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THE
GREENSTONE
DOOR
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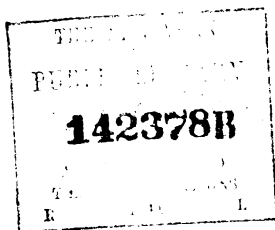
THE GREENSTONE DOOR

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BY
WILLIAM SATCHELL
AUTHOR OF
"THE TOLL OF THE BUSH" ETC.

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PREFACE

THE Maori words used in this story are explained when they first occur, and also, for convenience sake, in a glossary (p. 399). Certain of them are used so frequently that I am afraid the English reader will hardly be able to avoid acquiring a knowledge of their meaning. Such words are *pa*, a fortified village; *tohunga*, a medicine-man or magician; *pakeha*, a white man as distinguished from a Maori; *whare*, a native house; and *kumara*, the sweet potato. My excuse must be that these words have long since been adopted into the English language as it is written and spoken in the Dominion.

THE AUTHOR.

AUCKLAND.

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THE GREENSTONE DOOR

CHAPTER I

I AM LOST AND FOUND

IN my earliest mental picture of myself I figure as a small creature of unknown derivation, conscious of no void behind me, sure of an eternity in front. Around me, tangling its fronds above my head, is high fern, shutting out the hot rays of the March sun. There are strange creatures moving on the soil, whizzing past among the leaves, filling me with emotions at once fearful and delightful. Stirring uneasily within me is a sense of wrongdoing, yet I push my way on and on, following the black cicadas and huge brown locusts, as they leap before me, frustrating all efforts at capture. But presently I become conscious of something lacking. Wonderful as are the joys of this newly-found freedom, there is a thing here strange to my experience and as awe-inspiring as novel—solitude. I become aware of the absence of human voices, of the need of that mighty and comforting column, the parental leg.

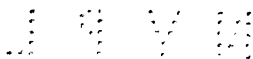
Here follows an interval of nothingness. Probably sleep brought a respite to my fears, my futile efforts to escape from the tangle of fern, for when I again become aware of

myself the sun no longer brightens the leaves overhead. It is still light, but the day is ending, and a chill breeze, harbinger of night, rustles the dry stalks. The insects have ceased their clamour, and save for the rustling all is still. All? No. There is a sound in the air, slowly detaching itself from the silence; a booming, hollow sound, a rhythmic sound, swelling and failing, shuddering through the air, vibrating through the earth. Surely I have heard such a sound before, or why does it conjure up in my brain a definite picture that sets my teeth chattering and causes me to bury my face in the ground? I can see the war-party heartening itself for the attack, the rhythmic stamping of feet, the rolling eyes, the horrible grimaces; I can hear the threatening staccato of the war-song, the voice of the leader, the guttural response of the taua,¹ as a fire crackling from lip to lip, the fierce shout, the deep, blood-curdling gasp, filling the air with a whisper of death—"Hi! Hi! Ha-ah!"

After this an interval of silence. The breeze has died away, the very growth around me seems to stand expectant of fateful things to come. At length there is a stealthy rush of footsteps, setting the earth aquake. I hear the deep breathing of the warriors as they rush onward on every hand, scaling the steep slopes of the pa.² None comes near me, and God alone knows whence I derive the wit to lie still and make no sound. Presently the last of them has sped on his way, and I am left alone again with the silence and the falling night. But not for long is there silence. High up overhead breaks out the crack of a gun, then a volley. Shouts and screams pierce the air. A voice harsh and dominating rises at intervals above the din and is answered by the exultant, deep-chested "Ah! Ha-ah!" of the attacking warriors. With a whimper of

¹ Taua = war-party.

² Pa = a fortified village, usually on the summit of a hill.



terror, I start from my hiding-place, toddle blindly through the fern, trip over the dense growth, and roll downwards into the arms of two men, making their way with great strides up the hill.

"Hulloa! What's this?"

"A pakeha¹ child, by the look of him, Mr. Wake."

"Then he must be Tregarthen's. What is your name, my boy?"

It is impossible I should remember all this, and I shall no longer make pretence of doing so: but what I have been told is so firmly bound up with what I do remember that it is hopeless to attempt to dissociate them.

The speaker's voice was masterful but kindly. He was a middle-aged man, with a pale face like my father's, and I remember that the circumstance that both men were white alarmed me and set me whimpering afresh. He carried his coat over his arm, and heavy drops of perspiration were running down his nose and trickling to the ground.

"What does he say, Purcell?" he asked.

"Ewic . . . Is it Eric, my little man?"

The other knelt down in front of me, brushed the hair from my eyes with a large hand, and told me not to cry. "Why, he's only a baby, Mr. Wake. Where's daddy, little man? What's that? Well, well, I can make nothing of it. Hark!" he broke off suddenly, lifting his face to the hill. "They're in."

All this time the firing of guns, the shouting and screaming had gone on undiminished in the sky overhead.

"We must go," said Mr. Wake anxiously; "but what is to be done with the child? Stay here, Mr. Purcell, and I will make the journey alone."

Purcell laughed and rose to his feet. "Yet," he said, regarding me with compunction, "we cannot leave the

¹ Pakeha = European.

baby here for Te Waharoa's umu.¹ What is to become of you, my fine fellow ? ”

I looked up into his smiling eyes and, for answer, twined a chubby arm round his leg.

“ The hand of the Almighty,” said Mr. Wake, lifting the hat he had just replaced on his streaming head, “ has led the child from the pit of death. Come, it will be night before we enter the pa.”

Without more ado, Purcell picked me up, as a man plucks a leaf by the wayside, and, almost at a run, they continued the ascent of the hill.

But the way was steep and, when the fern was passed, slippery, and presently there were terraces, twice the height of a tall man, to be surmounted, and when these were overcome and, as the first stars began to twinkle forth, we came in sight of the shattered palisades, smoke and flame were issuing from the houses, and the sound of firing had ceased.

The men of the attacking party had discarded their guns, as though all concerted resistance were at an end, and, armed with tomahawk and mere,² were moving among the burning whares,³ shouting and laughing in the wild exhilaration of victory. On the farther side of the hill, against the sky, a dense crowd of warriors was assembled, their plumed heads and naked limbs showing black against the light beyond.

Mr. Wake led the way with a firm step into the pa, followed by my protector, bearing me lightly in his great arms. Probably it was due to the confident movements of the two men that their approach was at first unnoticed by the triumphant war-party. Between us and the second line of defence was a ditch and a bank, and another between

¹ Umu = the Maori stone oven.

² Mere, pronounced “ merreh ” = a stone club.

³ Whare = the native house.

that and the kiritangata or innermost barricades. A low doorway in front of us stood open, and we crept through and stood among the huddled houses of the village. No doubt it was a scene to inspire horror at which my two companions gazed so intently, but for my part I saw only men and women and children lying asleep in the gathering light of the burning huts.

"Pitty, pitty!" said I, extending a hand to the leaping flames.

"Pitty indeed," said my bearer, looking gravely about him.

Mr. Wake's mouth trembled and set itself momentarily. His pale face looked whiter than ever, save where the flames tinged it with a ghastly yellow. He moved forward almost at a run and, gathering me closer in his arms, Purcell followed.

"Steady, Mr. Wake. Steady, sir," he cautioned. "Keep your shoulder against mine. We are too late in any case."

From somewhere close at hand came a shrill scream, followed by the laughter of men.

"We may yet be in time," said Mr. Wake, darting round the corner of a building

Did I understand the scene that burst on our sight a moment later? At least it lives clearly in my memory to this day, and definite memories, even when they seem pointless and immaterial, are the reflex of strong emotions. A large ~~whare~~ was burning merrily to one side, and in the lurid light stood three figures. The central was that of a young girl of fifteen, her slim figure swaying in the grasp of two warriors. She had ceased to cry out, and was speaking rapidly and thickly, her dark, terror-stricken eyes turning eagerly from one to the other, seeking some sign of relenting in the fierce yet amused faces.

"Puna!" I cried suddenly. "Puna!" and stretched my arms out towards her.

The girl's face, beaded with the fine sweat of terror, was turned quickly to us at the sound, and in a moment she had slipped from the grasp of her captors and was running fleetly towards us. So sudden had been our advent that surprise for a moment held the warriors spellbound. But only for a moment. In the next instant one had poised and thrown his tomahawk, and the girl, with her skull split asunder, lay dead and motionless at our feet.

My protector started, took a step forward, then restrained himself, looking at the still body of the young girl with a shake of the head. "Steady, Mr. Wake," he said sadly under his breath. "We *are* too late."

The pale face of the missionary was set in stern lines, and his eyes flashed with a fierceness almost fanatical in its intensity as he approached the warriors. "Shame on you, men of Ngatihaua," he cried in Maori. "God will demand utu¹ for the blood of this young girl."

The eyes of the two men shifted uneasily at this speech, and for a moment there was silence.

"Why are the pakehas here?" asked one of them coldly at length. "Do they desire to join cause with the Ngati-maru, the enemies of Te Waharoa?"

"We champion no cause save that of the God of Humanity," replied Wake sternly, looking at the slayer of the girl; "the God who has said He who spills man's blood, by man shall his blood be spilled."

The young brave's eyes swerved from the unflinching gaze of the missionary, but an instant later, with a laugh of bravado, he strode to the corpse of his latest victim, and, smiting the head from the body with one blow of his sharp tomahawk, whirled it by its long hair into the centre of the blazing whare; then, slinging the trunk, warm and

¹ Utu = payment in compensation, vengeance.

gouting blood, over his shoulder, he moved off through the village.

"Take me to your chief," said Wake, shuddering, addressing the other warrior, who had stood by in complete indifference while this savage act was performed.

With a lift of the eyebrows that seemed intended to absolve him from all responsibility in the result, the young warrior turned on his heel and guided us through the alternating glare and shadows of the pa.

From the storehouses slaves were busy removing the stores of food accumulated by the slaughtered villagers, and more ghastly burdens were also borne past us in the direction in which we were moving. Now and then our guide paused to exchange a few words with a comrade, and some of these came and stared us in the face or fell in behind, laughing and chattering to one another. One hideous, tattooed face was, I remember, thrust into mine and inspired me with a terror that still returns in nightmare. It was an ancient, evil countenance, with an eye that smouldered and gloated and menaced unutterable things.

Presently we came in sight of several fires, differing from those we had already seen by the circumstance that they did not roar up to a tremendous height, but burned fiercely close to the ground. Dark figures were busy about them thrusting the burning wood more closely together with long sticks. In the red light other groups were at work, bending and chopping at things in their midst.

Our guide threaded his way through these groups with more appearance of haste and uneasiness than he had yet shown, moving in the direction of a somewhat larger fire, around which the main force of the war-party appeared to be assembled. As we neared the outskirts of the ring of warriors, Mr. Wake, apparently unable any longer to control his horror and aversion at the scene, pushed past

the guide and made his way rapidly among the seated figures, with Purcell close at his heels ; until, rounding the huge fire, whose heat demanded the respect of a wide distance, we came on the leaders of the taua, seated together on a slight mound.

I have no actual recollection of the moment when these two intrepid white men, the one sustained by his religious belief, the other by a sense of comradeship and pride of race, thrust themselves unarmed on one of the most ruthless savages the Maori race has known. Indeed, from the moment the hideous face glared at me I doubt if aught else of the happenings of that night impressed itself on my consciousness.

Te Waharoa, though he was not destined to live long after this event, was, at the moment of which I write, at the prime of his manhood and full of bloody honours. He had held back the mighty Te Rauparaha and had been the means of driving him and the Ngatiraukawas to migrate to Cook's Strait. He had cast down the pride of the Waikatos and the Ngatimaru, and even those most inveterate of sportsmen, the Ngapuhi, who for long years never missed their annual shooting season in the Thames or Waikato, had gone away disgusted, leaving five of their braves crucified to the posts of his pa. In the flush of victory it is conceivable that even a savage may show forbearance in the discussion of a matter wherein opinions are likely to differ, but it must be remembered that at the moment his unexpected visitors made their appearance Te Waharoa had no longer any interest to distract his attention from the fact that he had not eaten since morning ; moreover, his ovens were—or shortly would be—full of a delicacy which, so far from appealing to the pakeha palate, was likely to prove a bone of contention between him and them.

The chief was seated on the ground, a great cloak of

dog-skin, fastened at his right shoulder, completely concealing the whole of his person and protecting him from the night air, which now, in the fall of the year and on the hill summit, breathed keenly. He gave no greeting to the missionary, who paused, breathless with the haste he had made, in front of him ; nor for the space of several minutes did he cease the low-toned conversation he had been carrying on with those around him.

"Be it so," he said at last, and bent his eyes on his visitors.

"Tena korua, pakeha,"¹ said he. "You have come far. These are times when a man does well to stay where he belongs."

"And these people," retorted the missionary, waving his hand in the direction of the burning whares, "does the chief say that they did well to remain where *they* belong?"

Te Waharoa nodded appreciation of the retort. "They offended me," he said shortly. "They have ceased to offend. It is enough. What is the pakeha's business with me?"

"I come on God's business, Te Waharoa," said Wake. "I know nothing of the cause of your enmity towards this people, or of its justice. I came to warn them of your approach, and, failing that, to intercede with you in their behalf. Surely the power to show mercy is the greatest privilege of the conqueror."

"The words of the pakeha are good," said Te Waharoa stolidly, "but his actions have lagged behind. The day is done. Let us now speak of other things."

"I can well see that I am too late, chief," Wake agreed, with more moderation in his tone, "but there is surely something I can yet do for my Master. Give me the slaves you have taken. The dead are past our help, nor do they need it ; but suffer the living to go free."

¹ Tena korua = Greeting to you two.

"I have heard that the pakeha is averse to the making of slaves," replied Te Waharoa, grimly: "I have remembered his aversion and made none."

"Then your prisoners, chief, let them be brought to me here and we will lead them from the pa, that the sight of their faces may not reawaken your vengeance. The day is done, as you remind me; let its deeds suffice, and peace be established between you and those who remain."

Te Waharoa sat for a while in silence, as though debating what reply he should make to this request. Around him the principal men of the war-party murmured to one another with looks of amusement in their faces, and presently one leaned forward and said a few words in his chief's ear.

"Good," said the latter, a cruel smile flickering for a moment at the corners of his lips. "Let those who have taken prisoners bring them here, that we may see if the pakeha's wish can be granted. Go!"

A number of young men sprang up from the ranks below and hurried off around the circle of warriors. Some passed through the lines into the shadows beyond, and for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour the two white men stood waiting while Te Waharoa, his iron visage unvisited by any sign of emotion, preserved an inflexible silence.

At length, one by one, the young men began to return, until the whole of them were assembled, and seeing them thus, without an addition to their number, a mocking laugh broke softly from the lips of the spectators.

"It is well," said Te Waharoa, calmly. "The lot of the prisoner is often less desirable than that of the slave."

"Then of all these people," said Wake, in tones that faltered with emotion, "no man, woman, or child remains. For this deed, Te Waharoa"—his voice hardened and his

eyes flashed denunciation—"you shall yet answer, if not on earth, then at the dread day of judgment, when every soul you have sent in blood to its doom shall cry out for vengeance upon you."

A murmur of wrath, even of horror at words which, to their minds, spelt sacrilege as used against their chief, ran through the group on the hill, but Te Waharoa preserved his calm unruffled.

"Pakeha," he said, "your words are as those of a child, who babbles of he knows not what, and therefore I take no heed of them. Yet if children persist in wrong-doing it becomes necessary to punish them; therefore I say to you, Go now, while the road is open. I am tired of your talk."

The missionary, undaunted by a speech which, with its cold threat, might have brought fear to the bravest heart, was on the point of an impulsive reply, when Purcell laid his hand on his sleeve.

"Remember, Mr. Wake," he said in a low voice, and not without a tinge of humour in his tones, "that God is a long way off, while the lives of the three of us are in your very hands."

The missionary paused and seemed, in obedience to the warning of the other, to change what he had been on the point of saying.

"There is one more word I must say to you, Te Waharoa," he said. "The dead are at peace, and against their souls you can do no further harm; but what of their bodies? What is the meaning of these fires, the preparing of these great ovens, the sights of horror we have seen as we drew near? Will the great chief, forgetting the word of his pakeha friends, descend to a level lower than that of the beasts, become the perpetuator of a practice which disfigures his noble race and rouses the abhorrence of mankind?"

Hitherto the missionary's words, but for the one exception I have noted, had been received with indifference or half-scornful amusement, but at this bold indictment of an immemorial custom of the race their brows contracted, and every trace of good-humour vanished from their countenances.

At this period the practice of cannibalism, though still invariably followed by the successful war-party, had already received its death-blow. The disgust of the white man, evidencing itself on the lips of the missionary and the escaped convict alike, had eaten its way less to the conscience than the pride of the Maori, and just as the modern wave of temperance, sweeping irresistibly forward, influences those who are not conscientiously in accord with it to a certain furtiveness in the taking of drink, so was cannibalism becoming a rite to be practised, if not actually in secret, at all events out of the sight of the white man. From this infection (so to call it) of shame to a natural soul-growth of distaste was a matter of very few years, and at the time of which I write every act of cannibalism, so far from confirming and prolonging the monstrous custom, brought it nearer to its end. Shame, however, is an emotion more likely at the offset to inspire anger than repentance, and as my protector looked round the scowling faces of the warriors and heard the mutterings as of a gathering storm, he knew that the lives of all three hung on a thread.

But no change came over Te Waharoa's face, nor did he appear influenced by the anger of those about him. Only in the depths of his eyes a light burned ominously. "Pakeha," he said, "you have said to me three things. I say to you only one—Go!"

Whether the missionary would have obeyed this mandate without a further attempt to drive home to the chief the horror with which his deeds had inspired him must always

remain a matter of doubt ; for at that critical moment, while Purcell stretched out his hand to again touch the sleeve of his companion, a warrior sprang suddenly to his feet, and stepping out from amongst the others, confronted my protector.

“Wait ! ” he said, and lifted a monitory forefinger.

CHAPTER II

I AM CLAIMED IN UTU AND BECAME THE LITTLE FINGER OF TE WAHAROA

HE was an elderly man, grey-haired and deeply lined about the face, but lithe and active in movement. As he rose, he threw his cloak from him and now stood up clothed only in his war-girdle. In his hand was a club or mere of greenstone, a thong from the handle of the weapon being caught in a loop round his thumb.

"The old talk is done, pakeha," he said. "This is a new talk. Observe the words of the chief; they are considered words. Said he to you, 'Go thou,' or 'Go all of you'? No. 'Go you two' were the words of Te Waharoa. But here are three persons. Our talk relates to the third. Let us speak now of the child. Begin."

Whatever reply my protector might have made to this strange commencement was taken from his lips by the missionary, who, with that lack of imagination which so often renders futile the most heroic efforts of the single-minded, saw only the opportunity of turning my presence to account in the framing of still another reproof. Drawing back Purcell's coat till the firelight fell on my unconscious form, for by this time I was sound asleep, he cried, "Yes, look! Of all those who when the morning's sun dawned were alive and happy in this village, only this one poor babe remains."

But the effect of his words was far different from anything he could have anticipated. A murmur, partly of astonish-

ment, partly of wrath, ran round the circle, and several warriors rose to their feet, crying out together. In that instant of confusion the old man raised his weapon and made a blow at me which must have ended my career then and there had it not been for the vigilance of my protector. Frustrated in his first attempt, the savage drew back, his eyes gleaming fiercely, and began a watchful circling of the man and child, crouching low the while, his weapon held ready for a thrust. The warriors, restored to good-humour by interest in the new event, were now all shouting their advice, mostly to the attacker, but not a few to the white man, who stood like a great mastiff, watching the snarling approach of some too daring cur.

"Utu! A son for a son!"—"Be careful, O Ngaru! His fist is as the knot of a kauri tree."

The missionary, dismayed by this unexpected turn of events, drew near to Te Waharoa and, in more humble tones than he had yet used, besought him to exert his authority for the preservation of the white man and the child.

"Friend pakeha," responded the chief, with grim irony, "you have shown yourself a laggard both in coming and going. On your own head be the consequences." With that he waved the missionary aside and again turned his eyes on the central figures of the drama.

"Be wary, O Ngaru!" cried the warriors. "Let your blow strike the child only. Now! Now!"

With a feint that drew his adversary to shift his position, the old warrior bent and sprang with surprising agility at his mark; but, rapid as were his movements, they were met by others of equal quickness. The murderous thrust of the heavy mere glanced harmlessly aside, and a mighty blow on the neck of the crouching figure sent Ngaru rolling to the very feet of the leader of the war-party.

"Enough," said Te Waharoa. "Now we will talk. Let the white men seat themselves."

The blow, which must have killed a man of less hardihood, seemed to have taken little effect on the old warrior. Rising to his feet, he gave a twist to his neck, as though to discover whether his head were still securely fixed on his shoulders, and then began a measured pacing up and down the sward, coming to a standstill as he reached the distance most desirable for oratorical effect, and speaking in brief sentences with long pauses between. The gist of his remarks was to the effect that the child was the son of Terekarene (Tregarthen), that the tribe had no quarrel with Tregarthen or any other pakeha, nor had they desired to injure him; nevertheless, Tregarthen—though warned of the mistake he was making—had espoused the cause of the people with whom he resided. He had fought desperately, and no less than seven of their bravest warriors had fallen to his hand alone. One of these warriors was the eldest son of the speaker. True that Tregarthen himself had been finally overpowered and slain, yet since he had ranked himself with their enemies all of his blood became also their enemies, and none should be suffered to remain alive. The correct process in circumstances of this kind was not to leave a blood-feud to be carried on by the generation that followed, but to make an end by the simple process of annihilation while the opportunity presented itself. It was correct that the child should be given up to the speaker as utu for his dead son.

A murmur of approval greeted this suggestion. Ngaru retired to his place, and another warrior took possession of the stage. He also had lost a son at the hand of Tregarthen, and therefore to him, equally with Ngaru, was the life of the child forfeited. The fact that the whole of the hapu¹ had been destroyed was immaterial. Tregarthen was not of the hapu; he had begun a new quarrel, all the advantage of which was as yet on his side, for while they

¹ Hapu = sub-tribe.

had lost seven, Tregarthen's hapu had lost but one. Even the killing of the child would not equalise matters. Nevertheless, concluded the speaker magnanimously, let that suffice.

Several others followed, claiming utu for the death of a brother, a father, or other relative; then came the other side. But the fire that distinguished the speakers for the prosecution was lacking from those who assumed the rôle of defence. It was evident that they were actuated by the love of debate and not at all by any feeling of humanity. They were learned in the law of utu, and unfolded it, in precedent and opinion, as being averse to the demands of the claimants. Presently the deadly imminence of the question seemed to withdraw into a mist of words. For a full hour argument and counter-argument clashed and wrestled, while I slept on, and my protectors awaited the issue with what patience they might. At length the audience—hitherto ready to applaud any telling forensic speech—gave evidences of surfeit.

"Hoi ano! Ka mutu!"¹ cried the throng.

All this time the chief had sat perfectly still, his eyes cast down, giving no sign that he took any interest in the proceedings, until the impatient cries of the warriors seemed to arouse him, as from a reverie. Motioning the last speaker aside, he bent his eyes on my protector.

"And the pakeha," he asked, "what has he to say in this matter?"

"Only this, Te Waharoa," said Purcell, rising to his feet. "It is not the life of one that is in question, but of two."

"Nay, of three," cried the missionary, springing to his companion's side.

Purcell's tone had been stern, but at this fiery support his voice dropped and took on a quaint humorousness.

¹ Enough! End it!

"It is not, chief," he said quickly, and before Wake could continue, "that I venture to dispute with these eloquent gentlemen as to what is or is not in conformity with the law of utu. That is a Maori law. I only know the law of the white man, which bids me stand by this little one as long as I can."

"You would fight for the child, then, pakeha?" said Te Waharoa, with cold contempt.

"So, chief. As for my friend, he is a man of God and of peace. Whatever may be said of us others, the missionary seeks nothing for himself. He asks nothing of you that is not for your own good in the doing. It would be a lasting stain on the Maori race if he should come to harm because of this. Therefore, let him go in peace. With respect to the child, I claim him by a law stronger than your utu, the law of humanity. He who would take his life must first take mine."

A dead silence followed this calmly spoken yet resolute speech. As there is no braver race than the Maori, so there is none more quick to see and admire courage. But perception and appreciation of bravery are not necessarily conjoined with the desire to spare the courageous, and while the resolution of the white man awoke admiration it aroused also in the warlike minds of Te Waharoa's warriors the desire to match themselves against it. In an instant a score of warriors leaped to their feet and, with a cry of defiance, sprang towards the white men.

Te Waharoa also rose, his gleaming eyes fixed steadily and with curiosity on the central figure. How—those eyes seemed to ask—would he act when the crucial moment came? Was this white man indeed daring enough to face alone and unarmed the very flower of the Maori race? So it seemed, for Purcell, having given utterance to his resolution, stood silent and unmoved, following with watchful eyes the motions of the howling mob around him.

As the armed warriors rushed upon them, the missionary had attempted to close in upon his companion, but, and as though acting in accordance with some concerted plan, the attackers, without striking a blow, drove between the two white men, thrusting Wake back until he stood within arm's length of the chief.

"Te Waharoa," he cried, breathlessly seizing his opportunity, "end this before it is too late. If you think to frighten this man into surrendering the child, then you misjudge him. His blood will be on your hands, and you will bring down on your head the execration of the pakehas."

The chief's brow contracted as he listened. He vouchsafed no reply, but, turning to those about him, uttered a curt command. The missionary was immediately surrounded and forced, without actual violence, to the outskirts of the crowd, where he was bidden to seat himself and remain quiet under pain of instant death.

Meanwhile Purcell stood surrounded at a distance of a few yards by a grimacing and dancing ring, shouting jests and defiance. The jests, indeed, predominated, and it would have been difficult for any person not conversant with the character of the actors to have perceived, in a scene of so much apparent good-humour, a savage and relentless purpose. Yet the most barbarous races are not incapable of acts of chivalry. A young brave, whose magnificent proportions were not unworthy to be matched with the giant frame of Purcell himself, suddenly cast his spear perpendicularly forward into the hand of the white man.

"Defend thyself, O pakeha!" he cried, and, seizing his mere, rushed to the attack.

Whether or no the fact that Purcell was unarmed had hitherto acted as a deterrent to the assault, the spear had no sooner fallen into his hand than his assailants were upon him. But the conflict—desperate indeed as between one

and twenty—was no longer of the impossible character that had first threatened. The young brave had in fact put into the hand of his enemy the only spear possessed by the attackers; the one weapon which could be trusted to keep at a distance the short clubs and tomahawks of his assailants.

Purcell's wits had all this time been at work. He had looked keenly about him for some object against which he could set his back, but the ground for some distance around was destitute of post or tree. There remained but the fire, and, desperate as he recognised the position to be, with roaring flames behind him and twenty enemies in front, he did not hesitate to accept it. As the ring continued to dance round him, he had worked his way, with apparently purposeless movements, nearer and nearer to the fire, hoping to provide himself not only with an unassailable rear, but also a weapon of defence. Thus when the spear came into his grasp he was provided with a plan, and lost not an instant in putting it in execution. So close was he to the flames that the ring in that quarter was already broken. He took one step forward, and, with a whirl of the spear that effectually cleared his flanks, faced about to meet the assault.

It was impossible that he should long withstand it, yet for the best part of a minute none got within the guard of that whirling point, or reached to it without feeling its thrust. Sideways he leapt, and, with fingers glued to the staunch wood, thrust and smote. Once at a crucial moment he stepped right back into the fire and kicked hot ashes and flaming embers into the faces of his assailants, falling on them before they could recover themselves and driving them ignominiously before him. But when the spectators beheld this tremendous feat of arms and realised the shame which threatened the taua, they sprang up in their tens and scores and rushed to join in the conflict.

Scorched by the flames, perspiration streaming from his face, but uninjured and with the child still safe in the bend of his arm, the dauntless white man caught his spear in a fresh grasp and looked with steady gaze at approaching death. No single arm could withstand even for a moment the multitude that now came against him. Only a miracle could save him. And the miracle happened. One instant he was gazing into the fierce, contorted faces of his enemies; in the next the whole scene was blotted from his vision. Something had fallen, as from the sky, and enveloped him. Was it a ruse of the enemy? Hampered by the child and the necessity of retaining possession of his spear, it was impossible that he could free himself before the death-blow fell. But the moments passed and nothing happened. He became aware of a silence that, in contrast with the uproar of the preceding minutes, was as death itself. Could that be the solution of the mystery? Suddenly the obscuring veil was withdrawn and he looked wonderingly about him.

Before him, as though arrested and petrified in mid-career, were the enemies whose last seen motions had threatened to overwhelm him. Their faces expressed chagrin, verging on anger, but held in check by something approaching awe. At his side, holding his great mat of dog-skin dependent from one hand, stood the chief, Te Waharoa.

"Enough, O warriors!" he said quietly. "This pakeha is the Thumb of my Right Hand; the child is my Little Finger."

Not a voice was raised. As though the words possessed in themselves some magical charm to still the passions of men, the attackers melted away and became merged in the rest of the war-party. Soon the chief and the white man over whom he had cast the mantle of his protection stood alone.

"Pakeha," said the former, "as concerns you and the child and the Man of Many Words, be at ease; henceforth the tapu¹ of Te Waharoa clothes and protects you. For to-night enough has been spoken. My young men will guide you to a whare where presently food shall be brought to you. But see to it that the Man of Words does not trouble me again."

"I shall do your bidding, chief," said Purcell. "For the protection you have given me and the child, I thank you. Is it permitted me without offence to speak one more word?"

"Speak, pakeha."

"It concerns the body of the white man, the father of this child——"

"It shall be sent to you. Do with it as you please. As for the food, have no fear. The Maori follows the custom of his forefathers, but he is not prone, as the Man of Words, to thrust his observances on the stranger."

With this parting thrust at the missionary, the chief turned away, while Purcell, inwardly congratulating himself on his narrow escape from death, stood to await the arrival of the promised guide.

He came in the person of the young chief who had so gallantly and opportunely thrown him his spear, and he brought Wake with him.

"Come, great warrior," said the brave, running an eye admiringly over the form of the Englishman.

"Comrade," said my protector, extending his hand, "if it should ever chance to you to need the help of a white man, to me belongs the right. Let me know the name of a brave enemy, that I may remember it among those of my friends."

"Paoa," responded the youth, his face showing gratification. "The pakeha is a fighter of fighters. He has

¹ See note, p. 400.

given many wounds, yet received none. What of the child?"

"Still sleeps on, unharmed."

"Truly, it is wonderful," commented Paoa. "I and many others sought only the life of the child."

"Such words sound harshly in the ears of your friend, Paoa," said my protector reprovingly. "Does it become a brave warrior to make war on an infant?"

Paoa shrugged his shoulders. "What matter a life that knows not of itself," he said; "it is as a bird that falls in the thick bush and is remembered not at all."

Both the white men recognised that the moral aspect made no appeal to the savage mind, and refrained from continuing the argument.

"He is now the Little Finger of Te Waharoa," Purcell reminded him.

"And the Little Finger may grow into the Right Hand of the Chief's enemies," was the reply. "But come, let us go."

He led the way round the fire, and, avoiding the groups of warriors making their way in the direction of the cooking fires, set off at a brisk pace round the outskirts of the ravaged village. The fires that for the best part of an hour had rocked and roared on the hill summit, a beacon of terror and warning to the surrounding country, were now dying down, heaps of glowing ashes marking the spots where the homes of the villagers had so recently stood. Purcell shuddered as he saw in imagination the dismembered bodies of those villagers now prisoned in the fiery stones of Te Waharoa's ovens.

After proceeding at a rapid pace for something like half a mile, their guide turned in towards the village, and a minute or two later stopped before a group of buildings which had escaped the fate of the rest. These were three in number, and though with none of the adornments that mark the more sacred edifices of the Maori pa, were yet

apparently substantially built and in good repair. The largest of the three, built on piles to exclude vermin, was a storehouse of such dimensions that Purcell paused to ask their guide to whom it had belonged.

"To the pakeha," Paoa replied briefly.

"Then it is to the child's home that you have brought us?"

The native made a gesture of assent and, sliding back the door of the building by which they stood, motioned them to enter. Darting away at the same moment, he returned ere they were well inside the dark interior with a flaming brand plucked from a burning building. A small lamp, still containing oil, stood on a rough table, the legs of which were sunk into the earthen floor, and presently in its dim light the white men looked round on the rude home of a man of their race, who had fallen a victim to the tribal wars of his adopted country. That the place had been raided by the conquerors was evident by the confusion that prevailed. The contents of chests and shelves, or such part of them as had not found favour with the raiders, lay in heaps or scattered broadcast over the floor. Little of economic value remained; books and papers formed the greater part of the litter. The sleeping-bunks were bare of coverings, save for one tattered blanket, in which, after a glance round, my protector wrapped my still unconscious form, subsequently depositing me on the bunk.

The missionary, overcome by the horrors he had witnessed, sank to a seat, and with his chin in his hands stared gloomily at the floor.

"Come, Mr. Wake," said Purcell, cheerfully, "let us rather thank God for the little we have accomplished than lament over what we have failed to do."

Mr. Wake shuddered and shook himself, as from a nightmare. "You are right, my friend," he said. "Forgive my weakness. It is not to every man that there is given

the greatness of soul to face such scenes undismayed, Now let us consider what is to be done for Tregarthen's child."

Paoa, who, after lighting the lamp, had carried his fire-brand outside, now returned with an armful of rugs, which he threw down on the vacant bunk. "Food and drink shall be sent for the pakehas," he announced, pausing in the doorway.

"The storehouse has not been touched then, my friend?" said Purcell, indicating the rugs, which had apparently never been in use.

"No. All therein is the war-spoil of the chief."

"Friend Paoa, it seems to me that, instead of utu being payable by the child, he has a right to demand it of those who have bereft him of father and possessions—of all save the rugs in which he lies."

The warrior's eyes followed the direction of Purcell's to the little bundle on the bunk. "Many chiefs and sons of chiefs fell in this quarrel," he replied; "their beds are not so soft as that of the child."

My protector nodded. "Go then, friend," he said. But he continued to discuss the question with Wake, whose knowledge of native law and custom was considerable.

The missionary roused himself to the consideration of a problem beset with difficulties. Having dismissed the claim of the other side and thus acknowledged me to be a non-combatant, Te Waharoa had laid himself open to be proceeded against in turn. But was this a moment to enter a claim? If the motives that had actuated the chief in sparing my life were sufficiently powerful, they might extend also to the preserving to me of the possessions of my father. In short, it was impossible to entertain any action save an appeal to the clemency of the conqueror. While this decision was being arrived at, the sound of voices and approaching footsteps brought both men to the door-

way. In the darkness momentarily dispersed by the winking flame of the failing fires, was a body of men moving in single file towards the hut. A long pole rested on their shoulders, and sagging from the middle was a mysterious bundle closely swathed in fern.

In this manner my father, with the blood of seven warriors on his dead hands, returned to his home.

CHAPTER III

I FIND A HAVEN

THEY buried him that night, digging his grave with spades taken from the war-spoil of Te Waharoa, and laying him in the cool, dry earth of that windy hill-top. His bones have long since been transferred to the other end of the earth, where, in the tomb of his ancestors, beside his girl wife—the mother I never knew—they moulder to the English dust from which they sprang ; but it is on the hill-top I love to think of him, resting after a brief and stormy life, full of wounds and honour, high up under the great arch of the sky. Sheep feed peacefully now on the wind-bitten heights, and only the step of an occasional shepherd breaks the solitude of the Tekuma pa. White men and brown alike are gone. But for me it is peopled with the ghosts of that tragic night. Its blood-drenched terraces still cry to heaven ; its burning whares still redden the sky, and in the midst of it—as though it were a monument raised in his honour—for me, the body of my father lies there still.

Te Waharoa remained many days at Tekuma, for the spoil taken at the capture of the pa was great. Crops had been harvested ; potatoes, kumaras,¹ and corn filled the storehouses to repletion. Visits from friendly parties were frequent, and none was suffered to depart without bearing with it evidences of the goodwill and hospitality of the

¹ Kumara = the sweet potato.

conquerors. Even with this assistance there was one kind of food in almost too great abundance. Slaves bearing baskets of human flesh were dispatched all through the Waikato, carrying greetings to friendly chiefs and summoning war-parties to join Te Waharoa in the prosecution of further schemes of conquest. Even on the morning immediately following the capture of the pa a whisper of his destination was abroad, for Te Waharoa had a blood feud, well-nigh as old as himself, which still remained unsatisfied. It was this rumour that led—ere the sun was well up in the heavens—to the hurried departure of the missionary, still bent on the salvation of the bodies not less than the souls of his adopted people; and when I myself awoke and rubbed the sleep from my eyes, it was to find myself alone with my protector.

He was seated on a box in the centre of the whare, tying together the sheaves of letters and papers he had collected from the floor, humming softly to himself the while, a habit the meaning of which I was to know well by and by. All I said on this occasion, however, was "Dadda!"

He gave a great start, and his blue eyes fell on my small figure sitting up, half buried in the rugs and pillows.

"Dadda, eh?" he said musingly, as though he were confronted with a problem. A moment later his expression changed, and, putting his hand in his pocket, he drew out a biscuit and held it out to me.

It must have been an unusual number of hours since I had partaken of any food, and I scrambled eagerly from my perch, rolled to the floor, picked myself up, and toddled to his knees to receive the biscuit.

From that moment what memories I have of my father become indissolubly mingled with those of my new protector. To the man who gave me birth my mind turns as toward some beloved figure of romance, but the memory of Purcell can still stir me to a passion of love and reverence,

as strong, surely, as can be raised in the breast of a human being. It may be that you, my dear reader, will become impatient with this man, that he may offend in his words and actions your lifelong and doubtless well-grounded opinions. Sometimes, as you may discover, I have differed from him, and, alas, at the end there rose between us a wall the most terrible and insurmountable that can exist between man and man ; but never for an hour was my love for him or his for me diminished a degree by our differences. His faults were no less lovable than his virtues, and of this I am certain, that his mistakes—if they were such—sprang from the greatness and not the littleness of his soul.

But I am not yet out of the clutch of Te Waharoa.

For long after the events I have described my memory is a jumble of incidents without definite order. I have a confused memory of much talking and many figures, all strange ones, in the whare. Then I am in a canoe ; it may have been the same day, or many days afterwards. There are numerous packages in the canoe, and I seem to be wedged in now here, now there, amongst them ; but I can always see the face of my protector and hear his —“ Tumble out,” or “ Tumble in, Cedric ”—a command doubtless obeyed literally—which announced the different stages of our journey. We seemed to be a long time in the canoe, and yet not all the time taken by the journey. There were intervals in the bush, filled with delight by day, but an entirely opposite feeling at night, when the cries of the moreporks¹ or the scuttling of kiwi² in the brake set me clinging closer to my protector. There were nights and long lazy days in native villages, where bright-eyed maidens, of whom I had no fear at all, would take me, rubbing their soft noses against my face in a way mysteriously pleasant

¹ Morepork = the native owl.

² Kiwi = a wingless bird.

and comforting to my babyhood. But always I came back eventually to my protector, and always the pair of us returned ultimately to the canoe full of packages. No doubt there were many canoes, but to me it was always the same one.

I have no recollection of the journey coming to an end, nor of what happened immediately thereafter, nor indeed for many and many a day. The small ship of my life had come into a quiet haven, where the ordered sequence of events made no impression on my mind. I ate and drank and slept and was greatly cared for; for in addition to being that rare thing a pakeha child, was I not also the Little Finger of Te Waharoa?

No doubt the first objects that impressed themselves on and grew familiar to my infancy were the buildings of the pa; the mysterious whare-kura,¹ fronting the rising sun in the midst of the holy enclosure, where stood the sinister graven image of the Rainbow god, with a huddled human sacrifice mouldering in the earth beneath his footless body; the whare of the supreme chief, little less sacred and awe-inspiring; the whare-matoro, which may be likened to the theatre or amusement hall of a pakeha town, and was to become eventually as full of pleasurable associations; the great storehouses, carved from pile to apex, a hundred threatening, pearl-eyed images glaring from their outward walls; the cooking-houses of fern stem or scrub; the huts of the villagers, on a descending scale, from the most elaborately carved houses to mere shelters of rush. Lowest on the hill slope, half hidden in a fold of the ground, was the dwelling of a tohunga or priest-doctor. From its doorway could be seen only the steep flank of the hill, with the river swirling in a silver bend at its foot. Not that for many a long day I stood in that doorway: enough for me

¹ Whare-kura = the Maori college for the education of the sons of great chiefs.

and my young companions if, scurrying past on the track below, we saw not the dreaded figure crouched in the porch, staring with brooding eyes at the river or the bush beyond.

The tohunga could look over the inner palisade of the pa, beside which the track lay. If at such times he happened to move, the biggest of us could pull back a sliding door at the foot of the fence and be away from his sight in the trench below. There were three fences beyond this, increasing in strength until we came to the pekerangi,¹ built of great trees, sunk side by side, every sixth tree out-topping its fellows and carved at the summit with a hideous figure-head. Overlooking the river, as it flashed round the foot of the pa, was the waharoa, the great and elaborately carved gateway by which entrance to the fort-village was gained.

But when I began to turn my eyes from the things in my immediate neighbourhood and looked around on the world into which I had come, be sure the first thing to catch my childish eyes was the great bulk of Pirongia. Sometimes he was close at hand ; a leap would land me on his bush-clad flanks ; and when I became learned in forest lore, on such occasions I could distinguish the trees in their kinds, as one who knows the words reads a book. At others he was far off and inaccessible, a long day's journey away. Not seldom, in the early morning, or on wet, wintry days, he drew cloud and mist around him as a mantle, and then all the world responded to his mood, became a place unknown and strange, dwarfed in height but extended into a flat infinitude, for he was no longer there. Every hour he changed. In the morning greys and greens predominated ; as day advanced the greens vanished and the greys deepened into blues, into deeper blues, into thunderous purples and blacks ; and so, against a background of golden glory, where the sun sank into the ocean, he passed into the night,

¹ Pekerangi = the outer palisade of the pa.

making of himself a starless cone in the heavens. From the pa he was always majestic and stern, calling on the heart of the beholder for strength and courage and endurance ; but I have also seen him from afar, tender as a cloud and blue as a sapphire, beckoning his own back to their allegiance.

There were other things to be seen from the pa : the river, breaking suddenly with its broad silver from the dense bush, sweeping in a great curve round the hill and disappearing as suddenly as it appeared ; the cultivations on the rich alluvial flat below, kumara and corn and potato ; and, through a gap in the hills, the wide green or yellow of springing or ripening wheat, the beginnings of that new order which was to cover the limestone soils of Waipa with the staple food of the white man. The rest was bush ; billow on green billow, rolling almost to the foot of the pa, masking the hills and choking the valleys ; such a riot of vegetable life as would daunt the stoutest heart in the attempt to penetrate it. Tracks there were, to be sure, ancient ways, still deflected from straightness by the ghosts of trees whose bodies had dispersed in dust ages ago. To step from their narrow limits was to begin a struggle, the end of which might well be exhaustion and death.

Such in appearance were the Matakiki pa and its surroundings. At the time of my arrival its inhabitants could scarce have numbered less than a thousand individuals. It was situated in the territory of the Ngatimaniapoto, with whom Te Waharoa had established a lasting alliance ; and to this country, as a safe harbourage, after the sack of the Tekuma pa, he sent his " Thumb " and " Little Finger," commending their care to a lesser chief of that tribe until the conclusion of the little affairs on which he was then engaged should afford him leisure to claim them. This chief, then a man well advanced in years, had proved himself a sagacious leader, nursing his tribe to full member-

ship, and while not refusing the loan of a war-party for the prosecution of such of the schemes of his allies as promised a successful issue, yet refraining from ventures that might commit him to a life of continuous warfare. It was in keeping with this diplomatic policy that he should welcome to his kainga ¹ a white man of the stamp of Purcell.

While the pakeha had by force of circumstance become all but a necessity to the Maori, he was now dribbling into the country in sufficient numbers to allow of the exercise of a little care in his selection. No longer might the escaped convict or deserting whaler pass at once into a sort of enslaved kingship, to balance himself giddily between power and sudden death. The missionary, tramping alone and unarmed into the pas, accomplished at least the advantage of revealing to his savage but intelligent flock a standard by which their own pakeha-maoris ² might be judged. And few there were that could satisfactorily survive the test. Equally destitute of fear and morals, to most of these the opening of the waharoa was as the unclosing of the gates of a Mohammedan paradise, for here were dark-eyed houris in abundance, to whom alliance with a white man lent a great, if meretricious, splendour.

But such a man as Purcell, bringing with him, as he did, a load of goods belonging to my father—for Te Waharoa had eventually consented to divide his spoils with the dead man's son—not to speak of his ability to procure more, was a treasure to be received anywhere in New Zealand with open arms. It is true that the hapu had possessed a pakeha of sorts several years previously, but of him we discovered little, and nothing to his advantage. As to his end, there was a conspiracy of reticence, and even his name had been distorted out of all recognition.

¹ Kainga = the home.

² Pakeha-maori = a European living as a Maori.

There were besides the chief a score or more of others, who claimed authority little below his own, and, absolute for life or death as was the power of Te Moanaroa, he seldom or never exercised it without the full consent of the council of chiefs. He was, as I remember him, a man of heavy build, short in stature, but of immense breadth of shoulder, never to be seen abroad without a war-spear in his hand. He spoke seldom. At the council of chiefs in the marae,¹ I have seen him sit for hours in complete silence, and yet, in some mysterious way, enforce his will upon the speakers. Not that I would claim for him any powers of telepathy. I think it was rather a natural sagacity and deep knowledge of human nature that enabled him to control the turbulent passions of his people. He was a believer in talk as a safety valve. He would wait patiently for hours while the verbal contest raged around him, and not till it had subsided into the calmness of exhaustion would he, in a few softly spoken words, disclose his inflexible will.

Of an importance frequently greater than that of the chiefs were the tohunga. Whether it was due to the comparatively long peace enjoyed by the community, or because of a certain love of mysticism in Te Moanaroa himself, I cannot say, but at the time of which I write it is no misuse of words to say that the pa was infested with them. I am not now speaking of the artists and men of learning in astronomy, agriculture, genealogy, and such like, who, through the terrible centuries of Maori history, had kept the lamp of knowledge burning undimmed, but of those followers of black magic with whom the name of tohunga is more popularly associated. These men, usually, though not invariably, of good birth, possessed a power in the community which was felt in almost equal degree by the slave and the sacred ariki² himself. They were

¹ Marae = the village square.

² Ariki = god-descended chief.

at one and the same time hated, dreaded, and revered. Through their mouths spoke the gods or devils of Maori theology, and from birth to death, and afterwards, there was no act of importance in the lives and deaths of the people—whether it were the setting-out of a war-party or the planting of a seed—which did not come under their direct control.

