

## AROUND WELLINGTON

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to walk into that shop without brushing up against hosiery, Manchester goods, linoleum, corsetry, shop walkers, shop talkers (all women), and shoppers (also all women).

### Cigarette Butts

On this magnificent tribute to the spirit of the Merchant Navy I had turned my back and was observing the passers by.

He came up along the edge of the footpath where the drizzle drifted in, and he wore a hat that turned down to match the downward turn of his nose, his mouth, his heels, his trouser cuffs, his back, and doubtless also his mind. He looked neither right nor left, and I wondered that day what his eyes might be seeing.

The next day (oh yes, curiosity took me back) he came at the same time, as regular as a parson's preoccupation and Saturday night. This time I discovered what his eyes say. A vision of some poor hovel where he lived, you think? Or happier sights of some better place where some day he had lived or some day might hope to live, Fate, Hitler, and the Social Security Act permitting.

No, not these or any other fine things. Simply cigarette butts.

I had not seen him coming. I had a cigarette, three-quarter smoked, and I was tired of it. Like the shop behind me I suffered from superfluity. I flicked it away. It missed the gutter and stopped smoking two feet out on the road.

Then the man came along, and again his whole personality seemed to be fixed exactly two and one-half feet on the paving block in front of his ragged shoes.

He walks slowly this man, and it seems as if he never sees anything; and yet in that moment when I felt him

coming past me he swooped off the footpath and was back like a flash, cigarette doused and the butt in his pocket.

### Wonder and Envy

A good journalist would have followed him, but I still have some squeamishness and all I can do is wonder where he goes each day.

You feel sorry for him, of course. My description has been so touching has it not? And yet in some ways I have it in me to envy him. The idea is preposterous, but then he is one of those

preposterous people who fail to realise that life means living, and is not easy. With such as he the nearest way to find the truth is to imagine the least likely possibilities. And one of these which I imagine about him is that his eternal search for butts thrown on to the street has kept his mind off Hitler and the fate of Homo Sapiens.

More of his sort and there would be no dictators. But no, that is too fanciful. Any more like him and there would be no cigarette butts. You can't have the scavenger without something to scavenge.

All of which is quite meaningless; but some day when I have the courage to return to that place at that time I am going to ask him if he knows there is a war on, and I am certain that his reaction will be very interesting.

I have an idea that the war will not seem so important to him as the cigarette I shall offer him, and in that event I shall be quite puzzled about the whole business as I am now.

And those are the two most significant people I have met in Wellington since Dunkirk.

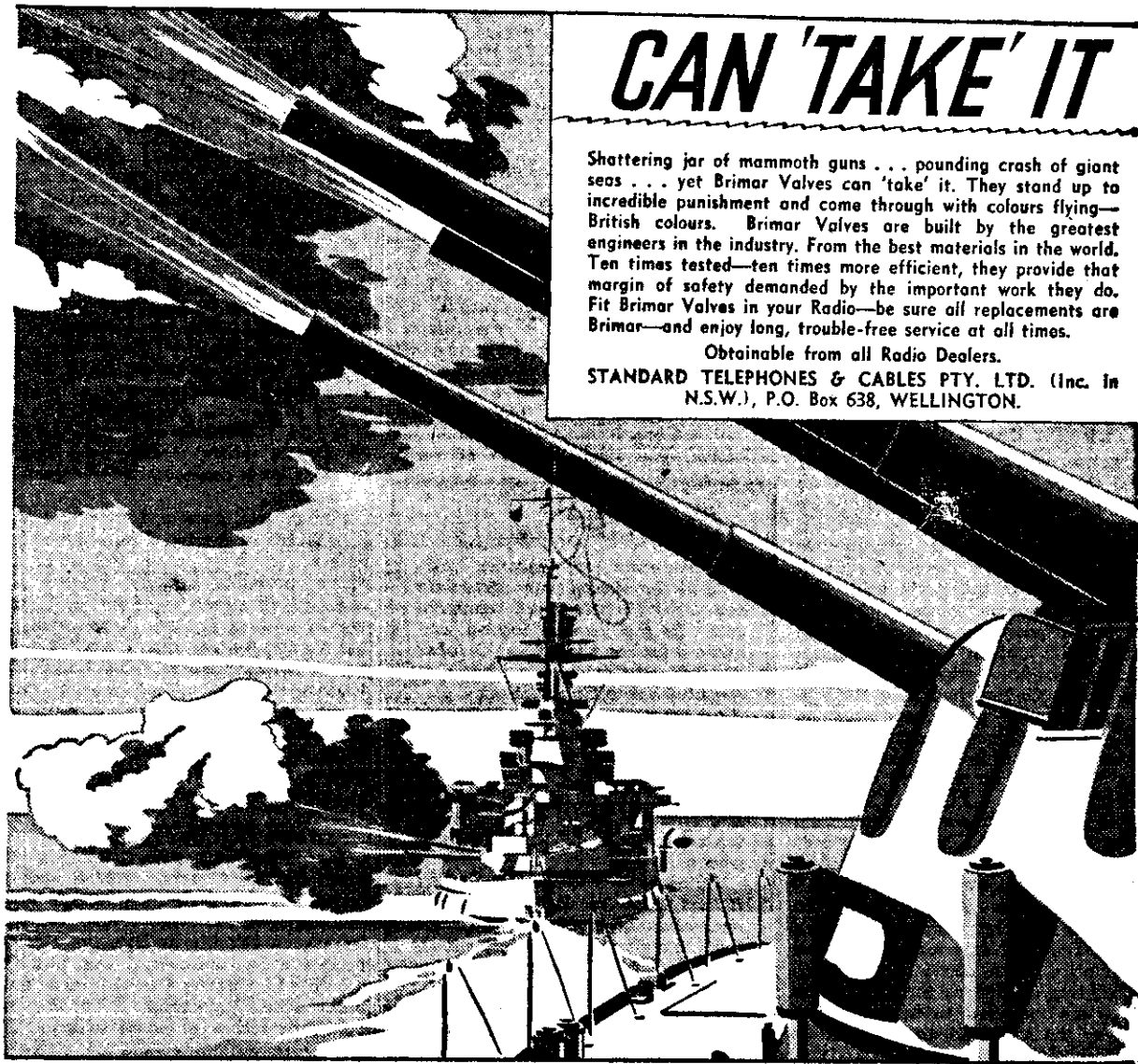
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## Voices In Storage

A reconstruction of the past over the air can be made much more vivid by the use of the actual voices of actors in the drama. This has been a notable feature of many NBS programmes. In the broadcast review of the first year of the war, extracts were given from recorded speeches by statesmen in England and New Zealand. In several of the obituary tributes that the NBS has broadcast, the voice of the celebrity has been used. There was an instance of this on a recent Sunday, when the NBS, through 2YA, paid a tribute to Grenfell of Labrador. The script mentioned the hardships and perils that this heroic doctor-missionary had faced, and then listeners heard the story, told by Dr. Grenfell himself, of how he had been cast adrift with his dogs on a small ice-floe and was saved just when hope seemed to have vanished. This was made possible by the fact that the NBS had in its library a gramophone recording by Dr. Grenfell. One side ended, by the way, with the words "How did it go?" — evidently someone was not quick enough with the microphone switch.

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