

Restless New York

BY WINIFRED JOHNSTON, '24

IF New York is restless it is only as a giant moves in his sleep, attempting to bring back to life a member of his body in which the blood has ceased circulating. Feeling his limbs dead, the great body turns. A groan issues from its lips. The feet move feebly.

But the convulsive agony is all unconscious. The brain of the giant still slumbers.

I

From ten o'clock in the morning till five in the afternoon the street curbs are lined with baby carriages. In Riverside Park the nurses chat with one another. On Cathedral Parkway the mothers bring out folding chairs to sit before bank or synagogue while their children play. Boys skate in the street, hook rides on buses and express trucks, swipe money to seek adventure in the movies.

At eight o'clock in the evening the Times Square subway platforms are still full of people waiting for trains to take them home from work: men, women, young girls—Wops, Bohunks, Negroes, Jews. A Westerner full of gin and cheer staggers to his feet to shake hands with a tall blond boy in a coonskin coat: "Shake, pal," says he, "I've been in New York five days, and you're the first real American I've seen!"

At night the sky above the city glows pink from the reflection of millions of Neon lights. At dawn the skyline, reappearing, pierces the clouds against the blue.

It costs only a dollar to see the city from the Empire State tower. It costs only a nickel to see the tower through a telescope at Battery Park—and past the tower the stars.

From the tower the daytime city is revealed like a map suddenly become elevated. Purple canyons, spire after spire, stupendous masses of steel and concrete, the two rivers sweeping downward to the sea.

"What a site for a city!" someone exclaims during a dinner at Columbia's International House.

"And how ugly in its realization!" answers a Welchwoman, over in the states for a year of study. "When I first saw your city, as I came in by boat, I wept at its loveliness. Then I discovered

Fifth Avenue, with Fourth Avenue just beyond it—the river, with its horrible railroad tracks and warehouses! Your lordly Hudson has been ruined! If one wants beauty one must go to the Seine or to the Thames."

"Give us time!" answers the American. "New York has not yet had its great fire and its Christopher Wren to rebuild it. And is America alone in industrial exploitation? Give us time for that, too."

II

The Columbia Institute of Arts and Sciences, the Town Hall Forum, the Brooklyn Academy Series of Arts and Letters; the New School for Social Science; the Rand School of Social Science; the Metropolitan Museum, the Roerich Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Riverside Church, the Community Church Center, the Brooklyn and the New York Ethical Societies; the Washington Irving High School Series of Lectures and Recitals; the Westchester Amusement Center. Night after night, thousands of people attending lectures, recitals, laboratory and art classes; thousands of people seeking an antidote to futility and despair.

At the New School for Social Research classes in writing, painting, dancing; showings of drawings, films, music, discussion of drama, politics, and physics.

At the New School, too, Fritz Wittels on general principles of psychoanalysis. At the Rand School, A. A. Brill on the Freudian contribution. At Irving Plaza, Alfred Adler on aspects of individual psychology.

At Columbia, a series of lectures on American Ideals, delivered by eminent members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters: Nicholas Murray Butler on politics, John H. Finley on education, Ralph Cortizzoz on art, Henry Hadley on music.

There, late in the season, W. Rautens-trauch discusses Technocracy and its relation to the enrichment of human personality. Consistently the engineering professor refuses to allow a political interpretation of technical facts. "What is the aim, then, of your fact finding?" asks a questioner on the ground floor. "To give the means of life to everyone

willing to work for it," answers the technologist. A poorly dressed man leans intently over the balcony railing. "That's O.K. with me, Professor," he shouts suddenly, as the meeting breaks up.

At City College a demonstration follows the dismissal of a young professor of English from the institution's night school. Alarm bells are set ringing all over the campus; there are speeches, a public trial of President Robinson at Central Opera House, a hanging of the President in effigy. Denials by the administration that the instructor was dismissed "because of Communistic activities"; a statement by the instructor that the director of the school's evening session had steadily opposed the activities of the Liberal Club, of which the English teacher was supervisor, and that the meetings of the club on the campus were twice broken up by police at orders of the college administration.

In November, the International Conference of Universities on "Obligations of the University to the Social Order"—called by the editor of *Business Machines* "one of the most important conferences ever held in America."

Harold Swift, trustee of the University of Chicago, in a speech on the university and economic change, mentions academic freedom to give a berating to a young Chicago professor who had arranged student visits to Illinois mines. Newspapers had played the visits up, Swift says, so that many of "the decent people of Chicago" had gained the idea that the university faculty was full of Socialists. Capitalists are making their wills, he says, and it is well for universities to remember it.