As I call to mind the terror of these men that possessed me in my childhood, a terror founded on sights and sounds actually seen and heard, and which now, as then, remain inexplicable, I marvel at the discredit into which their kind has fallen. Truly the modern representatives of tohungaism, half-contemptuously tolerated by the villagers and ignominiously hustled by the pakeha law, are but a poor lot of degenerates. Not with such men would Te Atua Mangu have deigned to cast the niu¹ or thrust the wands of life and death into the holy ground.

The chief-paramount—of him I shall have much to say presently—was so by right of birth, the eldest son of the eldest son, and grave indeed was the objection that might shake him from his seat; but the tohunga was great by reason of his own greatness. A single act might lift him into a position of eminence; a fortunate augury or—if you prefer it—a lucky shot at the future might render him an object of veneration; and thus, during the first seven years of my life at the pa, there were several changes in the standing of the wizard doctors, now one, now another, but for widely different reasons, gaining the favour of the tribe.

I know not how it was that during this time the one of whom I went most in awe was the tohunga whose place of residence I have already described. He was certainly not among those on whose word the hapu depended on great occasions, and though by the tohungas themselves he was

¹ Niu = divining rods.

highly regarded on account of some extraordinary feat performed years before, which had earned for him his name of Te Atua Mangu, the Black Spirit, he had done little since to sustain the reputation he then gained, or to exalt his name with the tribe. He was a man of deeply contemplative habits, shunning society, and given to fits of abstraction, as became the philosopher. For days together his whare would be closed, and on such occasions it was impossible to tell whether the magician were away on one of his solitary, protracted rambles, or pursuing some occult speculation in the unapproachable privacy of his hut. It may be that what subsequently happened has unduly coloured my early memories of this man, and yet I cannot but feel that there was an instinctive dread of him in my mind long before any action of his—unless it were his ominous way of regarding me—justified the existence of any such feeling.

Let me now briefly recall the uneventful manner of my life during those first seven years.

My protector, on his arrival, had been given a whare close to that of the chief, and on this spot, before the first winter set in, he had erected a building, framed of tea-tree and wattled with rushes, large enough to serve as a store and dwelling-house combined. Here was my home. The store faced the village square, half the front opening in a sliding door of hewn timber, which could be, and sometimes was, secured with a padlock. Fronting this door was an opening in the back wall, giving admission to the house. I remember it with four rooms, but at first there were but two, the kitchen and a small bedroom beyond. There were a means of exit from the kitchen and some apertures in both rooms, which, a few years later, were dignified by being fitted with glass. To the rear of this building was a long store on piles, sometimes full to repletion, at others an empty shell.

I think Purcell must have taken to himself a wife im-

mediately on arrival ; at all events I can remember no time when Roma was not a member of the household. She was of one of the fair-skinned Urewera hapus, no darker than a South European, with small, regular features. I fancy that she had been enslaved since childhood, but of this I am not certain, the only confirmatory evidence being the absence of tattoo marks both on her lips and her calves, and the circumstance that she was certainly an alien.

My recollections of her are such a blend of the tender and the comical, that I hesitate to put them on record lest the latter element should predominate. All, or nearly all that a child can owe to its mother, I owe to her. She was, I should think, the humblest being of her sex that ever existed. Despite a beauty that was real by any standard, and a natural intelligence of a quite respectable order, she remained for ever at the feet of her husband. To her he was the most splendid and worshipful of created beings, and his lifelong efforts to lift her to a more exalted position ended in complete failure. No man could be more consistently kind to a woman than Purcell was to his wife, and it seems impossible that physical fear of him could ever have dwelt in her mind, yet beneath the devotion in her eyes I seemed always to see an expression which I do not know how to describe by any other name. She took nothing from his hand, though it were but the salt to season her food, without such humility of gratitude as no man would willingly demand from his hound.

I know that for years Purcell was restive and even unhappy by reason of this attitude of his wife's. Once, happening to return unexpectedly after leaving the house, I saw him holding her above his head and shaking her with rough tenderness in his great arms, the while a passion of protest poured from his lips, but I do not know that any particular amount of humility was shaken out of her by this unusual treatment. I think that he became at length

reconciled to the position. At all events, her self-effacement became a household jest, not less amusing for its mingling of pathos ; and, though she appeared to share in our enjoyment, there is no doubt in my mind that the pathos and the humour were alike concealed from her.

But it was not only her husband who was thus exalted into a species of god ; there came a time when I also developed into an object of veneration, when my caresses were received with trembling gratitude, and she was unable to approach me without evidences of internal trepidation. Nor was this the climax of her mental malady, for later her humility was to stand between her and her own daughter, and not even the demonstrative warmth of that tenderest of hearts could avail ought against it.

So at length I come to Puhi-Huia.

She was born within two years of our arrival at the village. As the happy young mother held up the babe for the inspection of its father—and on this occasion we may believe that pride and exultation ousted the humility from her eyes—a bunch of the feathers of the royal huia¹ bird fell from its place on the wall and rested for a moment on the head of the child. Such an omen could not be disregarded. “ Puhi-Huia (Plume of the Huia),” said the mother. “ Behold the name ! ” And whether it were because this was the first occasion on which his young wife had taken the initiative, or because he was himself indifferently, the name established itself.

What a baby was Puhi-Huia ! Surely never before or since has there been her equal. A fat smile was the soul of her. She was most astonishingly obedient ; perhaps the humility of the mother took this form in the child. I have set her down in the fern with instructions not to move, and come back hours afterwards to find her still in her nest, patiently, with chubby hand, chasing the crickets she

¹ See note, p 400.

never succeeded in catching. Her disposition was so sunny that even pain could scarce quench the light that shone in her face. If I failed in an attempt to transport her on my back over some obstacle—for she was a heavy child—inflicting bruises on her and myself, no whimper escaped her. She would pick herself up, ready to be carried again or to follow in my footsteps, according as I directed.

The dangers into which in my innocence I led that child, the bruises and wounds I was the means of inflicting on her tender body, have sent many a shiver through me in subsequent years, and if I had not so often heard of the deceptions we practised to escape from supervision and of the wild outcry in the kainga that followed our prolonged disappearance, I could not avoid attaching some measure of blame to our guardians. The ooze of the river or the tangles of the forest should have secreted our small bones not once, but a score of times. Better perhaps for one of us if they had!

To these escapades, in the absence of any harm resulting from them, the village became in time inured, and as we increased in years and strength we were tacitly allowed the latitude to wander which we had in the first place wrested by sheer persistence from our unwilling guardians. My protector was a man whose nerves had no power to play tricks with his imagination. Danger had no existence for him until he was in the midst of it, and the fact that he recognised its presence even then was only to be gathered by an increase of cheerfulness in his manner. That he should neglect to watch over our every footstep, and should laugh at rather than reprove our exploits, was only in accordance with such a disposition.

But he could be adamant in other matters. A certain part of the day was set aside for lessons, and, nimble as were my wits, I never discovered a satisfactory way of

evading these. The methods I did try, however successful for the time being, were always unsatisfactory in the end ; and I can still recall the figure of Puhi-Huia in her little chair, big tears, which could be drawn with difficulty from her on her own account, rolling down her cheeks, as she unwillingly witnessed the expiation of my offence.

But I should do myself an injustice if I led the reader to suppose that, in the end, I learnt unwillingly. Once I had been fitted with the power to read easily, I discovered that that same curiosity which led me to pass no new thing on the river or the track, called me with equal force into the realm of books. Fortunate, indeed, was I to have such a guide and instructor, for, though I can lay no claim to scholarship—possessing nothing approaching exhaustive knowledge on any one subject—yet I am free of so wide a domain, and can wander so far without hindrance or stumbling-blocks, that I have at least the delights, if not the profits, of learning. And this, equally with my life, I owe to Purcell.

I have often wondered what was the true extent of his knowledge. It certainly could not be so limitless as it appeared to me in my youth ; yet, on the other hand, not to the last hour of his life could I be certain that in any subject I had plumbed it to the bottom. He taught me three modern languages, not to speak of Maori and English, and would, I doubt not, have taught me as many more, had not my appetite for this special branch of knowledge become surfeited with the third. But the thing that still at this day gives me the greatest surprise was his wide attainments in science. At that date, and even for fifty years thereafter, what was called education was limited to the facts of human history, so that a man might be ignorant as a savage of the whole cosmos, and yet, if he were fairly conversant with Greek and Latin, he was regarded as an educated man. On the other hand, whatever might be a

man's attainments in science, and however profound his acquaintance with natural laws, he could lay no claim to scholarship unless he could add to them a smattering of the classics. Even to this day the idea of the comparative unimportance of science lingers in certain quarters, and we find men of reputed education confessing and even boasting that they are puzzled by the phases of the moon !

To me the career of Purcell remains a romance as deeply clothed in mystery as that of the Man in the Iron Mask. Whence did he come, and why ? What tragedy was it that cut one so brilliant off from his kind and thrust him into the arms of savagery ? All his actions, from the moment I first knew him, were those of a man who had definitely determined his manner of life from that time forward ; nor can I confidently say that I ever saw in his manner evidences of regret for the life he had left behind him. He had a warm heart for individuals, but I have sometimes thought that his attitude towards mankind was misanthropic and that an intellectual impatience with man's social systems might lie at the root of his choice of the simple, strenuous life.

But to return to Puhī-Huia and myself. While our expanding minds were thus nourished with the lore of the Old World, there was no other difference in our manner of life from that of the children of the same rank around us. We played their games and spoke their language. The ghosts of the bush and the gods of the sky were as real to us as to them. In those days it never occurred to us to compare the knowledge we derived from such diverse sources ; our minds were simply receptive, and curious indeed was the muddle which creation presented to our mental vision. The taepo¹ and the tiger were monsters equally capable of verification, but of the former we heard daily, and of the latter only occasionally, in our lessons.

¹ Taepo = a supernatural being.

It was not for some years that the suspicion came to me that I was in any way different from my companions, and I remember to this hour the sense of loss and degradation that overwhelmed me with the knowledge that I was not of the Ngatimaniapoto, not even a Maori, but a member of a distant and alien race.

It was not very long after this that I first encountered Rangiora.

CHAPTER IV

I MEET RANGIORA

To account for Rangiora I must extend my scene to a point some twelve miles to the westward of the pa, where, within sight of the beautiful Kawhia harbour, dwelt the ariki or chief-paramount of the tribe. This pa was neither so populous nor so prosperous as Matakiki, for brains are not a necessary concomitant of high lineage, and in this respect Te Moanaroa was immeasurably the superior of his chief. Te Huata was a savage of the old school: fierce and bloodthirsty, a cannibal by choice as well as by custom, and a hater of the pakeha. Of him many dreadful stories were told me by my young companions. He had eaten up a whole tribe so recently that the memory of the deed was still strong in men's minds. For a twelvemonth he had lived on the tender flesh of infants, following with that of young maidens and youths. The well-born of the subjected tribe had gone to provide blood sacrifices at such ceremonies as the launching of war-canoes, the opening of buildings, and, in the end—with the exception of those who had fled to friendly tribes, there to remain as long as they lived, of little more account than slaves—the tribe was extinct.

Of late years, on account of the spread of pakeha ideas and the dwindling of his own immediate adherents, Te Huata had found the prosecution of such wars as these difficult. The mischievous doctrines of the missionaries

had spread into places where they themselves had never set foot, and there was a growing indisposition on the part of the young men to devote their lives to war. Deprived of his favourite food, and conscious of a slow but continual decrease in his power, Te Huata's disposition increased in moroseness. For all his dullness of wit, he could not but see whence came the spirit that was metamorphosing the ancient Maori customs, and deep and unappeasable was his hatred of the white man. Yet when Purcell, accompanied by Te Moanaroa and other high chiefs, laid before him a proposition to establish a trading station in the midst of his tribe, and thus secure to it a share of those new things which were transforming the whole country, he yielded a grudging consent. That he did so was a surprise to every one. Te Moanaroa had shaken his head when the possibility of such an establishment was suggested to him; nevertheless, he used his influence with the chiefs far and wide, and spoke with such wiliness at the final council that perhaps it was to him success was owing.

"Does the white man seek to open a doorway for his tribe?" the ariki asked, fixing his fierce, dark eyes on Purcell.

"No, but for the treasures of the white man's country," responded Te Moanaroa. "Guns are good, and the things of iron—axes and knives. Let our women have clothes that they may become as the birds in splendour. Tobacco is a hard food to come by, but the pakeha shall make it easy. Even I myself have paid much good greenstone¹ for tobacco, but now the common fellow shall get flax, and the chief shall smoke, and all will be well."

"Will one pakeha accomplish these things?" Huata persisted.

¹ Greenstone jade was highly prized by the Maoris for the making of clubs and ornaments. It is found only at one locality in the South Island.

"One or two, for there remains the Little Finger," said Te Moanaroa, easily.

"So long as the chief shall find workers," Purcell corroborated, "I will seek none from elsewhere."

"Then be it so," said the ariki, bringing the discussion to an end; "but take heed, pakeha, how you deceive me. In the hour that you bring another pakeha into my kainga you shall go to the oven. Aye, were you not merely the thumb, but the whole body of Te Waharoa," and he regarded the trader with looks so threatening that few but he could have met their regard undismayed.

As for the chiefs, awed by a threat so daring, and humiliated that their ariki should, in his spleen, have cast so gross an insult on their illustrious ally—an insult for which, if it came to the ears of Te Waharoa, they might yet have to pay in their life's blood—they rose to their feet and dispersed in silence back to their homes.

But Purcell, nothing daunted by the attitude of the chief, who, he well knew, had yielded to popular clamour and not conviction, built his store and organised his band of workers, and so rooted himself that long before the time at which I have arrived he had become indispensable to the tribe. True to his word, he had called no white man to his assistance, relying entirely on a carefully selected staff of natives for the conduct of his affairs and the safeguarding of his possessions. In time a third store was established, on the shores of the harbour, and as business increased and trading vessels, instead of being visitors of chance, began to put in with some regularity, this station became shortly the most flourishing of the three.

It was not without difficulty, and regardless of several refusals, that Purcell gained this further concession from the ariki; but the trader had found an ally in Te Huata's own household, in the person of no other than the chief's principal wife. Tuku-tuku, the Spider's Web, was a

tapairu¹ of lineage as illustrious as Te Huata's own. She was, moreover, a woman of much intelligence, quick to see the advantages that must accrue to the tribe by the increase in wealth and standing of its pakeha, and equally resolute to secure them by every means in her power. What arguments or persuasions she used to break down the dogged will of her spouse may be gleaned later; suffice it for the present that she gained her way, and the trader was permitted to extend his field of operations.

From that time my protector spent at least half his time away from home, and it became one of the greatest delights of our lives for Puhi-Huia and myself to set forth at those periods when his return was expected and meet him, either on the bush track or among the ferny hills, or even in that dense and sunken forest which flanked the ariki's pa itself.

I find that after all I have neglected to account for Rangiora. He was, then, the son, the first-born son, of Te Huata and his wife Tuku-tuku; a youth of such godlike descent that even his parents suffered extinguishment from his greatness. In his person were united strains of the proudest blood in New Zealand. So exalted, indeed, was his birth, that his very existence became almost a menace to his tribe. At any moment some thoughtless, childish action might, by reason of the powerful tapu that emanated from his person, plunge the tribe into serious difficulties. Thus, day and night, attendants were deputed to watch and control his every action. On the other hand, Maori custom allowed almost unlimited latitude to the young. Harshness or severity towards a child were things well-nigh unknown, and thus it may be gathered that the responsibility resting on the attendants of a high-born youth of an adventurous nature was by no means a light one.

Puhi-Huia and I had set out at daylight one morning on

¹ Tapairu — a chieftainess, descended, as the ariki, from the gods.

the mission of which I have spoken, having secretly determined on an early start with the object of catching our father on the very outskirts of Te Huata's pa—for to enter the stronghold of the dreaded cannibal chief itself was an exploit beyond even our daring. It was a beautiful morning in the early spring, and as, clear of the pa, we ran gleefully down the well-defined bush track, the morning carol of the bell-birds still pealed among the branches overhead. Flocks of parakeets flew with a whistling chatter from tree to tree, and in the dark boughs of the taraires unnumbered pigeons gobbled the purple fruits. Now and then, with harsh cries, a troop of parrots would whirl upwards into the blue sky and, circling in the air, drop again a mile away into the billowing foliage.

From every side came to us the sound of rushing water, now falling in cataracts down the rocks to some deep-worn pool in the boulders, now racing over a shingly bed, almost hidden from view by dense thickets of tree-ferns. The path was soft and wet, often degenerating into mud, and many of the fords held deep water between the stepping-stones, for the winter rains were still a thing of yesterday. But ah, the delights of that miry way! The sweet scent of damp earth and fern frond; the unending variety of growth and shades of green innumerable; the flowers—the spathes of the tawhara, sweet, sub-acid, of a taste indescribable; the kowhais hung with gold; the snowy pillars, wreaths, and arches of the climbing clematis. And then to pause mid-stream and chase the Tommy cod among the rocks—Puhī-Huia keeping careful watch on one side while I groped for the slippery prey in the crevices of the stone on the other.

We scarce knew how chilly was the bush in the early morning, till we came out on the ferny hill and stood sneezing and basking in the broad warm sunshine. But this place had its own peculiar delights. Never was such

a spot for an ambush. Even father himself could stand upright in that giant brake and no vestige of him be visible to the keen eyes of his children. Innumerable false tracks criss-crossed the hill-top, winding into one another and forming a maze to which no key existed. Sometimes we would come on spots with the ground overthrown and the tangled roots exposed, or even suddenly confront the author of the mischief, when, waiting for no more than a grunt, and hands interlocked, we fled to safety.

There was no pig or sign of one on this particular morning; indeed, the only living occupant of the brake appeared to be a bird, coloured a lively brown, with checks and bars of darker hue, who ran with wonderful agility up and down the fern stems, spreading and flaunting his long tail. He was remarkably tame—as all the New Zealand birds seemed to be in those days—fitting on his business quite regardless of our presence, and scarce troubling to fly off even when we assumed the offensive. What has become of all those confiding birds I remember in my youth? Most of them were sombrely coloured, but they possessed a charm for which I look in vain among their successors. The sturdy robins and native thrushes, who would peck outside the whares and even venture on occasions over the threshold; the hosts of bell-birds, peopling every bush and rendering dawn and twilight vocal with their sweet notes: whither have they flown? I rambled the bush a few years back, and save for the lonely voice of the tui, all was silent. Even the bold creatures who succeeded them do not venture here; the temple, empty of its choristers, maintains a melancholy silence.

We had come quickly through the bush, leaving plenty of time for the remainder of our journey; so—not for the first time—I became That One, The Nameless. With a charred stick, carried in my belt for that express purpose, I laid off in black scrolls on my countenance the tattoo

marks of Te Huata, and, arming myself with a straight fern stalk, repaired with stately stride to the spot where Cedric Tregarthen, the trader, had shortly before concealed his wife (Puhi-Huia). With screams of terror, Mrs. Tregarthen fled. In and out the fern clumps she ran, doubling like a hare and giving the Nameless One—it must be confessed—quite as much work as he desired, before, tripping over a tangle of fallen fronds, she is captured.

“What is your name, woman?” demands That One in awful tones.

“Arabella,” says Mrs. Tregarthen. (I can offer no explanation of Arabella.)

“To-night you shall sleep in my oven. Even now my slaves prepare a couch in readiness. I shall eat you”—smacking his lips—“with potatoes and kumaras.”

“Spare me,” cries the wretched Mrs. Tregarthen, falling on her knees, her long curls hanging all about her.

“Then disclose the hiding-place of the pakeha.”

“Never! He is my husband.”

“Then prepare to die,” says the ariki, drawing an imaginary mere from his girdle.

At that moment I became aware of a sudden change in Puhi-Huia's face. Gibbering fear had given place to embarrassment, mingled with curiosity, and her gaze became concentrated on a point behind me. Turning sharply, my eyes fell on a boy, slightly bigger than myself, who had evidently been a silent and interested spectator of the scene. He was a well-proportioned lad, broad in the chest, slender and lithe at the hips, and carrying himself with a quiet dignity which impressed me. His hair had been carefully dressed, and was decorated with two tail feathers of the huia bird. No tattoo marks disfigured the clear bronze of his skin, which, save for a belt and maro¹ of embroidered flax, was uncovered by clothing. On his

¹ Maro = apron.

breast hung a valuable jade jewel of high antiquity, and a light spear of red tea-tree wood was poised in his right hand. For a while his dark eyes scanned us expectantly in silence.

"Proceed," he said gravely at last.

"Enough," I murmured, sheepish and sulky; "it was but a game."

"Good," he replied in the same tone. "Proceed with the game."

"It is finished, friend," I replied, and, noting the comical discomfiture in Puhi-Huia's face, my sulks vanished in a consciousness of the absurdity of the situation.

But the newcomer showed no sign of sharing in my amusement; on the contrary, his face took on an added cast of severity. "Does Tregarthen's woman consent to reveal the hiding-place of her lord?" he inquired, turning to Puhi-Huia.

The young lady disclosed the red tip of a derisive tongue, but, thinking better of this impulse, shook her head half pettishly, and glanced at me for further instructions.

"It remains, then, for the Great One to uphold his word," said our inquisitor, with much deliberation. "By this time the slaves will have the oven in readiness. Let us go forward."

Puhi-Huia's face at this proposal was such an absurd mingling of defiance, derision, and downright dread, that I burst out laughing; for though the boy's manner impressed me wonderfully, it certainly did not inspire me with fear.

He looked at us with the same unruffled attention for a long while in silence. "Pakeha," he said at length, "it would be well to remove from your face the lines which simulate greatness, for I perceive that you are but a light fellow."

I had forgotten my facial embellishment, and as, thus reminded, I involuntarily raised my hand to the marks,

no doubt I presented to his eyes an extremely foolish appearance.

"You are the Little Finger of Te Waharoa," he resumed after a pause. "Of you I have heard. But Te Waharoa is dead, and what is the value of a little finger with no body? Dost thou know who I am, pakeha?"

"I suspect," I replied, looking at him with greater interest, the idea coming to my mind even as I uttered the words, "you are Rangiora, the son of the Great One and the Spider's Web."

He made a motion of assent, and for the first time something approaching a smile lightened his face. It was gone in a moment, and he regarded me with the same meditative attention as before.

"It is not well that a little finger should be without an owner," he recommenced; "therefore, pakeha, I have a mind to adopt you into my household. How say you?"

The day had gone by when the thought that I was a white man could lend to me a sense of shame and inferiority. So assured was I by this time of the greatness of my race that I could even smile at his proposition. "Not so, Rangiora," I said. "Presently the Maori will be a part of the household of the pakeha."

His face shadowed at this, and I saw his hand tighten its grasp on the spear; but he restrained himself. "As for the girl," he continued calmly, turning his gaze from me to my companion, "she shall become one of my wives."

Puhi-Huia shook her curls defiantly at this pronouncement, but it seemed to me that something in the nature of admiration lurked in the gaze she turned on the bold youth.

"She is the daughter of the Thumb," I retorted, my voice expressing the annoyance I felt. "There is no chief in New Zealand who is of rank sufficient to marry the daughter of the Thumb."

"Marry!" exclaimed Rangiora contemptuously. "I am of the blood of the gods. It is not for such to choose their consorts among the daughters of Thumbs. Listen, pakeha! Soon the Great One will rise and drive the white men into the sea. He has said it. But this maiden I shall keep to be of the company of my slave wives."

"He could no more do it," said I stubbornly, incensed at this insult to my beloved foster-sister, "than you could drive me from the ground on which I am standing."

"Do you say so?" he cried, grasping his spear and poising it for a thrust, while his eyes gleamed lightning upon me.

What might have been the result of the conflict is not easy to say. Beyond my fern stalk, which could scarce support its own weight, I had nothing to offer against his spear; but I was as angry as he was, and Puhi-Huia had already begun to show her small teeth and hook her fingers in readiness for assault. But ere we could move, I heard a sound of running feet and hard breathing close at hand. On the instant our enemy's countenance underwent a complete transformation. His wrath turned to mortification, and, grounding his spear, he stood listening to the receding steps.

"Kakino!"¹ he whispered viciously; then, after another moment of intense silence, "Yet, if my friend will help, I may still escape."

So pleasantly was this spoken that all recollection of our dispute melted on the instant from my mind. "What is it?" I whispered in return.

"My attendants," said he. "I have avoided them, but now they come. Hark! It is the other." The sound came closer this time, and we all held our breath as the searcher threaded the maze but a few yards from our

¹ Kakino = literally "bad," but often, as here, with the force of an invective

hiding-place. Presently we heard their voices calling to one another in the distance.

"Good!" exclaimed Rangiora, drawing a long breath of relief. "Yet presently they will return," and he looked vexedly about him.

For my part, I glanced inquiringly at Puhi-Huia, who nodded swift assent to my unspoken question. Evidently the slights she had received were forgotten, and her interest, in our new acquaintance had returned to her full force.

"The Spider's Web would allow me freedom," said Rangiora, "but the Great One forbids it. My soul is sick with longing for liberty. Even my slaves have more freedom than I. Scarce an hour have I moved unhampered, and behold, they are upon me."

There was such melancholy in his musical speech that Puhi's eyes glistened suspiciously, and slipping her hand into mine, she pressed my fingers entreatingly.

"Then," said I, "if I should show you a spot where the Great One and all his company might search for you in vain, will you promise to keep the secret sacred?"

"Aye, truly," he responded, his eyes sparkling with eagerness. "That shall be a bond between us two—nay, the three of us, for ever."

Stepping to the densest part of the surrounding brake—and the more quickly that the voices were plainly again drawing nearer every moment—I pulled forth a bundle of dry bracken and revealed a low tunnel which had been toilsomely hacked through the growth; it represented, indeed, the labour of many odd hours over a period of months and even of years. At a signal from me, Puhi slipped into the opening, Rangiora followed, and I myself—drawing the dead fern back into the opening behind me—brought up the rear. Hardly were we concealed from view, when the two attendants burst into the little opening which had been the scene of our encounter with Rangiora.

I may as well explain here that this spot, both on account of its proximity to the beginning of the tunnel and certain natural advantages it possessed, had long been, and continued long thereafter, the stage of our mimic dramas.

By a common instinct we all three remained still, listening to the voices of the men, as they paused to discuss the situation. That they were in much trepidation, and inclined to be angry with one another, was evident from their speech.

"If harm have befallen him," said one, "we are as good as dead men. The Great One will not listen to our excuses. With him it is ever the blow before the word."

"What harm can have befallen him, stupid fellow?" cried the other, in exasperated tones. "The young dog"—at this I felt my companion's body grow rigid, and laid my hand on his arm to restrain him—"is but eluding us, as many times before he has attempted to do. But see," he broke off in changed tones. "Here are his footmarks. And here he has thrust his spear-butt into the ground."

"There are more marks," said the other voice, after a pause, during which they appeared to be searching the ground. "These are not the footprints of Rangiora alone, but of other children also."

"The marks are fresh," returned his comrade; "they cannot be far distant," and, inspired with fresh hope, the searchers again moved away from our immediate neighbourhood.

"Forward, Puhi," I whispered, and the three of us crept on on all fours through the green darkness. So artfully did the course of the tunnel take advantage of the nature of the ground, that though its protection was often lost to us by the growth coming to an abrupt termination, yet this occurred generally in hollows of the ground or in close proximity to other thickets, and we were thus able, at small risk of detection, to traverse the hill-top almost from

side to side. Our progress, no doubt, was toilsome, and even painful, for though the springing fronds gave easily beneath our bodies, the remnants of the cut stems were by no means so compliant, and to this must be added the discomfort of the dust which rose continually from the spores and set our eyeballs smarting.

However, Rangiora endured it all without a murmur. Indeed, when we emerged from the first of the tunnels, though his limbs showed numerous scratches, his face shone with a delight and excitement that transfigured him. "When I sit in the place of the Great One," he declared, as we hurried after Puhi-Huia into the second tunnel, "I shall come here every day."

On we went, still hearing occasionally the voices of the two men, calling shrilly to one another across the hill-top, until at last we emerged altogether on a sheer cliff above the river.

And now what was the objective of this journey? What was the secret so carefully guarded, that such a work as the tunnel seemed to our childish minds the only fit approach to it? If we had desired to conceal ourselves from real or imaginary enemies a burrow in the brake would have sufficed. What was the reason, then, of all this prodigious labour? You also, reader, shall be taken into the secret.

Though a strip of grass edged the ravine, the growth through which we had passed was so dense that all risk of our discovery seemed to be at an end.

"Look, Rangiora," I said, drawing him to the verge of the precipice; "it would not be easy for a man to descend this cliff and live."

"It is an evil spot," he replied, drawing back with a shudder; "even a rat could find no foothold for the venture."

"Yet," said I, "a girl can do it," and I nodded to Puhi-Huia.

She ran from us some twenty yards along the edge of the chasm, to where a low and twisted tree spread its branches over the depths. Catching at one of these boughs with her hands, she swung out over the ravine, and in the next instant vanished from sight.

Rangiora rubbed his eyes, as though he doubted the correctness of his vision.

"It is nothing," I said, to reassure him. "Come!" and together we hastened towards the spot where we had seen Puhi-Huia disappear.

The thing, as I have said, was simple enough. Beneath the tree a great limb of rock projected over the ravine, and from this point a sort of giant stairway ran down to the bank of the river. True that many of the steps were so huge that the return, if not the descent, was only to be accomplished with difficulty, yet it was nowhere perilous, and four men might have moved abreast on the narrowest part of it. In addition, a wild growth of vines had broken out on the landward side of the crag, and so tough were they that a full-grown man might have trusted his weight to them in confidence.

Rangiora laughed in relief when the solution of the problem was revealed, and from that moment rank was forgotten and he became but a light-hearted boy.

"See the curly hair," he exclaimed, admiringly, pointing to where Puhi-Huia, her curls blown outward by the wind, stood looking laughingly up at us from a rock fifty feet below. His eyes flashed a challenge into mine, and, without a word spoken, we sprang down the rough stairway. That was the only time I succeeded in accomplishing the feat more quickly than Rangiora, and even then I had to bruise and batter myself to do it, so that when I reached Puhi-Huia my head was ringing like a wire, and I had to cling to her to prevent myself from falling. Only the fact that I was familiar with the descent and knew when to

leap, when to slide, and when to seek the assistance of the vines, saved me from defeat, and, as it was, he was on my heels as I reached the winning-post. From this point the descent, though still unaccompanied by much danger, became more difficult, and I had a compact with Puhi-Huia that she should never attempt it alone. Several of the rock steps were high, and two or three of them overhung the landing-stages so far that care was needed in negotiating them. With Rangiora's assistance, however, these difficulties were surmounted in record time, and we stood at length on a broad ledge of limestone rock, with the river thirty sheer feet below.

"What now, Little Finger?" demanded the young chief, looking down. "Truly the last step is a mighty one."

"Nay," I said, laughing, "that is not our road. But first I have the word of Rangiora that he will not reveal our secret?"

"I have given it," said he, and, drawing himself erect, he placed his hand with a proud gesture on his hair. "By my sacred head, I will tell no one," he said solemnly.

The action was impressive, and I hesitated no longer; so, sharply recalling the attention of Puhi-Huia, whose large eyes were fixed, to the exclusion of everything else, on the face of our new acquaintance, I led the way along the ledge.

A few yards brought us to our destination and, putting aside the creepers which hung like a huge curtain down the cliff, I ushered my guest into THE CAVE.

CHAPTER V

CAVE AND RIVER

THE portal was some ten feet in width at the base, narrowing as it extended upwards until, at twenty feet above the ledge, it became a mere crack. A yard or so above this was an opening, more or less round in outline, over which no creepers grew. It was plainly visible inside, resembling the rose window of a cathedral and illuminating the cavern, which must else, owing to the thick curtain of greenery, have remained in total darkness. Though I have often, from various points on the river and its banks, endeavoured to catch a view of the window in the cliff, I never succeeded, and I doubt if, in fact, it would be possible to do so.

Had Nature intended at once to reveal and conceal the wondrous work with which she had amused herself for thousands and even tens of thousands of years, she could not have selected a better spot than that in which she had placed the opening, whereby the glories of the cavern were displayed to our awed and enchanted vision. From the impenetrable obscurity of the roof, far overhead, huge stalactites flashed into the light, while beneath them, like sheeted ghosts, the stalagmites rose from the cavern floor. Of all sizes and the most fantastic shapes, they gleamed around us, as though the spirits of the dead, summoned from their long sleep, were bursting the chrysalis of the tomb. Here the curve of an arm seemed to develop and thrust aside its covering even as we gazed. Here a shadowy

face was on the point of breaking through some distorting veil. The suggestion of something human in the figures was everywhere. The spacious cavern might have been the workroom of a sculptor who had dimly conceived humanity and sought to fashion from a knowledge of human history the physical characteristics of a being his eyes had never seen. Pain and passion and adoration, sin that writhed and horror that transfixed, the tragedy—yes, and the comedy of humanity struggled for expression in the glittering stone. Nor did the perception of this aspect of the cavern make a heavy call on the imagination. Vanishing on minute examination of the isolated growths, it blazed forth in astonishing strength as the eye swept the scene and took in the solitary figures, the singular groups, gaining in force as they receded into the distance where the light failed.

It was, then, to me no matter for surprise when Rangiora, after taking a few steps forward, stood rooted to the floor, looking around him with perplexed and fearful eyes. "Kehua (ghosts)," he muttered under his breath.

Puhi-Huia, in whom use had inspired confidence, was moving calmly forward, when the young chief caught her by the arm. "Wait, Curly One," he whispered. "These are things of evil. It is well that we disarm them by an offering of cooked food. Stay you behind, and the Little Finger and I will undertake the matter."

"They are but stones," said I doubtfully, for his air of confident knowledge, and the distrust he showed, impressed me in spite of the better information I possessed. "Water drips from the roof and builds up the stone."

"How shall water build up stone, foolish one?" he replied. "Rather will it wear it away till the rock becomes but sand. These are kehua, though of a form unknown to our wizards. Let us, then, offer them cooked food, and they will disappear." As he spoke, he drew from his

girdle a small carved box containing kao, a sweetmeat prepared from the kumara, and, advancing cautiously towards the nearest stalagmite, thrust it forward to the full length of his arm. Nothing happened, and he proceeded to the next and the next, until some half-dozen or more had received an offer of the dainty.

"The stone is in the water," said I, with restored confidence in the explanation my father had given me. "The water dries away but the stone remains."

"Truly it is strange," said he; "yet now I remember to have heard the wise men say that there are places in the country of the Arawa where the clear water builds terraces of stone, yet the water is hot; and that is a thing conceivable. Maybe these kehua are but slaves, and have no power against the descendant of the gods"; and as this explanation occurred to him, he restored the box to his belt and looked proudly round upon the sheeted shapes.

By this time we had advanced well into the cave and come in sight of the most singular object—or rather, assemblage of objects—it contained. As Rangiora gazed about him with a new-born contempt in his gaze, I saw his eyes rest on this and the perplexity return to them. We had come to a spot where, between us and the walls of the cavern, hung a curtain of stone, here depending in opaque folds, and here a fretwork so delicate that the eye penetrated, as through a veil of mist, to that which lay beyond. There were times when, owing to the position of the sun in the heavens, the scene portrayed on that mysterious stage stood forth as under the rays of limelight; there were others when it was peopled with uncertain shadows, yielding nothing definite to the vision, and others again when beyond the curtain all was indecipherable darkness. What scene was it that was being enacted there continually in the changing lights? What meant the crowded, struggling figures, the kneeling girl, the empty gourd? Even as we

turned our eyes upon it a shaft of sunlight struck the window in the rock and fell, not through the curtain, but behind it.

I heard Rangiora draw a sharp breath, and my eyes followed the direction of his outstretched finger. "Puh-Huia!" he exclaimed.

It was true. Though I had never before noticed it, there was in the kneeling figure, with the long curls flowing round its drooping head, a suggestion of my foster-sister come to womanhood. At her knees, and plainly the object of her regard and the source of her despair, was a shapeless thing, more than half shrouded from view by the heavy folds of the curtain. In her hand was an empty gourd. So much was clear and unmistakable; it needed no pointing out; it was there as surely as if the sculptor had begun a representation of those very objects. But the rest was enigmatic, changing its meaning with the shifting shadows, and capable of numerous interpretations.

"The war-party is engaged," said Rangiora, in a musing voice and as though speaking to himself. "See how one side sways back and the braves are hurled over the hill. One by one their spirits seek Te Reinga."¹

"True," said I, "and yonder is the war-chief. His wounds are many, and a fierce thirst consumes him."

"Why dost thou not give him water?" Rangiora asked softly, turning his gaze on my foster-sister.

Puhi-Huia's eyes were bent on the mimic stage, and it was evident that her imagination had responded to the drama we created. "The gourd is empty," she said dreamily, "and there is no water in the pa."

Rangiora bent his head in agreement. "Stubborn has been the fight," he said; "water and food are gone, and the long night approaches. Behold, it is here."

As he spoke, the ray of sunlight, which had passed im-

¹ See note, p. 400.

perceptibly downwards from the head of the girl to the shapeless thing at her feet, vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

Even after the lapse of nearly seventy years that scene remains undimmed. But now I see not only that mysterious play in stone slowly unfolding itself to our imagination, I see also, as a not less vital part of the drama, the three children who gazed. Puhi-Huia, her eyes full of strange dreams; Rangiora, resting on his spear, his face half sad, half exultant; and myself, observant of all, my mind shifting rapidly from the light of knowledge to the twilight of superstition. There was to come a time, many years afterwards, when the recollection of our words on that day should rise to startle and confound me. Was it merely by blind chance that we blundered on the Hour That Was To Be? Or can it be that the curtain was really rent to our childish vision? Even to this hour I can offer no opinion. The thing must remain for ever inexplicable. For an hour or more we remained in the cave, exploring its wonders to the last limits of the light. Beyond this we did not venture. I noticed, as we wandered farther and farther from the opening, that Rangiora, despite his suggestion of the slavish origin of the kehua, got out his little box, and once, when he happened to bump against a stalagmite, the offering was presented with such celerity that I could not forbear from laughter.

"Wait, pakeha," he said severely. "We may yet come on the chief at whose obsequies all these slaves were sacrificed."

Hitherto we had spoken in whispers, but now, probably because his pride was offended by my mirth, and he wished to lend emphasis to his reproof, he spoke aloud. Ere his words died away, a sound of fiendish laughter broke crackling overhead and, a moment later, such a rumble of sounds, having in them the articulateness of speech, shook

the heavy air, that, startled beyond measure, we caught Puhi-Huia between us and rushed frantically for the light ; nor did we pause until we had gained the sunlit ledge without.

"Now, Little Finger," cried Rangiora breathlessly, and with a note of triumph in his voice, "what say you of your stones ? Do stones, then, speak with voices which shake the earth ? And as regards the kao, I have remembered that no fire has touched it, being dried by the heat of the sun alone. Had it been truly cooked food, you would have seen your stones vanish away."

But I had had time to recover from my panic, and an explanation of the sounds occurred to me by no means in accordance with this view of their supernatural origin. "It was but the echo of our voices," I said ; "for, if you notice, my laughter was repeated first, and the sound of your words followed in proper order."

I could see he was convinced of the truth of my explanation as soon as he heard it, but none the less he affected to treat the solution with contempt. "When I come here again," he said, "it shall be with cooked food in my hands, and so shall we clear the cave of the evil things that inhabit it. But, alas ! I must go. Should my attendants return to the Great One and report that I am lost, then, of a certainty, he will kill them, and though that is not in itself an undesirable thing, still I doubt not that others, and perhaps worse, would be appointed in their place."

I too was reminded of the object of our journey, which in the excitement of our new companionship had escaped me, and together we made the ascent of the stairway. On the way Rangiora chattered of his scheme for exorcising the cave ghosts, though I am convinced he had by this time as little belief in the supernatural character of the stalagmites as I had myself, and merely sought a convenient pretext for a repetition of the delights of the morning.

However, we arranged a time for the expedition and a form of signal to be scratched on the ground at the tunnel entrance, which would indicate the previous passage of either of us.

"Farewell, Puh-Huia," he said, as we stood again on the spot where we had first encountered. "To you I give my box of kao. For you, Little Finger," he continued, turning to me, "I have at this time no gift. But wait. Rangiora does not forget. E!" he drew a deep breath into his lungs. "Sweet have you made my hour of freedom."

As I write, the little carved box lies on the desk before me. But where are he who gave and she who received? Can it be that it is given to this inanimate thing to stand the test of time, while those beauteous spirits perish for ever from the universe? Surely it is but the blindness of our senses that withholds their future from our vision. If death ends all, it is because it transcends all.

We heard his voice calling shrilly on his attendants far away in the bush before we ourselves resumed our journey, and as presently it was responded to by answering cries, it was evident that the men had continued the search and not returned with direful news to Te Huata.

Except for the events of one day, I need only speak generally of our visits to the cavern at this time. Our father's frequent absences made for great irregularity in the hours devoted to study, for naturally Roma could not in any way be looked upon as a substitute. The mere gabble of our voices, repeating such lessons as had to be committed to memory, appeared to stun her, and her manner was never more fearfully humble than when the air of the cabin reeled from a broadside of conjugations or the like, discharged point-blank from the grammarian's guns. But though the lessons themselves were irregular—often, indeed, springing on me unawares in some such fashion

as, "It will be well for you, Cedric, to really understand the reason why Orion is visible in the summer time and not in the winter. Always examine yourself for loose knowledge, my boy, and tighten the nuts. Now we will suppose, etc., etc."—yet there were fixed hours for preparation, and our freedom at other times depended on a proper observance of them.

On the days when father was at home and we were allowed to enter the store and assist in the unpacking and shelving of goods, neither Puhi-Huia nor myself cared to be absent from home. Omitting altogether the delight of being with him, there was always something new and strange in the packages, the use of which had to be explained and exemplified. But there was hardly a day of the others that did not find us, in company with Rangiora, in the cave of the stalagmites. The young chief, after alarming his attendants again and again, had ended up by making a compact with them, the which they were the more ready to enter into for the reason that the manner of his disappearances remained to them inexplicable. On their part they agreed, for so much tobacco paid and delivered—I am afraid it was purloined from the stores of Tuku-tuku, the Spider's Web, who was a great smoker—to grant him liberty for a period, not exceeding a certain number of hours; he on his part agreeing to supply such tobacco and to surrender his person to their guardianship on or before the time stated.

How many and merry were the hours we spent together in the cave and its approaches, and later on—when, after much labour, we discovered a practicable route—on the banks of the river beneath. Usually Puhi-Huia was with us, but not always, for as time went by there grew up in her a desire to help her mother, which was only slightly deterred from its purpose by the obstacles the humility of the lady put in the way of her doing so. The charm

of the cooked food was duly tried on the stalagmites, needless to say without effect, and Rangiora had eventually to admit that, however improbable my theory of their origin, his was at least as much so.

It was many months before we came to a complete understanding of one another, and, despite the fact that we liked to be together and were continually plotting towards that end, there were occasions when only the presence of Puhi-Huia saved us from coming to blows. He had never, since the hour of our first encounter, cast a slight on the birth or standing of either of us. To Puhi-Huia he was uniformly gentle and courteous, watching her footsteps with a care that sometimes seemed to me unnecessary, and to savour of a feminine weakness of character. Of our parents also he always spoke with respect, and, however he might choose to conceal it, his admiration of the great trader evidently knew no bounds. But on the general question of the two races we were often at variance. Often have I heard him repeat his threat that the Great One would drive the white men into the sea.

"He couldn't," said I, on one occasion. "No man could. It is too late."

"The Great One is the greatest chief in the Land of the Long Light.¹ What he says will be done."

"There is a greater than he," I rejoined. "Captain Hobson is greater."

"I speak not of white men," he replied coldly. "The white men are but the subjects of the Great One."

"That is not so," said I, hotly. "This is the country of the white men, and all in it are alike subjects of the Great Queen."

"Who made them her subjects? Is she of the blood of the Maori gods? Away with such foolishness! Shall one possess that one has never seen?"

¹ "Land of the Long Light" = New Zealand.

"Why not?" I retorted. "Sovereignty was granted to her by the chiefs themselves. They ceded the country to her in the treaty of Waitangi, and so it is written."

"That cannot be," he said, though I noticed a gleam of uneasiness in his eyes. "Even the chiefs dare not give away the country of the race."

But I was full of detail, for it was but an affair of yesterday, and only the night before my father had explained to me the whole business. "But it is true," I added, "that the Great One has not signed. He alone, of all the chiefs of New Zealand, refuses to confirm the deed."

"Said I not so?" he exclaimed triumphantly. "And by what right should the pakeha claim sovereignty over this country? Have they fought with and defeated the tribes? Nay, that were a task beyond their strength. What have these recreant chiefs received for bowing their necks to the White Queen?" There was real curiosity in his tones, yet I could see that the matter was not so new to him as he attempted to make out. "Have they bartered the lands of their ancestors for iron and tobacco?" ●

"It is not the land," I explained, somewhat repenting myself of the spitefulness of my previous mood. "All that the Maori possess remains their own. It is but the mana¹ which has passed from many equal chiefs, who now make war upon and destroy one another, to the White Queen of the English, who will hold the land in peace. As there are many tribes of the Maori, so are there also of the pakeha. To my tribe, that of the English, the chiefs have given the right to hold the country against the others, that else might come here in thousands and put your race to the sword. It is for the protection of their people against such inroads that the chiefs have ceded the sovereignty of the country to the English."

¹ This word includes not merely authority, but the recognition of it.

"It is well, Little Finger," replied Rangiora, with fine irony, "but who will protect us from you English? Truly there may come a day when the people shall cry to the Great One, 'Wise wert thou, and foolish were we. Rise up now and drive these, our protectors, into the sea.' And on that day I shall stand at his side, the war-girdle about my loins, and great shall be the fight and long, and many shall pass to Te Reinga before the end is accomplished and Maori or pakeha possess the land in peace."

Well do I remember the manner in which these bickerings were brought to an end.

It was a grey morning in the late autumn or early winter. The crops were safely harvested, and though the fear of raids was fading from men's minds by reason of many years' immunity, the stockades had received their usual annual overhauling. The year's work was at an end. Rangiora and I had discovered a spot in the river where eels abounded and could be easily secured. With a supply of fish-hooks and lines, and a tin of freshly dug worms for bait, we descended from the ledge to the river bank. Hitherto Puhi-Huia, in spite of continual pleadings, had not been allowed to make the perilous descent, but this was so great an occasion that we yielded to her importunities, and down she went, clinging to the vines and dropping from point to point with such agility, sure-footedness, and self-confidence, that the glow of pleasure with which she had received our permission had not faded from her eyes when she stood safe and sound on the margin of the river.

We were soon established at the spot we had chosen and had our lines cast out in the water. There were unexpected difficulties, however, in the way of successful sport, and the greatest of these were the weeds and snags with which the river bed was encumbered.

