

THEY PASSED THIS WAY...

JANE DEANS, a bride and a bad sailor, had an unpleasant voyage of 113 days from England. She landed, very weak, at Lyttelton, and rode over the Bridle Track to Christchurch on a white horse with one eye. That was in 1852. At the summit of the divide, where the pioneer women rode and walked from Lyttelton, a small memorial shelter has been built, with the simple inscription: *They Passed This Way*.

The early settlers passed, the generations passed, and ninety-seven years later, not far from the Bridle Track, and under the coats of arms of early Canterbury families I talked with two present generation New Zealand women, who, like Jane Deans, had been given the opportunity to travel. The Sign of the Takahe, overlooking Christchurch, belonging to its citizens, dedicated to the past, seemed a good place to meet Mary Wootton, Miss New Zealand 1948, and now Mrs. Redmond Champtaloup, and Mary Woodward, Miss New Zealand 1949.

Women like Jane Deans didn't have very much when they arrived, but they made do. A basin of clear water served as a mirror, a creek as a wash basin, bath, laundry, and drinking water reservoir. The roof probably leaked, if there was a roof. "It was a long journey to make just to see some rain," a young wife wrote to her people.

They made their bread in camp ovens, and they made the yeast to make the bread. If they made cheese, they put two or three calves' stomachs in a jar with salt and water to make the rennet to make the cheese. When they ran out of tea they made a brew from bidi bidi or young manuka shoots. Their busy hands wrinkled and wore down to the

bone, but their clothes wore out more quickly than their hands. They worked all day and sewed half the night. No wonder one of them wrote in a letter home: "I forgot to mention yesterday, an earthquake. . ."

IN 1949 Mary Champtaloup, a bride, moved into a flat at 133 Leinster Road, where I waited for a little while before taking her to meet Mary Woodward. The living room fire had been laid in the best boy scout fashion; a row on top of them *that way*, making a lattice-work topped by a large lump of bright coal kept in bounds by two slightly longer, diagonally laid chips. There were welcome domestic touches; a supine tortoiseshell cat with white feet, a Mr. Pickwick table-top lamp, a pair of grey socks in a neat ball, a darning mushroom, an ironed handkerchief, and half-a-dozen figured earthenware steins. Jane Deans made a home; so had Mary Champtaloup.

On the way to town I heard a little about her childhood. She was an only daughter, was born and grew to maturity in the same house, had many friends and no anxieties. She bicycled happily to school along the flat Christchurch streets, went to the beaches and river beds on week-end picnics, spent her holidays on a sheep farm, liked English literature, liked acting, and had the chance to follow up what she liked doing. She went to work as soon as she left school, did an A.T.C.L. in speech training, and fitted happily into broadcasting when the opportunity came along. One thing led very naturally to another, without fuss or confusion.

We passed a man mowing the grass verge of the river bank, swaying on his little spring motor-mower seat, followed by a golden cocker spaniel. Mary

Champtaloup smiled. "I often used to pass that man on my way to school," she said. "He's still got the same dog."

MARY WOODWARD'S childhood was different in every way, except that she too was happy and secure. She is the second youngest child in a family of five, and has lived for a long time in New Plymouth. She said simply that she has never known a happier family than her own. Her parents encouraged them all to be independent, and the children, knowing they were free, were all the closer to their parents for it. Every Christmas they went off to a bach on an Auckland West Coast beach, family and friends, and had a most wonderful holiday. Mary lived in the water all the long summers, but admits very frankly that she has not much sports eminence except at gym. She took a shop job in the school holidays, and in the last University vacation worked in a knitwear and perfume factory. "You hear how easy it is to make big money in a factory," she said. "Don't you believe it. The work is pretty hard."

Jane Deans worked hard, too, and it is on the foundation laid by her and by the other pioneer women that these two rest so securely. They realised that and were grateful for it, having their afternoon tea under the carved, coloured, patterned oak ceiling of the Sign of the Takahe, where everything, stone, wood, and metal, is solid, built to last.

Again and again during our talk the worth and meaning of childhood security was impressed upon me sometimes by contrast. I asked them what they thought about married women working.

"At that factory where I worked in the May vac, there were quite a lot of young married women working part time," Mary Woodward said. "Some of them do have a struggle, you know. They went to work because they wanted to be able to dress their children properly."

I asked them if they had any memories of the Depression. No, they hadn't. They were very young in the nineteen thirties, and they were grateful for that too.

They were very pleasant together, the two Marys, smiling and saying "After you!" as we went out under the stone arch between the second and third rooms of the Takahe. They posed for a photograph in the window light on the carpeted steps, Mary Champtaloup carefully standing on a lower step because she is a little taller than Mary Woodward. Outside, the Mayor's car was waiting to take Miss Woodward further up the hill, to the Sign of the Kiwi; Mrs. Champtaloup was coming back to town with me, home to get dinner for her husband. We all said good-bye. In three weeks Mary Woodward was to leave for England. There was no mistaking her happiness; and as we drove down the hill Mary Champtaloup hummed a little tune to herself.

I thought of the writing on the east wall of the Takahe, appropriate enough for such an occasion: "Let us march on singing ever; the road will tire us less."

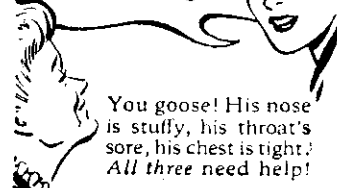
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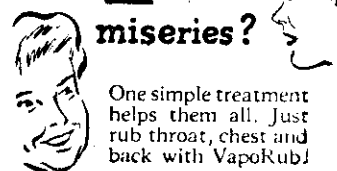
THE MISSES NEW ZEALAND: Mary Woodward and Mary Wootton (now Mrs. Redmond Champtaloup)—a photograph taken in the main studio at 32B.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 22, 1949.

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Baby's
Cold?



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