs, flipped tables with snowy napkins and presented vast menus in dazzling, gloved hands.

"I guess I'll have five, six, and 84," said Mrs. Broad after a pause. "Aren't these numbers cute? They certainly do save time. If you want, say, pumpkin pie, all you do is quote the number right alongside it. That is, 27. Oh, waiter, maybe I'll change my mind. I guess I'll have pumpkin pie too. I mean 27." And eat our Southern dish we did, beneath Mr. McLay's beaming eye.

After more skyscraper scaling Mrs. Broad took me home to change before having dinner at the Yale Club and going to a show. I went to iron my frock.

Written for "The Listener"
by J. R. MINOGUE

"We, have Negro servants," whispered Mrs. Broad, following me into the kitchen. "Ah, there you are, Mary Rose. This is a cousin of mine, all the way from New Zealand. Now, isn't that interesting?"

"Yeah," said Mary Rose without emotion. She rolled her dark eyes at me and then returned to the more rewarding occupation which I had interrupted, that of twiddling with the rubbish destructor. Mrs. Broad, her duty discharged, retired.

"Isn't it warm just now?" I said.

"Uh huh," said Mary Rose.

"I expected it to be so cold."

"Yeah?" said Mary Rose.

"What's it been like up till now?"

"Kinda cold," said Mary Rose. The conversation was not enlivened to any extent by the advent of her husband Albert from the garage. He was rubbing his hands.

"Mighty cold," he said.

"Yeah," said Mary Rose.

WHEN we came out of the show Broadway was lighter than the day. A million lights winked; an illuminated waterfall fell endlessly upon the top

of a huge department store; colossal figures wearing some sort of suiting blotted out the crisp, white stars; advertisements four storeys high proclaimed the latest cinema triumph; a bottle large enough to quench an illimitable thirst poured infinite cokes into a gargantuan glass. We stopped to absorb the sight.

"Well, how about that?" said Mrs. Broad. I was about to express a polite platitude but, instead, laughed. We were both surprised.

"Why, what's funny?" she asked. I recomposed my features to a more becoming solemnity.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm not quite sure." She didn't answer, but I was comforted by a glimpse of Mr. McLay's face, momentarily haunted by a ghost smile.

GEE, said Mr. Hanson, but he was glad that I had fallen into his hands. He was Mr. McLay's ebullient brother-in-law. I had come to the very person, yes sir, the very person qualified to show me the soul that was New York. So, during the whole of Sunday he drove me the length and breadth of Manhattan Island, I was shown every prominent business building, every notable church, every main street, every historic site, and, at unexpected moments, drowsy old residential squares sleeping away their winter.

"That's what visitors don't see," said Mr. Hanson. "You only see where people work. But this is where people live

and die, are happy and unhappy, and you've got to know all these places before you fall under the spell."

"I just love New York," said Mr. Hanson as he drove me home. "I guess I love London too. But not Paris. No sir. Too feminine and pretty-pretty for me. But London and New York are alike—both the durnedest old rascals."

"Hullo there," said John Broad. "We've been waiting for you. I'm showing the colour films of my European trip and thought you'd be interested." John had spent four weeks travelling in England, Holland, France and Switzerland. The films were very good, and he explained them as he went along.

"I took that one," he said, "about half-way up one of those Swiss passes. You know the ones I mean. I can't exactly remember the name of it. Anyway, I guess that's about half-way up. And that's about the top. And that is the top, I think, though it's kinda misty right there. Quite a height, those Swiss passes, though I can't remember how high that one was. Oh, and that's another one of the same pass. I guess that must be going down the other side."

"Gosh," he said when it was over, "how could you spend 10 months over



"We stopped to absorb the sight"

there. In four weeks I thought I'd seen everything, and was I homesick by the end of it. Europe is so drab and tiny. I know that sounds awful, and I certainly am ashamed of myself. But that's how it is."

I left New York the next evening, though not before I had seen a whole lot more of it. Mr. McLay also left that night.

"It sure was mighty fine to see you," he said, and then leant conspiratorially close. "But don't think you've seen America," said Mr. McLay, "because you haven't."

NEW LILBURN SONATA

A NEW Pianoforte Sonata by the New Zealand composer Douglas Lilburn will be broadcast from 2YA at 8.3 p.m. on Sunday, June 19, by the pianist Frederick Page. It bears the title 1949, and is in three movements, *Allegro*, *Poco Adagio*, and *Allegro Assai*. It was first played on May 21 at a meeting

College of Music, where he studied composition under Vaughan Williams. At the Centennial Music Competition in 1940 he scored a great success, winning prizes with his *Drysdale* and *Festival* overtures and his choral work *Prodigal Country*. He had previously made a name for himself by winning a Percy Grainger prize with his work *Forest*. His *Diversions* was recently performed in England by the Boyd Neel Orchestra.

of the Society of Registered Music Teachers in Wellington. Another new Lilburn composition broadcast recently was the *Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano*, which was played from 2YA on May 19, by George Hopkins (clarinet) and Frederick Page. This work was also played at the conversatione held last month to celebrate the jubilee of Victoria University College, where the composer is a Lecturer in Music. It was the first performance of any of his works since Boyd Neel played his *Diversions* 18 months ago, although he has written a certain amount of incidental music for plays and films during the past year.

Douglas Lilburn comes from Hunterville, and went in 1937 to the Royal



DOUGLAS LILBURN