Twice I had succeeded in drawing in my line only after long-continued effort, and on the third throw it became so

firmly entangled in the growth that there was nothing for it but to follow the hooks in person under the water. We were all expert swimmers and divers—what child who is given the opportunity to become so is not?—and no remark was made as I threw off my maro and slipped down into the water. I found that the line itself was caught, as well as the hooks, and by the time I had freed this from the black, splintered branch round which it was looped, I had to return to the surface for breath.

Again I dived, and, finding the original cause of the trouble, quickly set matters to rights. To do so I had crouched down, thus throwing my weight on the hinder part of my feet, and I was dimly conscious of one foot sinking through the weeds and mud and pressing tightly against some hard object on the river floor. I say I had only a dim consciousness of this, attaching no importance to the fact; what, then, was my horror when I rose to find that my heel was securely wedged in some cleft of a submerged tree, and that by no effort could I dislodge it. I have been near to death before and since, but that stands out as the moment of my life when the Grim Spectre drew nearest.

What ages seemed to elapse before the water above me lightened in a sudden flash and Rangiora sank down beside me! And yet it must have been brief indeed, for I had not yet discharged the breath with which I had filled my lungs on descending. He looked at me with eyes that bulged, fish-like, made a futile effort to release me, and, to my dismay, vanished upwards. I could endure no more: my head seemed swollen to bursting-point, and, with an explosive cough, a long train of diminishing bubbles burst from my lips. It seemed but a dream after this to find him again beside me, to feel his arm close round my waist and wrench at me—he had in fact but returned to the surface to fill his lungs for the effort—to know that at last he had

torn me free from the grip of death. I remember my foster-sister's white face and horror-stricken eyes, and I remember being dragged above the reach of the water ; and then, for a time, I remember no more.

Rangiora broke his compact with his attendants that day, and no doubt an extra supply of Tuku-tuku's tobacco was required to set matters right between them, for it was some hours before I was sufficiently restored to venture on the climb to the ledge. He was very silent on the return journey, scarcely taking his eyes from me ; offering his aid with a sort of shy embarrassment at the difficult spots, and plainly rejoicing when I accepted it. As for Puhi-Huia, she clung to my hand, starting now and again as from a dream, and looking wildly into my face. When we had parted from Rangiora and had entered on the bush track, she put her arms round my neck and shed a few rare tears.

"How kind and brave is Rangiora !" she said.

"Kind and brave," I answered, gulping down some obstruction in my throat.

"If he be not truly descended from the gods," she continued, "at least he acts as if he were."

I fear I had sometimes thrown doubt on Rangiora's theory of his origin, but I was completely silent now.

It was three or four days before I saw him again. In his eyes was still that intentness of reflective regard with which he had last looked at me. He was very silent and quiet in his manner, and for a while we sat on the ledge outside the cave without exchanging a word. For my part, I was seeking to overcome the shamefacedness of boyhood, which prevented me uttering my thanks in words, and at last I so far got the better of it as to mutter in a voice half sullen, half shy : "I shall never forget it, Rangiora."

"Nor I," he answered.

"I mean what you did."

He said nothing to that.

For a while we talked aimlessly of various matters, touching at length accidentally on something that suggested the old quarrel of the races. Suddenly he stopped in what he had been on the point of saying, and turned towards me.

"Little Finger," he said softly, "let that talk die between us for ever. In the hour that I found you in the water my eyes were opened, and I saw how deep the plant of friendship had rooted itself in my heart. Had you died then, to me also death had been welcome. So it is with me. I pray that it may be so with you also." His musical voice had taken on a bewitching charm, and for a moment my eyes were dim, so that I could scarcely see him. "Let us forget that we are of two races," he continued, "and remember that we are also of one—the race of mankind. Never shall my hand be raised against you and yours. Let not your hand be lifted against me and mine. Let us rather make between us the compact of the Tatau Pounamu,¹ and if in the years to come one of us should reopen that which is shut, on his head be the loss and the shame. Behold, the Greenstone Door is closed."

"It is closed," said I.

Ah me!

¹ See note, p. 400.

CHAPTER VI

I VISIT THE PA OF THE CANNIBAL CHIEF

ONE day there came a missionary to the pa. The children ran to me with the great news as I returned weary from one of my expeditions.

"A pakeha?" I asked.

Yes, truly, and a pakeha of sorts. The head of him was like the full moon when it was at full, and around his face the hair stood off white, as it were the moon's rays. He had gone to the whare of the chief, and Te Moanaroa had become a Christian.

"What, already?" I demanded, stopping short, for I had been but some three hours gone, and up till that time there had been no word of the missionary.

A Christian, they assured me. Moreover, all were to become Christians. The ceremony of the water was for the next day, and men had gone forth with their dogs and guns to secure pork. Let the Little Finger smell around. That was the odour of the bread which the women were cooking for the feast. Truly the religion of the Christians was a good thing, except, perhaps, the ceremony of the water; and of that they desired to question me. The whereabouts of the pakeha? He was in the whare of the Thumb.

Pushing through the chattering crowd, I made my way hastily in the direction of the house. In the square a goodly number of natives were assembled, evidently keep-

ing watch on the building in which the missionary was then secluded. Taking no notice of their calls to me to stay and discuss the business, I passed round to the back of the store and entered the living-room of the house.

My eyes fell first on the figure of Roma, squatting on the ground in safe proximity to the doorway, her face showing a mingling of embarrassment and terror. The missionary was seated on a stool, with my foster-sister at his knees. His appearance was very much as the children had led me to anticipate, and so remarkable to me was his bald head—a thing quite new in my experience—that at first I had eyes for nothing else. What tragedy accounted for that absence of hair? The only idea that occurred to me was that he had been scalped in battle; but the whiteness and smoothness of his head seemed against the ghastly supposition. However caused, he bore his disfigurement cheerfully and with an apparent unconsciousness of its extraordinary nature which I could not but think affected.

“Ah!” he exclaimed in English, in a pleasant, booming voice, as his eye fell on me. “And this is your son, Mrs. Purcell?”

“Ai—kahore,”¹ replied Roma, blushing and wriggling, and looking pleadingly in my direction.

“Now, which?” asked the missionary, smiling. “Your name, my boy?”

“Cedric Tregarthen, sir.”

“Then kahore.” Suddenly he looked at me more attentively. “Yes, yes,” he said musingly; “it is there, in the eyes and the poise of the head. I knew your father, Cedric. His name also was Cedric.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Faithful unto death. For such are they who put their trust in the Lord. Their seed shall not be lost, for He shall

¹ Ai = yes; kahore = no.

shelter it. He shall snatch them from the jaws of the tiger and bring them into safe places, that they may grow and multiply." Suddenly his voice boomed forth, till the tins on the walls rang and Roma made a spasmodic movement nearer to the door. "Who made you, Cedric?"

"God, sir."

"And who saved you, Cedric?"

"Jesus, the Son of God, sir."

"It is well," he said, his voice softening magically, and, drawing Puhi-Huia, of whose intense regard he could not have remained unconscious, into the circle of his arm, he playfully squeezed the lobe of her ear. "It is well. The Almighty causes springs to rise even in the desert, that so, in His time, it may be turned into a garden. But I fear your schooling will have been neglected, Cedric. Can you read?"

"Yes, sir."

"Read to me then."

I went to the well-filled bookshelf and, taking out the first volume that came to hand, opened it and began to read. It happened that the book was Montaigne, and my eye lit on that fascinating passage which pictures the writer at work in his tower. I had read a few lines, and was myself becoming absorbed in the theme, when something caused me to look up, and never shall I forget the expression of astonishment that sat on our visitor's countenance.

"Juste ciel!" he exclaimed. "Comment avez-vous appris le français?"

"De mon père, m'sieur."

"Votre père! C'est impossible. Ah!" (relapsing into English), "it is Purcell, the trader, of whom you speak?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have heard much of him from Mr. Wake. A man of great force of character and much learning, yet——" and

he looked at me doubtfully. "Nevertheless, he has explained to you the great truths of Christianity."

"Yes, sir."

"We will have a church here, Cedric, and, in the fulness of God's time, a school." He rose to his feet and began energetically to pace the whare. "For a quarter of a century we have laboured, preparing the soil and sowing the seed, and weak has been the growth. But the hour of better things is at hand. What say you, boy? Will you become an instrument of the good work—a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ? Will you carry the rongo pai¹ into the dark places?"

"I don't know, sir," I said.

"How!" he cried, stopping short and regarding me with looks that for the moment were almost fierce. "Not know, when it may be your immortal soul turns on the issue."

"It is for my father to say," I replied.

"True," he agreed, vexedly, scratching his chin. "Obey such as are placed in authority over you. Yet must the will of the Heavenly Father take precedence over that of the earthly. Well, well! These are early days for a discussion of the matter, for as yet you are but a child." And again his countenance relaxed into its habitual expression of masterful benevolence.

It was late that night before my father arrived, hurried home by the news of his guest's arrival, and, as I had been in bed and asleep for several hours, I was not a witness to their meeting. It was evident to me early in the following day that some hitch had occurred in the carrying out of the missionary's proposals. The ceremony of baptising the converts was to be deferred and—more regrettable still in the view of my informants—preparations for a feast had come to a standstill. A spirit of restlessness pervaded the

¹ Rongo pai = the good word.

village ; work of every kind had ceased ; the square was thronged and—more significant still—the tohunga moved to and fro among the people, here and there exchanging a word with a chief of rank, but for the most part absorbed and silent.

My father had bidden me leave the whare immediately after breakfast, while he himself remained in close confabulation with the missionary. As I wandered hither and thither, pausing now and again to listen to what was being said, I gathered two facts. The first was that Te Huata had vetoed the proceedings and called upon the chief of the hapu to dismiss the missionary ; the second, that Te Moanaroa was likely to disobey him. Presently a party of armed warriors marched with swinging gait through the crowd and enclosed a portion of the square in front of the chief's dwelling. Into this enclosure passed the chiefs, singly or in small groups, every man wearing his thrummed and embroidered cloak of flax, his plume of feathers, his ear-pendant and family jewels. In perfect silence they seated themselves out of earshot of the grim-visaged guard, and then my father and the missionary were sent for.

For the best part of three hours the grave deliberations continued, and then, as silently as they came, the chiefs and guard withdrew. A conclusion had been reached, and presently it was known to the expectant people. A middle course had been decided upon. Te Moanaroa would neither yield to nor disobey the commands of his ariki. He would attempt—as many times before he had attempted, and often successfully—to bend the will of the Great One. With this object he himself, together with the missionary and a party of chiefs, would proceed to Pahuata, there to reopen the matter in the presence of the ariki. A swift runner was dispatched to announce the coming of the party, and preparations immediately began.

My father had already returned to the whare when I

entered. Roma was busy spreading the table for the midday meal. The missionary had remained behind with Te Moanaroa, but I gathered from the haste made by my foster-mother and her nervous glances at the door that he was momentarily expected. With the assistance of Puhi-Huia, she had set on the table a loaf of bread of her own baking, a boiled leg of pork and a dish of butter-coloured kumaras, forming together a picture very pleasing to the eye of a growing youth. But all thought of the viands was at once dispelled by my father's first words.

"Cedric," said he, "on your bunk you will find a suit of clothes. Dress yourself quickly, my boy, for you are coming with us."

Never were words more welcome. Waiting for no second bidding, I flew to the bunk and, in a few minutes, stood arrayed in the costume of my race. Very stiff and uncomfortable, but extremely proud I felt as I returned to the table, where the missionary was already seated.

"Eh bien, monsieur Tregarthen!" said he. "À quelque chose malheur est bon."

"Tut!" said my father, laughing. "Everything is for the best, Mr. Hall. If we succeed, you will have accomplished more than you attempted."

"True," replied the missionary, gravely. "In the hands of the Lord evil itself becomes an instrument for good. Now, as regards Te Huata, or the Great One, as they call him——" and the pair turned to a discussion of the ariki.

Excited as I was, I think Puhi-Huia was even more so; but it was all on my account. When dinner was over, I rose from the table and was rushing off to air my new importance in the eyes of my brown-skinned companions, when she caught my hand and drew me to a standstill.

"Cedric," she began, "you are going to the pa of the Great One."

"Yes, Puhī," I replied, hastily kissing her cheek, for there was a mournful look in her eyes, and I wished to console her for having to stay behind. "I wish you were coming too, but you see it is too far for you, and the party will travel quickly."

"It is not of myself I am thinking, but of you," was her response. "You will keep beside our father, Cedric, and be good. Remember how terrible is the Great One, and that if you should anger him he will kill you. And shall you see Rangiora?"

"Yes, I hope so."

"Now, see how thoughtless you are; for you must not speak to him."

I nodded agreement, recognising the wisdom of her words.

She looked at me wistfully from her great brown eyes. "You will not have the care of me to hold you back, Cedric, when you are tempted to do something reckless. Oh, I wish to-day and to-morrow were gone and I were saying the haeremai instead of the haerera!"¹

To me the expedition appealed so entirely as an affair of pleasure, that I was taken aback at the serious light in which she evidently regarded it; and I put my arm round her and, mingling the hongī² with the kiss, promised to be cautious and keep with my father, and so, to some extent, consoled her. Not many hours were to elapse before I had reason to ask myself if there had not been in her distrust some premonition of the danger I was to incur.

It was a dull afternoon in the early winter as our large party descended the hill and, in single file, struck the forest trail. In front, marched twenty young warriors, armed with gun and tomahawk; the chiefs, with my foster-father, the missionary, and myself, followed; the tail of the procession being brought up by some fifty or sixty persons of

¹ Haeremai = welcome; haerera = farewell

² Hongi = the act of rubbing noses.

both sexes, who attended mainly out of curiosity, but also, I expect, in the hope that the Great One's ovens might contain some unwonted delicacy to reward their exertions. The track was in good order, for so far we had had but light showers, and the tireless lope of the travellers quickly left the miles behind.

Though, for my part, most of the journey had to be accomplished at a trot, I was so hardened by use as to be incapable of fatigue. Indeed, had I yielded to my inclinations, I should have broken rank and joined the merry fellows in front, or even fled on in advance. I could tell from the cries which floated back to us that the young braves feigned to be on the war-path. A log across the path was "a flying fish crossing the bows of the canoe," and him, as in duty bound, they slew to propitiate the god of war. I saw the marks of their tomahawks as I stepped over it in my turn. But when we had crossed the familiar fern-hills and entered the shadow of the sunken bush, the chief's voice was raised in reproof, and thenceforward the advance was made in decorous silence.

Black darkness had fallen before we left the forest trail and set our feet to the precipitous hill, on the summit of which stood the pa; but there was still some lingering daylight outside, and I gazed with interest and awe upwards to where, etched on the gloomy sky, were the palisades, the balconies, and the lofty watch-towers of the Great One's citadel. As our party came into view of those on the hill-top, we could hear the cries of the sentinels, followed by the booming notes of the great slab drum, and the weird wail of the teteré.¹ A strange silence fell on our ranks; even the masterful voice of the missionary ceased, and naught was to be heard save the deep breathing of the visitors as they scaled the steep mountain side. At times the pa was lost to sight, shortly to become visible

¹ Teteré = war trumpet.

again, each time nearer at hand. Lights or flares gleamed through the palisades.

At length the last slope was breasted, and, rounding the pekerangi,¹ we stood beneath the massive carved gateway of the pa. A challenge was given and replied to, and, with a waving of shawls and welcoming shouts, we passed into the fortress. In a moment our hundred was inextricably mingled with the occupants of the pa. Noses were being rubbed on every side. Ancient crones wailed, sang, and wept over the new-comers. Confused by the pandemonium of sounds and the flaring lights, which seemed to mix the whole village up in a devil's dance, I suffered myself to be dragged hither and thither, catching sight every now and then of a familiar face, but always, as I sought to reach it, finding myself the victim of a fresh hongi. At length, however, it became clear to me that I must use sterner measures, and, kicking myself free from an old woman, who was smothering me, under the impression that I was the second son of her daughter, who had died in child-birth, I flew into the midst of a bevy of girls, watching the scene with open mouths.

"Pah!" said I, wiping my face on the sleeve of my new jacket. "Kakino te hongi."²

"Ai," agreed one of my new companions, a merry-looking girl, some years older than myself. "Kapai te hongi pakeha. I show you."

The whole band laughed and closed round me. Well, it was certainly an improvement on the form of greeting from which I had just escaped, and I bore their kisses with such resignation that presently they tired of the sport. But they did not turn me over again to the mercies

¹ Pekerangi = the outermost palisade.

² Hongi = the Maori method of rubbing noses. The hongipakeha (European hongi) is, of course, kissing. Kakino te hongi = Confound the hongi.

of the elder people. On the contrary, they kept me in their midst, and it was in their company that I ate the evening meal and spent the rest of the night. As for my father and the missionary, I saw them no more until the next day, nor, despite Puhi-Huia's warning, did I feel the need of them. So pleasant and free from care, indeed, was the time, that I found it difficult to realise that I was veritably shut up in the stronghold of the dreaded cannibal chief.

After supper, a few of the elder girls, among whom was Pepepe, the merry-eyed maiden, smuggled me into the whare-matoro, a beautiful carved building, long since destroyed by fire. It was crowded almost to the doors. I noticed some of our own chiefs among the audience, from which I concluded that the discussion of our business had been deferred till the morrow; but I saw no sign of the missionary or my father, nor of Te Moanaroa. In vain also my eyes traversed the crowd for a sight of my friend Rangiora.

Young people were in the majority. The elders who were present took little or no part in the proceedings, though their frequent coughs of applause showed them to be interested observers of what was going forward. No doubt, were I to come upon such a scene now, my impressions would be vastly different from what they were at that time. To my young eyes the place was a blaze of magnificence, and so my memory recalls it. The wealth of beautiful cloaks, the embroidered vests, the rustling waist-mats, the black and snow-white plumes, the jade ear-pendants and tikis,¹ even the calabash caps and dog-skin wigs of the old women, were objects of grandeur, and, as I watched the supple figures of the young girls posturing in the dance, every one dressed in her best, her face brightened with red ochre—even Pepepe,

¹ Tiki = an ornament worn on the breast.

beside me, had managed to coax enough from her elder sisters to cause her round cheeks to glow with a spot of vermilion—it seemed to me that the climax of the beautiful had been reached.

There was one girl from whom I could not take my eyes, so perfect was her acting. She rolled her body at the hips, so that it seemed on the point of falling in two; her twisting shoulders were independent of the rest of her; she withdrew her nose and waved her ears; she grimaced and squinted and thrust out her tongue: there was not a young man in the room whose heart could withstand her appeal of perfection. And when she ceased dancing, and her face stilled, as water that has been shaken, and her smiling eyes looked down on the audience, a deep sigh of admiration filled the building. Dance and song followed in swift alternation, till at last every one found a seat and there was an expectant pause. Here and there the girls whispered and laughed among themselves, while the young men, their faces wearing an air of embarrassment, nudged one another, as though each sought to incite his neighbour to action.

At length one of the latter arose, and amid a complete silence said, "I intend to have Ka Heihei."

The dancing-girl stood up in her place and, turning her bright eyes on this would-be lover, replied, "Your head has not been at the knees of the tohunga-ta."¹

A laugh greeted the reply and the papa-tea² retired.

A silence followed, broken at length by the voice of a girl, who stood bravely up among her companions. "I take Tiki for mine," said she.

There was no answer, and a cough of approval confirmed the engagement; the happy girl sinking back in her place to receive the more special congratulations of those around her.

¹ Tohunga-ta = the tattooer.

² Papa-tea = one not tattooed.

So the game, that was no game but deadly earnest, went on, with increasing boldness as the young people gained confidence. Many a youth and maiden who had carried desire secreted in their hearts for a twelvemonth, put their fate to the test that night, to win or lose on a word. Refusals there were in plenty; soft and equivocal, carrying no sting when they fell from the lips of the men, but frequently of a shrewish quality in the mouths of the girls. Ka Heihei, the dancer, was by no means to be won from her state of single blessedness. Many, whose hearts she had fired, claimed her, only to sit down discomfited beneath the gay raillery of her replies.

At last a youth of eighteen sprang to his feet and said, "My pet shall be the Butterfly."

Pepepe, sitting close beside me, looked blankly around her, then, finding every eye turned in her direction, and realising that she was really intended—that this glory of a public asking had suddenly lifted her, a child, into the dignity of womanhood—rose shyly to her feet, and, looking at her young lover, answered: "Perhaps next year I shall reply to you, but at this time I am too young."

That her reply, however disappointing to her suitor, met with general approval was evidenced by the cough that followed her words.

"And will you marry Ruka next year, Butterfly?" I inquired, later on in the night, as I settled myself in the wharepuni.¹

Pepepe laughed. "If you will have me, pakeha," she said, "I will wait for you. Should you like me for your wahine?"²

"Alas, how unfortunate!" I replied with much seriousness. "I like you greatly, for though you did set the girls on to kiss me, you have been nice to me since; but Puhi-Huia is my singing-bird."

¹ Wharepuni = sleeping-house.

² Wahine = wife.

"I have heard of her that she is beautiful," said Pepepe ;
"but she will never be your wife."

"Why not ?" I asked.

"Because she is your foster-sister. Some day another girl will come. She may not be so lovely as Plume of the Huia, but the newness of her will bewitch you, and you will think of Puhi-Huia no more."

I heard this assertion with incredulity, but could think of no argument strong enough to controvert it.

Pepepe drew her blanket about her. "Tell me a story, Little Finger," she commanded.

I rather prided myself on my powers as a story-teller, having earned some reputation on that score among the children of my own village. "What shall it be about ?" I asked, mentally turning over my repertory.

"A love story of the pakehas," said the Butterfly, sleepily.

I had been reading lately some of the delightful tales of Musaeus, and I chose that one in which the lover seeks to take advantage of the story of the family ghost, to elope with his bride. I had reached that thrilling moment when the hero, glowing with love's ardours, steps into the waiting carriage and clasps in his arms—not human youth and loveliness—but the grim spectre itself, when, pausing with the intention of heightening the effect, I was made aware by the deep breathing of my bed-fellow that she had fallen asleep.

CHAPTER VII

THE WAR OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

It was scarcely daylight the next morning when I awakened my sleeping companion and proposed that she should take me on a visit of exploration through the village. Pepepe was by no means willing to be aroused, and it was not until my repeated pinchings had brought her into a state of complete wakefulness that she yielded a half-wrathful, half-laughing assent to my desires.

We stepped over our still slumbering companions, and, making our way silently between the two rows of sleepers, were soon drawing the fresh air of the morning into our lungs. The first thing that attracted me, bringing me to a standstill, was Pirongia. There above me, brightening with the growing day, fully within reach at last, he stood. Nay, I was already on him. The great rounded summit of the pa was in fact a terrace on his mighty flank. I had but to descend a slope of some sixty or seventy feet and I was at the foot of a scarp which seemed to plunge uninterruptedly down from his towering pinnacles. With a sigh, I turned my eyes from the sight. The mountain bewitchment was on me. How I longed for freedom and the companionship of Rangiora! Together we would dash down the slope and plunge into the gloom of the forest, not to emerge again until the last peak was surmounted and Pirongia lay vanquished beneath us.

But it was not to be, and I turned my eyes elsewhere. To the westward, beautiful Kawhia glistened like a pearl

in the morning light. To the southward, league on league, over hill and valley and plain, stretched the ancient territories of the tribe; their fisheries and hunting-grounds, their villages and cultivations, their battlefields and burial-places; and there was not a hill or gully, a ridge or creek, scarce even a stone or mighty tree that was not named and consecrated in the poetry, romance, legends, or history of the descendants of the Tainui voyagers.

Although Te Huata's pa was not, as I have said, so populous as our own, its palisades probably enclosed a greater area. The marae was considerably larger and, while our houses were crowded together, so that the pathways were narrow and tortuous, there was about Pahuata an air of spaciousness. The communal buildings were large and beautiful, with a wealth of splendid carvings inside and out; and though I was unable to obtain a glimpse of the interior of the great food-stores and armoury, I know from later observation that in the latter was a store of arms and ammunition, native and European, sufficient in the hands of resolute men to establish the prestige of the Great One in the farthest outposts of New Zealand.

For all the ariki's deep-seated hatred of the pakeha and the exclusiveness of his policy, he had nevertheless profited greatly by him in the matter of guns and ammunition. The musket was the one thing of pakeha manufacture which seemed entirely good and desirable in his eyes. He merely tolerated the axe and tomahawk, refusing to acknowledge that they possessed any advantages over the stone tools which had served the Maori nation so long. Admitted that their use resulted in a gain of time: until the arrival of the pakeha his people took no heed of time, for they belonged to eternity, and, moreover, quick work was bad work, as witness the slovenly output of the wood-carvers as contrasted with that of their forefathers.

Very picturesque and pleasant to me was the appearance of some of these houses, as they were glimpsed among the foliage of karaka and titoki, for in our pa there were no trees, nor could we have found room for them in our land-hungry village. There was, however, among so many things which seemed to me admirable, one unenviable characteristic. Death had evidently been busy. Time and again in our wanderings I would pause, and, with lowered voice, inquire the name of some chief, whose sealed cabin, painted with red ochre, denoted his departure to Te Reinga.

"Who dwelt here, Pepepe?"

"Tawari—an aged man; the uncle of the ariki."

"And here?"

"Ah! Go not so close. It is the whare of Te Ao-hikuraki, the tohunga."

At length we came on the outskirts of the village and in view of a solitary hovel on the edge of a dense thicket. There was something in the appearance of the place which suggested that it was not entirely uninhabited, and I was on the point of putting a question to my companion, when from the doorway emerged a figure so startling that the words were struck unuttered from my lips. The creature was human in shape, and from its flat dug it was possible also to determine its gender; but there was little else of humanity to teach me that she was of the race and sex of the blooming creature beside me. Naked, but for a dirty rag round her loins, smeared with grease and red ochre, her iron-grey hair uncombed and tangled about her shoulders, emaciated, with fearful finger-nails on her claw-like hands, muttering and mowing to herself as one possessed—she formed altogether a sight so horrible that it needed not Pepepe's restraining hand on my arm, nor the threatening gestures of the creature as she caught sight of us, to cause me to turn and flee frantically, as for my life. I

must have nearly crossed the village before I ceased running, and it was only on making the discovery that Pepepe was laughing that I did so.

"What was it, Pepepe?" I asked, when I had found sufficient breath.

"Te kai tango atua (the village undertaker)," replied Butterfly. "If you had stayed awhile, we would have thrown earth at her, and then, indeed, she would have been a sight to remember. But have you no undertakers in your kainga?"

"We have one," I assented, "but he is sometimes tapu and sometimes noa.¹ Why don't your tohungas make her clean?"

"Of what use?" asked the blooming Pepepe, indifferently. "There are still many old people to die, and soon she would be tapu again."

By this time the village had begun to stir. Women were blowing up the cooking fires. A band of slaves, carrying utensils, mostly of European manufacture, set forth to replenish the store of water from a spring far down the hill-side. One of the company—a fair-skinned, copper-haired girl of seventeen—smiled pleasantly at me as she went by with her laughing and chattering companions. I was to remember her pretty, pathetic face for a dreadful reason.

Pepepe left me presently, in response to a shrill call from the cook-houses, her place being taken by a number of boys, whose faces as they regarded me expressed a mingling of racial antipathy and curiosity. I write "racial antipathy," but how much is it, in truth, a matter of difference in language? No sooner did they discover that my Maori was as fluent as their own than they accepted me joyously into their merry company. It might have been expected that the youth of a race of warlike cannibals, capable of

¹ Tapu = sacred, not to be touched; noa = cleansed from tapu.

acts of ferocity and treachery, would themselves be of a fierce and intractable disposition. But this was very far from being the case. So far, indeed, that I cannot in all my memories of them recall one instance of a blow struck in anger. Gentle, affectionate, and good-tempered, they stand in strange contrast to the boyhood of Anglo-Saxondom, and in still more anomalous relation to their own manhood, as exemplified in many a fierce intertribal raid.

With eager delight, they led me on a second round of the pa. This time my attention was called to the lofty angle towers, and fighting platforms, with their heaps of boulders ready to be hurled on besiegers; to the huge drum, a slab of matai wood, between twenty and thirty feet in length, hung between two trees; to the weather-worn heads, many with the white skull showing through the tattered scalp, crowning the posts of the palisade. Quick-witted, bubbling with sly humour, my merry escort haled me hither and thither, until at last I had seen everything, and we stood together in the lofty gateway by which I had entered the pa the previous night. A party of about a dozen men was coming slowly up the steep track in single file.

"Nga tohunga, pea,"¹ said a boy of my own age, who stood beside me. "They are coming to bewitch the Little Finger."

Though this suggestion was received with mirth, I noticed that the merrymakers drew back as the procession began to file through the gateway; but, desiring to show that I was not afraid, I stood my ground, and probably for a similar reason, or because he saw that I did so, the boy who had spoken stood with me. The priests filed by in silence, looking neither to right nor left, their dew-wet cloaks drawn closely around them. The last of them

¹ "The witch doctors, I expect."

walked several paces behind the others, and, muffled as he was, I recognised him at once for Te Atua Mangu.

Now in my allusions to this man I have omitted so far to mention that, either from prenatal malformation or the severing of some sinew, his left foot was deformed. The toes appeared to be contracted and drawn in beneath the instep, so that he moved with a peculiar limp. As he approached, so strong was my instinctive dread of the man, that I had to call to my aid all the pride I possessed to enable me to hold my ground. What then was my horror when I heard my companion, to whom the tohunga was evidently quite unknown, say, "Here comes Hoppy, with the bird's claw!"

The words were not loudly spoken, being intended for my ear alone, but any hope I may have entertained that they had failed to reach the consciousness of the wizard was dispelled in one flash of his black and glittering eyes. Drawing back the maligned foot, he spurned towards us a cloud of dust. A strange paralysis came over my limbs. With all the will in the world to fly, I stood rooted to the ground. The dust arose, and, as though influenced by some sharp air current, flicked past me, sending a violent shock through my body. For a moment all around me was dim; then, with restored vision, I saw the back of the tohunga as he limped calmly on his way, and at my feet, foam issuing from his mouth, the rash boy whose insulting words had met with such instant and terrible retribution. Not I, but he, had fallen under the makutu¹ of the tohunga.

As I shall again have occasion to refer to this incident, I will only say now that the boy did not die. After lying for many hours unconscious, he regained the use of his limbs, but not that of his mind. Little better than an idiot, he lived for many years to evidence the powers of

¹ Makutu = witchcraft.

the magician, to whose spell he had fallen a victim in his boyhood.

Sobered and frightened by what had occurred, I began to bethink me of my promise to Puhī-Huia and how little regard I had paid to it. Since my arrival in the pa I had seen nothing of my father or the missionary, and I reflected that, for all I knew to the contrary, they might be at that very moment roasting for the chief's breakfast. Looking about for a fellow-villager, I soon learned enough to set this fear at rest. The Thumb and the missionary were royally housed in a whare adjoining that of the Great One. Yonder was the house. They had been courteously and hospitably received, and though the ariki had as yet refused to discuss the object of their visit, the speaker was in high hopes that consent would be given to the establishment of Christianity as the tribal faith, and that the interrupted feasting would go forward.

Repairing to the whare indicated, I found my father and Mr. Hall straightening their toilet after a night's repose in their clothes.

"Stay with us now, Cedric," said my father, after listening to an account of my doings. "It may be that you will carry away with you from to-day memories that will be of deep interest to other men in days to come."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Hall. "Though the end is assured, and New Zealand will come to God as surely as the sun will rise on the morrow, yet the passing of heathendom in any part of it marks an historic moment. Listen and watch, and it may chance that some day you will record your memories for the improvement of men in less strenuous times, and to the glorifying of God's goodness."

Well, he was a true prophet in one respect at least.

The day had opened cloudily, but by eleven o'clock the sun was shining, with but an occasional passing cloud to temper his beams. The Council was accordingly held in

the open square, a few steps outside the door of the chief's house. A party of armed warriors first took up their position in a great square, and into this the high chiefs walked, seating themselves in a double row. It was some time before they and the priest-tohungas were assembled, for everything was done in a grave, leisurely fashion; but at length my father, keeping watch at the door of the whare, decided that we might appear without loss of dignity, and we accordingly took the places reserved for us at the end of the row, where also was seated our own chief and sponsor, Te Moanaroa. There was a low murmur as we appeared and, as many eyes were bent on me, I took it, rightly or wrongly, to allude, probably with disapproval, to my inclusion in the party. Scarcely were we seated when figures appeared in the doorway of the ariki's whare, and at once the splendid bronze statues that surrounded us sprang to life. Whirling up their weapons as one man, they proclaimed the Great One with cries of—"I te taniwha! I te taniwha!"¹ subsiding immediately afterwards into their previous rigidity.

Te Huata, when I thus first set eyes upon him, was a man little past the prime of life. Though his skin was fairer than that of the generality of his race, his face was so heavily lined with the scrolls of the tohunga-ta's chisel as to appear at a distance almost blue-black. His thick hair was drawn through a ring and, being again caught thereunder, formed a large knot or pad on the crown of his head. His eyes were small, fierce, and rat-like, and there was something also of the rat in the fang-like character of his eye-teeth, which gleamed forth on any quick movement of his mouth. For the rest, he was a man of great stature and apparently huge strength. As he seated himself, and his eye, falling down the length of the row,

¹ The taniwha was a greatly-to-be-feared fabulous monster. By this title the guard proclaims the arrival of the dread son of the gods.

lighted and lingered on my person, I was aware of a quickening in my heart-beats. Would those terrible teeth ever meet in the tender flesh of my body ?

A moment later my pulse quickened again, but this time from a very different cause. A fresh figure had appeared from the chief's whare, and, with a careless glance round, cast itself on the grass at the feet of the ariki. It was Rangiora, my comrade. Behind him walked a woman, whom I regarded with interest, for in her person I had little doubt I saw the famous Tuku-tuku or Spider's Web, the mother of Rangiora, and the equal by birth of the proudest chief in New Zealand. She was not a good-looking woman ; her high features, thin cheeks, and heavy brows gave her, indeed, an aspect of the grimmest, yet there was something in her appearance that pleased me. Perhaps it was the breadth and serenity of her forehead ; perhaps, and more probably, it was her eyes—clear, wide, and full of intelligence. She stood awhile, her eye roving meditatively from face to face down one rank, dwelling a moment on our little group at the bottom, and returning with the same thoroughness along the other : then she crouched slightly behind her lord, her lips convenient to his ear.

It seemed to me that her coming gave satisfaction. A breath of relief swept down the rows, and the grave faces of the chiefs relaxed something, yet only a little, of their gravity. Well known was the power of Tuku-tuku over the fierce nature of her husband, yet it might be that on this occasion the Web of the Spider would be all too frail to restrain him ; therefore all men waited with furrowed brows the opening of the proceedings.

At length Te Moanaroa raised his heavy bulk from the ground and, taking a few steps forward, a gentle smile on his wily countenance, began his address. Honeyed and flattering words fell from his lips, but, watching the dark

face of Te Huata, I saw that on this occasion they failed of their effect. The body of the ariki swayed impatiently, and at last, losing that restraint which courtesy dictated, he raised his closed hand.

"Chief," he cried bitterly, "pleasant are your words as the rustling of leaves, but afterwards comes the south-west gale."

"Alas!" responded Te Moanaroa, "the words of the Great One are just, yet lay not on your friend the responsibility of those things which are, in truth, the acts of the gods. Our religion teaches us that in the beginning were Chaos and Night. In the Void was Darkness. Darkness of the Heights, Darkness of the Depths, Darkness of the Right Hand and the Left Hand, Darkness Palpable and Darkness Drawn Out—unnumbered Ages of Darkness. Then, as the dawn creeps upward on to the earth, so came the Light. The Light Above, the Light Below, the Light on the Right Hand, the Light on the Left Hand, Light Palpable and Light Drawn Out—uncounted ages of Light. And as it was in the beginning, so is it also to-day. Higher and higher, deeper and deeper spreads the Light; and higher and higher, deeper and deeper retires the darkness. Bend the tree to the earth, and its point will turn upwards to the light. Is man less sensitive than the tree? Can we command the light, that it come no further? Shall we say to it—Enough, we prefer the darkness? Now this is the meaning of the coming of the white men, of the coming of the new religion—not in disdain of the ancient gods, but a brightening and enhancing of the light. Here stand we, in the land of the shadows, the place that divides: shall we go back into the regions of Darkness, or forward with our pakeha brothers into the realm of Eternal Light?"

A murmur of delighted admiration followed this noble speech. Stern faces relaxed, and cries of "True, true, O Te Moanaroa!" were audible on every hand. But

there came no softening to the countenance of the ariki. Darker and fiercer it grew, as he read in the faces of his tribesmen the doom of his policy of exclusion. As a thunder-cloud he brooded over the scene—a cloud from which the bolt might flash to burn and destroy. There was, however, one party of some dozen individuals whose faces had remained unmoved by the eloquence of Te Moanaroa. Seated close together on the right hand of the ariki, beneath a withered tree, whose decaying branches and few sere leaves might be regarded as typical of their own fallen estate, the priests of the ancient religion observed the scene in silence. Now, as the countenance of Te Huata grew momentarily more ominous, I saw one of the tohunga lean forward and speak a few words into the ear of the chief. Instantly the Great One's features relaxed and his eye-teeth gleamed in a slow and cruel smile.

"Beautiful are your words, O Te Moanaroa," he said; "yet beauty may mislead us. What of this Light? Is it a safe thing? True that the tree lifts its arms to the sun and the sun forbids it not. The moth flies also into the flame. The flame endures, but where is the moth?"

The speaker paused, and a movement of uneasiness showed that the telling point had gone home.

"You speak of the religion of our fathers, O chief: let us continue to speak of it. Tane created his creatures in many likenesses. For some the light, for some the darkness. Well may it be that for the white man the light is good, and for the Maori, evil. What of the bat and the owl, the things that move by night? So has he made the Maori for the shadows. Well have you said—Go not back into the darkness. That is a wise saying. But go not forward also into the light, lest as the moth you be consumed, and it is asked of the Maori, Where is he?"

The result of this speech was to place the discussion in

a position of "as you were." Metaphor struck against metaphor, and both fell pointless to the ground. Nevertheless, it was already evident in which direction lay the desires of the majority, and, as speech followed speech, this was rendered still more manifest. Speaker after speaker concluded with the suggestion that the pakeha should be heard: so far they had been as birds beating the air; let the flight now begin. But Te Huata, the thunder-cloud back on his face, maintained a sullen silence.

Meantime Mr. Hall, never, I should imagine, a man capable of the exercise of much patience, had been kept in his place with difficulty. Mystical and elusive as was much of his own language, he had no sympathy for like qualities in the oratory of the heathen. Their allusions to Light and Darkness as spiritual beings seemed to him so much meaningless jargon; nor could he appreciate their indirect method of arriving at reasoned conclusions by a system of values in allegory and metaphor. I could hear him pishing and pshawing under his breath for a long time before the inevitable happened.

"Let us be practical," he said, not for the first time, to my father, who was humming softly to himself, as was his way when things troubled him. "A few plain words will clear away this mental muddle."

"Wait," repeated my father. "Your battle is being fought for you. They have their own methods, and 'muddle,' I can assure you, is very far from being descriptive of their state of mind. More than a mere religious belief turns on the outcome of this meeting. If they break Te Huata now, he is broken for good and all."

But at length the limit of Mr. Hall's endurance was reached. Taking advantage of a temporary lull in the discussion, he sprang to his feet, and, regardless of the malign gaze and closed, upraised hand of the ariki, launched his barque on that sea of talk.

It would have been better had he spoken in English, for I am bound to say that he had but a plain, Anglo-Saxon knowledge of the vernacular. The beautiful native speech fell crippled from his blast, as I have seen the gay finches of Australia fall before the shot-gun. Surprise, disappointment were manifest in the faces of his adherents, and a corresponding triumph gathered in those of his opponents. It had one good effect, however ; Te Huata, after a moment of hesitation, lowered his hand, and thenceforward he sat in grim and scornful silence. So far as the gist of the missionary's speech went, it could probably not have been bettered. He confined himself to the truths of Christ's teaching, which appeal inevitably and at once to all human kind. He gave them that message of love which has captured the imaginations and may yet, in some far-off future, control the actions of man ; and so glorious was his theme, that even his broken and often absurd speech could not entirely destroy, however much it detracted from, its beauty. Alas ! He closed with a grammatical blunder so comical that even those who had best caught the inwardness of his meaning could scarce forbear to smile. And, as was to be expected of a nation of practised orators, it was this defect in his speech of which his opponents took advantage.

Rising from his seat among the tohunga, Te Atua Mangu limped into the arena.

"So much for the Light," said he. "Now let us return to the Darkness."

This tremendous irony, coming on the suppressed mirth of the previous moment, proved irresistible. The gravity of the gathering was upset, and it abandoned itself to merriment.

"Well have the gods of Darkness served the Maori nation," continued Te Atua Mangu, when peace was restored, "and carefully should we look and examine ere

we abandon them and take to ourselves others that are new. And in this matter it is simple for the pakeha to help us. Living eyes have seen the wonders wrought by our gods through their mediums, the tohunga. Have any seen the wonders of Christ through his pakeha priest ? ”

“ I do not profess to work miracles,” said the missionary. “ The day for miracles has passed.”

“ Not so,” was the answer. “ We are still close to the gods of our fathers. But I have heard of your Kraitī (Christ). Is it not said of Him that He walked upon the sea, and that He changed the water into wai-piro ? ”¹

Mr. Hall made a gesture of assent, smiling, though uneasily, the while, for there was a methodical forward movement in the reasoning of the Black Spirit which compelled attention.

“ We have water,” said the tohunga, easily ; “ will the pakeha oblige us ? ”

“ I have already said that I am no worker of miracles,” responded the missionary, impatiently. “ In the days of Our Lord, darkness covered the earth, and it was necessary that He should reveal His deity to the few in some special and faith-compelling manner.”

“ We are told that here also is darkness,” persisted Te Atua Mangu. “ If Kraitī be indeed God, let Him show us a sign. It is said of Him that He raised up the dead. We have no dead at this time, but Death is a spirit who comes at call. If the pakeha will it so, a slave shall be killed, that he may show the power of his god over Death. Or—should that be too troublesome a proceeding—behold this tree, withered and decayed, all but leafless ; it would be a simple thing for his God to give back to it the vigour of its youth. Command it, then, that it be restored.”

“ Enough,” said Mr. Hall. “ Neither to me nor any man is such power given.”

¹ Wai-piro = any alcoholic liquor.

“ Say you so, pakeha ? ” returned the wizard. “ Speak of your own gods, for you shall learn that Tane is yet a living Spirit, who hears the prayers of his children.”

As I write these lines, I can see now, what escaped me at the time, that the discussion had been carefully manœuvred to the point which it had now reached. The priest of the Light had confessed his inability to work miracles : he of the Darkness was now to show his powers. On the issue hung for the moment the fate of the new faith.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE—AND OF DARKNESS

As Te Atua Mangu thus indirectly accepted the equally indirect challenge of the missionary, he turned towards the blighted tree and, with a movement of his arm, indicated that all should retire from its neighbourhood. The command was quickly obeyed, the priests moving off with dignified steps, while such of the chiefs as considered themselves in danger from the spreading branches or the falling shadow, lost no time in seeking a safer resting-place. In a very few moments the magician was alone. His first act was to throw from him his cloak, when it was seen that, with the exception of a small apron of coarse flax, he was naked. With slow steps he began to encircle the tree, moving spirally towards it until at last he reached the trunk. From this point he stepped outwards in a straight line, arriving at length on the circumference of his circle, his face towards us and his eyes looking—or so it seemed to me—directly into mine.

All this time his lips had been moving, but, with the exception of an occasional hissing whisper, I could hear nothing. Now, however, as he came to a standstill, these indistinguishable sounds grew and took to themselves the articulateness of speech. It seemed to me that I caught here and there the sound of a familiar word, yet always in a strange, incomprehensible connection. Were a snake endowed with the gift of speech, in some such hissing and

whistling voice might he speak ; and as the eyes of a snake, glittering and piercing, were the eyes that looked into mine and held me constrained, fascinated, and incapable of movement. How long this lasted I have no idea, though I know it was long enough for the growing up in my mind of a belief that if it continued many moments longer I should die. I had surely reached the limit of endurance, when, with a sudden flick of his hand, he released me.

"Behold !" he cried, and pointed a long forefinger to the tree.

Believe me or not, I tell you what my own eyes saw. It was green—yes, from the first branch to the last—with all the vigour and luxuriance of its prime, and beneath it, in place of the network of lights and shadows, was a pool, a blot of inky blackness.

"Makutu ! Makutu !" ¹ cried the assembled chiefs, springing to their feet and scattering in all directions over the square. I was dimly conscious of the missionary's eyes, round and incredulous ; of my father, stroking his chin and reflectively watching the excited crowd ; of many persons passing and hustling me as they went ; of a voice raised in sharp command ; and then—with gaze back on the wondrous miracle of the rejuvenated tree—of hands laid suddenly and with violence on my two shoulders. With a start I came to myself and looked quickly around.

I was in the grasp of the guard.

"Thumb," it was the voice of the ariki I heard, "said I not to you years ago that in the day you brought more pakeha to the village you should go to the oven ?"

"Some such threat you made, O Great One," returned my father, "but——"

"Then listen," went on Te Huata. "Begone, you and the White Man who barks like a dog. Your lives I give

¹ Makutu = witchcraft.

you. Have a care that you bring no more of your tribe within reach of my mere, for next time you shall not escape. As for the Little Finger, he shall pay the penalty, so that the spoken word of an ariki may not become as the babble of a child, carrying no significance."

My father stood speechless. So suddenly had the position come about—whether in accordance with some prearranged plan or springing in savage completeness on the opportunity—that he might well be pardoned if he were for the moment at a loss how to act. Between him and me stood the guard, armed and ready for any emergency. Our own party was almost weaponless; moreover its members were scattered, and thus did not even provide the advantage of consolidated, if ineffective, resistance. The single word "Patu"¹ from Te Huata's lips would have ended the matter then and there, and presently an opening in the crowd permitted me to discover the reason why it remained unspoken. Tuku-tuku had intervened on my behalf. Her lips were at the ear of her lord, and though he did not refuse to listen, I took but little hope from the glare in his sombre eyes.

It was at this moment, while my fate hung in the balance, that Rangiora, for the first time, deliberately turned his eyes upon me. During the early part of the discussion he had lain face downwards on the grass, idly plucking the shoots and taking, apparently, no interest in the proceedings. Later on, when Te Atua Mangu had begun his incantations to the gods, he drew himself into a sitting posture and moved backwards on his hams, until he was on the side of the ariki most distant from the tree, and here, so far as I know, he had remained until the moment of which I speak. At last, however, he rose, scanned me deliberately, yawned, stretched himself, and retired with an air of boredom into the whare.

¹ Patu = strike.

Never shall I forget the shock of misery and disillusionment which came over me as I watched what I conceived to be this heartless desertion. Yet it had one good effect: it stung my pride. Cold anger took the place of the helpless fear with which I had hitherto met this crucial moment of my life, and, stiffening my muscles, I resolved, since resistance was out of my power, to meet death with the calmness fitting to one of my race.

