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I WON'T pretend that I'm getting much enjoyment out of writing **PASSING PAGEANT** this week. I'm trying to put this down in those disturbing days between Christmas and New Year when the whole world seems to be holidaying and there's an air of irresponsibility abroad. (And, what's more, I'd much rather be indulging in fun and games, too.)

Anyway, rather than foist any old nonsense on you—and because it saves me a lot of trouble—I'm going to give you a talk that I broadcast from the BBC when I was in London. The hero of this little story I've called Nathan Westwood for reasons best known to myself.

Anyway, here goes—and remember it was written for an English audience. . . .

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ON the voyage from New Zealand I've been reading again Rupert Brooke's comment on my country and its people. Twenty-five years

ago he found New Zealand "a sort of Fabian England, very upper-middle-class and gentle and happy. All the women smoke and dress very badly and nobody drinks. . . . They've got all the things in the Liberal or mild Fabian programme—eight-hour day (and less), bigger old-age pensions, access to the land, minimum wage and insurance, and yet it's not paradise. Cost of living is rising quicker than wages."

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IT was strange to read that, for, on this same journey, I read a book written nearly a quarter of a century after and expressing almost the identical words about the New Zealand of to-day. England's well-known Tom Clarke was the writer.

Everywhere on the route . . . Australia, Ceylon, Egypt, Malta . . . I found a vivid interest in the bold Socialist experiment that is being played out in our little Dominion "down under."

I found myself involved in arguments for and against the methods of New Zealand's Government.

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BUT whatever the colour or creed of her politics, New Zealand is home to me as it was to my father and to his father before him.

It was in the 'forties that the spirit of Empire-building spread from a few explorers and statesmen to the rank and file of Great Britain. The Dutch had had a look at Aotearoa—the Land of the Long White Cloud, as the native Maoris called it—in the seventeenth century. To them New Zealand owes its name. Captain Cook had come along in the next century and left names that remain to-day . . . Poverty Bay, in the north, where the Natives would give him nothing to eat, the Bay of Plenty where he was regaled by friendly Maoris on kumeras—Maori potatoes—and wild birds, Cape Kidnappers, where some of his men were kidnapped, and many more.

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FOR the most part Crown and Parliament weren't enthusiastic about New Zealand. Think of the trouble America had been! Think of the lives laid down in India! Convicts had turned bushrangers in Australia and were no end of a nuisance to her Majesty's Government there!

But there were men who believed that great good could come from the proper colonising of hills and plains of New Zealand, men who were ready to back their beliefs with their fortunes. There were John Robert Godley and Bishop Selwyn and Lord Lyttelton and Sir George Grey and Hobson, fine figures, all of them.

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IT was the prospectus of the newly-formed Canterbury Association that attracted Nathan Westwood, who was an eighteen-year-old medical student at Edinburgh University at the time. His father had died a year before, his mother six months later and the young Yorkshire orphan decided to put the few hundred pounds he had into this colonial adventure.

There were stormy interviews with the trustees of the estate, hard-headed Halifax men who thought of the colonies as places of robbery, hardship and sudden death. But Westwood was a Yorkshireman, too, and when his mind was made up, well—it stayed made up. He took a long farewell of his friends

at Edinburgh—their admiration for his decision was probably tempered by the private thought that he was just a little mad.

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IN 1850—I can't remember the month—he set out, with several hundred other English men and women, in a little vessel called the Charlotte Jane. Five months the journey took. There were storms when the unfortunate passengers were battered down in the smelly darkness below the decks. There was sickness, when the little medicine Westwood had acquired at Edinburgh stood him in good stead as the doctor's assistant.

Eventually they reached the harbour of Lyttelton in the South Island. So this was the promised land! On the beach were a few tents belonging to whalers and to the few soldiers who had preceded the colonists. On three sides were tall, gaunt hills.

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THE women cried a little, the men found this so-called Utopia a little disconcerting. It must be remembered that these Canterbury colonists were no tough-as-leather immigrants. Godley and Lyttelton, the men behind the Canterbury Association, had chosen their flock carefully. There were men

the women in their billowing skirts and early Victorian bonnets set out to climb the now-famous Bridle Track. After nearly two hours walking they reached the summit . . . and there was Canterbury!

Mile upon mile of plain, unmarked by house or fence except where the blue smoke curled upward from the cottage belonging to the Deans brothers, the first settlers in Canterbury, who had arrived a year or two before. Immediately below was a big swamp where wild birds chattered among the huge clumps of native raupo.

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NATHAN WESTWOOD, who was really little more than a youngster, had fallen in with a widow and her two daughters. He climbed the Bridle Track with them, helping the elderly woman over the stonier parts. But as the Canterbury Plains burst upon them with the majestic fringe of the snowy Southern Alps in the far distance, the widow fell back on the rough grass and died, poor soul, before anything could be done for her. There's a stone and an inscription there to-day to mark the spot.

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JOHN ROBERT GODLEY had sent a Captain Thomas with the pilgrims to set as

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He found New Zealand very upper-middle-class and gentle and happy . . . Rupert Brooke, the famous young poet who was a victim of the Great War.

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surveyor. And so it was Captain Thomas who, beside the sluggish little stream that wandered across the swamp, said, "Here will we build a town."

And a pretty depressing prospect it was. There was swamp and desolation and the lonely cries of a few birds as they wheeled about the incongruous little company gathered on the newly-named Canterbury Plains.

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BUT there was work to be done . . . plenty of work. The men laid aside their tall hats and their grand coats, the women tied aprons over dresses that had probably graced some squire's garden party in old England. Soon there was the buzz of the saw and the crash of the axe, as homes were hewn from native



from Oxford and Cambridge, women whose lives had been lived in sheltered vicarages with carriages to drive in and servants to look after them. One man had even brought his carriage . . . a handsome affair with silver mountings that fell into Lyttelton Harbour when it was being unloaded and was never seen again!

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"WHICH way lies Canterbury?" asked one of the new arrivals of the soldiers on the beach.

"Over that track there," they said, with a laconic jerk of the thumb.

And so the men in their handsome trousers and tall hats and

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