In the evening Trustee Swift is answered. Charles Edward Merriam, member of President Hoover's Commission on Social Trends and professor of government at the University of Chicago, provides one of the thrilling moments of the conference. In the midst of his prepared address, Professor Merriam suddenly raises his head to say, with solemnity and calmness: "There are still witch-killers in Tennessee, in Chicago, and in New York. There is no freedom of speech among professors in Russia; there is none among professors in Italy. When it becomes impossible for the professor in America to speak his free opinion, then democracy has indeed failed. When that happens the powers that be can fight it out in the dark. And with the darkness will come machine guns and clubs."

III

Within the barn-like entrance of Madison Square Garden four mounted policemen keep guard against the onrush of people. Without, two on each side of the great entrance on Eighth Avenue, are their fellows, holding the sidewalks against a plunging, jeering, eager, politi-

ically-minded crowd. The trained horses are very gentle. They can muzzle their way through a mob of excited men and women or wheel their flanks in such a way as to turn a horde without injuring an individual.

Once again the political parties are taking their causes to the the people. Democracy is enjoying again the show it gets for its money. Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, and Communists, all rally their forces for the last time before the election of 1932.

Here in New York politics are as real and exciting as in the early days of America's torch-light parades.

Fifty thousand tickets were issued for the Hoover reception. At seven o'clock, an hour before the meeting is scheduled to begin, every one of the twenty-two thousand seats is filled. Two blocks away a policeman tells a Republican sympathizer that his ticket for an orchestra seat isn't worth the paper it is printed on.

Tickets for the Socialist rally were bought four weeks in advance. This is a party which does not have a "war chest" of interested donations. But the tickets prove no more valuable in ensuring easy entrance to the Garden. At seven o'clock the subway exit at Fiftieth Street is already jammed with people turned back from the doors. At Seventh Avenue, policemen join hands to prevent a rush across the street. Only the bold succeed in passing the mounted police two blocks below.

Franklin D. Roosevelt staged his triumphal show the night of the Republican rally. Two nights after the Socialists greet Norman Thomas, the Communists fill the Garden once more to capacity.

Over on Manhattan Avenue, a long line of people wait outside the steps of a brick building bearing the plate of the Monongahela Democratic Club. The retainers of Tammany are having their annual Christmas party. A policeman talking to a buxom, thick-legged woman watches a Negro pass a flask over to a pale, heavy-eyed Caucasian. Inside the double windows of the Monongahela Club the lucky ones are already munching buns.

In the municipal election 135,000 lose their votes by attempting to write in the name of "Honest Joe McKee." Thousands of others who also wish to give Walker's successor their votes lose theirs when they find election machines jammed by Tammanyites to prevent any such writing in.

Over in Brooklyn 15,000 fill the Academy of Music to hear Scott Nearing and James O'Neal debate whether Socialism or Communism can best save the country.

IV

Broadway on Christmas night. At the New York Theatre, Mary Wigman has taken twenty-seven curtain calls. It is her troupe's American debut. Finally she yields to the insistence of the audience. Cymbals clash. Out on the stage the dancers come again: hard, stern, proud, in the militant vitality of a new womanhood. Reluctantly the audience lets them go and drifts out-doors to join the Broadway crowd.

There are fewer electric signs on Broadway this year. Radio has taken many of the old advertisers. For a long time now the theatres have been moving up beyond Times Square and into the side streets. Now almost the only amusement houses left on the Great White Way are the movie palaces. Auction houses, millinery shops, gymnasiums and gyp bookstores spot the famous way. But here still are pleasure seekers, lined up along the curb, in front of the windows, surging up and down the Main Street of the World.

Where will the crowd go when Broadway is no more? We pass the automat where actors grab their noonday meals. One of the bookshops attracts attention. "What goes on on Park Avenue?" asks its glaring sign. "Men, Women, and the Neutral Sex." says another. The window is full of half-opened books. "What about the Frigid Woman?" asks a chapter heading. "This frank statement of a neglected subject—Formerly \$2.95—now 98 cents," reads the placard in the corner. "Yah," shout two newsboys to the salesman in the door. "Yuh outa be ashamed of yerself. Filling up our minds with that dirty stuff!"

The crowd laughs and passes on. Down Forty-second Street we catch a glimpse of Billy Minsky's burlesque house and its flashing sign, "Maids Without Uniforms." On the sign at the top of the Times Building the little comma chases frantically after the words preceding it: like himself—Christopher Morley says—always a little behind the world and trying desperately to catch up.

