

To-day Trevor Lane is proud to present the first guest contributor Passing Pageant has ever had. And it's none other than **NELLE SCANLAN**, famous New Zealand novelist, who is spending a holiday in this country. Read what she has to say . . .

ON THE subject of motoring, I speak with the authority of one who has been sorely tried. I had spent my motoring life in the back seat of other people's cars, going where they wished and where they liked, and often dropped at the corner, to walk the last stretch home. That last stretch made a motorist of me.

I HAD come to recognise chauffeurs as a race of men who revelled in traffic jams, and had a genius for finding them. They regard a picturesque detour as a weak evasion. Give them the main road every time, and the more buses and bikes, lorries and lights, the better they like it. For them, motoring is a business, not a pleasure, and as a conscientious class, they shirk nothing.

If you want to look at scenery you must drive yourself.

If you want to explore remote villages, or climb ancient ruins, no self-respect-

ing chauffeur will ever find the way.

I have witnessed much silent wrath in the back seat when a stubborn chauffeur held the wheel, and bluebells or blackberries were the object of the drive, and the baskets came home empty. But I'll be fair, and admit that there are exceptions.

EVERY year the traffic of London becomes more and more congested. There are so

drivers long years ago, so we do lead old England sometimes.

EQUIPPED with a driving licence, I was free to roam. It is said there is only one way to learn to write—by writing. And there is certainly only one way to become a motorist—by motoring. There is much on the road that is not in the book, and ten volumes could not warn you of all the emer-

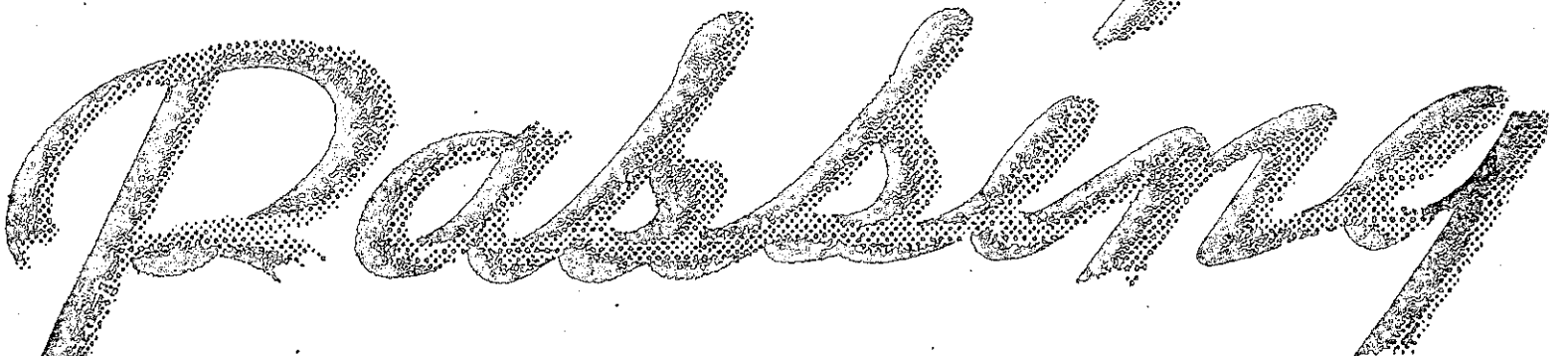
there is much I still want to do.

THEN came the honking, hooting, get-to-blazes-out-of-my-way high-powered car, that made 30 miles an hour look like standing still. Here discretion guided my course, but did not silence me.

London taxi-drivers are a kindly crowd, and I pay my tribute of gratitude for a turn of the starter when the battery had

One car, or even two, you may overtake with a fiendish burst of speed, but a procession of cyclists, a million strong, can defy even the super-charged miracles which make advertising a pleasure.

IN London, I garaged my car where, at any hour of the day or night, I might ring up and have it collected or delivered, a service which cost me only 5/- a week. That's



gencies you are to encounter in that first thousand miles.

run down, and a "You go first" wave of the hand in a sticky patch of traffic.

London for you. Young Bly (she was Bly 957 on her English number-plate, and Bly she remains) was respectably brought up in that gay old city, but now she has joined the thousands of homeless cars, which nightly stand, unlighted, at the kerb. She has grown a vagrant air, her complexion dimmed by wind and weather, but I'm glad it is such a reputable part of the town, where she will learn no evil habits.

many cars, buses, lorries, vans and what-nots, so many things a motorist must not do, so many rules to follow, codes to learn, signals to give and lights to obey, that I felt if ever I was to drive a car, I must begin soon, or the task would be beyond me. Even a course of Pelmanism would not enable me to memorise it all, and that "last stretch" was ever before me. So I bought a baby car, and set out to become a motorist.

