



UNSHAVEN, LIMBS cramped, hungry, need of a bath, dreary, black from soot, and in temper, that cigarette—your thirtieth—tastes as pleasant as the smoke in the carriage from the tunnels. A morning as grey as your mood. But you're there. "Is that all your luggage?" asks the taxi-driver. It is the end of a journey. A journey by Night Express.

Night Express. Wellington, three o'clock the afternoon before—426 miles through an island, sixteen hours—Auckland, seven o'clock in the morning if you're not late. All through the night you travel. "It's probably a unique train journey; no other quite like it," someone said. Sure, you just ask the Americans. You do; and they tell you about dining coaches, observation cars, ice water, and high speeds. About not an island, but a continent to cross. But they'll also tell you that no line in their country has had to be tunnelled, dug, pushed, ripped, and torn through such impossible engineering country. They'll say it is "the height of human impudence to have built a railroad through such an alpine geological curiosity shop." They're right.

The four hundred miles or more of track from Wellington to Auckland has thirty-two tunnels; it includes mountain

ranges and rivers, wide, meandering, and torrents, deeply-cut, rushing; it is over the amazing Raurimu Spiral; it has a complexity of slopes and steps and barriers; it runs through shifting swamps and under crumbling cliffs. It has little of the straight run of plains. You forget your dreariness and think of the bridges and viaducts and tunnels, you realize that its construction is an engineering miracle. But a miracle that had to be planned and drawn and skilfully considered; its theory carried into practice no less exactly.

*Question:* Is there anywhere in New Zealand with the confusion of noise and people and busyness of the Wellington Railway-station before the departure of the Auckland express. *Answer:* Probably not.

Knots of people, hats and coats and suitcases, talking, hurrying, in your way. Babies crying. Queues for left luggage, queues outside the barrier, queues for permits, for tickets, for reservations, queues outside the R.T.O.'s office of Navy serge, Air Force blue, Army khaki. "Mind there, gangway please"—you move quickly before you're knocked flat by the porter and her electric trolley piled high. That small boy must be lost. People, milling crowds of people. A wedding party, bright with clothes and laughing, showers of confetti. A Provost station patrol stamps past; subconsciously, guiltily, you move aside. Crowds in the refreshment-rooms, crowds