

# AROUND WELLINGTON

By "THID"

## A HUNTER AT LARGE

IT would be nice and thrilling to open this story by justifying the headline. It must be admitted, however, that it was only put there to attract your attention. The hunter, in fact, is no longer at large.

He was a friend of mine, and he was hunting very big game. A rare sort of beast in these parts. A shy animal that hides in odd corners. With a price on his head. Often angular. Not always clean. With good defences.

My friend was hunting for a flat.

HE came here from Christchurch. In Christchurch, although I believe the cost of living there is rising now, he had a one-and-a-half storied house with a garden—a real Christchurch garden. For the rental he paid for it—37/6—he found in Wellington that he would be able to get a room (b/s, gs. stve. scrnd. off, lge dble, suit bns. cpl.).

Now my friend liked to spread himself over a somewhat greater area than the distance between the bob-in-the-slot meter and the three-quarter bed. And his wife, although this might seem strange to Wellington readers, was unused to cooking in only half of a gas stove and coming home to find the roast cool with the shilling run out.

And they did not like arguing with the other twenty people on the same floor about the bathroom or who should sweep the passage-way that had become a community-kitchen; or who should have the window open to let out the smell of cabbage and corned beef, and who should have it shut against the mosquitoes and blow-flies.

And neither of them enjoyed lying in bed at night and listening to the clump of feet on the floor overhead.

Nor did my friend believe it was his duty to remove the empties from the vegetable cupboard on the afternoon after—especially when they were not his own bottles.

They were quite intelligent people and they had some imagination, but they could never deceive themselves

that a curtain across the middle turned the double bs. into two rooms.

So my friend decided to hunt for a flat. The flat won.

OF course I looked after him as best I could. I found a doctor for him. After twenty telephone calls one agreed to come away from his consulting room. (We thought it best not to try and take my friend away from the place. We were on one side of the door, and he on the other. We decided to keep it locked until the doctor came.)

When he did come we soon knew the worst.

So I went along with them and saw that they made him as comfortable as could be expected. It was unfortunate that one of the attendants resembled a landlord he had interviewed (one with half his teeth missing and his dinner clinging affectionately to the rest.)

I understand they looked after the attendant and did their best for him.

MY friend's problem was a simple matter of finance. He had so much income. A certain proportion of this was all he could allocate for rent.

Of course, he could have spent a good deal more. He could have spent £3 15s for two rooms and a kitchenette and bathroom furnished and he would still not have spent all his weekly wage. But then, both he and his wife sometimes found they needed some clothes, at least some wool and thread to mend the old ones.

And they liked to have three meals a day.

And even quarter-slice sandwiches were one penny each.

So they decided to offer £2 per week for a small, self-contained flat, furnished, and £2 5s per week if it were close to the city and they were saved bus or tram fares.

So my friend began to keep pennies in his pocket, and every morning and every night he would buy a newspaper and telephone all the likely places advertised. He did that for a long time. Then one day, when his shoes were getting thin, before they wore right out, he made a round of the land agents, then a round of the places to which the land agents referred him.

Then he came back to the double bs. and his wife duly comforted him.

Then he answered more advertisements.

He got so he could lift the receiver, dial the number, and say, without thinking, the same formula each time: "I want to inquire about the advertisement in the paper to-day. I am looking for a small furnished, self-contained flat for my wife and myself, would you please tell me about the one you have?" Like that, all in one breath.

Then they would tell him (I often listened in) and he would ask some questions and say, "I'm very sorry, it's not quite what I required."

Sometimes he would come over all enthusiastic and ask for the address and make sure he was getting there first. Then he would dash off and get his wife and they would do without lunch while he left the office and pounded off along the streets to see the place.

Then he would come back with his feet dragging just a little and the evening paper tucked under his arm with pencil markings all over the classified ads. page.

So it went on day after day:

I want a small furnished self-contained flat for my wife and myself have you anything that would suit me please?

THEN he was drawn in the ballot and he could no more afford £3 for a decent flat than he could use a Chicago piano. His wife would have their small savings and one guinea per week. He would let her have most of his £2 9s per week as a private and then she would just about have the price of a double bs.

My friend was unfortunately very good at arithmetic. He added up the figures and did the necessary subtraction, and it was about that time that the flat began to win.

Which shows, as I shall be glad to demonstrate, that the real fifth-columnists in this country are not people going from shadow to shadow with long beards and portraits of Cabinet Ministers in their left-hand breast pockets. Not them at all. Flats are the trouble. Flats reduced the war effort in the case of my friend. He would have been an excellent soldier.

Now he is not even a good patient and his wife hasn't even got the guinea a week.

## EMBELLISHING THE TALE

### "Ships and the Sea" Arouses Interest

ONE of the most interesting features about "Ships and the Sea," which is presented regularly over the commercial stations by Peter Whitchurch, is the number of letters received from listeners who have had some connection with, or know some further facts about the episode Peter has been discussing.

His description of the sinking of the Titanic, for instance, was followed by a letter from a New Zealander who was on the California, only 60 miles away, the night the Titanic was sunk.

Again, his story of the life of Sir Ernest Shackleton brought a letter from a resident of Eketahuna, Wairarapa, who served under Sir Ernest during the Nimrod's two voyages to the Antarctic in 1908-09. His story of the wreck of the Cospatrick was followed keenly by an Auckland resident whose grandparents had booked passages by the Cospatrick but later cancelled them.

Recently Peter conducted a broadcast from the Turnbull Library, Wellington, where an unusual piece of furniture is a chair made from the timber of the ship Inconstant, which was stranded, in August, 1850, on a point near Pencarrow, at the mouth of the Wellington Harbour.

The ship was subsequently beached on the foreshore and used as a storehouse, and the point was afterwards called "Inconstant Point."

Peter Whitchurch has been transferred to Station 3ZB Christchurch, but "Ships and the Sea" is unaffected by the change.



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