WHEN I asked the lad from the garage who had been my tutor, if he encountered many worse pupils, he replied quite candidly: "Not many." It was humiliating, but not discouraging. However, I had escaped the worst indignity, the wearing of a large red L (indicating learner) by beating the new law by a nose. Hitherto, all you had to do was to buy a car, take it on the road and drive it.

MOTORISTS, like dogs, were given one free bite. You can't prove that a dog is dangerous until it has bitten someone, and the motorist was permitted one accident to prove he couldn't drive. The daily slaughter on the roads, however, eventually settled that, and a compulsory test of knowledge and skill came into force. Dogs still have their free bite. New Zealand has set a test for

AT first I kept to the kerb, and everything on the road overtook me except the coal-carts, but these horses, I found, had lost their pride. There are few one-way streets in London that I did not get into at the wrong end, and have to back out. But I was not quite so bad as the woman who was stopped by a policeman and told she was in a one-way street.

"Well, I'm only going one way," she replied coldly.

I was ignominiously pushed out of Oxford Circus by a policeman, who put his broad shoulder to the car, when I forgot to get into gear when the lights went green, and wondered why she wouldn't start. And all the honking behind me could not tell me which knob to turn.

I stalled at city cross-roads, and was jeered at by small boys, but the great British Public is tolerant of fools.

ONE soon develops a motoring philosophy, and I began to classify the drivers I met. First on the danger list I put the van-drivers. They had goods to deliver and a time to keep, probably a girl to take to the pictures that night, so I got out of their way. It was no use signalling to them; they never saw you.

Next came the noisy little sports car, driven by hatless youth, with the patinam girlfriend beside him. The weekend world was theirs, and

THE bus drivers, too, regard with a kindly if contemptuous eye the temerity of the baby car which disputes their right of way. It is the man who smokes a pipe, who is the gallant of the road. Why? I can't tell you, but that pipe has become, for me at least, a symbol of road courtesy.

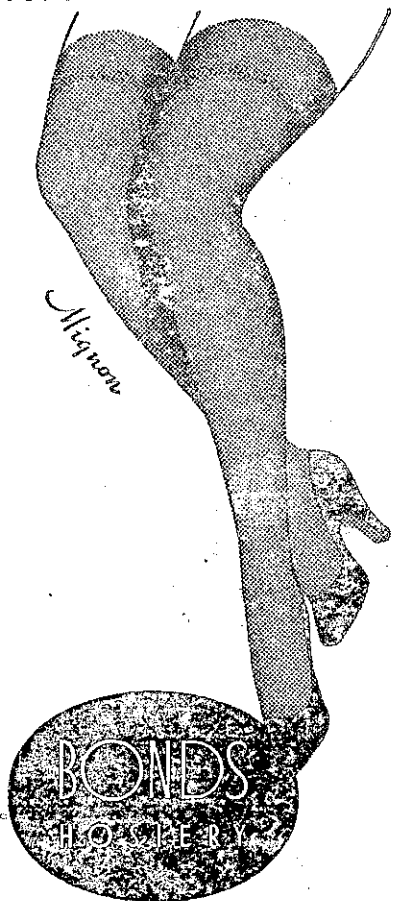
IN England there are three million cyclists, and on week-ends and Sundays, the whole three million appear to take the road in a solid body. They belong to cycling clubs, and the more there are together, the happier they seem. In boy-and-girl pairs, dressed alike in brown or green or blue, they set off in processions, wobbling their way over England's green and pleasant land, claiming equal right to the middle of the road under some law of 1066 and all that.

And even when cycle tracks are provided, as in the case of the new by-pass roads, they refuse to use them. The hospital's weekly harvest is appalling, but they would rather die than surrender their rights. In the New Forest, it is only the pigs and ponies which have right of way, and motorists must yield to them, as I was obliged to once, when a large sow and her litter slept off their heavy meal in the middle of the road. That privilege does go back to William the Conqueror, as there were pigs and ponies in his day, but no cyclists.

I PREFER the English system of numbering cars—three letters, often making a syllable, and three figures. They are easier to memorise than six figures, unless you have the memory of a bridge player. After the 999 Blys had been registered, we moved on to Blz, and after that to Bma (no relation to the orthodox in medicine), and so on. But the authorities, with true British delicacy, skipped a few letters here and there, as they might have embarrassed the more sensitive drivers if rude small boys had spotted them.

IN the English summer, I loved to wander off without any fixed plan, knowing that roof and refreshment for woman and car were available every few miles. I wanted to find out about English villages: if beyond Much Haden there was More Haden; why Great Gaddesden was smaller than Little Gaddesden; if Nether Wallop was really lower than Upper Wallop (it was by an inch or two) and

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