At the corner of Fiftieth and Sixth Avenue stands Radio City. About ten o'clock in the morning the crowd begins to form a line. By eleven the line extends down Fiftieth Street to Fifth Avenue. The doors open at eleven. At twelve the price advances to fifty cents. Perhaps Frohman was right when he told Roxy not to worry about the kind of show he put on in the amusement center: that the people would pay twenty-five cents to see the house alone, and that the tourists would keep coming a long time.

Rockefeller's Folly. Empty theatres all up and down Broadway, and empty office buildings all around it. The Winter Garden used to hold 5,000 peo-

ple. Radio City's Music Hall holds 6,200. McIntyre and Heath led the bill the opening night. A man who was there told me that the show was still going at 12:45. "They had the biggest theatre in the world on their hands," says Walter Lippman, "and their idea of entertainment was to give the people the longest show in the world." From a great distance the audience watched one two-dimensional pigmy after another cutting capers before a microphone. Personality succumbed before space. No musical show or variety number in the world could hold out against such a handicap. The tendency of Broadway toward better and bigger things had finally reached its logical end. The movie had inherited the earth. With the kindest of intentions the critics could do nothing but enumerate the glories of the building. Within a week Roxy had cut two numbers off of the bill and gone to the hospital. Within two weeks of its opening the management announced that the Radio City Music Hall would join the de luxe houses showing first run pictures.

Uptown the de luxe houses appeal to the multitude with an extravagant picture based upon the fall of Rome. Downtown, in the heart of Union Square, the little Acme Theatre shows for fifteen cents a masterpiece of photography and direction, G. W. Popst's *Kameradschaft*, the simple story of the disregarding of international borders by German workers who go across the old war frontier to help French fellow workers in a mine disaster.

In the little Workers' Theatre at the Rand School of Social Science young actors long out of jobs in the commercial theatres of Broadway accept parts in plays designed to use the stage as a weapon of organized labor.

Up on Broadway that disturbing satire of current politics, *Of Thee I Sing*, finally goes on tour. *Success Story* too departs, leaving *Dinner at Eight*, *Biography*, and *The Late Christopher Bean* to represent on their respective stages their various aspects of American life.

In January these are joined at the old Empire Theatre by Elmer Rice's propaganda play, *We, The People*. The opening is one of the exciting moments in American theatre history. Out in front the idle and curious gather for a glimpse of white shirt-fronts and ermine cloaks. Inside the beautiful and the famous foregather in blissful ignorance of what is before them. Behind the curtain sixty actors nervously prepare Rice's indictment of industrial exploitation. The end of the first act leaves the audience moved but bewildered. The end of the second finds it divided into opposing factions, alternately hissing and applauding the lines and scenes of the play. In the history of the theatre this is a mo-

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versity would increase, while such students who are drawn from the tax-supported colleges to others would no longer be an expense to the people of the state.

To the end that the soundness and practicability of this plan may be fully and prudently considered, I have determined to add five new names to the co-ordination committee already appointed and at work. These names are: Dr. Eugene M. Antrim, president of Oklahoma City University, and Dr. J. N. McCash, president of Phillips university, Enid; Dr. J. D. Finlayson, president of Tulsa university, and Dr. Hale V. Davis, president of Oklahoma Baptist university, Shawnee, to represent one group of independent colleges, both men of experience in the field of education; and Bishop Francis C. Kelley, to represent another group, a man whose qualifications have been recognized by several universities both in America and abroad.

I intend also to give this committee plenty of time, so that the decisions its members arrive at may be the result of a most comprehensive study of the whole field of higher education in the state, helped by the best thought of educators everywhere, and made with an eye on the necessity of economy, while promoting efficiency, and constructing an Oklahoma system of higher education worthy the name.

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ment which compares with one two hundred and twenty years ago, when Addison's *Cato* was applauded to success by the enemies of despotism and the supporters of constitutional freedom. The difference lies in the fact that contemporary Whigs and Tories have not yet realized that despotism is doomed and that freedom needs to be proclaimed anew.

IV

From nine o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night Macy's department store is alive with people. Men fingering ties and trying on shoes. Women looking at hats, coats, dresses, house dresses, sport dresses, street dresses, afternoon dresses, evening dresses. Men and women fighting for etchings, on sale in the picture section. Men and women filling the acre-wide dining room. Women waiting for chairs in the block-long rest room. People, people, people, turning family incomes back to business channels in the largest cash department store in the United States.

In the cut-rate fur shop in Union Square the painted models make their endless circle in front of the second-story corner windows. In the street below a paint-bedaubed dwarf clowns among the sidewalk crowds, pointing attention of passerbys upstairs to the procession of tired models.

Business as usual—From Klien's to the customer—Gimbel's will not be under-sold—Brother, can you spare a dime?