"Do not continue to hold me, friends," I said, turning to my captors. "Kill me or release me. Have you no fear that your fingers will fall off at the joints and your hands wither at the wrists, that you handle the Little Finger of Te Waharoa in this fashion?"

Heaven knows what instinct in extremity it was that inspired my brain to speak these words, but, as the event proved, none could have been better chosen. The two young toa¹ dropped my arms, as though they had suddenly become red-hot. I waited for no better opportunity, but, darting through the legs of the guard and dodging a spear-thrust with every breath I drew, I made as directly as I could for the spot where I had last heard my father's voice. But I was not to escape so easily. There were many famous runners among Te Huata's young men, and time and again I had to sheer away from my objective, with the result that I drew ever nearer to the seat of the Great One. He had spoken the word now. "Patu! Patu!"² he cried, while from his eyes flashed lightnings of wrath. Yet as I darted breathlessly hither and thither, dodging between the legs and under the arms of my would-be captors, feeling the tips of their fingers on my body at every other moment, I became aware that my friends vastly outnumbered my enemies. From all sides came cries of encouragement.

"Run, Little Finger, run! Ah, good indeed! He is

¹ Toa = braves.

² Patu, patu = strike, strike.

an eel for slipperiness. Away, you great fellow ! Behold the hunter of mosquitoes ! To thy right, Little Finger ; to thy right ! ”

Yet however great their sympathy, it did not go to the length of actively espousing my cause. Do what I would, every moment seemed to bring me nearer to the spot I most sought to avoid. But it was not, I think, until I espied the claw-footed wizard rise, mere in hand, to join the number of my hunters, that I lost heart. Him I dreaded above all created beings, and it was no longer with quick eye and, defined purpose, but in sheer mad panic, that I turned and, with a blood-red light in my eyes and a loud buzzing in my ears, dashed, as the stag at the hill, straight on my fate, as personified in the figure of the ariki.

Then, at that supreme moment, my purblind eyes caught sight of Rangiora again. His figure danced and brightened and grew dim, yet it was truly he, and no figment of a distorted imagination. No longer bored and indifferent, but with eyes full of fire and passion he gazed upon me. On his shoulders was a cloak of white dog-skin, a royal mantle composed of the tails alone, and very splendid and noble he seemed to me, even in that moment of despair. I could see his lips moving, but no word reached my consciousness ; nevertheless, I swerved towards him. He was my last hope. If he could not save me, at least it was something to die in the arms of a comrade.

But now I had eyes no longer for the young warriors at my heels, and, even as I changed my direction, I was aware of a grip of steel on my shoulder and, whether the result of a push or a blow, I lay an instant later at the feet of the ariki.

I had done all that there was in me to do, and, being no longer capable of terror, or indeed of any other emotion, I lay still and waited the death-blow. The seconds passed, and still I lay there unharmed. A strange silence had

fallen on the multitude. I could hear a voice, dimly reminiscent of my father's, yet new and terrible to my ears. What it said I could not hear for the beating of my heart and the gasping of my exhausted lungs. But at last the power of thought returned to me. Wonder filled my mind. I lifted my head and looked into the face of the Great One. His eyes, lit with blood-red lights, were staring into the distance beyond, and on his face was an expression of rage and fear so awful that it looked rather like some devilish carving than the countenance of a human being. Instinctively my eyes followed the direction of his concentrated gaze, and there I saw a scene so strange that without further thought of the danger in which I had so recently, and perhaps still, stood, I rose to my feet and stared with all my vision.

In the centre of the guard, holding them arrested at a distance of a few yards by the threatening of his upraised hand, stood my father. In his right hand was a heavy pistol, and—his temple against its muzzle—stood Rangiora, clothed in his cloak of dog-skin, his head erect, his eyes calm and steadfast. No hand of violence rested upon him. He stood there, as my heart plainly told me, in the cause of a friendship that passed the love of woman, offering his life for mine.

What had occurred was this. Seeing no better means of saving me in my desperate situation he had entered the whare, seized the loaded fire-arm, and placed it, together with his own body, draped in the royal cloak, as became one of his proud lineage, in the hands of my father. The rest was no affair of his. Between his own father and the white trader lay the issue. No wonder the crowd stood spellbound and silent; no wonder if with bated breath and beating hearts they waited the outcome of an act of heroism the like of which they might never hope to behold again. For myself, I can say without boast that all thought

of my own safety was swept from my mind in face of the terrible peril of my comrade. In my father's eyes gleamed a relentless purpose, and, scarcely daring to breathe, lest any act of mine should precipitate the climax, I stood as one petrified, still within reach of the ariki.

"Speak then, Te Huata," said the voice I had heard before, and now I knew that it was really my father who had spoken; "as surely as we both live, you shall pay me blood for blood."

Whether, in the madness of his rage, Te Huata might not have persisted in his deadly purpose, must remain a matter for conjecture; but at that moment a hand fell on my wrist and, looking up, I found Tuku-tuku beside me.

"Come," she said, and never taking her eyes from the figures of my father and her only son, led me towards them.

A sigh of relief burst from the pent bosoms of the observers, as step by step we drew near to the couple in the centre. With satisfaction I observed the sinking of the weapon that threatened my comrade's life, and with joy I reached him and cast my arm over his shoulder. White or brown or black, what mattered it to me! I knew then, as I know to-day, that no brighter spirit ever inhabited a tabernacle of human flesh.

But while we two thus rejoiced in each other's safety, my father—after a few gentle words to Tuku-tuku—had turned again, his anger nothing abated, on the ariki.

"Well for you, O chief," he cried, "that in the breast of your son beats the heart of a hero. Had the boy come to harm, learn from me that your own bloodthirsty soul, and not that of this noble youth, would have followed him to Te Reinga."

Te Huata made no answer. His fierce eyes were fixed on my hunters, who, having been forced to remain paralysed witnesses of the scene I have just described, now stood embarrassed and irresolute, awaiting his commands.

"Away, weaklings!" he cried. "It is fitting that women and children should rule over a race whose warriors are without skill in arms. As for you, pakeha," he continued, turning his gaze on my father, "your lives I have given you. Also it has seemed fit to my son to redeem the boy who was already dead. Truly his gods watch over him. Twice has he been covered from the sharp weapon of Death. Now begone, all of you, and trouble me no more."

But my father made no motion to obey. In his face continued the look I had never seen there before, and I think, only once since. It was plain that he, infinitely slow to anger, was angry now. His features were set inflexibly, and his grey eyes were dark and cold and terrible. By this time a fresh disposition had come to the gathering. The great square no longer existed, and practically the whole of the village was assembled in the marae. The ariki alone still held his original position. Beside him on one hand were the priests, on the other most of the principal chiefs of his hapu, and as the moments went by I could see the dispersed guard gradually reassembling in a dense mass to the rear of the chief. On our side, some four or five yards distant, stood in the forefront Mr. Hall, my father, and myself, while behind us—mustering probably a hundred all told—were the familiar faces of my fellow-visitors. It must be understood that very few minutes had elapsed from the moment when I was seized by the guard to that at which I have now arrived, probably three or four at the outside; yet they sufficed for the complete division of the previously mingled villagers and the bringing of them into a perilous state of opposition. Such, then, was the position of affairs when my father, yielding to the great wrath that possessed him, turned his terrible eyes on the ariki and answered his curt command to begone.

"Chief," he said, "hear my words. If I go now, I go

for ever. Long and patiently have I borne with you, and for what ? Have I sought to become possessed of your lands ? Have I bartered my goods for women or slaves, or for heads, or the ancestral relics of your tribe ? No man can say so. My hands are clean of any offence against you. They have been gift-bringers. Fruit trees border your plantations ; mine was the seed. In a few years food-plants of all kinds will cover these wild acres : but for me they had had no existence. I have brought you peace, for I have made successful attack on you impossible. I have supplied you with implements of industry, turning your labours into child's play. And for these things, what return do you make me ? I come to-day into your pa, bringing with me a teacher of that religion which many believe to be the final flower of our civilisation, and assuredly to such as you I could bring no gift more needful than the gospel of love—and how do you receive me ? Before my eyes I have seen my son hunted, as he were a leprous dog. A child, moreover, whose adversities, and the evil he has suffered at the hands of your race, should have rendered him for ever sacred to the Maori nation. Is that treatment to give to the son of the heroic defender of Te Kuma, the white man who scorned to fly or surrender, but gave his life for the people, of your blood, with whom he had made his home ? Not on you, O ariki, would I waste such words ; but here are a multitude of ears, and my speech shall sink into many hearts, to your undoing. But for your ear what follows. These things I demand of you : Freedom to come and go unquestioned through all the territories of the Ngatimaniapoto ; to have my good faith acknowledged, so that, bring with me whom I will, white man or brown or black, he also shall pass unmolested, for it shall suffice that I am answerable for his deeds ; the right of a voice in your councils on all matters affecting the well-being of the tribe, and more especially in councils of war, whether the quarrel

be with men of my own blood or of yours. Such shall be the privileges you accord to me. On my part I will guarantee these things: To protect you against the greed of men of my race; to be your voice in their councils; and to lift your children to the knowledge of the new world in whose dawn we stand. No harm shall spring upon you in the darkness; no treachery shall work your undoing in the daylight. I will be your eyes and ears; the man on the watch-tower; the scout far afield. So shall your tribe endure and pass onward into the light co-equal with the pakeha."

He paused, and in the murmur of approval that followed, the ariki could not but have heard the footsteps of the inevitable.

"These are grave matters," he resumed, "and should not be determined on the instant. Seven suns shall go by, and on the eighth, at this hour, I shall come for your answer. In the meantime the missionary bids me say that he will remain at my house, where such of you as desire to join the Christian faith may find him."

"And be not led away by false prophets in league with the Father of Evil," interjected Mr. Hall. "Behold, the tree is again withered."

His words were true. Nothing of its green luxuriance remained. As it stood at first, sere and decaying, so was it now. But even so, the last word lay with the priest of the ancient faith.

"So often as I bid it, so often will it return to life," said Te Atua Mangu. "Does the missionary know how long afterwards lived those whom his Christ raised from the dead?"

"Well, well," said my father impatiently, for the hot mood was still upon him. "Mr. Hall deals not in such trickery. It is in your savage hearts he proposes to work his miracles. Come to him at my whare, and he promises

that there shall grow up in you a new spirit, beautiful and destined for eternity."

"Is this the word of Te Moanaroa?" asked Te Huata, turning his fiery eyes on the chief.

"Behold, O Great One, how the matter stands," replied Te Moanaroa, mildly. "No consent have I given to this, nor refusal. Let those who wish test the matter and report. Many pleasing things have come to us from the pakeha. The ariki may remember how, on the first coming of the tobacco, a common fellow was selected to partake of the food. 'Excellent!' said he. But by and by, ah! how egregiously sick he was. Then said the chiefs: 'Well, indeed, that we did not eat of the pipe smoke!' Nevertheless, the man tried again and once again, and he was no more sick. Good! It was a food for the chiefs. So with this religion. It may not rank with tobacco. It may not rise above the common people. Yet it is well that the things of the pakeha be tested each as it arrives."

Te Moanaroa wiped the sweat from his face, for exertion of any kind made him perspire profusely, and glanced at my father out of the corner of his eye.

But the Great One sat unmoved. The knowledge that his power was dying ate into his vitals. Even his wife and child were against him. Chiefs looked coldly on his policy, and only a handful of priests stood by him. Exasperated to the verge of insanity, his slow mind moved cloudily through the darkness, seeking some way back which might be seductive to his people. He hated the cold, white glare that came over life with the advent of the pakeha. He hated the never-to-be-entirely-dismissed feeling of inferiority to the white-faced interloper. Oh for the comfortable old days when no doubt and unrest disturbed the well-ordered lives! Oh for the return of the time when every autumn brought the excitement of war,

the glories of the stricken field, with its flaming whares and multitudinous dead! Meat! His stomach hungered for the sweet-tasting ancestral food. Suddenly an idea came to him, and he raised his drooping head. Let those who would go on into the pallid light; for him the homely darkness. He would revive the ancient custom here and now. So would he answer the missionary, with his bark of new religions. An evil gleam came into his eyes, and the canine teeth stood momentarily forth.

Some such train of thought must have passed through the mind of the ariki ere he turned and, beckoning to him the captain of the guard, gave him an order in a low voice. I saw the man start and hesitate and slipped my hand into my father's, determined that this time no ruse should part us. But it was not on us that his new thought was bent. The man, after some further whispered speech with the ariki, moved off, and selecting a companion, the two of them slipped away into the crowd.

A few moments later the air was rent by a piercing scream. My blood curdled in my veins, for even my innocent ears could not mistake the sound of the death-cry. For a minute or more we all stood stricken dumb, knowing not what to think, and many of us, no doubt, preparing ourselves for the worst, when the crowd parted and the two warriors returned, bearing a burden to the feet of the Great One. The body was that of a girl. She had been knifed downwards from the throat, as I had often seen done with the village pigs, and her life-blood still gouted from the wound. Shuddering, I looked at the face. It was that of the fair slave-girl who had smiled at me as she passed down to the spring in the early morning.

"See!" said Te Huata. "Thus do I answer you, you and your friend the priest, whose gods listen not to him. Let the women and children, and the men who have never known war, follow in your footsteps; let them yield to the

pakeha their lands, the labour of their hands, their women, their children and their children's children, born and reared in slavery: I remain with my forefathers; their gods suffice me; I will maintain their customs. Away with it! To the priests the heart! Let the ovens be made ready!"

These words were followed by a confused murmur, in which I seemed to read a reflection of my own horror and disgust. So strong, indeed, were the expressions of disapproval around me that I cannot doubt but if the victim had been one of our party, weaponless as we were, an attempt would have been made to avenge her. Even as it was, it was perhaps fortunate that we were unarmed, for many a hand went clutching to its girdle, and our numerical weakness could only have led to the heating of many ovens in place of one.

But this rage was only for the instant; in the next, as with one accord, the visitors turned and fled in terror from the pa. In vain our chiefs sought by word and example to allay the ignominious panic. In vain my father and the missionary stood their ground and lent their persuasions to the efforts of Te Moanaroa; nothing could stay the rout, and, with what dignity we could muster, we finally followed in their wake.

The sun was sinking over the shoulder of Pirongia. Looking back from the great gateway, I could see the villagers scattered in knots over the square, excitedly discussing the events of the day. A denser throng marked the spot where lay the poor victim of the Great One's spleen. The ariki himself had retired and the door of his whare was shut.

CHAPTER IX

I AM SET AT LIBERTY

TE HUATA's triumph—if such it can be called—was brief. So far from reviving the custom of cannibalism, he had dealt its death-blow, and never again did it lift its hideous head in the territory of the Ngatimaniapoto. My father, long suffering and of infinite patience, was roused now to show how great was the power he had accumulated and so long held in abeyance. North and south, east and west sped his messengers, calling together the heads of the hapus for the appointed day. And at his summons they came, from every village and outpost of the tribe, bringing with them gifts, but carrying also arms in their hands, that due weight might be given to their opinions.

Stormy was the beginning, but calm as an evening sky the end of the meeting. Chief after chief espoused the cause of the trader. For every voice on the other side, a dozen were eager to respond. Item by item, the trader's demands were debated and upheld. White men had deceived them in the past, but this was a man alone. What he said came to pass. In vain Te Huata—curbing his fierce nature with difficulty—painted for them a picture of the Maori race subjected and enslaved. "It is but the beginning," he declared. "Granted the rewards that go with a beginning, what of the end? What of the day when you are in travail with the monster you have so lightly conceived?" They met his images with a dozen

as potent. Allowing grounds for uneasiness in the increase of the pakeha population, it was now a thing past remedy. The Maori nation was impossible of combination, and did he desire that the Ngatimaniapoto should alone, of all the tribes, refuse the patent advantages which accrued from the goodwill of the whites? In vain the ariki threatened; they heard him in stony silence. He bethought him of his godly lineage and denounced them, as from the high heavens: they shuddered, but stood firm. And, in the end, he yielded—yielded completely—conceding every privilege my father had claimed, and thus saved himself from that deposition from chieftainship which was otherwise inevitable.

From that hour I date the beginning of the new order and the passing away of the old. Every change in our manner of life—and the changes were far-reaching—was referable to that momentous assembly. In the first place Christianity was accepted as the faith of the tribe; missions were established and schools sprang into being, as mushrooms, in a single night. Very quaint, though full of a fiery enthusiasm, were many of these institutions. Village vied with village in the providing of scholastic advantages. Youths, who had been sent by the more far-sighted of the parents to be trained at outside missions, were hastily recalled and placed at the head of affairs. An unappeasable demand arose for Bibles, for the Maori language in its new and wonderful garb of print, and old men and children, husbands and wives sat daily at the feet of the teacher, imbibing such knowledge as he possessed. Nothing short of the dire necessity for providing tobacco sufficed to cause a gap in the ranks of the pupils. And truly wonderful, all things considered, was the progress they made. Their memories, trained and strengthened by centuries of oral learning, held the new facts gathered by their quick intelligence, and not many years passed

before there were scores, even hundreds, who were able to quote the Bible to the frequent discomfiture of their pakeha neighbours.

Another change inaugurated by my father, who himself set the example, was the abandonment of the pa as a place of abode. Even Te Moanaroa could not be brought to see the wisdom of this step. Many years of profound peace had not entirely allayed the old dread of attack. Though Matakiki had gone unscathed, other places within a few days' journey had suffered again and again from raiders, and the Queen's law did not as yet control the actions of the Maoris among themselves. Who was to say that when the news of the defencelessness of the new village was spread abroad some ancestral enemy might not see therein his god-given opportunity?

Nevertheless, my father persisted in his design. So far as he was concerned, the heavy labour of transporting goods into the pa should cease. His store should be on the flat above the river, accessible for both land and water carriage, and his customers, to east and west, should no longer be required to carry their flax and produce to the top of a hill, whence it must shortly be recarried to the plain below. To my eyes the new store was an immense and beautiful building, and great and widespread was the interest that attended its erection. Rafts of timber were brought from the vicinity of Auckland, overland to the Waikato, thence up that river and the Waipa to our doors; a journey so prodigious that the emerging of the first raft from the dense shadow of the bush into view of the pa seemed the most romantic event of my life.

Roma heard the decision to vacate our old premises with dismay, and she entered on the possession of her new and splendid dwelling, with its chairs and tables, its bedsteads and floor-covers and pictures on the walls, with fear and trembling. I do not think she was ever happy

there. For months she was continually finding excuses for a return to her old home, and uncounted times one or other of us found her, after an absence sufficiently long to rouse inquiry, sitting by the cold hearth of the dismantled kitchen, or endeavouring to repair the damages of time in its rush walls. Perhaps she lived in the hope that some happy day the Ngapuhi would descend upon us, burn the new mansion, and drive us back on the old abode. At any rate, it was not until the whole place fell into decay, and rain and wind entered at will, that she finally ceased to visit it.

What other change is there to record, before I again take up the thread of my story among scenes very different from those with which I have so far dealt? White men were invading the chief native settlements; almost daily, account reached us of their doings, their land purchases or attempted purchases. Mr. Hall became a frequent visitant, often renewing the subject he had broached on the first day of our acquaintance. It was clear, he said, that God had marked me out for some special destiny; what more likely than that it was His service for which I was intended? My reply was always, as it had been at first, a reference to my foster-father. I believe the attitude of the latter greatly puzzled him. Men who are truly broad-minded in theological matters are by no means common even now, and in those days they were extremely rare. An atheist Mr. Hall had heard of and could properly abhor; but Mr. Huxley had not yet invented agnosticism, and there was no word to denote the mental view of a man who was alternately helpful and indifferent.

However, I was a constant attendant at the mission school, where, in addition to my task of committing to memory chunks of collect and catechism—the same mystical jumble of words that is still, I believe, served up to Sunday-school scholars—I was myself also a teacher.

My own schooling at this period began also to occupy more of my time. I had learnt so far—as my father was careful to point out—as a parrot learns ; henceforth reason must be brought to bear on the matter. “Memory,” said he, “will enable you to pursue a trail ; only reason can give you the power of hewing out a fresh one.” Of books we had plenty, and new—or, better, old—ones were constantly arriving. Books formed, indeed, my father’s one extravagance, and, now I think of it, he was probably induced to change his quarters in the first place by the inordinate accumulation of volumes and the necessity that they should be more suitably housed.

The second summer following the great assembly was scarcely sped ere I lost the comradeship of Rangiora. He had derived his advantage from the new order in a greater measure of freedom. Hardly a day passed but I encountered him somewhere in my rambles, and later on, after I had once induced him to break the ice, he became a frequent visitor at the house. For some time past Puhi-Huia and I had been teaching him English. His memory was perfect and his intelligence keen, but he found the language beset with pitfalls into which he was continually floundering. What a relief it was to me when on our expeditions, after starting with the proviso that no language should be spoken save English, he would break into his own musical tongue, with its wealth of poetic and legendary allusion ! But with an increase in opportunity the matter was taken up with thoroughness, and so rapid was his progress that before very long—though his speech for some reason continued full of defects—he could read fluently, and even write with considerable correctness. My father had taken a great fancy to him. The day following the affair described in the last chapter he had sent him by special messenger a fine sporting gun, forwarding also gifts for Tuku-tuku, for, as he said, it was

a grievous thing he had been called upon to do against that mother's heart in defence of my life ; and now, as the boy began to pay his shy visits, he made him welcome with all the simple kindliness of his nature.

But more pronounced changes were in store for Rangiora. Though Te Huata had yielded to the will of his fellow-tribesmen as concerned the pakeha, he had lost no jot of his belief in the sanctity and wisdom of the ancient customs. Concerning the rearing of an ariki these were of much detail and inflexibility. The direct descendant of the gods was not to be suffered to grow up as any common fellow, with a mere smattering of genealogies picked up at the fireside and such knowledge of practical science as it was necessary every man should know : he must be carefully trained and fitted for the great position he would one day occupy. He must learn and store in his memory, as securely as a book has its subject-matter stored in its pages, the history of the tribe and of all the tribes from the beginning ; and as the mouthpiece of the gods, he must be familiar with every nook and corner of the Maori mythology.

We had been looking one day at a number of drawings my father had made of remarkable facial tattooings he had come across in his journeyings, when Rangiora startled us all by saying that he must shortly submit himself to the tattooer. A supreme artist belonging to the Ngatihaua tribe had been requisitioned for the work and would shortly put in an appearance.

"But surely you won't allow it, Rangiora," said I, hotly. "I shall hate to see you transfigured out of all likeness to yourself. Won't you, sir ?"

But my father was silent.

"I shall," said Puhi-Huia. "I am never able to recognise any of the boys again after they have been tattooed. Besides, it is very ugly."

I noticed that he seemed to pay more attention to my foster-sister's words than to mine. There was anxiety in his eyes as he looked at her. "I had thought that the wahine¹ took pleasure in it," he urged.

"I should not," said Puhi-Huia.

He sat awhile, wistful reflection in his eyes. "It is a thing that must be," he said at last. "It would be a disgrace to my tribe if their ariki should be as a common fellow with a plain face."

"There you are wrong, Rangiora," said my father, gathering together his drawings. "The tattoo is not a mark of rank, though some of its finest examples may be found on the faces of high chiefs. There are men of descent as good as your own whose faces have not been disfigured by a single line."

He looked incredulous at first, but presently—whether or no some instance in support of my father's statement had occurred to him—he became thoughtful. "Yet the Great One wills it," he said with a sigh at last.

Then my father brought his mind to bear fully upon the matter. "Do you desire to be tattooed?" he asked directly, and, receiving an answer in the negative, bade the boy hold out. "They cannot operate on you against your will," he said. "Speak to your mother and enlist her sympathies. There are a dozen precedents for refusing, and if there were none it would be a good thing to make one."

Whether he were influenced by my father's encouragement or Puhi-Huia's objection—and on this point she showed what was, for her, surprising resolution—Rangiora took a firm stand, and neither his father's pleadings nor his anger succeeded in shaking him from it. He had gathered together a list of the great men living and dead whose faces had escaped the scarification of the chisel, and this

¹ Wahine = womenfolk.

was his sole argument. The learning and eloquence of the pa could not affect the unalterable facts on which he relied, however much they might seek by their explanations to minimise their importance. And he had his way.

But the Whare-Kura¹ was another matter. No precedent existed for the avoidance by a high-born youth of the curriculum of this college of mysteries, even if Rangiora had any such desire. He passed into it in the autumn, and not until the recess arrived with the following spring, and he was once more at liberty, did any of us behold him again. A tapu of an awful character clothed him and his fellow-pupils. Secrecy attended their doings, and only from the remarks he occasionally let slip and from other sources was I able to form some idea of his manner of life through the long winter.

Study claimed the night and sleep the day. Priest after priest took up the tale of work, reciting the tribal history and its mythology, and calling on the pupils to commit their lessons to memory. Incantations and spells, the art and practice of makutu or witchcraft, the names and positions of the heavenly bodies, with the times of their appearance and decline, made up the main portion of the syllabus and gave employment to the scholars during the four or five years over which the full course extended. Periodical tests took the place of the examinations of the colleges of civilisation, and weird and even terrible as some of these tests were, they yet contained the germ of an idea remarkable in its sagacity. The young student standing for his examination was not called upon to repeat the lessons he had been taught; they were merely the means to an end. Let him show the real inwardness of his learning by accomplishing something. Then, if he succeeded, it was evident that his teaching had borne fruit. Thus and only thus might he pass into the higher

¹ Whare-Kura = Maori college.

classes and eventually come forth the holder of a degree in the mysteries.

Here then, in charge of the priests, and more especially of Te Atua Mangu, who had come to great honours since the display of his powers recorded in the last chapter, I will for the present leave Rangiora and return to my own affairs.

As, with the passing of the years, I grew in strength and intelligence, there grew up also in my mind a vague unrest and dissatisfaction. No doubt my reading was largely responsible for this, though, as I shall presently show you, the mystery that clouded my parentage had its share. To open the pages of a book, almost irrespective of its subject-matter, was to pass into the great world of which at first hand I knew nothing. Objects familiar to the infant of civilisation were often to me mere words. My mind was a firmament of hazy outlines, sometimes resplendent, sometimes repellent, taking definite form one by one as I encountered some pictorial representation. I looked on civilisation from the outside, dazzled by its glitter, awed by its undercurrent of horrors. Yet the horrors attracted me no less than the delights. The romance of the world was bound up with its wickedness, and it was the romantic for which I thirsted.

It was certainly not with the consent of my will that my father gained a knowledge of my feelings. Absorbed as he seemed to be at every moment of the day, either in his business or his books, it was marvellous how quick he was to conceive and even forestall our desires. He and I were returning one summer's evening from a trip down the river, where a branch store in charge of a white man had lately been established, when, without any kind of prelude, he announced his intention of sending me to Auckland in the winter.

"We must go through a course in manners," he went

on, without giving me time to speak. "What books have we? However, it doesn't matter. The root of the thing is in you."

"What is the root, sir?" I asked. Not that I cared, but I feared if I spoke of the greater matter the delight his words had given me would be too evident.

"A kind heart, Cedric. And at the top is a quick intelligence. There also you are fitted. Convention for the sake of convention is an abomination. Insincerity brings all manners, however exquisite their polish, into contempt. If you cannot feel kindness, do not attempt to express it. You may meet the Governor, Captain Grey—or Sir George, as yesterday's post informs us—address him as you do me. He will ask no better."

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

"You will board with my agent, Mr. Brompart. It is his own suggestion. He tells me that there are young ladies in the family, and that they move in the best circles—New Zealand circles. Never take less than the best, Cedric. If you do not think that the best alone is good enough for you, you are a mean-spirited fellow."

"How long shall I be in Auckland, sir?"

"As long as it amuses you—six months, a year, two or three years. You are your own master."

"Am I to work for Mr. Brompart, father?"

"No, no! You will be his guest—his paying guest. Consider that I have struck every chain from you. You are free."

"But, father——"

"Well?"

"It will be a great expense. And how——"

"That is my affair. Such money as you need you will ask Mr. Brompart for. He has my instructions to honour any demand you may make on him."

"Oh, father! Why should you do all this for me?"

"Why?" he echoed, smiling. "Must one have a reason for everything one does?"

"You have taught me to think so, sir," I answered.

He burst out laughing at that, and taking the oars from my hands, sent the boat hissing through the calm water.

"You can manage a boat, swim, and wrestle," he said musingly, presently. "Your boxing, however, is deficient and must be attended to. Better learn here than be taught by necessity in Auckland. What else? In scholarship, I doubt not, you will be more than a match for any boy of your age. Yes, and for the majority of your seniors. Figs from thistles," and he chuckled at some idea that occurred to him.

The light was fading as we came in sight of the house, set in its green plantations and young orchard trees, with the river wheeling past and the mass of the pa behind. I could see Puhi-Huia with a watering-can among her rose bushes, and Roma standing in the doorway on the look-out for us. What great news I had to communicate!

My father held me with a word or two till the boat was safely secured. Then we walked up together.

"It is a pleasant spot, Cedric," he said, laying his hand on my shoulder. "With those we love around us, and work and books, one should be happy here. The trees are springing up. In a year or two there will be fruit and shade in abundance. Even now it has a charm in the soft light?"

"Yes, sir," I said soberly.

"And it will increase in beauty. Memory will beautify it." He was silent a moment. "You asked me a question, child. There will be no need to put it again, for I shall answer it once for all. I love you; that is the why and the wherefore."

His hand came against my cheek and I held it there, not trusting myself to make any other kind of reply.

"Well, well," he said gently. "It's a poor-spirited bird that does not wish to try its wings. Heaven forbid that I should say one word to daunt or dissuade you! Only remember that here is your home. Remember it as you see it now.—Well, mother! Here we are, and as hungry as hunters. Come, little huia bird, and set the dishes on the table. Then we will give you our news."

CHAPTER X

I MAKE ACQUAINTANCE WITH A HORSE AND A WHITE GIRL

It was certainly unfortunate that my first introduction to the society of men of my own race should have occurred on shipboard, and more especially on such a vessel as the *Matilda*. Captain Grainger was not, I am now convinced, the most profane and brutal man that ever lived, but he certainly appeared so to me at that time. I was familiar with speech that meant death, with beautifully enunciated metaphors which paved the way to the oven and the conversion of one's bones into fish-hooks ; but the rough-tongueing, the brutal word-whipping, the savage, unmerited blows, which distinguished life on board ship, filled me with disgust and horror. In all my life, save when my existence was threatened, no hand had been lifted against me in anger. That it should seem expedient to one man to take the life of another—even though that other were myself—appeared natural and reasonable ; but this senseless infliction of pain and ignominy, without any object that I could discover, made me feel ashamed of my kind. If this were civilisation, then give me savagery. No doubt my mind exaggerated what I saw. Half the actions that seemed to me sheer brutality were possibly mere horseplay. The oaths which brought the blush of shame to my cheeks were merely an italicising or underlining of speech, bearing no reference to their original meaning. But I can only speak of things as they affected

me. Not that I myself received anything but kindness from Captain Grainger and the rough company of the *Matilda*. On the contrary, whether in the cabin or the fo'c'sle, I was made welcome. Indeed, before I left—for we were delayed two days by heavy seas on the Manukau bar—I had gone through the story of my life several times and made heavy inroads on the history of the Ngati-maniapoto.

"'Ow they ain't eat 'im beats me," said the admiring forecastle.

"That ol' Tee Whater's got 'is eye on 'im," opined an old salt. "'E's savin' of 'im up for Crissmiss or such like."

"Now you got away, you stay away," was the advice they tendered me first and last.

I tried my utmost to like these men, and especially Captain Grainger, of whom my father had spoken highly; but I drew a breath of relief when I was quit of them all. I could not get accustomed to their violent changes, or apparent changes, of mood. I would be standing beside the captain, listening to his sailor yarns, bowdlerised, no doubt, in respect for my few years, when of a sudden he would roar out, in a voice that brought my heart to my mouth, some such criticism as this: "Get off that gaff there. What the b——y hell are you doing? Call yourself a sailor! Wait till I get you, my man, and I'll teach you. What sort of a damned counter-jumper is that, Mr. Long?"

"Picked him up in Sydney, sir," replies the mate. "Seems willing enough, but I doubt if he knows as much of seamanship as he made out."

"Very good, Mr. Long," says Captain Grainger, stiffly. "Then, if he falls into the water, you will b——y well pick him out of that too. What the hell things are coming to, when you can't get a decent sailor man out of Sydney Cove, devil knows."

However, after two days of waiting, we slipped through the smother and let down our anchor in the wide, shallow haven of the Manukau. That our arrival had been anxiously awaited was evidenced by the fleet of canoes that surrounded us as soon as the *Matilda* swung out on her moorings. I looked eagerly around for some indication of Mr. Brompart, but there was no sign of him among the white men and Maoris in the canoes, and it was not till over an hour later that he arrived in a small boat with a single lug sail and, coming briskly aboard, picked me out with one glint of his queer, near-set eyes.

"Cedric Tregarthen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not such a savage after all. Come, where are your things? We must make haste if we are to reach Auckland before dark."

I pointed out my trunk, and while he handed it down to a half-caste in the boat, I ran off to say good-bye to my shipmates. It was a surprise to me to find that I was sorry to part with them, and that they showed concern in parting with me. Captain Grainger suggested that I should run over and see him on his next visit, which would be in six weeks' time, and seemed gratified by my fervent promise to do so.

Yet, as I have said, I was relieved to find myself out of hearing of their rough speech, and very pleasant in my ears, after the lingo of the ship, sounded the cultivated tongue of my new companion. Mr. Brompart spoke in rapid jerks, seldom taking the trouble to finish his sentences, but completing his meaning with sharp movements of the head and a cocking of his queer, shrewd eyes. I judged him to be of alert understanding, for though he put many questions to me during our journey to the capital, he seldom waited the end of my replies, picking up not merely facts but feelings from a few halting words, in a manner

that astonished and confused me. Only once was he at fault, and as the occasion had its element of humour, I may set down the manner of it.

A few minutes sufficed to land us on the beach and transport us and our belongings on to the higher ground, where a number of wooden buildings and some indifferent whares formed all there was in the nature of a settlement. The sun was sinking across the harbour. In the chilly winter air a few fires were blazing, and round them the Maori housewives were busy preparing the evening meal. There was surely nothing alarming in such a scene ; nothing in the attitude of these people to daunt one who had stood in front of the Great One in his wrath ; yet I took a hasty step backwards and, but that no one set me the example, I should have turned tail and bolted for the boat. The reader may guess for a twelvemonth without lighting on the cause of my alarm.

“What! What!” exclaimed Mr. Brompart. “Left something on——? No? Then what is it? What is it?” and he looked vacantly around him.

I was too proud to explain, and summoning up resolution, I again moved forward. I knew very well that the animals were horses, for had I not pored over pictures of them and other strange creatures for hours together? But truly the creature was both larger and more vigorous than I had imagined. He moved differently, and made a noise through his nose of which no warning had been given me. Also, though these particular animals were at present engaged in eating grass, they tore it up with such terrific energy, and their great teeth gleamed in such a sinister manner between their blubbery black lips, that their selection of such food appeared to me rather a temporary mania than an act in keeping with their great estate.

But Mr. Brompart's keen wits were not long at fault. As we drew nearer and his eye fell on the horses, he half paused

and gave me a searching sideways glance. "You can ride, Master Tregarthen?" he asked.

"No, sir. I have never even seen a horse till this moment."

That brought him completely to a standstill, an act in which I gladly followed his example, for as we approached the animals their attitude became extremely threatening, and I could not but reflect on the fact that I was entirely unarmed.

"Never seen a—— Never! Well, well!" and he gave a little screaming ho-ho of a laugh which caused me to dislike him fixedly and for a long time afterwards.

"Neither have I seen a lion or a tiger," said I; "for there are none of these in the Kawhia country."

"No offence, Master Tregarthen," he said quickly, smothering his amusement. "Never seen a lion myself except behind bars in the Tower of London when I was a boy. But we must get to Auckland, and the horses must carry us. You are not afraid, boy? What?"

I was. But I flatter myself that even his keen eyes could discern no sign of it. "Show me how to mount the brute," said I, "and I shall do my best to keep up with you."

"That's the spirit," said Mr. Brompart, approvingly. "We will travel slowly. You had better take the bay."

As he indicated the animal with a gesture, I was able to discover which one he meant, for as yet the fearsome brutes were all alike to me; and presently George, the half-caste, coming along on a nag of his own, with my trunk on the saddle before him, I was assisted to a seat, and we set out on our journey.

No sooner was I ensconced in the saddle, with my feet in the stirrups, than an entire change came over my feelings. Fear gave place to exultation. The mere fact that the monster had suffered me to bestride him sufficed to set me

at my ease. His head went down for a last nibble at the grass, and with a pull of the reins I brought it up again. He showed impatience and some resistance, but he obeyed. He acknowledged me his master. How I wished that my comrades of the kainga might see me now, a full-blown pakeha on horseback! My fancy showed me the eyes of Puhi-Huia, regarding me with terror and admiration. Whether Mr. Brompart had forgotten my disability or was desirous of getting some amusement out of the occasion I cannot say, but he refrained from making any remark to George, who, seeing us both mounted, set off at a fleet canter, rein hand down, his right steadying my box, and shortly disappeared in the scrub. Waiting for no bidding—at all events from me—our horses dashed off in pursuit, and in a moment we were all thundering along the road.

That moment remains for me still one of the most glorious in life. I feel the sweet chill air in my face as I write; I thrill again to the sense of power and lightness so exultingly commingled; again I am conscious of delight in my ability and prowess. But alas! The hard-trodden road lasted but a little way, and, without warning, my steed changed his step. On the instant I was bumped lifelessly hither and thither, now on the horse's neck, now on his rump. I was conscious of joggling past some other travellers; of the sound of a low, merry laugh. My feet lost the stirrups and, with a final slither that seemed to embrace every part of my steed, from his tail to his ears, I found myself sitting safely and not without a feeling of satisfaction mingling with my humiliation, on the muddy road.

"Oh, I hope you are not hurt!" said a voice in which compassion sought to quell amusement.

I started to my feet, and every feeling of humiliation, indeed, self-consciousness itself, was stricken from me at the wondrous vision on which my eyes rested. I am afraid

the reader who has been familiar with amazing things from his birth can never penetrate to the depths of my sensations. In the space of half an hour I was destined to behold for the first time a horse and a white girl. Imagine yourself a youth of fifteen who has beheld neither. How would you act? Would you be in complete possession of all your faculties? able at once to enter into calm conversation—not, perhaps, with the horse, but with the girl? All I know is that I stood and stared, as I have stared at the sunset from Pirongia, or a moonlit glimpse of the Waipa.

You were at that time, Helenora, twelve years of age. But why add to your vanity by describing you as at that moment you appeared to me? Let it suffice that your eyes were blue—ah, how blue! and your hair a cloak of gold. Neither of these colours had I so seen before; nor had I beheld a skin like yours, nor lips so dainty and so red, nor—— But I am describing you after all. Let me return to the young lady on horseback, with whom I am entirely unacquainted, and who has merely paused in passing to commiserate with me on my mishap. A peony blush, itself a miracle, has developed on her round cheek; her straight brows show signs of contraction, and her chin—dare I write her nose?—is taking an upward curl.

“This boy is very stupid,” said the young lady clearly, and then, for the first time, I noticed her companion.

He was a man of between thirty and forty, young and active-looking, with clear blue eyes. At the moment my gaze rested on him he was laughing at the girl's words, and yet there was about him an air of dignity that impressed and held me and finally drew me to doff my cap.

“You are not accustomed to travelling on horseback, my young friend?” he said good-humouredly, and with a slight inclination of the head in response to my salute.

“No, sir,” I replied.

"And yet I dare promise, Helenora, that in a month's time the young gentleman will be as proficient as yourself," he continued, half turning to the girl, but keeping one partly closed eye on me. "You are a recent emigrant, I suppose."

"No, sir. I was brought here as an infant."

"Indeed? And you have not yet learned to ride?"

Either I was tacitly to allow myself lacking in spirit, or I must again make my ignominious confession. I chose the latter alternative. "I have lived where there were no animals except pigs, sir," I said; "and I had never seen a horse until a few minutes ago."

Helenora laughed in merry surprise, dismissing every shade of annoyance from her face. "And you got on it the moment you saw it?" she said, opening her eyes.

"The moment I saw some one else do it," I corrected.

The gentleman appeared to recognise the distinction, for I saw his blue eyes twinkle. "Where is this benighted country?" he asked. "We must see to it that the variety of their live-stock is increased. Property," he added abstractedly, "that is the secret of civilisation. The first man who possessed himself of a stick started on a path to the stars." He repeated the phrase musingly under his breath, a dreamy smile in his eyes. Then an air of restlessness came over him. "Come, Helen," he said, gently pinching her ear. "We must ride on, my dear." He had apparently forgotten the question he put to me.

At this moment Mr. Brompart, who had ridden after my horse, returned, leading the animal by the bridle. The bend of the road concealed us from him until he was close at hand, and then I saw him pull himself erect and doff his hat to the saddle.

"Good evening, Your Excellency," he said, his head only narrowly falling short of the humility of his hat. "A pleasant evening, Sir George. Your servant, Miss Wylde."

The Governor—for the reader will already have pene-

trated to the identity of the stranger—returned the salute somewhat coldly, and for the first time I noticed the square strength of the jaw, which contrasted so strangely with the upper part of the face. I judged that he was not pleased to meet with my companion, with whose name, however, he showed himself acquainted. He looked at the girl and, moving his horse a few paces, sat tapping his boot with his riding-whip.

But Miss Wylde, absorbed in my manœuvres, was by no means disposed to tear herself away until they had been brought to some kind of issue. Once more in possession of my horse, I had, it appeared, attempted to mount him from the wrong side. That such a trivial detail should disturb the equanimity of the animal was incomprehensible to me, and yet I have no doubt it was the last argument necessary to convince my steed that I was a novice in whom no self-respecting animal should place trust. Round and round he went, backing into the other horses and starting under the cuts from Mr. Brompart's whip.

"Now!—Now!" gurgled Helenora. "Oh, what a stupid!"

Her pretty, musical speech disturbed me no whit. My whole attitude towards her was abject. Say what she would, do what she would, no question of right or wrong arose, no question of liking or disliking; she had become in the first instant a principle as fixed as gravitation, a religion once for all determined. And so she remained. But when Mr. Brompart, losing patience, muttered that I was a bucolic dunderhead, then, indeed, hot rage took the place of dogged endeavour. I listened no more to their conflicting instructions, but, taking the matter in my own hands, was almost instantly in the saddle. Moreover, I achieved this result, as Miss Wylde wonderingly remarked, from the wrong side after all.

How Sir George had brooked the delay, I was too occupied

to observe, but he moved off as soon as I had gained my seat, and Mr. Brompart, wasting no further time on his troublesome charge, trotted off to his side. I saw the Governor look quickly behind him, and had Helenora chanced to catch his eye, I make no doubt that much of this story would not have been written. Whether it were that the young lady expected to see me fall off again, or had developed an interest in the boy who had lived so long without seeing a horse, I have never had the courage to ask her, but though, warned by her previous reproof, I kept my own gaze in order, I was aware that her eyes were fixed upon me, and that she continued to watch me silently for several minutes.

"I can never have seen you before, boy?" she said questioningly at last.

I turned to her then, and saw a look in her eyes as though she were puzzled. "No," I replied; "that is quite impossible. I have never been in the white man's country before."

"Sometimes you look like somebody and sometimes you don't," she explained.

"Somebody?"

"That is the curious part of it. I can't remember who it is I am reminded of. It might be only one of my fowls," she continued—possibly my gaze had again grown too persistent—"I am always seeing likenesses to them, and I have a lame blackbird at home who looks so exactly like our vicar that—well, I suppose you *could* tell them apart. Don't sit so stiffly. You want to be all softened up, so that you can feel every movement of the horse.—You are not like the Bromparts, so it can't be any of them. Is Mr. Brompart your uncle?"

"He is no relation of mine. My father—Mr. Purcell—has put me in his charge while I remain in Auckland."

"Then your name is Purcell?"

"No. Mr. Purcell is not my father. He took me out of the Te Kuma pa, when it was sacked by Te Waharoa. My own father was killed then. He was the last man to fall, and he killed seven of their greatest chiefs before he died."

Helenora shivered daintily. "Was your mother killed too?" she asked.

"No. I know nothing about my mother. I think she must have died very soon after I was born. Perhaps she was never even in New Zealand; for my father was an Englishman."

Helenora was silent a moment. "You must mind when we come to the good road," she said presently. "Don't let your horse trot, or you will come off again."

"That is how I came to grief," I explained. "I thought, because I could keep on when he was going at full speed, that I had mastered the whole secret. So Euclid was wrong, and the greater doesn't always include the less. Why does he keep moving his ears like that?" The reader must understand that my attention was about equally divided between the girl and the horse.

The gaze which she turned on me was perhaps as searching and long as those for which I had earned reproof. "He is listening to what you are saying about Euclid," she said slowly.

"I am not quite so simple as that, Miss Wylde."

Her blue eyes scanned me doubtfully. "Oh, of course," she said presently; "you heard Mr. Brompart. Would it be rude to ask what your name is?"

I was only too delighted to tell her.

She looked at me with slowly widening eyes. "What!" she exclaimed.

"Cedric Tregarthen," I repeated.

A flush, as of excitement, came into her cheeks, and for a moment I thought she would have ridden away and left

me, but if she had such an impulse, she did not follow it, but kept her eyes fixed on me, one expression following another in their blue depths. In vain I sought to elicit from her some hint of the nature of the discovery she had evidently made ; a shake of the head and a roguish dimple was all she vouchsafed me. Had my name put her on the track of the recollection that had hitherto evaded her ? And was I mistaken in thinking that there was one expression almost amounting to defiance which shone in her eyes more often than any other ?

"Are you going to live with the Bromparts ?" she asked, musingly, presently.

"Yes," I replied. "But you speak of the Bromparts, and so far I know only of one."

"There is a Mrs. Brompart and two girls and some young men," she replied indifferently. "They have a section on the top of the hill above the cemetery, about a mile from Government House."

"Mr. Brompart is a farmer, then ?"

"Oh, no !" said the girl. "His sons are supposed to be, I believe, but he is a business man. He does things about the ships," she continued vaguely ; "but mostly he has to do with an English land company. We don't like him at Government House because he annoys Sir George. Sometimes His Excellency gets very angry with him. But since you are going to be one of his family, I ought not to have said anything about that."

I assured her that I would respect her confidence. "You are fond of His Excellency ?" I suggested.

"Indeed yes," she said fervently. "He is the kindest and cleverest of all men."

I write down her words, for, as you will learn presently, all men were not in accord as to the character of the Governor, and not many hours passed before I heard words spoken of him as full of hatred as hers were of affection.

"I am afraid I shall have to ride on," she said presently, in a voice that mingled matronly anxiety and childish reluctance. "His Excellency is being annoyed now."

