

**THROAT EASED
COLD STOPPED**

Pulmonas
1/1, 1/7, 2/7

The Listener

DURING the playing of a record the guests sat still, almost listless, each conserving his energy for the aesthetic frenzy that was to come, and so Miss Quint, wearing a look of

timid surprise, could survey them all. The Englishwoman sat nearest the fire and her face, almost habitually cold, was warmed by the glow to a colonial ruddiness. Miss Quint, watched the dark head and aloof profile, the mouth curved arrogantly, the eyelids smoothly down-cast, but the eyebrows questing, searching for phrases, waiting for the notes to fade, the record to cease its whirring and the conversation to begin again. Her hands now folded, were, Miss Quint reflected, actually lying in wait to snatch each new topic as it emerged from the silence, to whip it from its cellophane, make it her own. "When I was in Italy, in Paris, in Salzburg . . . Toscanini . . . Rosenkavalier —" An amiable voice but such a predatory enthusiasm. And whenever the truant conversation became estranged from her she seized it with determination, for she could not bear it to venture to any part of the world where she had never visited or else despised, but must transport it at once to those places where her fellow guests had never been. And all the while with swift compelling smiles she kept it docile.



A SHORT STORY

by

Ngaire Gibson

What do I do . . . to help New Zealand's War Effort?

I work willingly and loyally for the war organisation to which I belong, and I aim for 100 per cent efficiency in my daily job.

I maintain a cheerful and confident mental attitude—and to this end I refuse to listen to radio broadcasts from enemy countries.

I spend less on luxuries, and my extra savings I invest in National War Savings and Bonds.

I save paper, cardboard, and unwanted books and deliver them to the local Waste Paper Depot.

I work in my garden as much as time will allow, in order to grow more food.

In the enjoyment of my favourite beverage I practise moderation, on the principle that liberty is deserved only by those who do not abuse it.

An announcement issued in the Nation's interests by the National Council of the Licensed Trade of New Zealand.

THE others were no match for the Englishwoman. They heard each record of the quintet and then endured this agony of searching for elegant phrases. The last delicate persuading of the oboe, the tender summons of the horn, were drowned by their screaming thoughts. "Detachment," they said, was the inevitable word, and that while the bright shapes formed and dissolved again, a limpid tinkling conveyed the delicate boredom of the past. It was not that Mozart avoided life in this, they considered; the tiny tragedies and delicious comedies were lived to the full, but lived as it were in his sleep. Mr. Considine, have you ever played the bassoon? Such a literary instrument . . . The Wedding Guest and Maud . . . When I was in the East . . . My husband ate an Avocado pear . . .

The sweet conversation made Miss Quint feel dizzy.

BUT after all there was very little difference between this soirée and those of long ago. Except for vociferous compliments the guests in those days had been conversationally mute, but they had vied with one another in performance to a terrible degree. Even as Miss Quint's tenor uncle had begun the final agony of "Thora," rival tenors and sopranos had been groping for their copies of "The Sweetest Flower That Blows" and "The Little Silver Ring." And how mortifying it had been not to receive a double encore. A soirée meant no relaxation at all, but the same incredible striving.

"**SOMETIMES,**" Mr. Clay was saying, "the piano has a curious tinny sound and sometimes it sprays like a

fountain." Mr. Clay had such a leaning look, a romantic look. At this moment he rests his cheek on his hand, crosses his knees and leans over the Young Girl. His mind leans towards hers, too. He smiles secretly down at her, strokes his hair back from his brow and seems to lean right out of the century. His collar should be inches higher and his tie a wide cravat fastened with a pearl. The Young Girl takes little part in the conversation. She has no need to because of that creamy cheek and cherry mouth, the grey eyes and golden hair. She sits with her hands folded gently, and her face has that innocent complacency which only a very beautiful young woman can afford to exploit. Her smile comes and goes, so slowly, so nymph-like, that her silences seem a necessary part of the evening's entertainment.

AND now Mr. Clay is turning from the Young Girl and speaking to Miss Quint. Oh, if he should lean intimately over her like that her nerves would flutter. She is not like those young females who can give look for look. She is poised for flight but firmly held, like a recalcitrant Daphne. But he is only speaking of her garden. He has heard that she grows remarkable hyacinths. So like death, tranquil and waxen, with that still perfection that precedes corruption. Rather sentimental and fin-de-siècle, like Tchaikovski. Oh the horrible, the ridiculous young man!

THE Schoolmaster comes in with the supper. He has been marking essays and the whole tide of English literature has rolled before him. He listens to the finale and marks it off as just another essay. "Glorious music that!" I have only to treat each man as a schoolboy and the world as a class-room, and life will flow towards me.

MR. CLAY leans to the Young Girl again. "Anthony Eden," he is saying, "like a carnation, don't you agree? A delicate white carnation in a silver
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