The crocheted hats in the department stores are made by a hat-maker for forty cents a dozen. It takes her a week to

make two dozen.... The aprons in the department stores are made for two-and-a-half cents a piece. It takes the apron maker a day to earn twenty cents.... The frogs on the men's pajamas are made by home workers at eighty cents a gross. Two sisters and a mother earn by such work a combined family income of four dollars a week.... Girl cleaners in a Brooklyn pants factory are paid one-half cent for each garment they thread and sponge. Income: six cents an hour, \$2.58 a week.... In a food factory packing girls—aged thirteen—receive one cent for filling a dozen jars, putting them in wooden boxes, lugging the boxes to the next department. Maximum daily wage: fifty cents.

All during the month of December the *New York Times* in its Sunday issues runs its annual plea for "The One Hundred Neediest Cases." For twenty-one years the *Times* has presented to charity such appeal for aid. This year the cases are hard to select.

"The Neediest for whom aid is asked," states the feature writer, "are those whose distress is attested by the charitable societies to be the gravest in all the city. How desperate is their plight may be learned by reading the cases published in these pages today. Here are the brave widowed mothers, like Amy's, of Case 109, who have gone hungry that their children might have food and now are too ill to earn for them. Here are devoted pairs stricken by age, like the starving sister and brother of Case 66, who in their feebleness strive to keep up, dreading separation; and fathers, like Mr W., of Case 164, going blind and still toiling to save their families from want."

Bread lines and flop houses. Sixth Avenue employment agencies. Over in the Ghetto twelve people to two rooms. In Greenwich Village five people to one girl's salary. In Harlem whole families without work. "The Negroes were let off every job before the white people," says the secretary for the Association for the Advancement of the Colored Race.

Men pick dirty newspapers from subway garbage cans to scan the want-ad sections. "Unite!" shout the handbills littering subway station floors. "Hunger marchers to convene on Washington!"

On every subway train, Negro beggars. At every subway entrance, a physical monstrosity, his hat off for his evening penny. We turn from the Carl Shurz Memorial overlooking Morning-side Park to find a panhandler at our elbows. "Help me out, sir? Good God! I'm hungry and cold!" Panhandling has turned into a poor man's racket. Two blocks down, around the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the lookout may be standing now, waiting for his share of the money collected by his fellows.

On the tenth floor of an abandoned slaughter house, the police find a hobo

jungle, where twelve Negroes and three Mexicans have gone into winter quarters. Negro Paul, "The Boss," dining on mulligan stew made from scraps scavenged from meat markets, has not been downstairs in four months.

On the Grand Army Plaza artists and their wives shiver in the chill wind of November. Etchings and drawings flap in the breeze, framed oils leaned against the war memorial fall noisily to the ground. Brooklyn is sponsoring a sidewalk art mart. Etchings for a dollar, oils for five. A group of spectators gather around the artist who "makes them while you wait." It is Sunday afternoon. His business is brisk. A father pays fifty cents for a portrait of his little daughter. A woman coaxes her Pomeranian to stand for his picture. "What can I do?" shrugs the artist. "If I make ten a day it will give me more money than I've seen for some time."

A gray haired school teacher lives at the little hotel near the university campus since she lost her position in New Jersey two years ago. She is taking an extension course in children's story writing. But her funds are getting low. She has sold no stories. Next week she will move to the ground floor, where rents are cheaper.

"They told me at Macy's that I couldn't stand the work," says the former Junior Leaguer, who resigned because she could no longer keep up her dues. "So I'm selling hosiery at Lord and Taylor's. My husband has had no sales in months, and we have to keep our little girl in private school."

"If I can sell some blood next week, I'll get by for a time longer," says the sometime contributor to the *New Republic* and the *New Yorker*. "Thanks to my friends who give me a meal occasionally the hospitals find it still tests all right."

Flags fly over the little shack town at Riverside and Seventy-second, where the citizens' independent mode of living has attracted the help of municipal officials. But over at East River the shanty colonists this year kicked over Mr Zero's pot of Thanksgiving dinner. "We want jobs, not a meal," the colonists declared. In Central Park one of the transients has a copy of Shakespeare in his makeshift tent. "It wouldn't be so bad except for Sunday," the owner said. "Then the people come and stare at us as if we were animals."

"I'm so sorry for you, my man," says a fur-clad matron to one of these Central Park squatters. "We feel sorry for you, too, Madam," answers the squatter.

What does he mean by that?

The giant still slumbers. In one of the members of his body the blood has ceased circulating. The great body stirs. A groan issues from its lips. But the convulsive agony is still unconscious. The brain of the giant is still asleep.