Indeed, for some minutes I had been conscious that all was not quite well in front, and now, in the silence that followed her words, I heard the Governor say: "You are mistaken, Mr. Brompart. If your principals have sold what they did not possess, that is their affair. It is for them to recompense the innocent who have suffered by it, and in no way the concern of the British Government."

"But, Your Excellency," replied Mr. Brompart, hastily, "surely possession is a necessary part of the agreement to purchase. As I have already explained to Your Excellency——"

"I must go," said the voice of Helenora beside me. "Hold your horse tight or he will follow me. I am sorry I called you stupid."

"Why did you?" I asked quickly, as she gathered up her reins.

The colour came again into her cheek as she looked at me. "Because I thought you were rude. You stared at me so."

"But there was a reason for that," I said, "and I should like to tell it you."

She nodded, regarding me with a mingling of doubt and curiosity.

"Because," I said significantly, "a horse is not the only new thing I have seen to-day. If I stared at you, no doubt I also stared at the horse."

"I am the first girl you have ever seen?" she said, wonderingly.

"The first white girl."

"Oh, Maoris!" Her red lips curled disdainfully. Then the wonder returned. "How funny and incredible that seems," she observed, regarding me with speculative eyes.

"It accounts for my staring," I summed up.

The sound of Sir George's voice, cold and incisive, floated back to us, and she pulled her horse to attention. The haze of speculation in her eyes had changed into a gleam of shy roguery. "What did you think of the—horse?" she asked, and, waiting no reply, cantered away.

I saw her ride up alongside the Governor, heard the sound of her voice and his reply, and watched them start off at a canter, leaving Mr. Brompart to look impatiently behind at my more plodding efforts at horsemanship. But his distemper, if I had rightly judged his looks, was gone when I reached him, and he accosted me cheerily with, "Well, Master Tregarthen, you and your steed are becoming on better terms with one another—what?"

"When I get accustomed to the ways of the animal, Mr. Brompart——" I began.

"Just so, just so," said he. "Rome was not built in a day. And what think you of the beautiful Miss Wylde?"

There was a ring of spite in the tone he gave to the adjective, which would have silenced me even if I had felt disposed to reveal my feelings. I contented myself with remarking that she had been extremely civil to a stranger.

"Yes," he said grudgingly, and then—as though I had given expression to my inmost thoughts—"she is beautiful, and so is her mother, Lady Dora Wylde." He mouthed the words as though in mockery. "But do not exalt yourself on the casual civilities of Government House. Like as not the young lady will have entirely forgotten the meeting on your next encounter. Did she ask your name?"

I answered him in the affirmative.

He seemed surprised at that. "It is a well-sounding name," said he; "such as might belong to a gentleman."

"It did," I told him.

"Surely," he agreed, with a grimace. "Yet it may be

expedient to conceal the upbringing of the gentleman's——eh? To have lived in a Maori village, Master Tregarthen, is hardly a recommendation to the highest circles—you understand me. If Mrs. Brompart or the girls are to introduce you at Government House, as my esteemed client Mr. Purcell desires, you will perceive that reticence——eh? What?”

“I am afraid your advice comes too late, Mr. Brompart,” I replied, in no great good-humour. “I have already divulged the humble facts of my origin, and so, if your surmise is correct, I have saved Mrs. Brompart from suffering any humiliation on my account.”

He interrupted me in his usual fashion ere I was half way through, but I was resolved to speak, even if I was not to be heard, and therefore continued doggedly and in a loud voice to the completion of what I had to say.

He made no remark, but urged his horse to a trot, and, as mine followed suit and the whole of my attention was immediately required to keep my balance, I suppose he may be considered to have got the advantage in the little difference between us.

I had scarcely recovered myself by an affectionate embrace of my steed's neck, when two young men came galloping up from behind through the sticky mud.

“'lo, Brompart!” one of them shouted without drawing rein. “His Excellency on ahead?”

My companion gave a gesture of assent and gazed after the retreating horsemen with a sour face. “Mr. Hee-Haw and Sir Gregory Addlepate,” he remarked.

“Those are surely not their names,” I objected.

“No, but their natures,” said he, with his brief, screaming laugh. “The Governor's aide-de-camps, Sir Gregory Applethwaite and Mr. Wylde. Yes, Master Tregarthen, her step-brother.”

The thought had occurred to me, but I had made no

motion to put the question. There was something almost uncanny in such intuition.

By this time darkness had fallen, but we were not far from our destination. From the higher ground we had gained, I could already see the pale gleam of Waitemata—"the Glittering Water"—and on the near bank a few dim and scattered lights, which I guessed to be all that the night left unconcealed of the white men's city.

CHAPTER XI

I ENTER THE WHITE MEN'S CITY

WE left the wider way almost immediately afterwards and, plodding down a muddy track through dense tea-tree scrub, came presently on some slip-rails, which gave admittance to a paddock. The lights of a house shone forth at the farther end, and towards these Mr. Brompart directed his way, after having dismounted and closed the slip-rails.

"Ever seen a cow, Master Tregarthen?"

"No, sir."

"There is one yonder. You can see her horns against the sky."

I looked and saw her as he stated, her head and shoulders appearing against the pale background over the low hill. It was a thrilling sight, and, for all the years of familiarity that have intervened between that day and this, my first cow rises before me as I write the word, a veritable creature of romance.

A few yards from the building Mr. Brompart told me to dismount, and, bidding me go inside, led the horses away. For what I believe was the first time in my life I was seized with that strange, causeless trepidation of the mind, from which youth often suffers untold miseries. I made my way to the veranda, and though the house door stood invitingly open, and I could plainly hear the voices of the folk engaged in conversation inside, my will

was paralysed, and not a step farther could I go. In vain I reasoned with myself, called up the hairbreadth escapes of my life ; more easily could I have faced the Great One than these harmless people of my own race. As the minutes passed and my terror, or whatever it was, increased rather than diminished, I sat down on the step and presently found myself listening to what was being said inside. Mr. Brompart had evidently gained the interior through another entrance, for his was the voice which first drew my attention.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Is the boy not come in?"

There was a unanimous negative and a chorus of questions—as to my whereabouts from the men and my appearance from the women.

"As to where he is," said the master of the house, "probably he has mistaken the cow-shed for the dwelling-house, and John had better seek him there before he turns in with the other calf."

This raised a guffaw, which John interrupted to declare that he would not be saddled with the responsibility of looking after me. "I know how it will be if I make a beginning," said he ; "he will be shoved on to me all the time. I'm not going to have him hanging round, with every one making fun of his wild manners and his broken English."

"As to his English," Mr. Brompart admitted, "he speaks well, and there is no great fault to be found with his manners. Get me my slippers, Sarah ; and you, Richard, go and see what has become of him."

"Not me!" said Richard. "Let Fred go."

"It would have been so simple to have brought the boy in yourself, William," said a new voice, "instead of troubling the boys to do so."

"As to that, Jane," returned Mr. Brompart, with unexpected mildness, "I have done a day's work. But let it

be: the boy, no doubt, will manage well enough in the open air."

"I'll go, father," said an eager treble; "he can't be very far away."

"Sit down, Sarah! I wonder at you!" reprimanded her mother. "Fred can go as far as the veranda and call out."

The sound of an advancing footstep brought me hastily to my feet. The flattering allusions to which I had just listened had served one good purpose by bracing my nerves, and, moving my feet noisily on the veranda, I saved Master Fred the trouble of coming any farther by myself entering the house.

I set down this conversation, not because I imagine it will possess any interest for the reader, but for the reason that it introduced the Bromparts to me in a characteristic way and may serve the like purpose with him.

The first thing that struck me in the personal appearance of my new housemates was their pronounced likeness to their father. All had the same near-set eyes, only avoiding a squint by a narrow margin, softened, it is true, in the faces of the two girls, but still perceptible. Yet they were not ill-looking girls, and but that Helenora had already delineated on my mind an imperishable image of female beauty in its perfection, I should, no doubt, have beheld them with deeper sensations than I actually experienced. Janet, the elder girl, possessed the better features, but her expression was too cold to be pleasing, and I liked better the looks of her sister Sarah, who had sufficient naturalness to regard me with interest and enough good-nature to frown on the rude antics of her three brothers.

As for these young men—for the youngest of them was scarcely older than myself—I came from a land of savages, it is true, but not such savages as they were. The Maori was, I doubt not he still is, a pattern host. To him courtesy

and hospitality to the guest was a religion. There was a ceremoniousness and reserve about him which flattered and elevated, and though, no doubt, his manners might on occasion be not altogether free from hypocrisy, yet better than insult, and never had I seen a guest, however slight his rank and reputation, subjected to ridicule and buffoonery.

The eldest son, Richard, was at the moment of my entrance engaged with a book. He looked up, stared at me deliberately, and without any form of greeting returned to his reading. The second son, Fred, approached me with his tongue in his cheek, and making a sign to his sisters to observe his cleverness, spoke with a vile accent a number of disconnected Maori words, which he had no doubt picked up promiscuously on the beach. John, the youngest, burst into a laugh and stamped his feet rapturously on the floor.

"Come, come, boys, no tricks," said Mr. Brompart, mildly amused. "And sit down, Master Tregarthen—or Cedric, since you are to be one of the family. Mrs. Brompart—Miss Brompart—Miss Sarah Brompart. Now you know us."

Angry and confused as I was by the, to me, extraordinary nature of my reception, I still sufficiently recollected my father's lessons in the conventions to bow to the ladies. Miss Brompart favoured me with an inclination of her head in return. Mrs. Brompart gave me a languid hand, taken from between the leaves of a fashion journal and returned thereto, and only Sarah warmed my chilled blood with a smile.

"Tea will be ready soon, pa," she said. "Perhaps—Cedric would like to go to his room first."

The use of my Christian name seemed to cause her brothers exquisite amusement, and I saw the angry, red flame in her cheeks. "You should speak to John and

Fred, pa," she said warmly; "they don't possess the manners of savages."

The temptation to strike, and strike home, was irresistible. "Indeed, Miss Sarah, you are wrong," I said; "that is exactly what they do possess."

Had a bomb-shell burst in the room, I doubt if its occupants could have looked more astonished. Richard threw down his book, and with a sneering laugh at his discomfited brothers said it was the "best he had heard in a long while." Mr. Brompart said nothing, but he regarded me shrewdly and speculatively for several moments.

"You mustn't mind my brothers," Sarah said, as she conducted me to my room; "they don't mean any harm."

"Then I am sorry I spoke as I did," was my reply.

"Oh, as to that, it will do them good. I meant that you were not to let anything they say or do hurt your feelings. Here is your room. Do you think you will be comfortable in it?"

I had been too much occupied with my new acquaintances to take note of the contents of the room I first entered, but now I looked with interest around me. I have slept in many handsomely appointed bedrooms since that day, but I have never had again the sense of luxurious comfort which came over me at the sight of that little chamber with its single white-curtained window, its simple brass-mounted bedstead, its washstand, mirror, and chest of drawers.

"Indeed, it is a beautiful room," I said fervently.

She laughed gaily, checking her mirth when she saw that I was in earnest.

"Mr. Purcell is very rich, isn't he?" she asked.

"I don't know," I answered. "We used to live in a rush whare, and though we have a good house now, it is nothing to this."

To tell the truth, the idea suggested by her words was

almost new to me. My reading, of course, had acquainted me with the fact that there was—though in other lands—a wide disparity between the possessions of individuals, but it had never seemed to me a fact in which I was, or was likely to be, personally interested. Even a great chief like Te Huata had, beyond his clothes, his weapons, and his few hereditary ornaments, no personal possessions, and only my foster-father owned more of this world's goods than he could immediately use or consume. Yet it would have seemed to me a ludicrous suggestion that Te Huata was poor. My eyes were shortly to be opened on this and many other matters.

I never learned with certainty to what rank in life the Bromparts had belonged previous to their emigration from England. From the number of titled names on the lips of Mrs. Brompart, when, later on, she condescended, for reasons of her own, to take notice of me, I could only conclude that she had moved in the highest circles; but as Mr. Brompart never supported her by word or look, and seemed, indeed, to possess a sneering contempt for titles of every kind, I judged it unlikely that he himself was a person of distinction in the country he came from. On the other hand, there seemed to be no lack of money. The sons made merely a pretence at working on the farm, leaving all the laborious work to hired assistants, and spending their time either idling in the town or riding over the countryside. On that night of my coming they went out after tea, disappearing one at a time, and I noticed that both Mr. and Mrs. Brompart looked annoyed when the discovery was made that they had gone. Janet merely curled her proud lip when asked if she knew where they were. She rarely addressed a word to her brothers, or indeed to any occupant of the house, and later on I could not but discover that she held every member of her family, with the exception of her mother, in disdain.

At breakfast the following morning, Mr. Brompart—after vainly endeavouring to enlist the services of one of his sons to relieve him of the task—announced that he would himself take me into town and show me the sights. “You will be able to dispatch a letter to your foster-father to-morrow,” he said thoughtfully. “There is a schooner leaving. Well to have something to write about.”

I cordially agreed, for I was all agog to see the splendid city of the white men, of which for years past I had heard so many reports. It was a fine, bright morning as we rode our horses on to the muddy highway and turned our faces towards the shining, island-studded waters of the capital of the Colony. I had supposed the residence of the Bromparts to be, at the nearest, on the outskirts of the inhabited district, but, as I looked around, I could see in every direction the homes of the settlers dotting the grass lands, not merely in the direction of the water but along the ridge of Remuera and towards the beautiful ancient pa, which the white men had rechristened Mount Eden. In front of us, standing out against the sky, were several large buildings, and thence westward I could see them clustering ever more thickly together as the land fell away to the harbour.

“Inside the double rail here, to your right,” said my guide, “are the Government House grounds. House itself was burnt down four or five years ago. Royal Hotel to left. The old Post Office and Customs House, Master Tregarthen.”

A bugle call rang out sweetly on the morning air, sending a thrill of pleasure through my body.

“The barracks,” explained Mr. Brompart. “You’ll be interested in the redcoats. All boys are—and women. The 58th Regiment: Lieutenant-Colonel Wynyard in command.”

The city of Auckland at that time had its centre in Point Britomart. To the left was Commercial Bay; to the

right Official Bay. The early settlers, in establishing themselves, fixed on the sunny slopes to the eastward in preference to those which were subjected to the force of the prevailing winds on the west ; and thus the first intention of the town was towards what is now known as Parnell. Already, however, the greater physical advantages of the western side were making themselves felt, and into the muddy channel of Queen Street was rapidly flowing all the enterprise of the budding city. From the check of this westward expansion the east never recovered. To this day there is about Parnell an air—let me not write of stagnation—but of village quietude ; nor will it awake to activity till a viaduct spans the intervening valley that proved its undoing.

Giving a name to every object which he saw attracted my attention, and hastening me along meanwhile, Mr. Brompart turned into Shortland Crescent and pushed on down the hill. Even at that date I think there must have been well nigh a dozen vessels lying out in Commercial Bay, while, standing across from the round green hill called North Head, on the opposite shore, came an object of such majesty and beauty that I drew rein, and, lost to everything else of the wonders around me, had eyes only for this. It was a full-rigged ship, one of those emigrant vessels of which I had so often heard in my native home, one of those wondrous floating palaces which were bringing the people of my race in hundreds and thousands to the land of the Maori. How great and glorious were the people who could fashion and control an object so transcendent ! Tears of pride and delight came into my eyes as I watched her. Up aloft, I could clearly see the figures of the sailormen taking in the royals and top-gallant sails. Not by any possibility could such privileged beings be of the drinking, swearing class of the *Matilda*. Meanwhile Mr. Brompart had ridden on till, missing the sound of my horse's

footsteps behind, he turned and himself beheld the vessel.

"The *Esmeralda*!" he cried, gathering up the reins. "Put up your horse at the Osprey in High Street. I have business to be seen to at once," and, waiting no reply, he went off at a trot down the hill.

High Street and the Osprey Inn proved easy to find, and giving my horse in charge of the stable man, I set off on all but dancing feet to explore the town.

Auckland is larger now, but it does not seem to me quite so fine nor so densely populated as it did then. Its single or two-storied shops, with their small windows, its verandahed residences, its public-houses—I think I counted eight in Queen Street alone—represented to me the last word in civilisation. I wondered at the people, men and women, boys and girls, military and civilian, who passed me without a word and with only here and there, among the younger folk, a look of inquiry. The children moved together in twos and threes, and sometimes a couple of soldiers, very smart and dashing in their uniforms, would come along the street abreast, but I was impressed, as I had never been impressed among the Maoris, by a sense of the isolation of the human unit. It was only the rebound of my keyed-up emotions, but seeing so many men moving alone, exchanging merely a word or nod with others here and there, and all with a strange air of intentness on their faces, a sudden chill came over the warmth of my feelings. Unknown to myself, I had come face to face with the barrier of cold reserve which the Anglo-Saxon raises between himself and all but the chosen few.

I have still a vivid recollection of the novel scenes I saw that day. Sale by auction struck me as a magical way of disposing of goods, and I wondered that it had never occurred to my father to adopt it. I resolved, as I stood in Connell & Riding's sale-room on Queen Street and

watched the celerity with which the auctioneer disposed of his stock, that my first letter should carry to him full directions for the carrying out of this new idea. In front of the rostrum was a table, piled with drapery goods, muslins and silks and velvets of the finest texture and most delicate hues imaginable. They were mostly in short-length pieces, being, as the auctioneer told us, dress lengths, and so taken was I with their beauty that I could not resist the temptation of buying a couple of pieces for Puhi-Huia and also a large sun-bonnet of genuine Leghorn straw, which things I duly sent to her the next afternoon by the seventeen-ton schooner *Gazelle*.

I observed Fred Brompart—he was the second son—among the crowd of onlookers, but he took no notice of me until after I had made my purchases, when he came up and fingered the stuff and asked me, with more civility than I had looked for, what I intended to do with them.

I was grateful for his recognition, for by this time I was tired of my own company, and I launched out into a description of my foster-sister, all the more fervent that I had had no one to speak with of her since I dried her eyes on the river bank. I came to a conclusion abruptly, expecting to see a sneer on his face, but he merely nodded. “You paid enough for them, Cedric,” he remarked.

“You mean I have paid too much?”

“No. The price is right enough as the things are going; but it’s a good deal to give for presents to a girl.”

“Don’t you give presents to your sisters?” I asked, wondering.

For the moment Fred looked embarrassed. “Oh, that’s right enough,” he said, recovering himself. “But you don’t want to be too free with your money till you know the ropes. If you’ve finished, let’s get out of this. I’ll tell the man to put your things aside till later on, and we’ll go for a stroll round. What do you say?”

My reply was that I was only too glad of his company, and this was the absolute truth. Fred led the way briskly down the street, till we came in front of one of the public-houses I have spoken of—the Crown and Anchor, I think it was—when he came to a halt and proposed that we should go inside and undertake the operation he defined as “wetting our whistles.” I wished to be companionable, and there was no doubt also an element of curiosity in my consent, for I had a very exaggerated idea of the wickedness of these places. However, I followed him in, and, pushing our way through the noisy crowd which surrounded the bar, we were presently served with two glasses of English beer. Fred was greatly tickled when he found, after an exhaustive search of his pockets, that he had come out without any money. “After inviting you in and all,” said he. “Lucky it was one of the family.”

However, I was glad of the opportunity of paying for the beer, and begged that he would keep the change for a sovereign the girl handed him until another occasion, for, as I wisely observed, he would certainly need some more money before the day was out. As for the beer, one mouthful was enough for me. Anything more nauseous had never passed my lips, and despite the whispered remonstrances of my companion, not another drop would I take. Nor have I drunk beer from that day to this. Finding I was not to be moved, Fred kindly exchanged glasses with me, swallowing the contents of mine with the dual purpose of hiding my shame and avoiding such a flagrant insult to the house as I had projected. “Old Sheehan gets nothing but the best, and he’s pretty touchy about it,” he told me.

I thought this would have terminated our visit, but Fred’s whistle, it appeared, was not yet properly moistened, and as I could not be induced to try any other kind of

drink, he fell back on a young man of his own age, with whom he had exchanged a nod on entering. Presently he was in the midst of a laughing group, every one with a glass in his hand. I think that was my first insight into the power of money. I could not but reflect that if I had kept my change in my own possession he would have been obliged to come away with me as he had at first intended.

I was agreeably surprised with the good-humour and friendliness of the men around me. In pronounced contrast with the people in the street, every one addressed me as if I were an old and familiar friend. They asked no questions. They knew me and called me by my name—"Jack" or "Bill" or "Young Larkins here," as one individual persisted in designating me, with such perfect confidence that that name presently ousted the others. Nor did they make an embarrassing demand on me for conversation in my turn; it was enough that I wore the appearance of listening and continued to smile amiably. Such was my innocence that it did not at first occur to me that I was witnessing the early stages of intoxication—I doubt if I knew that intoxication had stages—and it was only after I had made an earnest but quite unsuccessful effort to understand what they were talking about, that a suspicion of the truth began to form in my mind. After that I was all eagerness to be gone, and finding myself unable to get any answer from Fred as to how long he intended to stay, I finally worked myself to the door and took advantage of its opening to slip out into the street.

By this time it was past midday, and I repaired to the Osprey Inn for lunch. Here I came on Mr. Brompart, just finishing his meal and evidently in a great hurry. "I must return to the office," were his first words as he caught sight of me. "But come down to the beach. Where

have you been, boy ? The shops ? Come down to the—— Fine ship, the *Esmeralda*. Like to go aboard, perhaps ? ”

I said that I would extremely, and twenty minutes later, having dispatched my dinner, I hastened down to Official Bay, and was soon, together with Mr. Brompart and one or two other gentlemen, being pulled out to the ship. The cabin passengers had already come ashore, but the red tape of officialdom had tied up the emigrants, who still remained on the vessel. They were now, as I understood, about to be released. Upwards of a score of boats and canoes hung on the flanks of the big, weather-worn ship, some of them touting for passengers, some laden with fresh provisions—strings of fish, little baskets of vegetables and fruit. Through these we made our way, and, reaching the gangway, presently gained the deck.

I am bound to confess that, impressed as I was by the size of this great ocean voyager, I was still more impressed by the darkness, the noisome odours, the general air of filth and squalor that characterised the hold in which the emigrants were confined. Much of the disorder was, no doubt, due to the fact that the voyagers had collected together their belongings prior to leaving the vessel, but even when due allowance was made for this there remained a good deal unaccounted for. In spite of the depressing character of their surroundings, the emigrants were in good spirits. The women sat chatting among their household gods, keeping a watchful eye both on their surrounding bundles and the sturdy children who played hide-and-seek among the litter. The men also were much happier than they were aware of, in drawing comparisons, disastrous to the Colony, between the New Zealand officials and those of the land they had left.

But now word was passed down that they were free, and in a moment all was activity. I fancy that the majority

of the men were military pensioners, who had been granted an acre of land with a cottage and the right of pre-emption over five more acres, being in return liable for active service if required ; but there was also one considerable batch who seemed to look to Mr. Brompart for instructions, or to possess the right to call on him for assistance.

I may say at once that I never arrived at a clear understanding of this branch of Mr. Brompart's business. Of his own affairs he never spoke to me, and it was chiefly from chance words let fall by other people that I gathered the idea that he represented some group of land-speculators, whose enormous claims were disputed by the natives and remained, so far, unsupported by the Government. How these claims were finally adjusted—if they ever were—or how far Mr. Brompart was himself responsible for the trouble and distress that ensued, I have no knowledge, but I do know that for many years he was rarely free from the importunities of the settlers for a week together, that he often took trips to the southern settlements to avoid receiving deputations, and that even after the lapse of forty years I have occasionally heard his name spoken with invective.

I lingered so long on the ship, taking stock of its proportions and method of construction—for I had resolved to have one exactly like it, but cleaner, at an early date—that but for a native canoe which still lingered, I was in risk of having to spend the night on board. I found its proprietor among the crew, endeavouring to effect a sale of a few trivial articles of Maori workmanship, and waiting till his business was transacted, I told him that I wanted to go ashore, and asked his terms.

He looked me over thoughtfully, scanned the empty water, and having thus taken stock of the position, announced that the charge was "fi' bob." I had no idea what was a fair price for the proposed service, and, had I

been dealing with a white man, whether I suspected him of overcharging me or no, I should have closed the bargain at once. But the Maori was nearer to my heart than the pakeha. I could not bear that he should cheat me, and I knew by the fellow's manner that he proposed to take advantage of my necessities. After all, it would be a perfectly simple matter to swim ashore. So I gave him a proverb in use in our country, when it was considered one sought to make gain out of another's need. The effect on his face was instantaneous, cunning and greed gave place to a look of astonishment, and that, in its turn, to one of shame.

"Friend," said he, "your words are correct. In the Maori sayings lives the wisdom of our ancestors. The canoe is yours."

I found that my new acquaintance belonged to a hapu whose place of residence was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Tamaki. His name was Tetere. He had been familiar with Auckland from its beginning, and both then and later I learned from him much of the feeling that attended the intercourse of the two races. On one side was humiliation, tempered or held in leash by greed of gain; on the other, at the best, tolerance, at the worst a scurrilous contempt that enveloped the whole native race in the epithet "bloody Maoris."

I am not now speaking of those hardy and courageous settlers, true chips of the ancient Anglo-Saxon block, who, taking their lives in their hands, had gone forth into the wilderness, there to hew out for themselves the homes the old land denied them—they, at least, were compelled by their necessities to hold the original owners of the soil in respect; nor of the men of culture and understanding who were able to pierce the dark skin of ignorance and observe with admiration the natural strength of the brain beneath; but of the mass of the townsmen, themselves of no particular

education, of narrow, insular views and absorbed in the petty issues of trade. Many of these had come direct from the cities of England or from Sydney, hired or purchased a shop or office immediately on landing, and entered on business, as though they had merely shifted from one street to another. Never moving from the narrow limits of the town, seeing only the worst side of the natives in their midst, they could form no adequate conception of the qualities of that race without whose continued forbearance and goodwill their lives were not worth an hour's purchase.

It is true that a share in the blame for this misunderstanding must be laid at the door of the natives. I think there was nothing in the early days of my residence in Auckland that so puzzled and even shocked me as the manners of the Maori visitors. I had been accustomed to dignity and reserve, to courteous speech, to honourable dealing; here I could see little of any of them. The men were boisterous and tricky, the women bold and worse. Their lack of pride angered me. I have seen—this was in the days before the establishment of the Maori hostelry—men and women lying wrapped in their blankets, asleep in the doorways and at corners of streets, the winter rain falling on them. Yet they must have known that no white man had ever so lain within reach of the shelter of a Maori whare. Keen as were their wits, their whole attitude towards the pakeha was a mistake. Nay, it was their very keenness that led them astray. In their manner was a reflection of the manner of those who addressed them. He who came with boisterous jest found a boisterous jester to receive him. The speech underlined with senseless oaths was responded to in like fashion. What the pakeha gave, that did he receive. But though, as I have said, a measure of blame must attach to the native on this account, the initial fault lay with the white man, who,

satisfied with his formula of "bloody Maoris," neither doubted nor attempted to conceal his immense mental superiority.

But I am anticipating. Only a faint suggestion of some irritating soreness came to me from Teteré's words on that occasion. I was aware of a cloud in the bright sunlight of that winter's afternoon—a cloud far off and impalpable. Would it melt away in the blue heavens, or grow till the whole fair land darkened under its shadow? Very pretty and peaceful looked this youngest of cities from the calm waters of the bay. Neatly painted cottages gleamed from their orchards and gardens round the shore. The highly prized *Pinus insignis*, destined before long to change the whole aspect of the surrounding country, rose in the first splendour of its vigorous youth. Flowers were not wanting, even at that season; great white trumpets of datura hung from the fences, bushes of yellow jasmine enlivened the gardens, and, most conspicuous of all, glowing, as though it itself originated the light it reflected, the resplendent bougainvillea of Australia made of some unpretentious dwelling a shrine of beauty.

From the high land over our heads, an unbroken series of buildings, beginning with the little church of St. Paul's, descended the steep gradient, westward, to the beach at its foot. Over the point rose the masts of the trading vessels then in port, and on the still air I could hear the chanties of the sailors, as they loaded timber for the Port of Sydney. Auckland was not yet in her teens, yet already so much was accomplished. Truly the men of my race loitered not on the way. Ever present in their minds were the mighty cities they had left. No time to be lost. No time for dalliance. As they were, so must this be. Swiftly they built: would the things that they built endure?

Breaking the silence with startling suddenness, came a bugle call, several bugles ringing out together.

Tetere lifted his eyes to the cliff. "The soldiers," he said, and a brooding look gathered on his face.

Alas, if therein lay the answer! Alas, if to the arbitrament of what was suggested by those sounds should be submitted the question of the endurance of the works of the white man!

CHAPTER XII

I LEARN MY ORIGIN

MR. BROMPART was detained late in town, looking after his emigrants. He told me, I remember, that cholera was raging in the City of London, two or three thousand persons dying from this dread scourge every week. A suspicious death had occurred on the *Esmeralda*, and though this was the solitary case of sickness among the emigrants, I understood that it was in part responsible for the delay which had occurred in their landing. None of the men had returned when I reached home. Mrs. Brompart, to my surprise and pleasure, smiled pleasantly at me as I entered the drawing-room, and Janet, who was seated at the piano, running her white fingers lightly over the treble keys, asked me if I liked music. I do not know if her playing was good or bad: I do know that it filled me with delight, and when Sarah burst into the room and came eagerly towards me, I was lost in such a dream-world that what she said failed to reach my consciousness.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Brompart brightly, as Janet closed the piano. "How did I come to forget it?" And rising, she took a small sealed envelope from the mantelpiece and handed it to me. "The Governor's aide-de-camp brought it," she explained, "Lieutenant Wylde."

"He was disappointed that you were not at home," added Sarah, looking with curiosity at the unopened note in my hand.

"Lieutenant Wylde is brother to that child Helenora," said Janet.

"Cedric must have made a great impression," added Mrs. Brompart, gaily. Mr. Brompart had related the circumstances of my first ride. "It is quite evidently the writing of a very young lady."

The same thought had already occurred to me, and, to conceal my embarrassment at her banter, I hastened to occupy myself in opening and reading the letter.

It is yellow with age now, but the childish writing remains as legible as ever. Here it is, word for word:

GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

"MY DEAR CEDRIC,

"My mother wishes me to write to you. She would be very pleased to see you here, and will be at home all to-day and to-morrow. Please come, because it is *important*. It you have any letters or mementos" (there had apparently been a difficulty with this word) "of your family, she would like you to bring them. I suppose you have seen a great many wonderful things by this time.

"I remain, yours truly,

"HELENORA WYLDE."

To describe the effect of this missive upon me is almost impossible. For years I had pondered over the mystery that enveloped my origin. No ray of light had ever come to pierce the darkness which descended that fatal night on the Te Kuma pa. Who were my father and mother? Was the latter, perhaps, still living? How came it that my father emigrated to New Zealand; and from what part of the old land did he come? It was well-nigh a certainty that people nearly related to me by blood must be living in some part of England: then, where were they to be looked for? And, if discovered, with what feelings would they regard me?

These questions and a hundred like them were constantly in my mind. I could never read works of fiction in which the origin of the principal character was unknown, without the deepest interest and sympathy; yet the motives of these heroes in their search differed from mine. I desired not wealth, but ancestors. Among the natives—except occasionally in war-time, when a great strategist might force his way up from among the common people—rank counted for everything. To have no knowledge of your forefathers was a state almost inconceivably ignominious; only my white blood saved me from suffering the full effects of my disability. The very children could patter backwards into the generations, making their way, sure-footed, for hundreds of years. I alone was compelled to remain silent.

Now, however, and at last, the long night showed signs of breaking, for how else could I construe Lady Wylde's desire to see me, coupled with the surprise shown by Helenora on first learning my name? If to this cause for excitement be added the fact that I was again to meet—and meet perhaps on terms of acknowledged friendship—the girl whose beautiful face and winning manners had remained ever since I first saw her constantly present to my mental vision, the reader can form some idea of the state of expectancy into which I was thrown.

Mrs. Brompart continued to take notice of me all that evening, plying me with questions, which I answered freely to the best of my ability. I was extraordinarily innocent in some ways, and probably I found nothing to wonder at in her suddenly developed interest in my affairs. I should not have been less frank with her if I had. My first white girl had not only established herself as the most perfect of created beings, she had lifted her whole sex up to a height which criticism could reach only with difficulty.

My importance was enhanced the following morning

when, shortly before the time I had appointed to myself for visiting Government House, Lieutenant Wylde again appeared. I was summoned from the cow-shed to find him in gay conversation with Miss Brompart, who, with a bright colour in her cheeks and no trace of the hauteur which usually characterised her, seemed quite a different creature. "This is Cedric Tregarthen, Mr. Wylde," she said. "He proposed waiting on Lady Wylde in any case this morning."

The young soldier rose to his feet and, making a swift military salute, stood looking steadily at me for some moments. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Tregarthen," he said at last. "My stepmother was looking for you with such anxiety yesterday that I thought I would drop in on my way from parade and see if you could manage to come back with me."

To this I readily agreed, and, hastening to the stable, I saddled and bridled the horse I had already twice ridden. Lieutenant Wylde was on the veranda when I returned. Though I looked hastily away, I did not fail to observe that he held Miss Brompart's hand for a length of time which seemed to me to exceed the usual courtesies of leave-taking. However, he swung into his seat as I came up and led the way to the slip-rail, as dazzling a vision, in his uniform of an officer of cavalry, as my eye had ever rested upon. Without any clear reason, I was aware of a feeling of uneasiness in the thought that this splendid personage was Helenora's half-brother.

"You are making a long stay in Auckland, Mr. Tregarthen?" the lieutenant asked as we reached the highway.

I was admiring the action of his horse, which, in contrast to the heavy lurch of the animal I bestrode, seemed a creature of air and fire; distending its red nostrils and lifting its feet daintily from the mud of the road, as if in

disdain of its surroundings. A similar daintiness and disdain appeared to characterise the rider. Even when he addressed me he had an absent air, as though his thoughts were elsewhere. He had a habit of humming musically to himself, which, however pleasant to listen to in the intervals of speech, was apt to prove disconcerting when it traversed speech itself.

"I shall probably be here a year," I replied. My foster-father desires me to see a good deal of the white people."

He nodded, still humming, and then, as though the sense of my words had only just reached him, turned suddenly and looked at me. "What white people?" he asked.

"The people of Auckland—the white settlers."

He continued to regard me for some moments, but at length the puzzled look vanished from his face. "Of course," he observed; "I had forgotten. You are Helenora's New Zealander," and he resumed his humming.

In such desultory and broken conversation we traversed the short distance that separated us from the residence of the Governor. I think the young soldier's interest in me was only of the mildest description, and that in what he did say he was influenced almost entirely by politeness. My admiration for him knew no bounds, and though I was aware that for the most part my replies to his questions fell on deaf ears, I attributed this lack of attention to the cares and responsibilities of his high position. Absorbed in matters which affected the destiny of the young Colony, my petty affairs must seem to him trivial indeed.

Since the disastrous fire which had swept away the original Government House, Sir George and Lady Grey had established themselves in a mansion recently completed for one of Auckland's leading merchants. For those days it was a fine building, constructed, I think, of

the lava rock which covers the country round the base of Mount Eden, and standing on the ridge above Queen Street which is now known as Karangahape Road.

Wylde gave me into the charge of a man in livery, who conducted me to the drawing-room, where I sat distracted by the splendour of my surroundings until Lady Wylde appeared.

I had been impressed by Mrs. Brompart, but she sank into the commonplace in comparison with this chieftainess of the best blood of England. Tall and slender, fair-skinned, her hair only lightly touched with grey, she might have been twenty years younger than her actual age, which I suppose at that time was about forty years. Closing the door, she came forward soundlessly but for the soft swish of her skirts, and, pausing directly in front of me, without any form of greeting, scanned me with a breathless eagerness that was full of the suggestion of pain.

"Your father is dead, Cedric?" she said at last.

"He was killed by Te Waharoa, Lady Wylde; at the sack of the Te Kuma pa."

"Te Waharoa! A savage!" Her tremulous lips closed in a sharp line.

"There were many killed there—men and women and children. My father was the last to die." I was proud of the heroic story, and spared her, I fear, but few of the terrible details.

She had sunk into a seat, and her face was white before I became aware of the depth of her emotion. "But he is there?" she said in a whisper. "They didn't . . . ?" A shudder shook her frame.

"No. Te Waharoa did not wish to kill him. It was his own fury that brought him his death-wounds. And when he was dead, they gave up his body. They gave up most of his property too, and his was the only whare that was not burnt." I was reminded of her desire for

something that would establish my relationship with the dead, and pulled from my pocket the only thing I had with me in Auckland, a copy of the *Poems of William Wordsworth*, with my father's name in the fly-leaf.

She waved it away at first, but subsequently stretched out her hand and took it. "There is no need," she said. "I am reminded of your father with every word you speak. There is a likeness in your face, but it is strongest in your voice and the way you lift your head."

"Who was my father, Lady Wylde?" I asked eagerly.

"He was the younger son of the present Lord Tregarthen of Pentreath."

"My grandfather?"

"Yes, your grandfather."

"A peer of England?"

"Of a very ancient and noble English family."

"Shall I become a peer of England?"

"You might," she said slowly. "It is not impossible."

A wave of exultation flushed my veins. Even my boldest imaginings had hardly transported me so far as I was carried by these few words. To have a grandfather living was something; to know that he was a rangitira¹ of the proud aristocracy of England was, to one brought up as I had been, vastly more. Probably also I had many other relations; even now I might be in the presence of one, for how else could I account for the deep interest Lady Wylde took in my affairs?

"No," she replied, when I had ventured on the question. "Our families have been on terms of intimate friendship for many years, but we are not connected by blood."

"And my mother?" I asked.

She had opened the book on her lap and was looking at the inscription on the front page. I thought I noticed a change come over her face, the faintest hardening of the

¹ Rangitira = a chief.

soft lines, and when she lifted her eyes I was sure of it. Hitherto her manner had been intensely human and natural; so much so, that from the first moment I had been as completely at ease with her as if I had known her all my life. But now her eyes were cold and searching. They seemed to put me away from her, until the gulf between a lady of rank and the foundling of an obscure native village lay deep and wide between us.

"I can trace no likeness to her," she said. "It will please your grandfather to find that you are wholly Tregarthen."

"She is dead, Lady Wylde?"

"She died soon after you were born."

I had been fancying what it might be to discover a mother such as the lady before me, and her reply fell cold on my heart. "You knew her?" I asked.

"I knew her, yes. Yet in a sense I never knew her." There was a suppressed vehemence in the words, and she rose as she spoke, as though to put an end to the interview. I followed her example, dimly associating the mention of my mother with the blight that had fallen on her original friendliness.

"No, no," she said, with a quick return of her first manner, as I made a motion to take my leave. "You must not go yet. I wish to speak with you, but not immediately. Can you amuse yourself here? Go where you please. Or stay; I will send Helenora to you. You have already made the acquaintance of my little girl."

"Yes," I said; and no doubt the pleasure her words gave me was plainly visible in my face.

She smiled graciously, a very tender, womanly smile, but still with that look of suffering beneath it, and, with my book still in her hand, left the room.

I was absorbed in a great war picture—I think it represented the closing scene in the battle of Waterloo—when a

slight sound caused me to turn suddenly, and there, almost within reach, was Helenora.

I could take delight in describing her to you again, as she appeared on the occasion of our second meeting. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to accompany her every entrance on the stage with pages of description ; but what use ? I could never penetrate to the heart of the mystery and lay bare to your gaze the source of her perennial, ever-changing charm. Humble and proud, tender and callous, reasonable and utterly illogical, earnest and flippant, her moods and actions never to be foreseen—I can give her to you best thus, in negations and antitheses.

But I am keeping the young lady waiting. “Good morning, Miss Wylde.”

“Good morning. My mother says that you may call me Helenora.”

“It is a beautiful name. It might almost be a Maori name. Change the l into an r—Herenora, and there it is.”

“I suppose it would be much improved by that,” she said, with a pout and a laugh.

“I love the Maori language, but it would not be possible to improve on Helenora.”

She eyed me sharply, and suggested abruptly that we should go into the open air. “This room is stuffy,” she declared.

I had not noticed it, and could have spent a very pleasant hour learning the names and uses of the various strange objects which surrounded me ; but the room became stuffy as soon as she said so, and I followed her out into the grounds. As I expressed an interest in the flowers and plants—nearly all of them new to me—she led me round the beds, deriving much amusement from my ignorance and occasional astonishment, when the flower named was not in accord with my preconceived idea of it.

“And this one ? ”

"Narcissus."

"The boy that died of love of his image in the water?"

"No. That is the Poet's Narcissus. Fancy any boy being so stupid."

"And so conceited."

"That's not so wonderful—in a boy."

"There could have been no Helenoras in those days," I said.

"Or he would have died sooner.—This is the English daffodil."

"Wordsworth's daffodil?"

"Yes. Mr. Wordsworth is dead—did you know? The news came through by the *Esmeralda*. I heard Sir George Grey telling Mr. Swainson. That doesn't interest you."

"Oh, but it does. I know hardly anything from personal experience. Books have been everything to me."

"How funny!" she said. "I keep on forgetting what the world must be like to you, after being buried so long in that Maori village. What is it like?"

"There are so many things . . . it is hard to describe. It seems pettier than I had imagined, more feverish; aimless; not so intelligent. I thought the white men were immensely superior to the Maoris. Mr. Purcell—my foster-father—is a giant in knowledge beside the natives, but I did not really see how great he is till I came to Auckland."

"Oh, but Auckland is a very small and a very new place," she said. "You mustn't take it as an example of a great city."

"No. Of course the fault is in me. If I could see clearly into things, no doubt my opinion would be different. I had exaggerated expectations of everything. . . . However, some things have not disappointed me."

Helenora turned her clear eyes away, but curiosity finally overcame her. "What things?" she asked.

"A great ship on the water, a galloping horse, and a white girl."

"Both the Misses Brompart are pretty girls."

"Yes, but I was not thinking of more than one."

"Which one?"

"Neither."

She laughed merrily, but her cheeks were brighter. "Who taught you how to pay compliments? I hope you are not like my brother."

"Your brother! I hope I may be. I cannot express how much I admire him. He completely fills my ideas of the hero of romance."

"He is nice to look at," she agreed.

"But it is not merely his looks; it is his—what shall I call it?—his intellectuality and courtesy. His mind, absorbed in matters of—state, he can still interest himself in the little affairs of the casual stranger."

"You are the casual stranger?" Helenora's pretty mouth had been gradually opening.

"He might have left a message and ridden away, but he waited for me, and, though it was plain that he had other matters to think of, he gave me his attention."

"He did! Well!—But you believe he had other matters to think of?"

I was puzzled at the note of mockery in her tones. "In his position——" I began.

"He is one of the Governor's aides," she broke in. "He has to do what he is told. The reason why is nothing to him; nor has he any responsibility for the consequences. Yet, you are right, he was probably thinking of something else. I think I must tell him of this conversation. He will pull his moustache and look annoyed."

"Please don't make him annoyed with me."

She laughed wickedly. "Shall I tell you of what he was thinking?"

"You can't possibly know."

"I can tell you in one word."

"Well then?"

"But shall I?"

"Yes. You have excited my curiosity."

"Then—girls."

"What girls?—You mean . . . ?"

"Just GIRLS."

"How do you know?"

"Because he used to make me his messenger, till I got sense. He thinks only of three things—his clothes, his appearance, and girls. Somebody would be bound to tell you, so I have shattered your hero before he grows bigger."

"I am not sure that you have shattered him. The hero of romance is not unlike that."

"Oh, set him up again if you can! I admire him as much as you do. He is so splendid. I can't help thrilling when he comes into a room in all his war-paint, and I see the flutter he causes, but I want to laugh too. You see he carries on so many flirtations that he is always in a dreadful fix when he has to meet more than one or two of them together. He was very annoyed with me one day because, when I found him studying a book on strategy, I told him he was wasting his time, for he was already a born strategist. He told me that I was too sharp for my years, and that nobody liked sharp girls."

"Then he does take an interest in his profession?"

"Oh, yes. He loves soldiering as much as I hate it."

"Why do you hate it?"

"Because it has already cost me one brother and a father.—There is Sir George. Would you like to speak to him?"

The Governor stood with his back towards us, looking downwards in the direction of the town and the harbour.

He was alone. His figure, for all its suggestion of youth and activity, had a droop to one side, and I noticed that the hand pressed to his hip moved as though he were endeavouring to still some physical pain.

"He is suffering from his wounds, poor dear," said Helenora, in a voice of tender concern. "He ought not to stand on the damp grass."

Perhaps the sound of her voice reached him, for he turned at that moment and came towards us.

Though I was to meet the Governor many times after that, to become, indeed, on terms of intimacy with him, I think I remember him best as he appeared then; with none of the cold dignity, the reserve, the absoluteness that so frequently characterised his manner, but completely his attractive and natural self, kindly, good-humoured, brimming over with boyish roguery and playfulness.

He listened to Helenora's stately introduction of myself with a whimsical smile. "Then it *was* a case of love at first sight," he said to her, as he gave me his hand. "I hope you are conscious of the honour this young lady has done you, Master Tregarthen, in summoning you so promptly."

"I am, sir," I said, mistaking his meaning, until I caught sight of Helenora's rosy face, and then, I doubt not, I blushed as deeply as she.

"Tut, tut!" said His Excellency. "What is a Governor in comparison? Until your appearance I can assure you she has evinced interest in no man."

"Your Excellency is facetious," said Helenora, with great dignity. "And you have no business to stand on the damp grass."

"Well, well," said he, laughing at this conjunction of reproofs. "We will sit on a wooden seat in the sunshine and be as grave as owls. But," he added, stopping short, "three is reputed to be an unlucky number."

"There is no owl-like gravity about that," remarked Helenora, resigning herself to his teasing humour.

But when we had seated ourselves he remained for some time silent, looking down at the little township, as he had been doing when we first caught sight of him. His arm was round Helenora's waist, and presently, as though to draw me into their companionship, he laid a hand on my shoulder.

"What will it be like in fifty years, Cedric?" he said.

"A great city, Your Excellency."

"These hills and vales covered with buildings, spires and domes, villas and parks and gardens. Never was a spot better situated for the establishing of a City Beautiful. They must take advantage of the hills, crown them with splendid edifices; construct noble viaducts and spacious streets. What should you say to streets so wide that there is room for a footpath and lofty trees in the centre of them?"

"Beautiful," said Helenora. "Why don't you make them do it?"

"I?" he said lightly. "I am the man who is to make grass grow in the streets, not trees."

"It is a lie," she said, and drew his arm closer around her. "I wish I could burn all the *Southern Crosses*¹ before they are printed."

He laughed gaily at her bull, and presently resumed his musings on the city to be. "They must reserve the foreshores. The Waitemata must run through the streets and through no man's back garden. Here must be the great pleasure way, tree-planted, fronted by noble buildings, open parks, reserves. The citizen should drive for miles along the banks of the island-studded waters. Yes, if its men are great enough, Auckland may become the Wonder City of the world."

