

From A Window In Fleet Street

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THERE ARE a number of "dead" subway stations in London, black, dismal holes through which the fine underground trains crash without any slackening of their speed. Now another has been added to the list of these abandoned Stations of the Dark. It was with a little start that on a recent Monday morning I found the big iron curtains drawn down over the front of the Brompton Road Station; and a placard announcing, "This station permanently closed."

Brompton Road Station was never a very busy place; and it lay between two powerful competitors for its traffic—South Kensington and Knightsbridge. So unimportant was it that only every other train on the Piccadilly line stopped there. The electric signs that dangle over the platforms in the stations telling which places the next train is skipping had a way of always saying, it seemed, "Passing Brompton road." So that this became a familiar phrase and I have been told that it once was used for the title of a play.

Nevertheless, I who had used Brompton Road Station many, many times had come to have a real affection for it, and I shall miss it now that it is only a dismantled shaft in the ground.

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IT WAS AN old-fashioned kind of station.

It had the inevitable magazine counter, and there was a corner given over to a tobacconist, but there were none of the bright display windows and the shops selling confections, antiques, jewelry and wearing apparel that you find in the grander and newer stations. It was rather a gloomy place, I suppose, in its quietude and loneliness. Certainly, it was ugly, for it adhered faithfully to the old model of London underground station that called for a three-story house façade with dull ochreous floors and an entrance arch of glassy Indian red, and a square blue marquee with the station's name etched in milk-white letters.

A wobbly lift carried you slowly down to the train platforms and the man who operated the elevator also sold you your tickets or took them up from you when you were arriving at Brompton road. You could always find an empty, draughty bench on which to sit and look over a newspaper while trains rushed by, passing the station, until at last one remembered Brompton road or thought better of it and paused there. You never had to hurry, anyway; you were never caught in a crush.

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KNIGHTSBRIDGE was of the same pattern when I first saw it. Now the old liver-yellow, madder-brown building is closed down, and a muscular-looking white stone station, the re-credescence of Knightsbridge, stands on the corner of Sloane street not many doors from the old arched entrance.

Its gleaming, creamy tile tunnels, lined with posters and shop displays, reach out for a block or more. Automatic machines serve you your tickets. Swift, steep escalators ride you down to the tracks. (Only recently a Swedish architect said London's best modern architecture lay underground. It is quite possible that he was right.) And, of course, all of the Piccadilly trains stop dutifully at Knightsbridge, then flash on to South Kensington.

The name of Brompton Road has been painted out on the lists hanging in the stations; strips of white paper have been pasted across it on the diagrams of the subway system that hang in the coaches. The station has been passed for good and all.

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THE TEST MATCHES are over at last—they begin in June—the Ashes have departed, and the Australians have received the King's congratulations. The Ashes are the world's championship pennant in cricket.

In the final and deciding match, two of the Australians, Ponsford and Don Bradman (the latter is the Babe Ruth of cricket) made 510 runs between them in the first innings, a lot of runs even in cricket. It seemed to take the heart out of the English team—"Australians Butcher Our Bowlers," said the headlines—and at the end of the first day it was a serious question whether the batsmen were wearier from hitting and running or the fielders from running and missing catches. Bradman batted for over five hours on the first day. So Australia won in this game that has been called "athletic chess" and the season makes way for football.

But there is general feeling abroad that the cricket's popularity has suffered some from the disagreements and controversies and criticisms that the Test Matches of 1932 and 1934 have caused. Newspaper writers are expressing relief that it is all over, and I have heard more than one young man of the non-public school type dismiss the whole glorious game with the British equivalent of "nertz" when some one has tried to engage him in discussion of it.

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WHICH RECALLS that during one of the earlier matches this season between England and Australia—the day on which an American gangster was shot and killed—the late stop-press news in one of the provincial papers bore the startling intelligence: "Australians Shot Dead: Gangster Still Batting." Just one of those absurd accidents of typography which provide jokes and food for thought, too.