¹ See note, p. 400.

"Why Auckland?" said Helenora. "What have the Edens done that this place should be called after them? Some day, perhaps, when there are no more *Southern Crosses*, the citizens of Auckland will rename it Grey City, or Greytown."

"Beware of her flattery, Cedric," he said, with mock gravity. "Yet they may give me a public-house, or even a street."

I was encouraged by his kindly manner and good-nature to put a question suggested by his imaginings of the white man's city in days to come. Was there any place in the City Beautiful for the dark-skinned natives of the soil?

"For them also," he said, turning eagerly towards me. "God forbid that there should be more than one road for the inhabitants of these islands. God forbid that they should not travel it together. You are interested in the Maoris? But, of course; you have lived amongst them. You are from that benighted spot where there are no horses and cattle. Who is the head chief?"

I told him.

"Ah!" he said, knitting his brows. "I have heard of him. A stubborn fellow."

"His mana is declining, sir," I said hastily, unwilling that my tribe should be prejudiced in the eyes of the Governor by the misdeeds of Te Huata. "Besides, he does not live at the pa I come from, where we have a chief of the very highest intelligence, Te Moanaroa. He has always protected my foster-father, sometimes at great risk to himself. He is a loyal subject of the Queen." I spoke eagerly, for I was anxious to clear the frown from his face, and I succeeded. He was looking at me attentively and with some curiosity as I finished.

"You have attended a mission school?" he asked.

"No, sir. The nearest school is many miles away. My

foster-father is a great scholar, and he has taught me himself."

The Governor smiled indulgently at my use of the word scholar. "What has he taught you?" he asked.

His indulgence had turned into astonishment, however, before I had come to the end of my items. Helenora laughed gleefully at his expression of bewilderment.

"If your life has known misfortune, Cedric," he said, "it has known good fortune too. I hope you appreciate that. As for you, miss, I suppose you were aware of all this?"

"No. I only guessed it," said Helenora.

"I should like to meet your foster-father," the Governor said. "Is he often in town?"

"He has never been here, sir, but I believe he will come now on my account."

"Do not fail to let me know when he does. As for your chief, he shall have horses and cattle, a present from the Queen's Government."

"May I write and tell them so, Your Excellency?" I asked eagerly.

"You may, Cedric," he said, pressing my arm. "You may tell them also that you have made a friend who hopes to see a good deal of you; one who appreciates highly your loyalty to themselves. You speak the native language, of course?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, blushing hotly at his kind words.

"Have you taken any interest in the tribal songs, folklore, and traditions?"

"Yes, sir. I know more than a hundred waiata,"¹ I replied.

His face lit up with enthusiasm. "We must go through them," he said, rubbing his hands. "Some time soon—if they will let me. Ah, dear! How much ado about so little, and the really great things—the waiata—must wait."

¹ Waiata = songs.

An aide—not Helenora's brother—appeared, conducting a gentleman towards us over the grass. His Excellency rose to his feet, and we both followed his example. The expression of his face had altered. The kindly, simple gentleman was gone; in his place stood the Governor of New Zealand, the representative of the Queen, grave, dignified, reserved. I stood with bared head, while Helenora bent her knee in a curtsy. The Governor lifted his hat and turned to the approaching couple.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PAST REPEATS ITSELF

I AM afraid our conversation was a little grandiloquent after the Governor's departure.

"Of all the men I have met," said Helenora, "Sir George is the knightliest and kindest."

"Knightliest!" I agreed, with enthusiasm. "That is the word. I could fancy him cold and haughty with the nobles of the land, but gentle with children, and simple and kind to the lowly. Oh, Helenora! After all it is that that makes the great rangatira."

"What is a ranga terror?" Helenora asked suspiciously.

"Rangateera—a chief. The Maori words seem so homely, and more expressive than the English," I explained apologetically.

"You may use French," said Helenora, "or ordinary German vocabulary words, or Latin; but no Maori or any of those, because I don't understand them, and it is not polite to use words people don't understand."

I expressed my regret, and added the wish that if the young lady detected any other solecism in my manners she would immediately call my attention to it.

She relented on the instant. "Your manners are good," she said. "Most boys of your age have none at all. That's why I li—don't mind entertaining you. And it wouldn't have been a bit surprising if your ways had been horrid instead of what they are. As for foreign words, if I were

as clever as you are, I wouldn't mind whether it was polite or not ; I'd stagger people with them."

"Would you like me to teach you Maori ? " I asked.

She thanked me doubtfully. "I don't think it would be worth while," she said—"except that I should be glad to know something Miss Temple couldn't pretend to. But in England no one speaks Maori, so I should not even be able to show off with it."

Her words startled me, for they disclosed the thinness of the stuff of which my dreams were made. Helenora had come into my life and glorified it ; now I saw how certainly, and at no distant date, she would slip out of it, taking the glory with her. My thoughts turned back to my own affairs and the recent interview with Lady Wylde.

"I suppose you knew who I was as soon as I told you my name, Helenora ? " I said.

"Yes," she replied. "I was tempted to tell you, but I decided it would be better fun to keep you in suspense. It was the likeness to the Tregarthens that I first noticed in you. You are like your grandfather, but still more like your uncle."

"Is your home near my grandfather's ? "

"Only a few miles away."

"Then, if I were there, I could see you often."

"You could I suppose, if you wanted to."

"I should want to," I said, with such complete confidence that she let the statement pass in silence.

We were back on the bench again in the warm sunlight ; Helenora primly upright, her glossy-booted toe tracing a pattern in the soft gravel of the path, her fair curls screening her face on the side nearer to me.

"What did my mother tell you of your family ? " she asked presently.

"Just that I had a grandfather and an uncle living."

"If your uncle does not marry again, some day you will

be Lord Tregarthen. But he is almost certain to marry again, unless——”

“Unless?” I asked, as she paused.

“Unless you come to England.”

“Why should that make a difference?”

“The Tregarthens are a very proud race. If your father had been alive, they would have forgiven him; but they are afraid of his child.”

“Forgiven him! Was there something to forgive? Then why should they fear me?”

“Not you, but what you might be; what it is very strange you are not—ignorant, almost a savage. Don’t you see?”

I nodded. A great dread struggled with my curiosity. Was there a stain on the shield of the gallant knight, sleeping so peacefully on the windy hill-top? “Ought we to speak of these things, Helenora?” I asked.

“You have to know,” she said hesitatingly. “Mother is not well. She told me to speak to you.”

“Then you will tell me the story?”

She assented mutely, the screen of hair still over her face.

“Well?”

“Your grandfather objected to your mother,” she began rapidly, “and when your father defied him and married her, he closed his doors upon him.”

“What was wrong with my mother?” I asked in a whisper.

“There was nothing wrong, except that your grandfather did not want her.”

“Why didn’t he want her?”

“You mustn’t catechise me,” said Helenora, uneasily. “He didn’t wish her for a daughter-in-law, and that was all.”

“Perhaps she was a person of low rank?”

"She was not an earl's daughter, but she belonged to a good family."

"And my grandfather turned them out?"

"He refused to receive them; he did not reply to their letters; he was very deeply offended."

I pondered the story, and an idea, born of my recent experiences, came to me. "Was my mother poor, Helena?"

"I think she must have been."

"But my father had plenty?"

"He was dependent on your grandfather. I don't think he had very much."

"They fell into poverty."

"Yes. I am afraid so."

"Dire and awful poverty?"

"Don't talk like that. It is an old, old story."

"And I was born and my mother died. What happened then?"

"Your grandfather relented. He wrote to your father and bade him return, and bring his son—you—with him."

I laughed a laugh that sounded odd even to my ears. "And my father answered?"

"With a curse."

"So says his son."

"Oh, Cedric!"

"May my feet rot off before I cross the threshold of the man who sent my mother and father to their graves!"

"Oh, you must not! Listen! I have told you the story all wrong. You prompted me. You made me tell it you that way."

"You have told me the truth."

"No. For I haven't told you all the truth. There was something else—something which made all the difference."

"What was it?"

"You mustn't speak of it again—even to me."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want you to speak of it again."

"Very well."

"At the time your father ran away and married your mother, he was betrothed to some one else."

A suspicion of the truth flashed through my mind. "To whom?" I asked quickly.

"To my mother."

"That was why you said *my* mother was not an earl's daughter?"

"Yes. How quick you are!"

"I noted that because it seemed irrelevant. Tell me everything."

"The marriage was arranged when they were children."

"But were they lovers?"

Helenora shook her curls till they again concealed her.

"Then they were," she said.

"When they were children?"

"Yes, and till your mother appeared."

"Then it was a boy-and-girl love; they did not know their own minds?"

Suddenly Helenora turned her eyes full upon me; they were very bright and steady. "You are going to defend your father?" she asked.

I understood what she meant, and great as was my pride, it quailed before the threat in the depths of her gaze.

"He mistook the nature of his feelings," I urged.

"Very well. My mother was of no consequence. He could do as he pleased. Her feelings were nothing."

I was silent.

"You know that I am telling you the truth now," she continued, "and you don't like it. Don't think I am proud of my mother on account of this. I would sooner she had been as fickle as your father. She loves him still."

It was true. Only thus could I interpret what had

passed between Lady Wylde and myself. "But my mother," I exclaimed, grasping blindly at any hope in my dismay—"she, at least, was guiltless of any wrong to my grandfather."

"She was my mother's friend," said Helenora inexorably. "She met your father at my mother's house. She knew all about the relations between them."

"Was she very beautiful?" I asked.

Helenora tossed her curls with a motion of disdain. "Of course you think that will excuse everything," she said.

"No. I was only seeking to explain it. It is incomprehensible to me."

"Why?"

"How could he have looked at any other woman?"

"Then you think my mother pretty?"

"She must have been very like you, Helenora, when she was as old as you are—the same bright curls, the same *kanohi tiaho*."

"What is that?"

"Shining eyes."

"Oh!—I told you not to speak Maori."

"Yes. I apologise."

"... Nor English either."

"You asked me why it was incomprehensible."

"Yes, but that had nothing to do with my eyes."

"I was thinking— But you will be cross with me."

"Well, if you are afraid..."

"No. I am not afraid. I was thinking... if *we* were sweethearts—you and I—there would be no other girl in life for me. If *you* had ever said you loved me, I should be yours for always."

I do not know how my voice sounded, whether it had the ease I sought to give to it; but I was in deadly earnest. My great fear was that she would laugh, but she did not.

I thought I detected a slight rigidity come into the poise of her averted head. Did it indicate anger ? For quite a minute she was silent.

" I wonder if those were the words your father used to my mother ? " she said at last. " How strange if they were ! "

The fatal past rose darkly in front of me, but I persevered. " Will you be my sweetheart, Helenora ? "

Though her face was invisible, I knew that her thoughts had in a degree forestalled my words. She did not move. Her chin was lifted and she appeared to be gazing at some point far off in the sky. Suddenly, her head came down and was concealed in her hands ; her shoulders shook, and a low laugh escaped her. It was not a giggle—Helenora never giggled—neither was it a laugh of amusement, much less of pleasure. If there be a laugh of discovery, then hers was one. I had an unhappy feeling of a note of threatening in the sound, but it was gone in a moment. She spoke through her hands. " You have only seen me twice."

" But I loved you when I first saw you."

From the direction of the house came the sound of a bell. I doubt if I should have noticed it but for its effect on her. She sprang to her feet and, abandoning all concealment, turned her face directly towards me. Her cheeks were bright ; her eyes full of the mystery of her thoughts. Shyness, mischief, defiance, fear, compunction, chased one another and mingled in their depths. Slowly and gravely she nodded her head.

" Does that mean you will, Helenora ? " I asked eagerly.

Again she nodded.

" You will be my sweetheart ? " I repeated, scarce daring to believe in my good fortune.

There was a touch of impatience in her third assent, and she drew a watchful step away from me.

A dozen literary precedents for actions the most ex-

travagant surged through my mind, but there was no precedent for this child, with her angel's beauty and her woman's brain. "Thank you, Helenora," I said in the end. "As long as I live I shall love you and you only."

Her eyes fell, and for a while she stood in silence, moving her foot hither and thither. Once her lips parted quickly, as though she were on the point of speech, but, if so, she thought better of it. When she did speak it was in matter-of-fact tones. "That was the luncheon bell," she said, "and I am as hungry as a hunter." But even then she did not look at me.

I have tried to portray this love scene rather as I saw it many years afterwards than as it seemed then. Had I thought of recording it on the moment of its occurrence it would have consisted only of one continuous expression of delight and exultation. As one in a dream, I followed my Helenora to the house door and thence to the dining-room. I heard her whisper that I was to put on my best manners; that I was to meet Lady Grey; that there would be two or three gentlemen present: and her little proprietary whisper thrilled me to the exclusion of the verbal contents of it. I could have faced the Queen herself with perfect calm at that moment. I was, indeed, on an elevation beside which the loftiest earthly rank became insignificant. When at the door she squeezed my hand—either in warning or encouragement—I was in a condition to extend patronage to the Governor himself.

And there was no need for nervousness. Lady Grey received me kindly, with a few words which showed she already knew of my existence; while the gentlemen—there were only two—nodded good-naturedly and absorbed me with a jest into their company.

"Helenora's flame, you know," said Sir Gregory Applethwaite, turning to the Governor's private secretary,

"I wish I were young enough to contest the point," said the latter.

Helenora merely lifted her chin in disdain, and made her way to her mother's side.

The Governor entered a moment later and we all remained standing until he was seated. That was the only formality there was. A homelier and more cheerful little party it would have been difficult to find. I sat between Helenora and her mother, and though no word passed between the former and myself, I was subtly aware that she was nervous on my account. My greatest, indeed my only difficulty, was the apparent superfluity of cutlery and glasses with which I was provided. However, by carefully imitating Helenora's actions, I managed to allay her anxiety, and presently she returned to her natural self.

"I am only allowed in to lunch sometimes, when there is no company present," she told me. "Usually I have dinner with Miss Temple. She has a holiday to-day. I like being with grown-up people better than children, don't you?"

"Is Miss Temple a child?"

"Stupid!—Isn't Lady Grey beautiful?"

"All the white women are beautiful."

"I think you must be a little like Arthur. Did you think all the Maori girls beautiful?"

"No. But some of them are. Puhi-Huia is beautiful."

"Who is Puhi-Huia?" she asked quickly.

"I will tell you about her by and by."

"Do the Maoris have sweethearts?"

"She is my foster-sister."

No care that I could perceive brooded over the Governor's table. The young men chattered lightly of current events, mingling politics and pleasure as they mingled their wines, and imparting the effervescence of humour to either indifferently. It occurred to me that the Colony was not, in

their eyes, so important a place, nor so complex a problem, as it appeared in mine. Sir George might be aware of reasons for anxiety, but there was no reflection of that knowledge in the faces of his subordinates. They were concerned with the management of a new Colony of the British Empire. It was rather a lark, and, in any event, it was merely an interlude, which, so far as they were concerned, would probably come to an end within the next year or two. I liked their strong, clear-cut faces, their method of speech, their imperturbable good-humour, their ready wit and strong sense, but I did not again make the mistake of attributing to them any responsibility in the course of the Colony's events.

The Governor himself was rather silent, and even abstracted, yet he had that peculiar alertness in his abstraction which I have since frequently noticed in men of intellect. All that did not concern or interest him passed unheard, but a witticism, an apposite remark, a little item of news, perhaps, was sufficient to disperse the mist from his blue eyes, to call up a smile of amusement, or a quietly spoken question of remark.

On the conclusion of the meal Lady Wylde took me to her own sitting-room. I have only a very hazy recollection of what passed between us, and that I attribute to the confused and conflicting character of my emotions. She wished me to say that I would return with her to England, when—or, perhaps, even before—Sir George Grey's term of office expired. She painted my grandfather and my uncle in the attractive light of her long and intimate friendship. She attempted to arouse in me motives of ambition and cupidity, and no doubt to some extent she succeeded; and the strongest argument of all, my love for Helenora, enforced and lent a glamour to every plea she used. But if I can boast of any virtue, strong in my childhood, and of whose tenacity the reader may judge in

the sequel, it is that of loyalty to faiths once formed. Unable as I was to explain or excuse the apparently heartless conduct of my father, I could not admit or believe that no satisfactory explanation or excuse existed. Call it a mental squint, if you will, it persists with me to this hour. But that was not all. Even if the conduct of my father and mother be allowed to be dishonourable on high moral counts, it stood absolved in the courts of Love, for that they two dearly loved one another there could be no doubt, and it could in no case relieve from responsibility the man who refused to accept the inevitable, who kept the fire of his anger bright for a whole twelvemonth, and only suffered it to die out before the cold blast of death, when it may be said that his vengeance had achieved consummation.

I do not know that this or any of it was evident in my replies to Lady Wylde; nor do I say that I had reached any fixity of determination. I could not gladly contemplate the idea of leaving New Zealand for ever, and the thought of a final abandonment of my foster-father and sister raised a mist in my eyes.

"But Lord Tregarthen is your own flesh and blood, Cedric."

"Yes, I know. But . . . but, you see—if it were not for my foster-father I should not even be alive."

"But you would like to go home? You would like to see England and the great places you have read about?"

"Yes—he taught me to read about them. He spent a great deal of pains on me. There was nothing in it for him, except care and trouble."

"Nothing?"

"What could there be?"

She stared at me for a long time from under her brows. "I shall write to him," she said, "You must give me his address."

I do not know why this bit should stand out while the rest is nebulous and unresolvable, unless it be because Helenora had come in a moment or two before and was seated on a rug, her head thrown back on her mother's knees, her eyes fixed on my face.

"Has he told you about Puhi-Huia, mother?"

I was surprised that Helenora, who had hitherto found a difficulty with the simplest Maori words, should enunciate my foster-sister's name so correctly. I hastened to reply to her mother's mute look of interrogation with an inventory of the charms and virtues of my life's playmate; she also provided a bond I could not lightly sever.

"But you must remember, Cedric, that your whole career is at stake. Then, if these people have been kind to you, it may be in your power to recompense them. Your grandfather is extremely wealthy."

"Nothing could recompense them. You see . . . they love me."

"If they love you, child—and of course they do—they can wish nothing better for you than such an opportunity as this."

"I am not saying I will not go, Lady Wylde. I must have time to think, and I must learn what my foster-father wishes."

"Yes," she agreed. "You must write to him, and I will write also. There! We will talk no more about it at present."

I offered to take my leave, but to this Lady Wylde would not listen. "I am sorry I have no boys to entertain you," she said, "but Helenora will do her best. Come to the house as often as you please. Every day if you will."

Fancying some reluctance in Helenora's manner as she accompanied me from the room, I paused outside the closed door and spoke of it, "Would you sooner I went?" I asked directly,

"Not if you don't speak about stupid things," she replied uneasily.

"Stupid?"

"Sweethearts and all that."

"But it is such a great thing. When may I speak to your mother?"

She came to a dead stop and regarded me with startled, angry eyes. "If you say one word to my mother, I will never speak to you again," she declared.

"But," I objected, crestfallen, "she ought to know that you have promised to become my wife."

"I! I never promised anything of the kind."

"Didn't you say that you would be my sweetheart?"

"I may have said that," she temporised. "That's nothing. Besides" (triumphantly), "your father and my mother were sweethearts, and they never got married."

"Oh, Helenora!"

"Well, did you not speak contemptuously of boy-and-girl love?"

"I could not possibly love you any more if I were a hundred."

By this time we had arrived at the schoolroom. A cheerful log fire was burning brightly on the hearth; but it caused no relaxing of Helenora's countenance, as she seated herself beside it.

"I did not propose that we should be married immediately," I continued gravely, as I took up a position opposite to her.

"I think you really are stupid," she said with a sniff. "Whoever was married at twelve years old?"

"I know of at least two," I replied.

"Oh what a——! Your Maoris, I suppose."

"Yes, Maori girls."

"Now I understand. Don't you know that the custom of the white people is quite different?"

"Yes; I do know that. I only want you to say that some day you will be my wife."

"Why should I?" she asked rebelliously.

"I don't know why you should," I replied humbly. "I don't know why you consented to be my sweetheart; but the one reason will do for both."

"Will it?" she asked, and fell to musing, her eyes on the fire. "Ten years is a long time," she continued presently. "Long before then you will love some one else—as your father did."

"I will wait all my life for you if you say so."

"No, no! You will grow tired."

"Try me, then."

"If you dare me I will."

"I do dare you."

"If I say Yes, will you help me with my German exercise?"

It is due to Helenora to say that she denies that she surrendered on any such terms. Yet the German exercise is an improbable invention, and there is no dispute as to our being engaged upon it immediately afterwards—Schiller's "Song of the Bell."

"We are just starting it," said Helenora, cutting short my eager reply with a multiplicity of words. "And of all the flat, unpoetical things ever written in a foreign language—and that is saying a good deal—it's the flattest and unpoeticiest—I mean to look at. Fancy so many pages about a bell. What is it all about?"

"It is a sort of summary of human life. It is not so much the bell itself as the accompaniment it plays to the life of man—marriage bells, death bells, and so on. Give me the book and let me see how far you have gone."

Whatever Helenora might prove to be as a sweetheart, as a pupil she was humble and obedient, quick to grasp a meaning and apt to put it into clear words. It seemed

to me that Miss Temple must have a delightful task, but later on I found that it was not so. There was a species of hidden war between them, never entirely emerging, but also never ceasing. With a less keen-witted child the governess's pretence to finality in knowledge might have passed muster. She claimed to be, as it were, armed in knowledge; but Helenora, having once discovered a flaw in her armour, delighted in a subtle probing of it at all points, until, I fear, in the view of the pupil, it was but a thing of tatters.

"If she only wouldn't pretend! I hate pretence, don't you? She is really sound in the rudiments, and she speaks French beautifully; but beyond that I am always in doubt of her. Take German, for instance; I am quite sure she has only a very small vocabulary, but she never admits the need for consulting a dictionary on her own account. I know she does it on the sly, because I've caught her at it. And then, when we've got all the meanings of the words, they don't make sense. She pretends to understand them, and that makes me wicked. I suppress all my brains and make my face look like a cow's. She explains over and over again, and I become more cow-like with each repetition. Would you like to see me make a face like a cow?"

I record all this because it serves to explain the footing on which I stood with Helenora during the next three years. If I had never found cause to bless my foster-father for the care he had taken in educating me, I did so now. It enabled me to establish a hold over my sweetheart from which she was unwilling to free herself. By her greed for knowledge, far more than any depth of liking, I maintained my position as her acknowledged lover. It was that that won me the right, on rare occasions, to hold her hand; to that I owe her frugal, fugitive kisses and the repetition of the promise that "some day" she would be my wife.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE YEARS

ALTHOUGH—or perhaps because—the three years I spent in Auckland have left memories as tender and delightful as any I can call up, I pass rapidly over them here. They formed that period of life which comes to all save the most unfortunate, when the parental rule has worn away to a thread or is voluntarily relaxed, and youth steps out from the shelter of childhood and gazes with enamoured, anticipatory eyes on the glittering pageant of life. True that my *Wanderjahr* began when most boys of my race are still children at school; it is on experience and not on time that the brain feeds, and, few though were my years, they had contained incidents as strenuous as fall to the lot of most men in a lifetime.

Childhood in the kainga is not of long duration. Apart from the fact that the Maori develops rapidly in body and mind, there is in their society none of the reserve in speech which holds our own youth back as by invisible hands. I had at first mingled uninterruptedly with the Maori children; their games, their thoughts, their interests were mine: but as time went on and the teaching of my foster-father began to show, however unintentionally, in my words and ways, a change came over my relationship with them. They made me old; they made me staid and grave: for, though still contending with me physically, they pushed me into a dominant position in relation to things of the

mind, making of me a sort of oracle, whether I would or no.

Nor did my residence in the white men's city effect any great change in this respect. I had expected—without just reason, perhaps—to find the white men universally wise and brilliant, whereas, on the contrary, I found them ignorant and dull. A few hours sufficed for the Brompart family. Even Mr. Brompart, mentally alert as he was, I discovered to be grossly ignorant on quite simple matters. The same number of months further afield were enough to complete my disillusionment. So far from education being the rule, it was the exception; a thousand years of facilities had accomplished no more than this. I cannot absolve myself of priggishness at that time; there was much that I did not take into consideration, and much of which I was myself ignorant, yet my disappointment, at least, was real and bitter. I had hoped in place of the teacher I had lost a thousand would spring up around me; I found, at the most, three or four.

I saw much of Sir George Grey, and gave him such assistance as I could in his study of native legends and mythology. Of his goodness to me words are inadequate to tell. Half-measures were not in his nature. He could not see me daily and make use of my services without extending me in return an affectionate interest that embraced my life, present and future. No moment found him too busy or too tired to listen to my troubles, and every power of his mind was at my service in their removal. It was in response to no theory of duty that he so acted; willingly and gladly, at any time, he would put aside his own affairs to take up those of another.

The question of my going to England was one that was often discussed between us. I think he made it his business to ascertain every particular of the life-story of my parents in order that he might advise me. His judgment, when

he did give it, was in favour of my accepting the overtures of my grandfather. "Do not rouse again the fire that has burnt itself out," he said. "Let the past die, and turn your eyes to the future."

This brings me to the visit of my foster-father.

I think I had been four or five months in Auckland before, finally, and after much persuasion from me, he came. Never shall I forget the sight of his giant figure, striding down the street one morning in the early spring, or the hot wave of pleasure that surged to my face as my eyes lighted upon him. Man as I deemed myself, I was glad that he did not hesitate to kiss me in the busy street, and to march down it still holding my hand. In the end he had come unexpectedly, the conjunction of a departing vessel and an urgent letter from me having mastered his irresolution. Disdaining any means of conveyance, he had travelled the distance from Onehunga on foot.

"This then is Auckland," he said, and looked neither to the right nor the left.

"Did you bring Puhi-Huia, father?"

"No, Cedric. This is but a flying journey. We must make the most of the hours. But she is well, and her mother. They sent you their love and many messages, which I shall no doubt recall by and by. So this is what they have been about."

Though he looked deliberately at nothing, he seemed to notice a good deal; commenting on things I thought he had passed without a glance.

"All the old institutions, Cedric. Man can never wipe the slate clean and begin anew. He carries all his lumber with him, good, bad, and indifferent." I could detect the old impatience in his tones.

"Will you come to Mr. Brompart's, father?"

"No, my son. I will take mine ease at an inn. No man's guest I. There is one virtue in money—only one.

By it a man is independent ; he can live his own life. And that reminds me : you do not spend enough. Youth should be free-handed. If I have ever counselled thrift, forget it. It is a poor virtue at all times, and it is none in a youth."

I took him to the Royal, in order that he might be near Government House, for I was determined that Sir George Grey and he should know and like one another. At the same time that I looked forward to their meeting, I was nervous and anxious over it. Two prouder men never lived. Neither by his office nor by nature was the Governor fitted to take a subservient part ; on the other hand, I could not conceive my father bending his kingly head in humility to any office or man alive. A dozen dread possibilities presented themselves to my mind. I was in a fever of anxiety till the actual moment of their meeting arrived. Then, to my inexpressible relief, I found that I had harassed myself without cause. In all my cogitations I had overlooked Sir George's kindly feelings towards myself, and also the fact that I had spoken of my father so often that I had managed to create some kind of favourable idea of him in the Governor's mind.

I had received permission to bring the guest at an hour in the afternoon which Sir George usually devoted to purely private matters ; and thus, when we had once passed the threshold, the three of us were alone. I doubt if either heard my stammered words of introduction ; their eyes were fixed on one another to the exclusion of my palpitating personality, and in a moment their hands had met in a hearty clasp. What was said I do not know. I was glowingly conscious that the tone of both voices was exactly right ; that there was an absence of chill formality ; that both men were deeply interested in the meeting. Then silently I turned the handle of the door and stole away to find Helenora.

I had taken counsel with her on the matter so often that I had ended by imbuing her with my own fears of disaster. "Two such men cannot possibly like one another," she echoed me. "There cannot be two suns in one—what-you-call-it."

"Yes, there can," I said, taking heart; "there are plenty of binary stars."

"Oh, then take courage. They will revolve round one another in harmony."

We went together to the door of the room that we might hear their voices, and decided—I do not know on what ground, for nothing was audible—that all was well. That any part of their talk should bear relation to myself certainly never occurred to me, yet, when two hours later I received a summons to the Governor's room, it was to find myself confronted with the necessity of coming to a decision on the matter that had so long perplexed me.

They were standing together at a table near the window, their four eyes fixed on the pages of a book, the leaves of which Sir George was turning with reverent care. It was evidently one of those literary treasures in which the Governor, as became a scholar, delighted, and which he was in the habit of securing at every favourable opportunity throughout his long life. The minds of the two men were evidently in sympathy, but the physical contrast between them forced itself strongly on my notice. Sir George, slender, upright, finely proportioned; my father, huge and rugged, and with a slouch forward of the head which came of dwelling in habitations too small for him. None would have been likely to guess the man of learning in the latter. A poet of nature, perhaps, a thinker, but scarcely a scholar. There were moments, on the other hand, and this was one of them, when it was difficult to think of the Governor as a soldier and a man of action; when he seemed, on the contrary, born and fitted for the life of a

student. Beyond a glance as I entered the room, they took no notice of me until the last page was turned.

"No individual man should possess such a treasure," said my father, "or if so, he should be compelled to safeguard it as he would a life, and be held responsible for its loss."

"That is true," replied Sir George, his face clouding, "as I have already learned to my cost. Some day, however, I hope to do more than verbally agree with you."

"Well, well," said my father, "I intended nothing personal. They cannot be better placed than in the hands of those who love them and possess the key to their mysteries. I have to give Your Excellency hearty thanks," he broke off, "for the kindness you have shown to my boy here."

"On the contrary," said the Governor, "it is I who am indebted to him. I fear his good-nature has led me into ruthlessness at times. Is it not so, Cedric?"

"No, sir. I have spent none but hours of happiness here."

"His Excellency has also expressed interest in your career, Cedric," went on my father, "and especially in the question which has lately arisen. We have sent for you, not as those to whom you owe obedience, but as two simple men who wish you well, and would aid you with honest advice."

There was such kindness expressed in their faces that I could not trust myself to more than a murmured word of thanks in reply.

"In the first place," my father continued, "we are quite agreed that, from a worldly point of view, there is no room for hesitation at all—you must accept your grandfather's overtures. That done, a career, possibly—probably—a great one, is secured to you. So much is as clear as daylight.

Everything that ordinary men covet, wealth and station and all that they entail, are yours at a word. You pass from a life which offers for one of your talents—and, as this is a time for plain speaking, I may tell you that you have great talents—nothing or little, to one whose possibilities are practically boundless. Against all these advantages you offer, as I understand, a scruple.”

“I have hesitated, father,” I replied; “but if you tell me to go, I will do so.”

For a while he made no answer, and, for all the confidence in his tones, I, who could read every expression of his countenance, knew that he was ill at ease. To me, indeed, convincing as his arguments appeared on the surface, there was something lacking. I was aware of a reservation that made all the difference. His mind spoke, but his heart remained silent.

“What is your scruple, my boy? Tell it me in plain words.”

I had never put my feelings into language, and I began doubtfully now. But as I went on, the scruple, as he called it, began, from something vague and dully passionate, to take shape and glow. “It must be less than sixteen years,” I said, “since all these advantages were pointed out to my father, and he refused them. He was a man then, ten years older than I am now, and thus better qualified to form a true judgment——”

“No,” interrupted Sir George, gently; “he was not so fit to judge. His reason was thrown out of equilibrium by sorrow and the belief that he had been treated harshly and unjustly. You can bring a clear mind to bear on the matter; he had only passion.”

“Even if that were so at first, sir,” I replied, “he had time to change his mind afterwards; but he never did. My grandfather could offer him nothing but worldly advantages; he could not undo the distress he had

made my parents suffer, or call up my mother from her grave."

"Cedric," said my foster-father, with a note of sternness in his tones, "have you allowed the savage law of uto¹ to get hold of you? Then," he added, more gently, "it is a pure assumption that your grandfather was the only sinner. Remember too, my boy, that the more tragic facts of your parents' story were pure accidents. Your father's inability to support himself, and your mother's death, whether or no it was attributable to the same cause, were events only indirectly consequent on your grandfather's anger, and certainly unlikely to have been foreseen by him."

"If I could think so——"

"Come, come, my boy. It was so. Would you make a monster of your grandfather?"

"There is something on the boy's mind," said the Governor, regarding me attentively. "Let him show us his whole heart."

"I do not suppose that my grandfather foresaw or calculated on the consequences," I explained; "but he knew of my parents' distress and took no measures to relieve it. So far he was responsible for what followed. In the depths of his misery my father wrote to him a letter that should have moved a heart of stone; he initialled and returned it without one word."

"Where did you learn all this?"

"From Lady Wylde, father."

"Lady Wylde is an injudicious woman," said Sir George, leaning back in his chair with an expression of annoyance.

"I had the story from her in fragments, sir," I said quickly. "She read the letter and she was moved, though in her case it might well have been otherwise. She begged for mercy, but my grandfather was adamant. In the end

¹ Uto = vengeance.

she attempted to help alone, but by that time it was too late."

"Then it was probably too late in any case," commented my foster-father.

"Am I to go then, father?" I asked.

"Cedric," he replied, "are you aware that all the world will dub you a fool? It was in such a spirit of quixotism that Cedric Tregarthen, your father, refused quarter from his savage foes. In what light, think you, would Mr. Brompart and the worthy business men of this city regard such abnegation?"

I made no reply. For all the sombreness he sought to give to his tones, I fancied I could detect a note of exultation beneath.

"Can you not find forgiveness for your grandfather?" the Governor asked regretfully, after a moment.

"Forgiveness, sir?" I answered doubtfully. "What is forgiveness? I would not harm him if I had the opportunity; nor is there any malice in my heart towards him. If that be forgiveness, then he is forgiven. But to forget is not in my power, and until I forget I don't want to take a benefit at his hands."

I do not know how long we sat after that, and only fragments of what was said remain in my memory; but I know that I, who went into the room full of doubt, drawn with equal force in opposite directions, yet in a state to welcome compulsion, came forth confirmed in a resolution to accept nothing from my grandfather; and desperately unhappy in that resolve. One thing, to me more desirable than rank or wealth, it had been in his power to give me, and that was the companionship of the girl in whom, even then, my very existence seemed to centre. Was my pride, then, greater than my love? No. I could not have withstood the certain prospect of losing Helenora irretrievably.

At the worst I saw in front of me a long parting and the risk that attends the separation of lovers ; but that, in the end, I should subdue all difficulties and accomplish my desires I never doubted.

Nevertheless, it was in low spirits that I entered the schoolroom to communicate my final decision.

By this time Miss Temple had fully adopted me as a member of her staff. I had been careful not to arouse her jealousy, and I fear, in my desire to stand well in her eyes, I had even been guilty of referring needlessly to a dictionary and similar acts of hypocrisy difficult to justify.

"Give Mr. Tregarthen"—she only once in all the time I knew her adopted the familiarity of my Christian name—"your Schiller, Helenora. He will read and translate the passage you find so difficult—on what grounds I am unable to imagine."

This was a familiar ruse with the teacher when she arrived at some impenetrable obstacle, and I was always extremely careful to remain unconscious of the pupil's sniffs and nudges, and to enter on my task with a becoming hesitation. Possibly Miss Temple, among her many studies, had not entirely neglected that of the human heart. I think she guessed the state of my feelings and attempted to reward me for my assistance by frequently leaving me alone with Helenora. For that reason, if no other, she holds a kindly place in my recollections of those days.

When the governess had retired, I seated myself on the sofa beside my betrothed, and, as a preliminary to the distressing intelligence I had to communicate, endeavoured to take her hand.

"Oh, don't!" said she, pettishly. Then, aware of my mournful expression—"These bothering German genders! Mädchen can't be masculine. Even the Germans wouldn't

be so mad. Yet it must be masculine or feminine. Well, then . . . if you tell me which it is——”

“Neither,” I said. “It is neuter.”

“How absurd!” But I was permitted to retain possession of the coveted hand.

“The Germans are so ridiculous. What do they want all these sexes for? Heaven knows, two is enough.”

“It comes to them from primitive times. Early man regarded everything as possessing a spirit, and it was natural to suppose a sex too. I expect the neuters came in later on, when he was beginning to have doubts on the matter. As time goes on we may expect——”

“Oh, shut up!”

“I came to tell you, Helenora, that I have decided not to go to England.”

“I knew you wouldn’t go all along.”

“How could you possibly know when I have only just made up my mind?”

“I have known it from the day mother first asked you.”

“Well, there is an end of it. I have told my father I am not going.”

“I do not know how a person so clever as you are can also be so stupid,” Helenora said after a moment, attempting to withdraw her hand.

“You think I have done wrong?”

“Anyway,” she replied, evading the direct question, “it brings all this to an end,” and she swung her hand in mine to give meaning to her words.

“It can make no difference if you go on loving me, Helenora,” I said.

“Oh, yes! If *I* keep on. But so long as you have your Puhi-Huias you are quite willing not to see me for years and years. If you loved me, you wouldn’t care for any one or anything but me, and you would have decided differently.”

I let this doctrine of love go unchallenged. I was too unhappy either to argue with her or defend myself. Perhaps also I knew her in this mood and had learned that silence was best. At any rate, presently I felt her hand creep more closely into mine.

"We may be here for years yet," she said by and by.

"If you only love me truly, Helenora," I ventured, following my own train of thought.

"Of course I love you . . . and Cedric"—coaxingly—"will you show me how to do those bothering quadratic equations?"

Truly the Germans were right after all!

I have spoken of these three years as a time of joy, but they were also a time of fear. The dependance was on the continuation of Sir George Grey in office as Governor of New Zealand. I touch the politics of those days with a distasteful hand. They are dead and forgotten, and are only briefly revived here in explanation of my own story.

When Sir George—then Captain Grey—arrived in the Colony, Hone Heke was at the height of his triumph. He had defeated the soldiers of the Queen, sacked the capital of the Colony, and was considering fresh and more ambitious schemes of conquest. The native mind, even that of our strongest adherents, was disturbed. The white man, then, was not invincible in war. It was still, perhaps, possible by force of arms to thrust him back into his original subservient position of pakeha-maori. To such ideas, as well as to the fears of the settlers, the energetic action of the new Governor gave instant denial. Prompt and stern measures against Hone Heke, followed by immediate leniency on their success, retrieved the position, recaptured the Maori imagination, and called forth from the settlers universal gratitude and praise. But not for long.

The Maori remained constant. To him this was a great man, strong in battle, merciful in victory, wise in knowledge ; a protector, a father, a true representative of the White Queen—that sublime, far-off goddess, whom their eyes were never to see.

But the settlers took a different view. Here was a man who could lift them out of their difficulties, provide them with landed estates and the means of making money rapidly, solve the native problem—and all by the simple expedient of recommending that the government of the country should be placed in their own hands. Few men will doubt now that war, bloody and long, would have followed the handing over of 120,000 warlike and highly intelligent natives to the government of 20,000 mostly untrained and undisciplined white men ; the majority of whom, moreover, had not yet developed any affection for the country, and merely desired to make money rapidly in order that they might leave it. This is to cast no reflection on them ; it is merely tantamount to the statement that they were ordinary human beings.

So when the wished-for constitution arrived, the hopes and expectations of the settlers, on the very eve of fulfilment, were dashed to the ground by the action of the Governor, who, foreseeing nothing but disaster as the result of such a measure, and calling to the confirmation of his judgment Bishop Selwyn and the Chief Justice, caused it to be suspended for five years. If to this unpopular act be added the attitude he assumed on the question of native lands, the very apple in the eye of the emigrant, and more especially towards the New Zealand Land Company, it is unnecessary to seek further cause for the bitterness which followed.

How petty and sordid it all appeared to me ! I hated the noisy group of would-be politicians, who yelled and clamoured around him. If Sir George had only been my

old enemy Te Huata—already the dreaded one was veiling himself in the tenderness of memory—how speedily would they have found a cosy quietude in his umus. Verily I was a savage when some fresh deed or allegation of theirs came to my knowledge. The great New Zealand Land Company did its utmost, both openly and in secret, to cast down the man who stood like a rock in its path. Petitions for his recall were hawked about and dispatched to the Home Government, and for months and years we lived in a state of uncertainty.

But here let me, once for all, draw a distinction. I have spoken of a noisy group of politicians. Let me not be too hard, either, on them. No doubt they persuaded themselves that their actions were conceived in the best interests of the Colony ; that their allegations of despicable motives were true ; that the Governor was, in truth, the obstinate, power-loving autocrat of their conceptions. Honest men have deluded themselves before and since, and noise, even at this day, is not unknown in the political world. But outside their circle, siding definitely neither with one party nor the other, the true empire-builders continued silently on their way. What recked they of the political turmoil ! Work lay ready to their hands, and they did it.

I have shown the reason for my trepidation. Never a mail arrived but I went in fear and trembling till its contents were divulged. But the months passed, and the years. Earl Grey stood firm, and the expected recall did not arrive.

What was I doing in those three years ? Let me run over them rapidly, recalling only such events as seem important or of interest.

In the first place, my foster-father's idea that I might be attracted towards some commercial or professional life in the city was not realised. My education, as the reader may long ago have decided, was of an eminently unpractical kind. It by no means fitted me to compete with men of

my own race in their common activities, nor had it even provided me with any incentive to do so. But for vague ambitions that drew to no focus, I might have perceived the danger I was in of developing into a drone in the human hive, a mere onlooker, and, worse still, a dissatisfied one. But the reader must not suppose that I was idle ; on the contrary, no day was long enough for the work I desired to perform. The possession of a quick-witted pupil inclined to be critical caused me to make an examination of my own accoutrements, with the result that I consumed much time and oil in mending, extending, and polishing them. It pleased me to be without a flaw in Helenora's eyes, as my foster-father was in mine ; to be a universal work of reference ; to have this one absolute and irreducible superiority over my sweetheart. I was studiously priggish with her ; I cared not if I exasperated her with my Sir Absolute, and I often did. It was in her character to feel a deep respect for knowledge, and by luring or goading her into fresh fields, I rendered myself at once admirable and indispensable.

Besides the time devoted to Helenora and my own studies, three or four hours of nearly every day were at the service of the Governor. Sir George was a busy man, and in a hundred and one ways—in addition to the special subject I have already alluded to—I was glad to find that I could help him. He had a very large circle of correspondents, not merely in political but also in scientific and artistic circles ; and as time went on, much and finally nearly all this came to be my special task to deal with. Requests for information came in shoals, and, however great the labour involved in answering them, none was neglected. My department could not be said to suffer from monotony. Now we would be collecting information on volcanic outbursts, as discoverable in Maori tradition ; now considering the feasibility of stocking the New Zealand

rivers with trout. Sir George liked to be abreast of the times in all matters.

I remember an allusion by one of his correspondents—I think it was Professor Huxley—that caused the sending of an order to Europe for books. He had little time to read them when they came, and this was the beginning of a new form of employment for me. My task it became to read and digest the works and then talk them over to, or rather at him. We would have presented a curious reversal of the natural order had any stranger been permitted to come on us at those moments: His Excellency, mildly receptive, myself bristling with knowledge, and doubtless didactic in its delivery. Many a time have I opened Helenora's blue eyes or received an order to "shut up" with gleanings from those ponderous pages. As I lift my eyes, I can see many of those identical volumes, still fresh and well preserved after the lapse of half a century. Some are yet living thoughts; others have been superseded or become discredited; but all alike are endeared to me by the memory of the giver.

I was not a paid secretary, though I might have been so at any time. The whole charm of the connection to me was comprised in the fact that no bonds save admiration and affection held me. But Sir George was not one to suffer obligation lightly, and I think he only reached complete contentment in our partnership when, after the arrival of a mail, he could place a pile of books on my table, with my name written in the fly-leaf.

Did I do any other work? A little for Mr. Brompart. Business in connection with money matters—for, as I think I have said, he was my foster-father's agent—frequently took me to his office. He kept no staff of clerks, doing everything himself, with the occasional—I am afraid very occasional—help of one of his boys. After a while he took to confiding in me, so far as his naturally secretive

nature would allow. He spoke despondingly of his sons ; indeed, without enthusiasm of his whole family. " They want to return to England, Master Cedric ; that's their constant cry," he would say. In the end I found something lonely and pathetic in the little man which moderated the dislike I had at first felt for him. It was in this mood that, finding him harassed by the necessity of doing a great many things at once, I gave him an offer of assistance with his books, which was greedily accepted. After this I would drop in for an hour or so two or three times a week, and, so far as my ability permitted, put the financial side of his affairs into some kind of order.

But there were times, occasionally extending into months, when these employments were suspended or curtailed by the absence of the Governor on visits to other parts of the Colony. Sometimes he went almost alone—that is, with his secretary, possibly an aide, or myself ; at others his whole suite, including Lady Wylde and Helenora, accompanied him, and at those times I never failed to receive an invitation to join the party. In this manner I visited Wellington and Nelson and acquainted myself with the doings of the white men in both islands.

But the journeys I loved best—after allowing for the disadvantage of being separated from my beloved—were those in which Sir George and I were alone, or, if with one other, that other Bishop Selwyn. On foot, attended by a few Maori bearers and guides, we covered long distances, suffered many misadventures, and were happy. Many a time have we arrived, jaded and hungry, at some native village, the bourn of our travels, to find ourselves inspired with fresh vigour by the gracious hospitality of its inhabitants. Many a time have I seen the teeth of the huge palisades drawn that the distinguished travellers might enter by no common gateway.

I cannot say that I ever developed that enthusiastic

affection for the Bishop that I felt for the Governor, yet he was a man worthy of devotion, if ever there were one. Perhaps the trend of his mind was too stern and uncompromising for my youth. Climbing the fern-hills or trudging along the bush-tracks, I would listen to the conversation of my companions and note the difference between them. Sir George was naturally a religious man; he had an unshakable belief in a controlling Providence, and yet in matters of detail he was almost certainly a latitudinarian. He could converse for hours amicably with my foster-father; the Bishop could scarce be civil for five minutes together.

Another point of difference lay in the variety of Sir George's interests. He could encounter nothing new without having the whole of his attention attracted towards it. A tree had to have a native and a botanical name; the note of a bird needed to be identified. If a bearer picked up a vegetative caterpillar or a pupurangi,¹ he would keep the party waiting till more were discovered; a passing allusion by his Maori hosts would send him, keen-scented, on the trail of a new legend. The Bishop, on the other hand, kept his mind resolutely fixed on the matter in hand. He would draw the conversation back again and yet again to the object of the journey, and be for ever urging the advance. Ah, what a man he was! How truly, with all his mind—and it was no mean one—and with all his strength, he served his Master! Nothing could stop him in his work; neither rivers, nor mud, nor weariness of the flesh, nor angry men. He spared no one, least of all himself.

If I count these among my labours, then a few words will suffice for my pleasures. Riding and boating were the chief of them. I had soon outgrown the poor nag which Mr. Brompart assigned to my use, and a few months found

¹ Pupurangi = a large snail.

me with a horse and trappings of my very own. From that time I spent nearly every available moment on horseback, usually, especially in the summer time, in company with Helenora, but sometimes with one of the junior officers of the garrison, or alone. Among my friends of those days I must not forget the 58th Regiment. There were few men in it, from Lieutenant-Colonel Wynyard, in command, to the last of the ranks, with whom I was not on speaking terms. I loved the simple, good-natured privates, while I deplored their partiality for beer and its consequences. I could understand them a great deal better than I could the townsmen, with their sharp, money-hungry faces. For the gallant Colonel I had a strong regard, and he, I think, had a liking for me ; at all events, I was a frequent guest at his house, and in its precincts Helenora and I spent many happy hours.

I think it was not very long after my arrival in Auckland that Colonel and Mrs. Wynyard gave a fancy-dress ball to the élite of the city. Though we were regarded as too young to share in the festivities, we were permitted to witness them surreptitiously. Helenora told me that the whole affair was a very moderate one indeed, but, for my part, it dimmed into insignificance the splendours of the native meeting-house at its best. The Colonel received his guests as an old-time landlord of a country inn ; but as I seem to remember him also very distinctly as Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert, he probably changed his dress during the evening.

That night was rendered memorable by the burning of the Windsor Castle Hotel in Mechanics' Bay, an event which brought the gay scene to a premature end and sent us all—not excepting the Governor—post-haste to the work of fighting the conflagration. I am afraid that the heroic efforts at salvage made by the crowd were not always entirely disinterested, for I saw cans of spirit flit by me in

the red light and met many unsteady and excessively noisy people on my road home in the darkness just before dawn.

But if I begin on these old memories I shall never have done. Ah, reader, no doubt you have discovered already why I delay, and am reluctant to get to the end of those three years !

CHAPTER XV

PARTED

AFTER my father's first hasty visit, he paid several others at no very long intervals. He told me that business—our business, as he was careful to call it—had expanded greatly. He had purchased a schooner of his own, and already there was need for another. The decline of the mana of Te Huata had led to the establishment of branch stores in many fresh districts, and correspondence with an agent would no longer suffice to the proper carrying out of the business of Purcell and Tregarthen. I already knew much of this from the multifarious accounts in Mr. Brompart's books with which my father's name was connected ; but even when the fact had been given weight I fancy that a reborn desire to meet men who were his mental equals exerted a superior influence. Sir George was always told of his visits and, so far as his duties allowed, he welcomed him to his intimate society. Night after night would the two engage in high discourse, with perhaps none to note save Helenora and myself.

But I am coming to the end of *die schöne Zeit* ; it only remains to record the end itself. As, with a fearful joy, I gathered each month into my harvest, I knew that its passage brought me inevitably nearer to the time when my life would lie fallow. Yet a blow seldom falls where or when it is anticipated. No recall came for Sir George Grey. Mr. Fox and his partisans petitioned in vain.

Earl Grey, to his everlasting credit, stood firm. It was the bad reports the Governor received of the health of his mother that achieved what his enemies had found themselves powerless to perform. The end came suddenly. Sir George applied for leave of absence, and in the same moment began his preparations for departure. It was Helenora who gave me the news. I had parted from her unsuspectingly but a few hours before, and now she launched this bombshell.

Her eyes were bright and her cheeks flushed with excitement. "We are going," she said. "It is all arranged. We are going by the *Commodore*."

I suppose there was something in my manner of receiving the news that brought her to a full stop and then set her stammering that of course for *some* reasons she would be very sorry to go.

"Ah, don't!" I said, in the bitterness of my misery. "I can bear your delight, but not your mock regrets."

"Mock!" she began, half angrily; then continued more gently—"But Cedric, you knew that I should have to go soon."

"Oh yes, I knew it! I know that some day I shall have to die, but that will not make it any easier when it comes."

"I *am* sorry. Truly, truly sorry," she said tremulously. "Now don't you believe me?"

"Yes, dear, yes. I was a brute to speak as I did."

"No, it was my fault. I was a brute. I was so excited, I didn't think. And the Bishop is going, and Mrs. Selwyn. Won't it be lovely to have Mrs. Selwyn?"

"Yes. I am glad she is going—that is, I am glad you will have her company. I am very fond of Mrs. Selwyn." There was a dull feeling in my head, as though my brains had been turned into cotton-wool.

"And your great friend, Serjeant-Major Freeman, is going with all his family."

"Freeman ? . . . Oh yes. . . . The *Commodore*, you say ? "

"Oh, Cedric ! I do wish you were coming too."

That came from her heart and fell warm on mine, restoring my courage.

"Why won't you ? "

"I could only come on your account, Helenora. We have thrashed it all out. You have said that I would not be the same to you if I yielded because I loved you."

"Yes, but now I am not sure. *Would* you come if I told you ? "

"Tell me in three years' time."

She was silent.

Every day, and often several times in the day, we returned to the subject ; but Helenora was not always in the same mood. Sometimes I was aware of far-off lightning and the threatening of a storm that never broke. As the day of our parting drew near a strange thoughtfulness and abstraction developed in her manner. For my part, I could think and speak of nothing but my approaching loss and the distant future which was to compensate me for present sufferings. She heard me restlessly, often endeavouring to change the topic, and, when I would not be moved, giving signs of irritation. For these, however, she was ready to apologise humbly if I complained.

"Forget me. What is the use ? It is all so far off."

"A million years couldn't make me."

"Why do you love me ? I have been hateful to you. . . . Yes, don't deny it. I have, I have ! How could you be so blind ? "

"Helenora——"

"It was because of what you could give me. *You* could not be so dishonourable if your life hung upon it."

Dumbfounded at this outburst, I could think of nothing but to take her hand. After a moment's surrender, she snatched it away.

"I wish I was made of steel," she declared. "I suppose it is the stuff we are formed from that causes us to be so fickle. It changes from one thing to another at a touch. But I am worse than other girls. They can avenge an injury weeks afterwards, and enjoy it.—You would never forget an injury."

All this was so much Greek to me. I could only follow her lead, and hope to come on the thought that underlay her words. "I do not think that mine is a revengeful nature," I replied.

"Why, you are avenging your father now. You don't care what it costs you so that you be revenged."

"No, it is not vengeance. I don't wish to hurt my grandfather. Merely I cannot bring myself to take anything from him."

"Do you think the knowledge of that can please him? You couldn't devise any way of hurting him more."

"If it be so, I am not responsible. That is the Nemesis of wrong-doing."

"Your grandfather did no wrong," she flashed.

Often in the past had she thrown out such a challenge, and once or twice I had been moved to take it up; but now nothing was of moment to me save the fact that I was about to lose her.

"When will the *Commodore* reach England?" I asked, resolutely dismissing the subject.

"Captain Broadfoot says we may not be there till May."

"Then it will be seven or eight months before I can hear of you." The terrors of space may become accentuated when expressed in quantities of time. Involuntarily the words escaped my lips—"How can I endure it!"

She gazed at me and I saw her eyes dilate and her lips tremble. "Is love like that?" she whispered, in a tone that blended curiosity and pity.

"Yes," I said, in my desperation—God knows if at that

moment a dim gleam of comprehension had come to me—"it is misery, all misery."

For a moment she sat still, her face working; then, with a sound like a sob in her throat, she rose and fled from the room.

Lady Wylde had never entirely abandoned hope that eventually I would change my mind, and now, as the time of departure approached, she renewed her efforts to induce me to join them on the *Commodore*.

"There is still time to arrange with Mr. Purcell," she said. "Do you think that I have any motive save a desire for your welfare?"

"No, no," I cried, and, taking her hand, I covered it with kisses.

"Is there nothing that will move you, child?"

"How can there be if I refuse the kindest heart in the world?"

"Yet there may be something. I wonder if you have considered one thing." A delicate colour mantled in her cheeks—for even now Lady Wylde would blush like a young girl—but she continued to regard me steadily. "Cedric, I have never spoken to you about it, yet, of course, I have seen. Every one has teased Helenora for years. You know best what is in your own heart. Have you considered?"

"Oh, Lady Wylde!" I answered, as red as she. "It will be like death to lose her, for I love her till nothing seems of value in comparison; but if, because of my love for her, I do something which makes me a traitor to myself, will that help me to win her?"

"Do you think that Helenora loves you?"

"She likes me. She is fond of me."

"So much was inevitable. And she will miss you—more, perhaps, than she realises—but love! You do not even think so. Then what is to come of it? Do you

suppose that she will not attract others as she has attracted you?—that the men will leave her alone? In three or four years she will be a woman. How do you propose to recover her, if you let her go out of your life now?"

"She has promised that she will be my wife."

"You cannot bind a woman by the promise of a child."

"Some way I will get her back. I must. I will never give up fighting for her."

"I admire your courage, but not your good sense. Perhaps you are hoping that Sir George will return. I do not think so for a moment. His work here is done, and he is destined for greater affairs. But even if he did return we should not be with him. Captain Wylde is anxious to join his regiment in the Crimea, and Helenora will need two or three years in a finishing school."

"She is educated already," I said despondently.

"Yes, thanks to you, dear. And without you I should have been compelled to send her home long ago. But there are other things besides Greek and German that a young lady has to learn before she is fit to go out in the world."

I doubt if until that moment I had fully realised the difficulties which lay in front of me. Probably I had exaggerated the value of Helenora's promises. I had failed to recognise how much my hopes depended on her and how little on anything I could do myself. Lady Wylde's words had conjured up for me the great world to which my beloved was going. I saw myself returning to the darkness of the native village, from which I had suddenly emerged, as a butterfly from its chrysalis. I saw Helenora passing into the city of lights, of music and dancing and gaiety. It opened its arms to receive her. Noble men and beautiful women surrounded her. On she went, smiling and radiant, and so vanished from my gaze—for ever.

"Can't you come, dear?"

Dumbly I shook my head.

"Why not?"

"I don't know. I want to come. But there's something in me, strong as death, that bids me stand fast."

That was the last struggle. From that time, save for a word at the very end, no one attempted to shake my resolution. I was free to inflict on myself what suffering I would.

It was on a hot December morning, the last day of the year, that I stepped into the canoe held in readiness for me by my friend Tetere. Our acquaintance had ripened into friendship since the day he had pulled me ashore from the *Esmeralda* and refused payment for the service, three years before. Care was on his brow as he dipped his paddle in the still water, for this, as he observed briefly and thereafter maintained silence, was a sad day for the tribes.

You who cry out that the Maori is incapable of gratitude, not bethinking you how rare a virtue that is in any people—study first the attitude of the natives on this occasion; become a witness of the gloom and sorrow which descended upon them when those bulwarks of their nation, Grey and Selwyn, were thus at one moment withdrawn. The town was full of sad-voiced natives, come to say farewell to their "Father." Through the midst of them I had come, greeting many old friends on the way, and hearing from the lips of all the same expression of regret. The Governor was holding an undress levee that morning, being due to reach the ship immediately afterwards; but Lady Wylde and Helenora were already on board the *Commodore*, and thither in silence over the glassy waters Tetere transported me.

"Will you wait for me, Tetere?" I asked, as I caught a rope on the vessel's side.

"For ever, friend," he answered.

I drew myself up and stood on the decks, all newly holystoned in preparation for the reception of the distinguished voyagers. A short distance away stood a group of ladies—Mrs. Selwyn, Miss Temple, Lady Wylde, Helenora, tall and slim, at her mother's side.

Ah, how dear to me she was! How dear!

Slowly and gravely she came to me and we stood together in silence, looking towards the shore.

"The Governor will be here in half an hour, Helenora."

"Yes."

"I should like you to take me over the ship."

"But you have been all over it several times."

"Still I want you to show it to me."

"Of course."

I do not know that for that half-hour we spoke more than a dozen words. I am convinced that during the whole of that time, though my eyes never left her, she did not look at me once in return. She took me to the part of the ship which she would inhabit for so many months, showed me the cabin, the state rooms, and her own berth and bunk. The noise of the Governor's arrival broke on my misery as the trump of doom.

"Will you wait here, Helenora?" I asked. "I want to say good-bye to you last of all."

She nodded without speaking, and, leaving her standing against the bunk, I rushed up on deck.

The first person I encountered was Miss Temple. She was on the point of descending the companion-way as I ran up.

"Good-bye, Miss Temple," I cried, in as cheerful a voice as I could muster, extending my hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Tregarthen," she responded. "Or if you will allow me to say Good-bye, Cedric, it will better express my feelings. I used to hate boys, my dear; but

I shall love them all for the sake of your gentleness and kindness. I am sure you will grow into a very noble man. And, Cedric," the good creature went on, placing the corner of her handkerchief in each eye alternately, "what I can do for you I will. You shall not be forgotten, my dear."

I had not expected this from Miss Temple, being unconscious that I had done anything to deserve it; and there was a dimness in my own eyes as I went forward to bid my adieux to the rest. The Governor's last words were that I must not fail to join his army of correspondents, and in my case the oftener he heard from me the better he would be pleased. The Bishop wrung my hand until it was numb, said he should see me again, and that we would have many a bush ramble together yet. Lady Wylde drew me to her and, with one of her pretty blushes, kissed me on the forehead. "Even now it is not too late," she whispered; then, after a wistful searching of my face, kissed me again. Captain Broadfoot, ruddy and hearty of voice, firmly planted with legs apart on his snowy deck, gave me a hand that did not disgrace his name, and, in response to my question, said he would up-anchor in a quarter of an hour, and that if I were not off the ship then he would take me to England. So when the last good-bye had been said, I returned to Helenora.

"I must go in a few minutes," I said, "but before I bid you good-bye there is one thing I must say. It was a chance word of your mother's that suggested it to me; perhaps but for that I should have failed to see that I ought to say it."

For the first time that day she lifted her eyes and looked at me steadily.

"When I first saw you, dear," I continued, my heart sinking in my breast, "I was only a boy and you were

only a girl. Even now we are not much better. So I want to say . . . to tell you that I—I do not hold you to any promise you made me when you were a child, or have repeated since. I should not think you dishonourable if . . . if, by and by, you should change your mind. I know that if you had not meant what you said, you would not have said it, and . . . if I lose you, I shall at least be able to remember that once you liked me enough to wish to become my wife."

What it cost me to stammer through this only my leaden heart knew.

I ceased, having no more to say, and, my eyes on her downcast face, stood expecting a reply; but still she neither moved nor answered. The minutes allowed me by the Captain were flying apace. What spirit was it that had risen up and stood between us at the very last? If Love looks coldly on Age, he frequently meets an enemy in Youth.

"I must go, Helenora. There is only to say good-bye."

She gave a little shiver and lifted her eyes quickly with a sort of fear to my face.

"Good-bye, dear . . . dearest."

Her hand crept timidly into mine. "Good-bye, Cedric."

"I have bought three kisses from you in three years, Helenora . . . I have nothing to offer you for one now."

The expression of her eyes changed then. I saw the tears well up and flood them and, sure at last that our hearts beat in unison, I gathered her in my arms. For long we clung together, mingling our tears with kisses and broken utterances.

From overhead there came a sharp cry of command, followed by a shrill whistle and the rapid scuffling of feet.

"I did not know it would be like this," she sobbed, as I tore myself away, "or I would never have consented to your staying behind."

So my beloved stirred in her sleep. So in that moment I lost her.

CHAPTER XVI

I FIGHT A BATTLE

I WILL pass lightly over the days, weeks, and months which immediately followed. Even the gold wherewith memory gilds the past will scarce bear rubbing at this point. My mind took no cognizance of the passing hours; day and night followed each other unnoted while I lived again the three years of my happiness. Interest was dead in me. I was as one numbed by a heavy blow. Yet through this muffled half-life shot fierce flashes. There was the nightmare of the receding ship, a black speck in the infinite, turbulent waters. How far had she voyaged now?—and now? Ah, the pitiable smallness of that speck, and its infinite importance to me! By an effort of imagination I would cross the intervening leagues to be rid of that appalling sense of littleness. I would penetrate to the heart of the ship and find her—silent and a little pale, with downcast eyes, weeping softly in my arms; or gay and light-footed, frank of speech, passing hither and thither among the rough sailor men, the idol of the ship.

But always, in the end, winds blew, the sea arose, and darkness fell like a pall; then, were it day or night, I would spring up and, hastening to the stable, saddle my horse and dash away into the wilds. Riding was the one solace left me; the one relief to my misery. During those unhappy months there was not an outlying settle-

ment or lonely farm within fifty miles of the town that did not learn to know me ; scarce a settler with whom I was not on terms of friendship. They were good to me, those simple, hard-working folk ; asking no questions, glad only to see the face of a white man ; the good-wife setting her homely fare before me with apology in her eyes, or pressing me to the acceptance of a couch for the night. I was not too far sunk in my self-absorption to neglect, after a while, to carry in my pockets such little trinkets and favours as bring brightness to a woman's eyes, wherewith to mark my gratitude. I hated the town with a mortal hatred ; yet I could not bring myself to leave it for good, for, as yet, my old home was scarcely less repugnant to me.

No question but that it would have been well for me if at that time stern necessity had compelled me to labour for a living, or even if some employment, taken up for amusement, had become ingrained as a habit ; but the departure of Sir George had bereft me of all occupation, saving only the writing up of Mr. Brompart's books, which I might do or neglect at will. Both sons failing him, he had long since expressed the desire that I should come into the business definitely as a partner. £250, he thought, was a ridiculously low sum for the good-will of a half-share ; but, though my old dislike had died out, I had no wish for a closer association with him than already existed. Indeed, I had often reflected on the desirability of severing all connection with the family, and had it not been for Sarah, I would probably have already done so.

A more self-absorbed pair than Janet and her mother surely never existed. Clothes and Government House comprised the whole of their interests. They were for ever scheming to extort money from the harassed head of the house, so that they might clothe themselves in fresh splendours ; and from me they sought to extract little

odds and ends of information concerning the private life of the Governor and Lady Grey, which might satisfy their curiosity or be of use as small talk in other circles. Possibly it was owing to my disinclination to gratify them in this respect that I eventually fell in their good graces, for, after a brief period in which I could do no wrong, I sank into a condition of mere tolerance from which I never again arose.

As for the sons, their manner towards me was either fawningly cheerful—in which case I knew what to expect—or else surly or viciously insulting. No matter that one or both of them had borrowed a sovereign from me over night, it by no means protected me from being baited with senseless insults at the breakfast table. You may wonder that in such circumstances I continued to lend them money, without, as I very well knew, the faintest prospect of having it returned; yet I am probably not the only person who has found at once a refinement of vengeance and a solace to his pride at the expense of his pocket. With what keenness of silent disdain did I supply the needs of these two mean-spirited men, and how often within a few hours of doing so have I had need to call on my pride lest I should be roused into personal violence against them.

But of Sarah I have little but good to say. She was my champion from the first day to the last. I am bound to admit that she had many of the Brompart characteristics. She had no power of endurance, but must needs resent the most trifling innuendo as fiercely as if it were a blow. She permitted herself to be drawn into wrangles with her brothers and sister when, by remaining silent, she might have disarmed them. In the family quarrels, and they were of daily occurrence, she took her share as blithely as the rest. It was not, I think, merely my partiality that made her appear to me always in the right. When she erred it was from excess of feeling rather than from the lack

of it. She was the only person in the house I ever heard speak of Mr. Brompart in terms of affection, yet she was also the only one he ever reproved.

If I had had any doubts of Sarah's kindness of heart, it must have vanished in the light of her conduct when my great trouble came upon me. I had never spoken to her of my love for Helenora, yet in sundry ways she made me conscious that she was aware of it. In the black days which followed the sailing of the *Commodore*, the most refined lady in the land could not have shown me a more delicate sympathy. She watched my comings and goings as a mother might watch over her child. She fought pitched battles with, and worsted, her mother and sister on the question of my meals. No matter what hours I kept, food was to be in readiness on my appearance. Did not the boys keep all hours and nothing said, though John was no older than Cedric? Night after night have I found her waiting for me, with a dainty little supper, selected by her own hands, spread on the corner of the table.

"You shouldn't do it, Sarah. You make me feel ashamed."

"Why? It's not so late. I have been reading Mr. Dickens's new book. Just look at my eyes! I wouldn't have gone to bed for anything."

"He has no business to make you cry. But I wish you wouldn't go to all this bother. I have rarely any appetite for supper."

"Nor for breakfast; nor for dinner."

"Well, but I eat like a horse outside—cold boiled pork and loaves of bread."

"Oh, yes!"

"Don't do it again, there's a dear."

"Well then, eat something now."

Even when I had worn out her patience, she would frequently steal from her bedroom at the sound of my

step, to pour water into the little teapot waiting on the hearth. It was this that led to the incident which brought my intimate connection with the Bromparts to a close.

The favourite form of witticism with the young men was to affect that I was a Maori and to speak to me in what they represented to be that language. I do not know why they should have made me their butt, and it is scarcely worth while to inquire. Probably any youth set down in their midst would have fared the same; but it is possible that their humour took an added malignity from the facts that I was better educated and, I trust, better behaved than themselves.

On the particular morning at which I have arrived, Richard, the eldest son, a man of five or six and twenty, had been particularly offensive in his manner, and, as was her wont, Sarah had taken up the cudgels on my behalf. I had far rather she had followed my example of contemptuous silence, but it was not in her nature to sit still when her feelings were aroused. Mr. and Mrs. Brompart, together with Janet and the youngest boy, John, had finished breakfast and retired. Richard, Fred, and I, having appeared later, had detained Sarah in the room to attend to our needs. For a while the battle of taunt and counter-taunt went merrily on, making little impression, except that of noise, on my dull ears. Then I heard Sarah say, "Fancy a man of your age borrowing money from Cedric! John told me, and I shall tell father about it."

"All right, my girl," responded Richard, his brows darkening, "and I shall have something to tell him also. You think your little games in the middle of the night have had no witnesses. You take care, or——" And he concluded with a remark so gross that in an instant the red blood dyed her face from brow to neck.

Then, with the single exception of his sallow, sneering countenance, all the room became to me a black darkness.

I half rose and, leaning across the table, struck him, before he was aware, with the palm of my hand on the side of the face. So sound and satisfactory was the blow that his head and Fred's rang together, like the two hollow bones they were. And for the first time since the sailing of the *Commodore* I recognised that the wallet of life was not left entirely empty.

Sarah, still rosy and shrinking with shame, clapped her hands in glee and turned on me a pair of eyes wondrously bright and admiring.

"You young dog!" cried Richard, white with rage, with the exception of one ear, which stood out like a great red danger flag. "I'll wring your neck for that!"

"If he'd done as much to me, I'd thrash him within an inch of his life," said Fred, eyeing me viciously and still fingering the side of his head.

But life had returned to me in no meagre stream. "You would!" I cried, springing to my feet. "Then come outside and I will give you such another. Come both of you, one at a time or together." And, putting Sarah, who attempted to stay me, aside, I moved round the table towards them.

In a moment they were on their feet, and we all struggled from the room to the passage, and thence to the open air.

"Behind the stable," cried Richard, calling a momentary truce in the hostilities.

"Good!" said I. "There, or anywhere."

"Don't you call any one, Sarah," warned Fred savagely.

"If she does," I added, "I will never speak to her again."

Her red cheeks were white now, and she followed us with steps that at one moment hung back, and in the next came quickly forward, crying out at her brothers for cowards all the while.

"Go back, you fool!" cried Fred, as we neared our

destination, and he raised a threatening hand as if to strike her.

"Back yourself," said I, thrusting hard against his chest, so that he reeled against the stable. "But run in, Sarah, all the same."

"They will kill you between them," she cried. "Two to one. Oh, cowards! Cowards!"

Possibly her words were not without effect on Richard, for when we had thrown aside our coats and vests, he glanced doubtfully from his brother to me and asked what it was to be.

"Toss up which of you I shall thrash first," I suggested.

At that they hesitated no longer, but came at me both together, striking wildly in their blind, revengeful fury. Joyously I met them. Life had come back to me as a river returns to its long-dry course. The black rage with which I had heard the elder Brompart asperse the character of his sister had turned into a white flame, that rage of battle which counts no odds and is capable of achieving miracles. Yet, however high my spirit, it must have proved of little avail without the training in self-defence my foster-father had given me. After the first violent encounter, during which I managed by a lucky blow to rid myself temporarily of the younger brother, the latter adopted tactics less easy to deal with, attacking me from the rear and striking me behind the ears with blows that set my head ringing. Again and again I manœuvred to get the wall of the stable behind me; but such a guard, though excellent in defence, is a hindrance to attack, and as sure as ever I abandoned it in response to the call of some favourable opportunity, I was subjected again to this assault from behind.

At length I became convinced that if I were to succeed, I must dispose in the first place of the younger brother. Hitherto my strongest efforts had been directed against the more scientific fighter—for it had been quickly evident to

me that Richard Brompart knew something of the art of self-defence—but now, as the knowledge of my misjudgment was brought home to me, I turned in a flash on my other assailant. Forcing him backwards with the fury of my onslaught, and breaking down what defence he essayed, I planted right and left squarely in his face, sending him to earth, his head in falling striking the stable wall with a violence that completely incapacitated him from taking any further part in the proceedings. But, quickly as this was accomplished, Richard was upon me before I could prepare to meet him. Stars, that never shone in any firmament, flashed suddenly in my eyes, and, reeling from the force of the blow, I stumbled over Fred's legs and measured my length on the ground.

All this while I had been dimly aware of the girl hovering around us, now wringing her hands, now pressing them over her eyes, but attempting no interference. As I fell, however, and lay for the moment stunned and at the mercy of my antagonist, she darted forward and thrust herself between him and my prostrate body. But for that I truly believe he might in his black fury have kicked the senses out of me, and as it was, I bore the mark of his boot in my ribs for many a day.

"Quick, Cedric! Quick!" she cried. "Oh, you unspeakable coward! No, no! No more! Oh, my God, what shall I do!"

I was on my feet again at last, my head whirling like a teetotum, but a steadfast resolution in my heart. I had lived amongst savages and learned of what wickednesses they were capable, but it was left for me to behold a white man strike a woman. Bright on her pale cheek was the mark of his cowardly hand, and I should have been no better than he if I had cried "Enough" then.

"Stand back, Sarah!" I said. "This has got to be fought out. I can beat him, and I will."

Shudderingly and with fixed gaze she withdrew, leaving us once again facing one another. Slowly my eyes were clearing, and the numbness caused by the blow I had received was passing away from my muscles; yet I knew that for some moments longer I was in a condition to act only on the defensive. Brompart, for his part, was not without judgment in his rage. He had learned that I was not the unskilled antagonist he had expected, and probably recognised that he must immediately follow up the advantage he had gained if he hoped to come successfully out of the battle. At any rate, he wasted no time in preliminaries, but, as soon as the girl withdrew, came at me with redoubled fury, seeking with all the knowledge he possessed to deliver a knock-out blow. Warily I watched and parried, and bided my time. His exertions had taken effect on him. For ten minutes the contest had raged almost without pause, and, grown man as he was, with the advantage of weight, he was no match for me in endurance. His manner of life was telling against him. Even the sovereigns I had loaned him were now returning me interest. His face was contorted, his breath came short and sharp, judgment failed from his attack. He fought with a wild desperation that invited catastrophe.

On my side each moment found me better fitted for the encounter. Save for a cut lip, an increasing dimness, due to the gradual closing of one eye, and a singing in the ears, I was as fit as ever. At last, confident of myself, I began to attack in my turn. But his bolt was shot. Twice I felled him to the earth, and twice he staggered to his feet, teeth set and eyes gleaming. Blackguard and brute as he was, treacherous and mean as I afterwards found him, I will say for him that he had none of the physical timidity of the coward.

"Enough!" I cried, relenting. "I am satisfied."

But he was past reason. Like a maimed wolf he sprang

at me again and yet again, and half unwillingly and yet of necessity I struck him, full on the point of the chin, laying him motionless at my feet.

Whew! But I was hot and thirsty.

Out of the hot glare of the March sun, Fred Brompart sat up, sick and white, and witnessed the overthrow of his brother. Sarah had hastened away to the horse-tank for a billy of water.

"Come, Fred," I said, approaching him, "all the luck of the affair has been mine. Give me your hand in peace as soundly as you gave it me in war, and I promise we will not be long in forgetting the whole business."

"Get away, you boasting prig!" he retorted, rising shakily to his feet. "We held you too cheap, or it would have ended differently. I'll forget it when I have paid you back with interest, not before."

"Please yourself," I responded, with a shrug. "If you choose to be melodramatic on account of a blow or two exchanged in fair fight, that is your affair."

He went off without further speech, scarcely glancing at his brother, who by this time was beginning to show signs of returning animation. The blow he had received, though inducing complete paralysis for the moment, has no after-effects, and in a few minutes Richard was able to rise to his feet. He did not look at me, nor did he speak, and I did not again lay myself open to a rebuff. Picking up his coat and vest, he departed in the direction of the house.

It was five years and over before I saw either of them again, and then it was to a dreadful purpose, as you shall hear.

Sarah, the billy in her hand, stood looking after him till he disappeared; then she turned her eyes on me and lifted the vessel to my lips.

"Drink, my hero," she said, smiling and breathless,

and yet with something sombre and untranslatable in her eyes. "Was any girl so unhappy as to be compelled to rejoice in the defeat of her brothers."

"The pity of it!" I agreed. "But could I remember they were your brothers when—when——"

"Drink," she interrupted, flushing. "May you win your heart's desire. You will. You must. How can she prevent you!"

Who knows the delight of quenching his thirst who has not drunk water from a billy? The cold, dewy feel of the vessel; the sparkle of the liquid on the bright metal; the curled, cold edge of the tin against your teeth; the satisfying sense that, be your thirst ever so deep, here is a draught that will suffice to allay it.

"That was good, Sarah," I said. "Now I must go and pack my things."

"Why?" she exclaimed, coming to a dead stop. "Where are you going?"

"I scarcely know," I replied. "But I can find a lodging at the Osprey till I have made up my mind what to do."

"But, Cedric, why should you go?"

"I must."

"For what reason? They are not likely to touch you again; and father will be very angry with them when he hears."

"It is not that, Sarah. I have never been afraid of your brothers, though I have borne much from them. Nor am I ashamed of what has just happened. But—well, do you not also feel that there is no alternative?"

"No," she said slowly; "I don't."

"Then you do not guess what is in my mind."

"Yes, I do," she said, averting her eyes. "Richard is mad. I don't want you to go."

"Nor do I desire to go ; but, Sarah, there is nothing else to be done."

"Why ?" she said again, rebelliously. "Do you think I am in love with you ?"

"No, no," I cried aghast. "I am not such a vain fool. But——"

"Well, then," she said, with a sudden indescribable change in her manner, "you are wrong. I do love you."

I was stricken completely silent.

"Of course I love you," she went on, flushed but unfaltering. "How can I help it when I see the contrast between you and my brothers ? I have never received kindness or consideration from any one but you. It is not your fault. I knew all along that it was your nature and no more ; but my heart is not a stone. And now if you go I shall be wretched."

We had arrived beneath the shade of a pine near the back of the house, and here, by mutual consent, we stood still, out of sight and hearing of every one.

"I must go, Sarah," I repeated unhappily. "Don't you see that it is still more impossible that I should stay now ?"

"Why is it ? If you do not love me, and I know you do not, why should you not stay ?"

But even in the confusion and embarrassment of my mind, I saw and pointed out the fallacy of her argument. "If I did love you, Sarah, that would be a reason for my staying."

"I know that you love Miss Wylde. I shall not try to displace her. Only, if you go, the days will be all dreary. Are you afraid of me ?"

I looked into my heart and saw the answer written there plainly. "Not of what you may attempt, Sarah ; but of what you may accomplish unwittingly," I replied. "Every man, I suppose, has reason to fear what is within him, and

I more than most men, for they say that my father before me was a traitor in love."

"I ask nothing of you: only that you will stay for a little while."

I know not how the discussion was ever brought to an end. Possibly some one appeared to interrupt it, or it may be that merely a sense of the long time we had spent over it brought it to a futile close. It left a feeling of dissatisfaction in both of us. Again and again we traversed the same ground, using the same vain arguments. I knew that there was but one course open to me, and that was to go. And, in the afternoon, I went.

Some tale of the morning's doings had evidently been told to Mrs. Brompart, for she refused to see me for the purpose of saying good-bye, and I had to leave under the ban of her displeasure. Janet, however, took on this occasion a stand different from her mother's. I found her at the piano. She wheeled round quickly and surveyed me from head to foot as she gave me her beringed white hand.

"You thrashed them both," she said.

"At all events they didn't beat me," I answered.

"You thrashed them," she repeated, "and both at once. I should have liked to see you do it. Good-bye."

Sarah stood waiting within the doorway of Mr. Brompart's work-room in the front of the house, as I went down the passage on my way out. Her eyes and her tear-stained face drew me in spite of myself, and I went to her with a wildly beating heart. Think ill of me if you must, reader, but not of her. She was no older than I. I should have had the strength to part from her with a hand-shake; I should have remembered Helenora's pure kisses, rare and starlike, and held my lips sacred.

How miserable I was as I went my way! What a traitorous wretch I seemed to my own heart! I had sworn

lifelong loyalty to one girl, and here, within a few months of losing her, I had exchanged passionate kisses with another. Helenora had sworn no oaths, yet I dare stake my life that no compassion might open a way to her dainty lips.

Never again, I told myself, should any girl get within the guard of my reason to make a traitor of my heart.

CHAPTER XVII

I RETURN HOME

WITHIN a week after severing my connection with the Bromparts I set out for home, and not until the first step was taken did peace and contentment of mind return to me. I had thought that with the loss of Helenora I had plumbed the depths of wretchedness, but those few days before my resolution was taken were surely the most miserable of my existence. For all youth's weakness, life has no sterner moralist. I can smile now in my old age, and find excuse for my conduct, but I held myself despicable then. I could not dismiss the thought of Sarah from my mind. Her warm kisses still clung to my lips. The salt of her tears was in my mouth. I hated her for the hold she had on my imagination, yet day after day I haunted the streets in the hope that I might see her again. I did not admit to myself that it was so, yet the hateful knowledge was there, deep down, covered with a multiplicity of self-deceits.

Mr. Brompart was very anxious that the breach with his family should be healed. When he became convinced of the impossibility of this, he still urged the advantages of a partnership, going to the length of reducing his terms from two hundred and fifty to a mere hundred pounds. "It is simply because I like you, Cedric, that I make the offer. We could work well together, and there is money to be made, my boy. This is going to be a great city. The hundred pounds is neither here nor there. I don't

especially need it, but Mr. Purcell would naturally prefer to pay something. What ? ”

“ I am afraid it is of no use, Mr. Brompart. I am very much obliged to you all the same.”

“ Now, now ! ” he exclaimed, with a persuasive cock of his head. “ You are hipped, you know. I have said that it was a scoundrelly thing for the boys to do. I have apologised for everything. I never was sorrier and more annoyed. And—by the way—Sarah has told me something about you lending them money. That was wrong of you. Come, come ! How much ? ” And he began to fumble with his cash-box.

“ Sarah was probably misinformed on that point,” I replied. “ At all events, I have forgotten all about it.”

“ You are a strange lad,” he said meditatively, and bit his forefinger, a habit he had when puzzled. “ You won’t change your mind ? Hark in your ear. This will be a great city. I know what will make it so.”

“ What, sir ? ” I asked ; then added bitterly : “ It had a great man in its midst and practically cast him out. Will its citizens grow in prosperity by making drafts on the future ? Can they rise to greatness by selling one another building allotments ? ”

“ Tush ! ” he exclaimed, half angrily. “ You are cranky on that subject. Sir George Grey—may he never return !—has poisoned your mind. But we’ll let that be. Auckland will be great in spite of him, and I know what will make it so. Gold ! ” He breathed the word in a whisper, his sharp eyes fixed on my face. “ Gold ! Come in with me. I know something.”

But I shook my head. I had not lived the life that gives that word a supreme charm for the sons of men.

“ Bah ! ” he exclaimed, leaning back. “ You are an ass. What will you do, then ? ”

“ I shall go home and help my father,” I replied ; and

even as I spoke the words the will and desire to be gone flooded mind and heart. At once my plans were made. Already I was burning to put them in execution. "I shall start to-morrow," I continued, and held out my hand to bid him farewell.

"How?" he asked. "There is no boat for the best part of a month."

"I shall walk, Mr. Brompt. The trails are good. Or I can pick up a canoe and do nine-tenths of the journey on the rivers. I shall be there under a week."

"If you don't get shot or tomahawked on the road," he supplemented.

"That is a townsman's idea," I assured him. "The Maoris are not the savages you citizens imagine them. If I die of anything it will be from the excess of their hospitality."

"I wish I had your knowledge of them," he said enviously. "I could make a fortune. The whole trouble comes of not knowing them."

It is more than probable that behind those words lurked the reason why he was so anxious that I should join him in business. He had thrown out many hints on the subject of land purchases during the years I had been with him, but I invariably threw cold water on the idea that I could in any way assist him in his desires.

"Well, it is no use talking," he broke off with a sigh. "You are an impractical young man, and your mind is made up. Give my respects to your foster-father, and, by the way, I hope your little difference with the boys won't affect—eh?"

I assured him that his business relations with my father would not be injured by what had occurred, for so far as I was concerned the affair was already forgotten. And so we parted.

I left my luggage in care of the landlord of the inn, to

be dispatched by the first boat, and with a light pikau¹ on my back and a strong pair of soles on my feet, set out at daylight the following morning on my journey.

I shall not recall the incidents of that long tramp, well as I remember them. I had done longer and more strenuous travels with Sir George Grey and Bishop Selwyn, but never before had I taken the track alone. Solitude was what I desired. I was sick of the noise and bustle of the town, the never-ending hurry for wealth so incomprehensible to me. I wanted to be alone with myself—that new other self which had sprung into prominence from some unsuspected depth or shallow of my nature, and lowered my pride and confidence. I would have it out with him in the wide silent spaces of Nature, whose children we both were. Depend upon it, there is no medicine for the mind that is sick equal to a lonely tramp amid new scenes. The physical effort, not violent but continuous, the health-giving air, the deep, dreamless, well-earned sleep—these are the things that renew the body and refresh the soul.

The weather was perfect. Nature seemed at a standstill, dreaming of the past summer, forgetful as yet of the winter. I did but little of the journey on the water—the end, and a stretch in the middle only. The remainder was over the fern-clad hills or along the root-crossed, echoing forest trail. I steered by the stars, by the beckoning summit of Pirongia, and by the knowledge picked up from the natives of the direction of the ancient ways. At night I yielded to the mood of the moment, either seeking the hospitality of a neighbouring village, or avoiding it and making my bed beneath the starry counterpane. And as my body grew in health, my mind gained sanity. Sarah's kisses cooled on my lips. As a comet she had come, appearing suddenly from the unknown: as a comet she faded from my vision. At last she was gone, and there in the

¹ Pikau = package.

sky, clear and steadfast and undimmed, was the star of Helenora.

So, when the journey was accomplished, I rounded the bend of the river, where I had seen the timber rafts emerge from the gloom of the bush years before, and saw the evening planet shining in the sky, and the fresh-lit lamps of my home below.

Why had I waited so long? How came it that in my misery I had forgotten my father's words, spoken on just such an evening as this? Wherefore do we hasten with our trivial injuries to those we love, yet bear our deepest wounds in silence? A flood of tender recollections came over me as I moored the boat to the tying-post, and on eager feet hastened up to the house. The veranda doors stood open, and there, as I had pictured it, was the familiar room, with the table spread for the evening meal. My father's book for the night lay ready on a table near the window, his long clay pipe and tobacco jar beside it. I could have laughed and wept as my eye fell upon them. And he was there, talking to a tall young girl, whose glorious brown hair fell in gleaming ringlets to her waist. Who could it be but Pui-Huia, grown into a woman? The door opened and in came Roma, bearing a dish in her hand.

I had been tortured with the thought that I should find some dread change—even death itself had been among my forebodings of the last few hours—but there they all were, safe and sound, before my eyes. I delayed no longer, but, reckless of the shock my unexpected coming must give them burst into the room.

"Father, father! It is I at last!"

I saw the muscles of his face tremble; then their arms were round me and mine round them. Roma, spilling the contents of her dish on the floor, stood aloof, moaning to herself, but I would not have it so. Resolutely, even fiercely, I drew her, dish and all, into the circle of our

embraces. Brown or white, she was all the mother my life had known.

How well do I remember that autumn evening! Ten thousand nights are utterly forgotten, but that one remains. I feel the cool air rising from the river, and see the curtains moving in the open window. There is a dish of peaches on the table, crimson and gold in the glow of the lamplight. Books are everywhere, but no one touches them. We talk of simple things, and are vastly amused over quite trivial jests and events. My father is unusually talkative; not once does his mind pass into the clouds wherein, as a mountain summit, it is wont to dwell. A moderate smoker, he empties pipe after pipe. Surely the scent of the tobacco is in my nostrils now. Merciful Heaven! As I recall that night and think of what remains to be recorded, my heart fails me. I am tempted to lay down the pen and write no more.

The next day I took up the work I had set myself to do. My father's business had become almost unwieldy in its dimensions. The single store had thrown off shoots, until now its branches extended over a territory as large as an English county. Up and down the river, through the open country, by devious forest trails, our punts and packs were for ever on the move. During the three years of my absence a great change had come over the district. The huddled cultivations at the feet of the pas had spread out into great areas gilded over with wheat. Food-plants covered the rich virgin soil, and everywhere work was in progress with a view to extending their domain. The age of the musket had passed away. Cattle and horses, agricultural implements and seed were now the things dear to and desired of the chiefs.

When the history of the Maori as a separate people comes to be recorded, the years of which I am now to speak

will surely be regarded as the halcyon time of the race. A profound peace—the first for centuries—had settled on the land. The people had advanced sufficiently far into civilisation to perceive its grandeur and beauty, yet not so far that they had lost confidence in themselves and their possibilities. An enthusiasm had sprung up for the things and ideas of the white people, and no voice had been raised to chill them with its warning—Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.

The valleys of the Waipa and the Waikato became great gardens and granaries. The soil needed but tickling to smile in plenty. Fungoid and other vegetable parasites had not yet swept over and conquered the country; and, for almost the first time in the history of New Zealand, food of the highest quality existed, not merely in plenty but in superfluity. In comparison with the ancient methods it was easily produced—too easily, perhaps; yet, unless we regard work as itself an end, undue weight may easily be given to that argument.

There were other causes at work to destroy this promising beginning, and most potent of these was the steady influx of the whites. Left to himself, with the knowledge he had already gained, the Maori might have gone on, accumulating strength with the passing of the generations, until at length he was fitted to march side by side with his white brother. But the inrush of emigrants brought him daily into closer contact with them; the pace they set him was too swift; the grandeur of the temple of civilisation ceased to inspire, and now appalled and oppressed him. He hesitated, stopped and drew back, and even if war had not intervened to blot from the land the last traces of his labours and ambitions, it is doubtful if he would ever again have essayed the road, the first steps of which he had trodden in such hope and delight.

But I am only at the first days of my return. Their

leisure moments were spent in picking up the threads of the old life and renewing the friendships and acquaintances of my boyhood. Allowing for the great physical change which occurs between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years I was probably less altered to them than they were to me. For the first time the gulf between the pakeha and the Maori became evident to me. It even obtruded itself, and many months elapsed before I again found myself back at somewhere near the old standpoint. Te Moanaroa, to whom I went to pay my respects on the morning after my return, was my first disappointment. He had grown more obese and short-winded. Always inclined to gluttony, I fear the years of peace and plenty had done him more harm than good. The grossness of his body had reacted on his mind, for it seemed to me now that his eye was cunning rather than sagacious.

But it was Rangiora I most desired to see, and I should have tramped off to Pahuata to seek him out, had he not saved me the task by himself coming to the house. Although I have been too busy with other matters to allude to him, I had not lost touch with my boyhood's friend during all this while. I had written to him many times and received in response quaint and stilted compositions in English, most beautifully engrossed in a large hand, the which I could by no manner of means reconcile with my memories of the dear fellow. After a while I changed my own language to Maori, but he did not take the hint, and the careful compositions continued to arrive at intervals and perplex me as before. However, here he was in the flesh and—thank goodness!—willing to greet me in his own language. He had grown a great fellow in the interval. Though he fell short of the proportions of the Great One, who was the only man of my acquaintance who could rival my foster-father in stature, he was fully two inches taller than I, and yet of such breadth and shapeliness that it

was only when you ran a tape over him that you learned how big he really was.

After his pleasure at my unexpected return had abated in the fervour of its expression, I began to notice a kind of absorption and dejection in his manner, recurring at intervals as though there were something on his mind which he could not shake off. Whether this had connection with another discovery I made at the same time I could not determine. Sometimes I thought it had. At others I was not so sure, or even convinced that it was not so. This other discovery was that he loved Puhi-Huia. Set a thief to catch a thief, and a lover a lover. I could not but observe how his eyes dwelt upon her and followed her movements; how quick he was to foresee her wants and supply them; how attentively he listened when she spoke, and how gentle was his voice when he addressed her. Of Puhi-Huia herself in this new connection I could make nothing. Neither word nor look revealed her. Her appearance of complete serenity may have been the mask instinctive to her sex, but if so it never slipped. My friendship for Rangiora was no slight thing, yet I found myself wondering if it would stand the test of this discovery. It was natural with one brought up as I had been that colour should not assume that immense importance it has in the eyes of the ordinary white man; yet it was there, a creation of my three years in Auckland. But far more potent than this in giving me a vague sense of dissatisfaction and uneasiness was the new-born knowledge of the disparity that existed between the inheritor of civilisation and the child of savage parents. True that Puhi-Huia was a half-caste; she was yet a white in her ways and instincts, and neither in colour, form, nor feature did she favour the savage half of her descent. The dark blood had lent a subtle glow to her beauty, no more. I am not sure that there was not something mean and paltry in my first view

of the matter ; but no sister could have been dearer to me than Puhi-Huia. I doubt if I could have welcomed any man to the position of her lover. There was probably only one person alive who would, in my opinion, have made her an entirely satisfactory husband, and his affections were already engaged elsewhere.

Full of such perplexing thoughts, I looked at Rangiora with new eyes, and I was the better able to do so that there was little about him to recall the boy I had known. I could not dispute that, despite his brown skin—for he had not inherited his father's fairness—he was pleasant to look upon. His features were of the Roman type, strong and clearly defined ; his eyes dark, liquid, and intelligent ; and even the ill-fitting suit he wore could not conceal the symmetry of his figure. One might have travelled a long way without finding a finer man. So much was satisfactory ; but had his brain kept pace with his body ? One may be drawn to marry a body, but must live with a mind.

He was not very talkative, and I did not succeed in rousing him to animation until I began to speak of the old days in the cave.

" I have not been there since my friend left," he said at last. " It is too full of memories."

" Then we will revive them together," said I. " We will go to-morrow."

He looked at Puhi-Huia, who was busy setting the table for tea, but, though she must have heard what we were saying, and understood the inquiry in his gaze, she gave no sign.

" Stop here to-night," I continued, " and we will go by water. Even if the tunnel be still there, I expect we have both grown too big for it."

He agreed, and the expedition was duly carried out. Up to the moment of our departure, I think he was in hopes

that Puhi-Huia would accompany us. She did come down to the river bank to see us start.

"Will not the Plume of the Huia come also?" he asked.

"No, Rangi," she replied gently. Then added, smiling—"I am not so bold as I used to be. You must make a stairway up the cliff for me."

He took her words seriously, and, as we went on our way, discussed the possibility of giving effect to the idea. "I have but a knife with me," said he; "if it were a tomahawk something might be accomplished."

"She could get up as quickly as either of us," I said, giving tongue to my irritation at last. "It was but a polite way of saying that she did not desire to come."

He was silent. Probably he needed no telling, and was merely deceiving himself, as lovers will; but for some reason his silence increased my annoyance and goaded me into speech.

"Are you, perhaps, thinking too much of Puhi-Huia, Rangiora?" I asked.

"True," he said—"if to think of her all the time be too much."

"Well, but, my friend," I continued with forced calm, "that is idle of you. You must know that nothing can come of it. Or are you so lost to reason as to suppose that you can marry the daughter of the Thumb?"

"So also has the Great One reproved me," he said quietly. "Yet if she were the lowliest slave-girl in the pa, she would still be to me as a queen to whom I must render homage."

"What!" I exclaimed, now fairly exasperated. "Does Te Huata forbid you to marry her on the ground that she is of lower rank than yourself?"

"It is not my thought," he replied in the same tone. "No such talk could rise between Puhi-Huia and myself."

Yet it is no doubt hard for my father to forget that I am of the blood of——”

But this was too much, and I cut him short with a burst of scornful laughter that derided him and his gods.

I saw his face change and a look of pained incredulity gather in his eyes. And in that moment of madness there came to me a vision. On the bush trail were two children—a girl and a boy. The boy's face was sick and white and his step slow and uncertain, for Death had passed close to him and the ice of his breath still curdled in his veins. The girl's arm was around the boy, supporting him. I could hear her voice, still and clear in my mind. “How kind and brave is Rangiora! If he be not descended from the gods, at least he acts as if he were.” A great revulsion of feeling came over me. I raised my hand to my forehead, and, as though by that physical act, wiped away the evil thing from my brain. “Forgive me, Rangī,” I said. “I know not what imp of madness came over me.”

“Is it love, brother?” he asked, in a whisper of fear.

“Not of the man for the woman. The brother for the sister, if that admits of jealousy. But it is gone. Speak to me of your love.”

And he told me, in musical sentences tinged with poetic beauty, how the thing had grown with his youth, till now in his young manhood it possessed him.

“And Puhi?” I asked presently.

“Who can tell of her when kindness ends and love begins?” he said. “Alas! it is a hard trail on which my feet are set, and I would tread it alone until it brings me to her door. The Great One has chosen a maiden of high descent and of an ugliness inconceivable, and he urges her upon me. Nor is the maiden herself backward, being come to her sixteenth year and still husbandless by reason of the greatness of her birth.”

“But this is the new age, Rangiora,” I said. “It lies

along the road of the white man and not the ancient track of the Maori. There only may you advance yourself to greatness."

"So does the matter show itself to me," agreed Rangiora, "and so have I spoken to the Great One. But his heart is of the old time. Quietly he lives, raising not his voice in the council, yet the spirit of bygone days is strong within him. He waits the time when the tribe shall come to him and say—'It is enough. Rise up, O ariki, and drive the pakeha into the sea.'"

"That day will never come," I said confidently. "I remember speaking of this when we were children; but the years pass and the silence becomes deeper."

"That also is true," he said; "yet who can look into the future? It is said in the council—I know not whether the words be true or false—that the power has passed from the governors, and now we shall have many masters. The government will no longer be a man, but a machine, without bowels or judgment. Tell me, friend, greatly travelled, are the white men all of the wisdom of the Thumb, of the good Governor who has gone, of yourself, that they should do this thing?"

"There are many amongst them who love the Maoris," I answered; "who will uphold their rights in the Parliament and take shame to themselves if harm befall them."

It was not until we had reached the cave and renewed our acquaintance with its "ghosts" that Rangiora became communicative of his doings during the years of our separation. He spoke hesitatingly at first, gradually warming under the call of my sympathy until at last he made a clean breast of everything. Then I found that my surmise was correct, and his troubles were not confined to the problematical issue of his love for Puhi-Huia.

He was, he told me, a Christian by conviction. During the vacations of the *whare-kura* he had lost no oppor-

tunity of advancing himself in the knowledge of the faith of the pakeha. He had read the Bible through and through, and found nothing within its covers in conflict with his ideas of the right and the probable. Great and wonderful and full of hope for mankind was the sacred book of the whites. But, alas! the teachings of the whare-kura were not in accord with it, and therein lay the cause of his dejection. He had entered on his work with curiosity and interest, and had learned so rapidly that he had become the star pupil, in whom the hopes of the teachers were centred. The tests which had proved insurmountable to many of the pupils had offered no difficulties to him, and now he was on the eve of the last supreme task, which should release him from his bondage and retire him with honours from the college.

"What are these tests, Rangi?" I asked curiously.

For a while he hesitated. "I am under vows not to betray the secrets of the priests," he said at last; "yet if they be, as I am beginning to think, the servants of the Evil One, it is no sin to do so. Advise me, friend, for my mind is divided."

"It can but be trickery that they practise," I replied speciously. "No good thing was ever yet by necessity kept secret. At all events, here are no ears save ours, and my lips shall be silent."

He looked quickly around him, and, putting his hand in his pocket, drew something out. "It is strange," he said, "that the Evil One should be so active and God so silent. Behold this pebble. Know you any prayer that will give you the power to crush it between your fingers?"

I took the stone from him and examined it. It was round and smooth, as though water-worn, and needed not the point of my knife on its surface to convince me of its extreme hardness.

"No," said I, smiling; "neither with nor without prayer is it possible."

"Yet I have seen it done, and I myself have accomplished it."

"Then do it now," I challenged him.

He gave a negative gesture and returned the stone to his pocket. "Some dark influence is at work in the whare-kura," he said, "for there the thing impossible comes to pass—not merely the uttering of a spell that causes such a stone to crumble into dust, but the incantation that will take life."

"How?"

"It is known to you, friend, that cruelty is not in the heart of the Maori. Save in the madness of the war passion, he takes no delight in the infliction of pain or death. Cruelty belongs not to a race, but a kind."

I nodded agreement, and waited with interest for more.

"It is by the death-spell that I must gain my freedom. All other tests I have passed, but this one remains."

"I have heard a whisper of some such thing," I said; "but surely you, Rangiora, with your good sense, are not so foolish as to believe that you can slay by an act of will. If one should die following any act of wizardry of yours, be sure that some deceit has been practised to bring the thing about."

His face showed no lifting of its despondency. "Is it harder to kill a man than a dog?" he asked. "That test I have accomplished; the other awaits me."

"Poison," I said uneasily.

"What poison forbears to strike till the signal be given?"

"Something short of witchcraft must account for it," I objected.

"Has my friend, then, forgotten the incident of the dead tree that became green? What, short of witchcraft, will account for that?"

"And the final test is the taking of a human life?"

"When the new term ends, such will be my task. The victim will be brought before me, and with a spell must I destroy him."

"Take heart, Rangiora," I said, endeavouring to make light of the matter, though his evident belief in his powers impressed me; "you cannot do it."

"Nor in my case," he went on, unheeding, "will it suffice that I destroy a slave or a person of no importance. They may bring me a well-born child or even a lesser chief, that the power of the gods in their descendant may be clearly demonstrated."

"It is nonsense," said I. "The victim may die of poison or sheer fright, but not by any witchcraft of yours. Shake off this nightmare, Rangiora. Or if you really possess the power, don't wait for the end of the term, but blast Te Atua Mangu at the beginning. That would be a truly meritorious act, worthy the descendant of the gods."

But he was not to be chaffed from his beliefs, and at last I suggested that he should refuse to return to the college.

"That cannot be," he replied. "In one thing must I give way to my father. If not in this, then in the matter of the maiden; and that is a thing beyond me. Behold the light at last."

We had been sitting during this discussion on the spot where as children we had first beheld the drama in stone described in an early part of this history. In the dim light the curtain stood out in ghostly folds, but save for a gleam here and there the stage beyond was in darkness. Suddenly, however, as Rangiora spoke, a shaft of brilliant light pierced the opening, as it had done on that far-off occasion, and no doubt at due intervals from time immemorial, and in an instant the scene stood forth in light

and shade, as though it were but that moment created. For a long breath I saw it with the eyes of my childhood—the struggling figures, the fallen hero, the kneeling girl—then it became but a fantastic, meaningless collection of stalagmites. But Rangiora gazed on with rapt vision till the last ray of light had passed ; when he rose with a shiver, complaining of the chilliness of the air.

We returned to the canoe soon after that, and I set him ashore on the edge of a track whence he could make his way homeward. Although we had found no solution of his trouble, his manner showed increased cheerfulness. Promising to visit me again before the term began, he went his way.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PATH OF TRUE LOVE

"NATURE is very persistent," said my father, putting aside his book and reaching out a hand for the tobacco jar. "Having once made a thing, she hates to get rid of it. The human body is full of survivals."

"If Adam was a white man——" I began.

"He was," interrupted my father, a twinkle in his eye; "that is beyond question. The pigmented skin is man's armour-plate against excessive sunlight—the greater the light, the deeper the pigment. No doubt Nature was at work for ages on the matter, but she will be twice as long in getting rid of her work. The Maori, having changed his latitude, no longer needs the pigment, but it persists. What matter a shade of colour? It is admirable in the flower and the butterfly."

"I want to fix my ideas," I said doubtfully. "Does not all mankind conjoin fairness with beauty?"

"To-day, perhaps. But it is a question whether admiration of the white man's qualities, apart from his whiteness, may not have originated the idea. Do you assert that the negro conceived a pale skin as beautiful before he had seen one?"

"It is conceivable."

"Then it is only accountable on the supposition that that also is a survival—from the original Adam. But I know what you would be at, my boy. The difference in

colour is only perceptible through the glass of sex. This is an excellent tobacco."

"Have you no feeling at all with regard to it, father?"

"No, Cedric. I am colour-blind." He gazed at me a moment whimsically through a cloud of smoke. "There was a time in the history of this planet when the white man was the savage and the swarthy man the person of intellect. It will come again. To be white will not then seem so admirable even to the white man. Look deep, my son. Is there nothing left beneath the brown skin of the boy who twice saved your life at the risk of his own?"

I was silent, and yet I think the hour was already past when that rebuke was deserved. I would have welcomed any argument that helped me to the serene altitude from which my father looked down on mankind.

But it was only for the first few months that I was troubled by the vague distaste which prompted me to such discussions as these. As I became once again familiar with the brown faces and resumed my old intimacy with Rangiora, the feeling of the insuperable nature of the barrier of colour faded from my mind, until at last my heart was unreservedly set on the successful issue of the loves of these two. I use the plural deliberately, for I had known Puhi-Huia too long and too intimately to remain many days in doubt as to her state of mind. For a long time no word passed between us on the subject, yet by an infinity of little signs I knew that her thoughts were continually with her lover. It was from her that I learned of certain schemes of Rangiora's, which, however ambitious, I did not doubt would be in part realised. Once free from the whare-kura, he hoped to begin work on them, and my father had promised not merely his advice, but such capital as might be needed.

The young ariki looked forward to the time when the whole of the tribal territories—while remaining in their

present ownership—should have yielded to the methods of the white man. Sheep and cattle were to cover the hill-sides; the valleys were to brim with orchards, and the great flats laugh in harvests. The spirit for the accomplishing of such results was abroad; all that was required was a resolute leader and capital to set the work going. The tribe was to grow rich and powerful. Its members were to live in comfortable houses. They were to have cities of their own, ruled and policed—always subject to the law of the Queen—by themselves. Their schools should be the best-appointed in the Colony, and from them the most intelligent pupils should be selected and sent into the lands of the white man, to learn special trades, arts, and professions.

“It sounds like a dream,” I said; “and yet, what is to prevent it? At all events, the Maori must go on or die out. The white people are pouring into the country. In less than ten years the proportions of the population will be reversed.”

“Yes. And they will want land. Rangiora believes that the only way to hold it against them is to use it.”

“He is wise. Many of the chiefs cannot be made to see that. They regard proprietorship as sufficient. They appeal to the treaty of Waitangi; but no treaty can stand against a law of nature. The pressure will come; they must either bring the land into use or dispose of it to those who will.”

“I am glad you think Rangiora is acting rightly.”

“I do think so. Of course, there are difficulties in front of him, and his father is probably the greatest of them.”

“Yes. Yet I feel sorry for that old man.”

“You would,” I said. “Even if he ordered you to the oven—and no doubt he would like to—you would find excuses for him. You know, of course, that he is strongly opposed to an alliance between you and Rangiora.”

"I think there is something pitiable in his fallen greatness," she replied, without answering my question. "As children we scarcely dared to breathe his name in a whisper ; now, no one regards him."

"His son does—as yet. I must say that, in the circumstances, Rangiora's obedience does him credit—or otherwise. What do you two expect to come of it all, if you do not put up a fight ?"

"I do not expect to marry Rangiora, if that is what you mean."

"Yet, am I wrong in thinking that you would like to ?"

"He has never spoken to me of love," she said evasively.

"But he has spoken to me and to our father."

She sat for a while silent, gazing in front of her, a soft light gleaming in her dark eyes. "Sometimes I have thought that the idea did not please you, Cedric," she said shyly at last.

"Do not think so any more. No man would seem to me good enough for you ; but that is all. As for Rangiora, there are only three people in the world I like better, and two of them are girls."

"You know that I am half a Maori."

"No need to disparage that half with me. In five hundred years the white aristocracy of New Zealand may also take pride in claiming their descent from the Maori gods."

"I have a feeling that nothing will come of it," she said dreamily. "Always in my thoughts something stands in the way. I have dreamed of it too—a rock or a cloud or a tangled thicket."

"Is Te Huata all of these ?" I asked.

"I feel that I could make friends with Te Huata—with any creature of flesh and blood ; but this is a shadow, not to be appeased or circumvented."

"Come," I said encouragingly, "that is not a healthy

thought, and I scarcely know my cheerful little sister in this new aspect. If it were of my case you were speaking, there would be some justification for despondency," and I began to enlarge on my own troubles. "There is something real and substantial in an obstacle which is composed of the whole thickness of the planet," I concluded.

She heard me with silent interest, then laid her hand with a light caress on mine. "You will marry her, Cedric," she said. "You will spend many, many long and happy years together. I feel that as clearly as I cannot feel the other. You and Helenora will make up in joy for the wrongs and unhappiness of the past." Her voice had a strange quality of remoteness, and in her eyes was the fixed gaze of the seer.

"How long to wait, dear prophetess?" I asked softly, fearing to break the spell.

"Many stormy years yet. But it will be. It is sure. . . . God has promised me."

"Puhi!"

Her voice fell almost to a whisper, and in it was a suggestion of terror. "He will take you out of the burning city. Only you. He will not let my father come."

I put my arm round her and turned her face to mine. "Puhi!" I exclaimed, looking into her misty eyes and shaking her softly. "Puhi! What is it?"

She shivered, and the light of consciousness returned to her gaze. "It is the matakite,"¹ she said.

"Nonsense! There is no such thing."

"Then I do not know what it is. This is the third time I have looked into that glass."

"What glass?"

"Well, it is shadowy, with moving reflections," she said vaguely. "I know about the shadows and what they

¹ Matakite = second sight.

are doing. But one cannot describe it as one can real things."

"No," I agreed; "that is just it; they are not real. They are fancies bred of being too much alone. Come, put on your hat, and we will go for a spin on the river. As for this love affair, I propose to take a hand in it. I am not afraid of the Great One any longer."

This must have occurred some time towards the end of winter, for it was not very long afterwards that I heard that Rangiora's days of pupilage were over, and that he had come with honour out of the college. I was consumed with curiosity to learn from his lips the sequel of the story he had told me in the cave, and, after waiting several days in the expectation of seeing him emerge from the forest trail or run his canoe ashore on the river bank, I made up my mind to pay him a visit myself.

Since the occasion of the assembly which had so nearly ended disastrously for me, I had not set foot in the Great One's pa. Change, I was told, had been at work there also. The old glories of Pahuata were gone, never to be recalled. As elsewhere, the villagers had descended from the heights to the plains, building for themselves new, but, I am afraid, less substantial and ornamental dwellings among their growing crops. Aloft, amid the ruins of his fortress, surrounded by his band of wizards, a handful of slaves who clung to him rather from habit than either fear or affection, and a few ancient men of the tribe, the Great One dwelt in solitary state, waiting the summons of the Hour to Be. Around him were the hundred dismantled homes of his seceded people, and the closed, ochre-painted doors of the departed dead. So, sitting in the chill, sunless air of that spring morning, his great cloak of dog-skin around him, his back to the whare—almost in the very place in which I had last seen him, almost in the very attitude

in which he had doomed me to the oven—I saw him again.

Warned of my approach, a few women and girls—all that was left of that turbulent crowd which had overwhelmed me on my last visit—cried their welcomes.

“Welcome, friend of my son,” he said, as I stood before him. “You have been long in coming. It is many days since the storm died away.”

“So many that I have forgotten, chief,” I replied.

“It is well said. The way to the kainga is open—and the way of return. This is your home.”

I was agreeably surprised, and knew not to what influence, unless it might be the friendship of Rangiora, to attribute this change of manner, if not of the heart that underlay it.

“The chief’s words are full of kindness,” I responded. “Yet the house of the Thumb stands open, and the desired guest does not come.”

“That is a thing understood between us,” he replied. “Suffice it for this time that the White Chief is not, as the rangatiras of the tribe, to regard only the foot of the pa and not its head.”

“Pleasant in my ears are the words of the ariki. It is a true saying that the heart of the Thumb is with the Maori nation.”

Te Huata raised his brows in assent. “For myself,” he said, “I regard not the white men who come and go. I know not their Queen or her Governors. The Thumb only do I know, and with him is the compact between me and the people of his race.”

His words made little impression on me at the time, but I was to recall them later and find in them a dread significance.

“But enough,” he broke off. “The speech of the old has no charm for young ears. Go then: your friend awaits you.”

But it was Tuku-tuku, the Spider's Web, who next claimed my recognition. I gathered from her face that she was moved by the sight of me, doubtless recalling that moment when the lives of myself and her son hung in equal balance. She was not content, as the chief had been, to take my hand, but put her face to mine in the greeting of the hongī.

"Alas, Little Finger!" she said in a low, moaning voice. "The young trees have sprung up and the old are beginning to wither."

"Not for a long time yet, Tuku-tuku," I responded cheerfully. "The kauri¹ still rises above the clouds, and, the tree-fern shines green in his shadow."

She laughed with pleasure at my pretty speech, and her intelligent eyes regarded me kindly. "Are the boughs of the young trees still interlocked?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied, putting a hand on Rangiora's shoulder. "Lay an axe to one, and the other will fall also."

"It is good. You two are of the young generation. With them is the word. Let there be peace between the white skin and the brown skin for ever."

In response to my desire, Rangiora led me round the village, and mutually we recalled the tragic incidents of my last visit.

The whare-kura was in excellent repair, and, to my surprise, the storehouse used as an armoury, so far from showing evidences of wear, gave signs of recent renovation and enlargement.

"For what is the building used now?" I asked, "that such care is taken of it."

"Guns," said he.

I came to a dead stop and regarded him questioningly.

"The law against the sale of arms to the natives has

¹ Kauri = *Dammara australis*.

been repealed," he reminded me. "It is a fancy of the Great One to collect them."

"I doubt if the act of the new Governor was a wise one," I said, with a feeling of uneasiness. "Yet it surely shows how peaceful is the intention of the white man."

"To forbid their sale to the Maori was a wrong," said Rangiora: "to permit it is a foolishness."

Whether or no I agreed with the first clause, I was at one with him on the second. "What object does the Great One set himself in their collection?" I asked.

"Surely none but the old one."

"Yet he received me kindly and spoke with favour of the Thumb."

Rangiora was silent awhile. "Little Finger," he said at last, "my father is no madman. Sometimes I ask myself if perhaps his sight may not be clearer than ours. Yet verily I believe if he held all white men in equal honour with the Thumb, this building might fall to pieces with the rest."

"His mind has truly changed then?" I asked. "It is difficult to believe, remembering the past, that no malice lurks in his heart."

"Yet it is so. My mother, who reads every thought in his mind, has told me that the spring is clear. The Thumb is a chief of the Ngatimaniapoto. There may be anger between brothers, but presently the mud sinks and the water clears itself."

Even then I failed to grasp the true meaning of the changed relations between my foster-father and the ariki.

On the outskirts of the pa, past the last decaying habitation, a fresh incident of my boyhood recurred to me. Here, in company with Pepepe, had my young blood chilled at the fearful apparition of the village undertaker, ancient, ragged, emaciated, daubed with paint, insane. There had used to be a track down to the whare, but now rank

weeds cumbered the way, and a couple of bare poles alone denoted the spot where the wretched hovel had stood.

"Where is she?" I asked in a whisper.

"There," he replied, and pointed a finger to where the growth was densest. "Come away; it is an evil place, for there she still lies uncleansed of her trade. One morning a slave, bringing food to the edge of the track, found that of the day before still untouched. No man has been there since."

We wandered from the village to a quiet nook in the hill, out of the wind, overlooking a scene of great extent and beauty, wood and water fading into a remote horizon. And here I questioned Rangiora as to his manner of leaving the whare-kura. I had fancied in him a desire to avoid, or at least a reluctance in speaking on, the subject, and now, as I put my direct question, his face shadowed, and for a long time he made no reply.

"If you have repented confiding in me," I said at last, "we will speak of other things."

"It is not that, my brother," he answered quickly; "but I fear what may be your judgment on me for that which I have done. Bitterly and unceasingly do I repent my action, yet if it were to do again, I know not but my choice would be the same."

"Tell me."

"Little good came to me from my last term in the school, owing to the distraction of my mind over that which lay in front of me. I questioned Te Atua Mangu, who at first would answer me nothing, but a few days before the close of the term he took me aside and revealed the thing that was to be done. It was a grandson of Te Paoa they had chosen, a youth of high descent by both parents, and against him I was to cast the death-spell. Truly, my friend, my heart turned to water, but I hardened my face and spoke. 'It cannot be, Black One,' I said,

'for this of your teaching have I not learned, to weave the spell of death.' 'Have no fear, O son,' he answered me; 'the gods will strike through your speech.' 'Is there no other test that will suffice, my master?' I asked him. 'For you,' he replied, 'there is no other.' 'Consider well if that be so, Black Spirit,' I said; 'for it is not in my heart to slay the grandson of Te Paoa.' Then his face grew dark and he questioned me if I would disobey the commands of the priests. 'I will appeal to the ariki that I be relieved of the test,' I told him; 'for it is a thing not in my power, and if it were in my power it is not in my will.'

"So he left me, and I sent word to my father, putting the case before him. Deep was my disquietude till the message of the ariki arrived. 'Obey the priests, son,' were his words, 'for the thing you tell of is within my knowledge and approved. Yet if your heart be not uplifted to this greatness, think no more of the daughter of the Thumb, but take the wife of your people I have chosen, and the way shall be made easy for you.' Alas, Little Finger, I was in the jaws of the shark, and must needs lose a limb! Tell me, then, how your wisdom would have directed you in such case."

"I should have walked out of the school and left my education uncompleted," I answered him.

"That thought also occurred to me, but I saw the face of my father, the Great One, he whom the tribe has deserted. He sat up here among the ruins, sad and alone, and his face was turned towards Te Reinga."

I could not but sympathise with his filial feelings in an aspect of the matter which had not occurred to me. "How then did you decide?" I asked.

"For long it seemed to me better that the grandson of Te Paoa should die than that I should marry the maiden my father had chosen, but as the dread hour approached,

it was borne in upon me that by no desire could I bring myself to the casting of the death-spell. It was then, my brother, that light came to me in the darkness. I looked and perceived that the gate of life stood open, and through it, from the world of spirits, came the ray that dispersed the clouds. Yet once more I sent a message to my father, and in it I told him that by no manner of means could I bring myself to the performance of the test. To my mother also I wrote, asking that she plead for me with the ariki.

"It wanted then but a few hours to the time of trial, and down sank my spirits as the moments passed and no answer came to me. I had made all things ready, and my eyes were on the open gate, when a priest brought to me a letter from my mother. One thing she had achieved for me. With regard to the maiden of high descent, I might have my desire; with regard to the other, the ariki was to have his: so would a way of escaping the test be found for me. Truly the shark's jaws had met in my body and the half of me was torn away. There was left to me just the hope that the mind of the ariki might turn towards Puhi-Huia as it had turned towards her father."

"I marvel that it has not done so already," I said. "One would have thought that after all these years he would have recognised that there lay his son's opportunity for greatness."

"The mind of the ariki is dark to me in this matter," said Rangiora. "Sometimes I have thought that he had no true desire for the maiden of high lineage, and but urged her upon me to try me."

I recalled Puhi-Huia's prophetic despondency, and a dull but scarcely personal resentment gathered in my mind. "Then it is the daughter of the Thumb, and not the grandson of Te Paoa, who is to be the victim," I remarked,

"Say not so, Little Finger," he replied gravely. "The Queen may drop a tear for the soldier who falls: his is the wound, and the pain of it."

I could not but be touched by this evidence of the state of humility to which love had brought the proud descendant of the gods, and inwardly I vowed that no effort of mine should be spared to bring about an alliance between my comrade and my foster-sister.

CHAPTER XIX

LETTERS FROM HOME

THE remoteness of New Zealand from the civilised world at the time of which I write is evidenced by the fact that, while I parted from Helenora on the last day of December, it was not until the end of July that I heard from her, and thus received my first intimation of the safe arrival of the barque at its destination. During all those long months I had been at frequently recurring moments a prey to the most dread misgivings. Feverishly I opened the mails as they arrived, and sick at heart I cast them aside, after searching again and again for news of the *Commodore*.

But at last, and in a dazzling burst of light, the enigmatic darkness dissolved. Here was news in plenty; not only from my beloved, but also from Lady Wylde, Miss Temple, and Sir George Grey, the latter sending me also a volume of poems by a Mr. Robert Browning with which he professed himself greatly struck. Gathering together the flimsy envelopes—a necessity of foreign correspondence in those days—I hastened to a quiet spot on the river and there spent a luxurious morning with my absent friends.

It was not the Helenora from whom I had parted—tremulous, half frightened at the kisses she gave me, the child awaking—who wrote to me now. She had fallen back into slumber, and this was my old playmate, albeit in her best and most affectionate mood. Not a word said she of lovers or sweethearts, and there was but one

phrase in her letter which, rightly or wrongly, I could construe into such a reference. "I suppose your dear Puhi-Huia is more beautiful than ever," ran her last postscript. For the rest, her pages were full of description and the incidents, little or great, of travel. Nevertheless I read it over and over again, weighing every phrase in the scale of my love, and fancying I detected here and there a balance in my favour. Lady Wylde had little to say of her daughter, the greater part of her letter being devoted to the disappointment of my grandfather and the possible marriage of my uncle.

It was from Miss Temple that I learned most of my beloved. The governess was about to lose her dear pupil, though she was happy to say that the separation was only for a term—Lady Wylde had been kindness itself in her arrangements for the future. Dearest Helenora also, now that their long and intimate companionship was drawing, alas, to a close, had given her the sweetest evidences of affection. Mr. Tregarthen would perhaps remember moments of *difficulty* when the inception of the stream of knowledge was hindered by rebellious impedimenta—I knew not what to make of this passage unless it had reference to obscurities in the German text—but such were now at an end; Helenora's manner was unchangeably beautiful. The writer went on to refer to several occasions when I had been the subject of conversation, giving me Helenora's words and her own, with results to which I no doubt attached an exaggerated value. "All is yet well," she assured me, and I pondered over the word "yet" and wished she had not used it, endeavouring to persuade myself that she had done so inadvertently. "As I re-read these lines," concluded the kind lady, "I am reminded of those exquisite verses of our beloved Schiller—

'O zarte Sehnsucht, süßes Hoffen,
Der erste Liebe goldne Zeit,

Das Auge sieht den Himmel offen,
Es schwelgt das Herz in Seligkeit.
O dass sie ewig grünen bliebe,
Die schöne Zeit der jungen Liebe.'

Believe me, my dear Mr. Tregarthen, ever your friend and well-wisher, Aspasia Temple."

Poor Miss Temple! It is many a long year since the hand that wrote those lines laid down its fluent pen for ever.

Of the next five years of my life I have little to tell you. My boat had drifted into a back-water, and, saving only letters from England, hardly a wave of any importance reached me. It all seems sunny now, a long summer, beneath which Time has submerged the winters, and yet, as I lived through it, busying myself in the affairs of Purcell & Tregarthen and the developing projects of Rangiora, so that there was scarcely an idle moment left, I know that it wore for me something of the insincerity of a dream. Something also of a dream's underthrob of melancholy and mystery pervaded it, and to pause in my labours was to become conscious of the continual unrest that underlay the calm surface. Currents swift and strong swept the under-waters, yet there lay my barque motionless on the serene surface.

But those letters! Ah me! How life quickened in me as they came fluttering across the world into my eager hands. How sometimes—causelessly it may be—I exulted as I read them. How far more often they plunged me into weeks of gloom. At first there would be a letter every month or six weeks; then they declined to four a year, three—even two; but not for five years did they cease altogether. Of her doings she told me; of her school and her friends. Her account of the Alps ran into many pages, and I duly froze with her on the lesser mountain

peaks. I watched her jealously as she moved amid the gay scenes of Paris under the wing of her mother, accompanied her through the Louvre, and knelt with her in the dim cathedral light of Notre Dame. I attended with her the Christmas festivities in the ancestral home of the Tregarthens, met my uncle's new wife, and in due time was introduced to his baby, the desired son and heir. This was the type, the mere pleasure in reading her words once passed, that left me sad. The thrill of delight in life was in them, life, a pageant of action and colour that swept her away in its midst. What connection had it with the far-off, obscure New Zealander, moving on his petty and monotonous round?

There was another type—rare indeed, but still in the course of years they grew into a little pile of themselves—when under the influence of some passing mood she came back to me. Some little thing, no doubt, had gone wrong, she had quarrelled irreconcilably with a friend, been reproved for naughtiness, or met with some mighty disappointment, and the necessity of writing to me had caught her at that propitious moment. On a high level of wisdom and seriousness were these compositions. Literary care was evidenced in them, and they pointed out the vanity and futility of life with a subtle delight in its hollowness, only to be matched in the pages of the poets. But it was at these faint fires I warmed myself, and when I arrived at such a passage as—"I often think with longing of the happy days of my childhood in sunny Auckland, and wish that I might live them over again," then such a glow came over me that the wintriest day was changed into summer.

For my part, no mail left the Port of Auckland that did not carry a letter from me. If I was able from what she wrote to draw a more or less complete outline of her life, my letters must have furnished her with a finished picture of my own. And so it continued to be even when the

frequency of her replies had fallen almost to vanishing-point.

It was an understood thing between my father and myself—how arrived at I cannot remember—that some day I should go for her. That the matter was in his mind I knew, not by any open speech, but indirectly, by chance words, and for these, as time went on, I came to be always on the watch. When he remarked that early marriages were a necessity with a dying race, or that barbarous peoples matured more rapidly than the highly civilised, I interpreted his words to mean that I was to wait. Once, accompanying him with Puhi-Huia round the garden, listening to his talk of the community of plants—it was the evening of a mail-day, and either I was dissatisfied with Helenora's letter or the absence of one—I think I could detect the moment when, in the midst of his cheerful talk, he became aware of my silence and abstraction. Nevertheless, on he went with his chat, passing from country to country of the world in search of his illustrations, as though the whole earth were familiar to him, and coming to a stop only when the last bed had been surveyed.

"Yet," said Puhi-Huia with gentle slyness, "you haven't told me why these buds are so long in opening, and it was to learn that that I invited you and Cedric into the garden."

"Patience, little gardener," he replied, laughing; "the flower that lasts longest takes longest to expand."

His eye as he spoke dwelt for a moment kindly on me, and I know that in some mysterious way I was comforted.

But now I was nearing my twenty-third birthday, and Helenora was in her twentieth year, and at last I broke silence.

"Shall I go now, father?"

He put a marker in his book and set it aside, fixing his eye meditatively on the log fire. Roma and Puhi-Huia

were in bed. For more than an hour not a word had been exchanged between us. He might very well have misunderstood my sudden question, but he did not. I could tell that his thoughts had gone straight as an arrow to the matter in my mind.

"It is very necessary that we should not make a mistake," he said with a sigh at length. "Would you care to show me anything she has written to you?"

I sprang to my feet and brought from a sacred corner in my desk her four latest letters, setting them before him in the order in which they had been received.

He read them carefully, smiling occasionally at some passage which amused him; but his face wore the same air of pondering when he had finished the last of them and laid it with the others on the table. My heart beat fast with expectation, but I contained myself and waited.

"Would you go as a claimant or a suppliant?" he asked presently.

His words raised a question I had never been able to answer to my own satisfaction, and I was silent.

"One thing emerges from these letters," he went on gently, touching them with his finger: "the writer is absolutely heart-whole. Perhaps you have thought—you may have had reason——"

"No, sir," I replied. "I am under no delusion as to her feelings—love for me is not among them."

"Is there bitterness in your tones? A shade. Natural, Cedric, but not reasonable. You have cause to congratulate yourself rather, for by this she must have met many men her equals in rank and intelligence."

"Yes, father; and for that reason——"

"Do you know that it is so?" he broke in on my impetuosity.

"Lady Wylde has told me. There have been many admirers. Two in particular."

"Proposals?"

I assented.

"And Lady Wylde would help you—is that so?"

"She would not oppose me. Of course I cannot help feeling that in one respect I am no match for Helenora."

"She will have thirty thousand pounds, no more," my father observed indifferently.

"And no less," I added with a rueful laugh.

He was silent awhile, toying with some trifles on his reading table. "There is evidence in her letters of a very strong regard," he said at last, "but so complete an absence of allusion to anything pending between you that I am wondering a little with regard to your own letters."

"I have always had it in mind to go to England," I answered. "In the meantime I have not run the risk of tiring her with too many protestations."

He nodded comprehension. "But that policy may be carried too far," he remarked. "It has probably served its purpose. Come. We will not go to England just yet. We will first add our proposal to those others. Make it the sole topic of your letter, beginning with the first word and discontinuing only with the last. Write also to Lady Wylde—by the way, I am sorry to read such poor accounts of her health—and tell her that you have fifty thousand pounds invested in English Consols."

"But, sir——" I cried, almost speechless with amazement.

He drew his book towards him and opened it at the mark. "We are told that all is fair in love and war," he said, with a comical glance; "yet so bold a statement should perhaps not be made without warrant. The stock was transferred to your name on your twenty-second birthday."

For several years past my ideas of my foster-father's command of money had gone on expanding, but, hazy as were my notions of what constituted wealth, I was stricken

breathless by the magnitude of the sum he mentioned and the careless generosity with which he bestowed it. Some confused words I began, but he cut me short with a movement almost expressive of impatience.

"Do not give it an importance it does not possess," were his words. "The money came lightly to me. I was not among the poor creatures who created it. Yet there is one thing in connection with it in which I can take pride, that it has fallen to my lot to have a share in the upbringing of a man to whom I can give it without a single fear."

Before I went to bed that night the letter was written. As I opened my long-sealed heart to her it seemed as though Nature took the pen from my hand and wrote the words for me. Though I have utterly forgotten its contents, I have a belief even to this day that it was a good letter, eloquent and moving as deep sincerity must be, and as only deep sincerity can be. It left within the week, and I set myself to the months of waiting with what fortitude I might.

It was crossed not far from the shores of New Zealand by a letter from her, and she had written me another before it finally came into her hands.

The first of these was short, tinged with gloom, and so cold in its tone that the new-born lust of life which had followed on the dispatch of my proposal was quenched in me as I read it. Yet analyse the sentences as I would, I could not fix on any particular word or phrase as the cause of my dejection. It was not the joy masquerading as misery with which she had amused herself in letters already alluded to. It was unquestionably the real thing, and the reason, though it avoided expression, was to be read between the lines. She was in the south of France with her mother. Lady Wylde's health had not improved with the change, as had been hoped by her medical advisers, and now they were returning to England. No description

of scenes or events ; no word of herself ; no allusion to anything contained in my recent letters, or even acknowledgment of their receipt. I marvelled that she should be able to say so little and convey so much in the three pages to which her letter ran.

From that moment the foreboding of trouble never left me. I did not doubt that Lady Wylde was dying—difficult as it was to associate any one so beautiful with the grim spectre ; yet, sorely as I should miss my kind friend and correspondent, I had an instinct of disaster which was to touch me more nearly. What form it would take I did not know, but that it would come, that probably it was already on the way, I was as sure as I was miserable in the conviction. The advent of steam to New Zealand had not so far wrought anything approaching a revolution in the length of time which attended dispatch and reply to correspondence, and I had still to look forward to many months of suspense before Helenora's answer could reach me.

But my time of trial was not to last so long. Barely three months had elapsed before my eyes were again gladdened by a sight of the familiar handwriting. Hoping and fearing, I tore open the envelope, in my haste suffering a part of the contents to fall through my fingers to the floor. I knew what the thing was before I stooped to recover it, and my mind formed the words before the opened card gave them to my vision.

“ In memory of Lady Dora Helen Wylde, who died . . . ”

“ DEAR CEDRIC,

“ My mother has been in her grave a week to-day. She died on the twenty-eighth of last month, on the anniversary of the day on which your father left Tregarthen House never to return. You will say that this is a coincidence, but to my mind it brings together two facts in the relation of cause and effect. Do you think that is a wild

idea? I knew my mother's heart. Even when I was a little child she was as much a sister to me as she was a mother. She never grew old. Her spirit was broken for ever on the day your father deserted her, and though she was fated to lose her husband also after little more than a year of married life, that was a minor loss. Admiration and affection were all she had left to give my poor father. She was conscious to the last, resigned, even cheerful. Her only anxiety was for me. She was not forgetful of you. Within an hour of the moment she breathed her last, she spoke of you, and whether or no it was of you she was thinking, 'Cedric' was the last sound I heard from her lips. Is such loyalty, regardless of the worthlessness of its object, rising superior to all counter-influences, a thing admirable and beautiful? It seemed so in her. Yet such a state of mind might as often have its origin in weakness as in strength. You see to what condition of mental calm I have attained when I can thus coldly criticise my darling in her new-made grave. I would have you think that I am calm and deliberate when I write that my mother's grave lies between us. It is a barrier nothing can remove—no word of yours, no compassion of mine. I do not know what has been in my mind during the last seven or eight years; the wind has blown all ways: but I do know that when, a child, you asked me to be your sweetheart in the garden of St. Kevens, it was not love I had in my mind, but vengeance. As your father treated my mother, so would I treat you. I would lead you on and delude you until the moment arrived when I might pay back to you the wrongs your father inflicted on my mother. It was a cruel scheme—childhood is cruel—but I dare say there are very few people with sufficient strength of will to carry out such an idea. I might have done so if you had been different. I have never met any one so open, so unsuspecting as you. I had never met any one—I have never since met any one—who

so compelled my respect, so incited me to good faith and honourable dealing. Strange, indeed, in your father's son! And so the plot failed, not from lack of evil in me, but the excess of what is good in you. Yet the end is the same, saving only that it is accomplished in sorrow and not in malice. I know that what I have written will wound you, but you may find some comfort in my unworthiness. I might wish, for your sake, that the years of our separation had abated the strength of your feelings, but not for my own. To me you will always stand for what is best in humanity—strength and resolution, gentleness and endurance—and you have formed for me an ideal I would not lose even to avoid myself suffering. And so I bid you good-bye. Do not waste yourself against my resolution. If you write I shall not answer you. Let me go quietly out of your life. . . .”

The little office behind the store was in total darkness, when my father's voice, calling my name, roused me to the world about me. The door opened and I saw his figure against the blackness, a small lamp in one hand, an open letter in the other. His face was grave, even harassed, but its expression changed as his eye fell on my huddled figure.

“What is it?” he asked quickly, setting the lamp on the table.

In silence I put the letter into his hand.

He read it standing; then seated himself and perused it again. “You must go to her,” he said at last. “The *Westmoreland* leaves Sydney in ten days' time.” He sprang to his feet, and, taking the lamp to a file of the *Southern Cross*, began to search the shipping intelligence. “Yes, you can do it,” he continued eagerly, after a moment; “but it means starting to-morrow. Captain Morse is to sail at midnight. We will send a message to delay him while your things are got together. Come! Everything

fits in admirably," and he rubbed his hands with an appearance of satisfaction.

But I did not move.

He stood a moment regarding me, and I saw his hand stealthily crumple and conceal the letter he had brought with him into the room. "It is a pity we have not a little more time to prepare, but there will be a spare day or two in Sydney, and anything you need can be purchased there. However, the first thing is to notify Morse," and he took a step towards the door.

"Father," I said—and he came to a stop on the instant, his back towards me, listening attentively—"was that letter from the chief of the Ngatihaua?"

"Yes, Cedric," he answered after a pause. "A few lines, but of no consequence—now."

"Yet, is it good news or bad?"

His reply was long in coming. "It is bad, my son," he said at last, "bad!" And in his voice was reluctance and an infinite passion of regret.

No more was said. Thank God he knew that no word he could say, or any human being could say, could tempt me to leave him then.

CHAPTER XX

THE STORM-CLOUD

FOR the long, calm day has come to an end, and night, dark and gloomy, is descending on the fair landscape.

The change was no matter of a moment. For years I had watched the growing of the cloud and struggled against the idea of its significance. Even when its significance was admitted, I lived in the hope that it might pass without breaking; that the will of honourable men on both sides would prevail and that a way of escape would be found. But its origin lay deeper than the acts, good or ill, of individual men; they might hasten or retard, even alter the method, but they could not affect the result. Clearly do I see now that human passions were but the instruments of the Inevitable, and in so far as we fought against them, not wisely but in anger, we hastened the coming of the end.

The Maori War was precipitated by an act of injustice of the colonists; so much is unquestionable. But when that is said, there remains nothing to be added. That but for the war the condition of the Maori might have been different to-day is a mere dream. For a thousand who fell in the field, ten thousand withered in the airs that blew from the habitations of the white men. The living inhabitants of a country, animal and vegetable, mutually adjust themselves. In New Zealand, separated by vast oceans from the nearest mainland, this adjust-

ment had been carried to a point which simulated perfection and stability. Something conceivable as a unity of character pervaded it, from the lowly moss to the giant kauri; from its strange polymorphic plants to its singular birds. But the addition of one insect, one microscopical fungus, rendered it as liable to collapse as a house of cards.

The farmer of to-day is engaged in a herculean struggle with disorder, but there is no fact of early New Zealand better authenticated than that the country originally was peculiarly free from fungoid pests, destructive insects, and deadly diseases. Man was intermittently violent, but for the rest Nature was in a gentle mood. With the European settler came, *inter alia*, those ancient evils from which his civilisation has never had the wit to release him. Freed from the restraints of the harsher latitudes, often escaping from the clutch of their own special enemies, they ran riot in the virgin field. Birds fell from the boughs, and no man could point to the cause; vigorous manhood succumbed to maladies that would scarce confine a European child to its bed; and war, more insidious and deadly than was ever waged by man, ravaged the foretime Happy Isles.

We did not tell ourselves then that the Maori was doomed; that his best hope was extinction in the blood of the conqueror. Just then he was very much alive, very sure that grave injustice had been done him, very determined that it should be retracted or revenged. The policy of *laissez-faire*—if indeed it were a policy, and not the entire absence of one—which had followed on the vigorous methods, propitiatory and educative, of Sir George Grey, had resulted in failure. The system of hereditary chieftainship—a tool ready to the hand of the Government—had been suffered to fall into decay long before anything had been devised to take its place, and, from a number of well-ordered communities, the

Maori nation had degenerated into a mob whose individual members regarded with equal indifference the law of the Queen and the Ariki. Not that this indifference took the form of lawlessness. Pride held fast even where the moral sense might have proved inadequate, and offences were oftener those of omission than commission.

It was as much the recognition of this disorder among themselves as doubts of the honesty of the Government that led to the initiation of what is known as "the King Movement." Its instigators sought to re-establish that order which the whites—passively, it may be—had caused to be broken, and to make for themselves one voice in place of the numerous conflicting voices of the past. It was inevitable that the desires of the settlers should clash with those of the original owners of the soil, and no policy, short of abnegation on one side or the other, could have prevented such conflict occurring. But the Maori was not unreasonable. He recognised the permanency of the occupation of the country by the white man, and theoretically, if not always practically, he admitted his needs; but he saw also, and with equal clearness, whither the division of his own counsels was driving him, and above all he recognised the necessity for concerted action in the alienation of the ancestral estates.

For my part, not merely my human sympathies—often enough, I admit, deceptive guides—but my judgment also were on the side of the originators of the movement, and I still believe that if with due regard to British sovereignty—a matter which was never in dispute—it had been openly accepted and encouraged by the Government of the day, not only might a costly and protracted war have been averted, but that monstrous edifice of native land laws, through which no human brain can penetrate, which stands to-day a monument to legislative stupidity and a perfect example of How-not-to-do-it, would never have

been called into existence; and so might the North Island have been spared that long paralysis which still lingers in a hundred fair and fertile valleys.

With the assistance of the Government it might have been possible for the Maori people to elect a king representative of the whole of the tribes: as it was, he stood for but a section, and a disaffected one. The choice fell on a chief of the Waikatos, a son of Te Whero Whero, who himself enjoys the unenviable distinction of being one of the most ruthless savages of Maori history. But the man who truly represented the Maori nation during that stormy time, who stood for all that is best in his race, and who mentally and morally could compare not unfavourably with his civilised opponents, was Wiremu Tamihana, chief of the Ngatihaua and a son of my old enemy Te Waharoa. On him it was that, when the struggle came, the eyes alike of Maori and European were turned. In strong contrast to his dominant father, he was not a fighting man. Bloodshed and any form of violence were averse from his nature. A love of justice was ingrained in him. Deeply religious, honourable, chivalrous, he commanded the respect and goodwill of every one with whom he came in contact, and no stronger argument in favour of the justice of the cause he espoused is to be found than the fact that he did espouse it—in words while words availed, and in action when the hour for talk had gone by.

With this brief summary of events fateful to the Colony, I may return to my own people.

Te Moanaroa was dead—of a surfeit of cucumbers, obtained, alas! in the garden of his pakeha. My father, finding him seated in the patch, had, with the delicacy his sense of hospitality enjoined, hinted that to be sparing in the eating of cucumbers was a necessity he had himself alighted on after many adventures to the contrary.

Te Moanaroa smiled in the superior knowledge of his own internal capacity. "I have eaten two of the water-melons," said he, "and this is but a small thing in comparison. Does the Thumb say that six of these prickly ones are the equal of one melon?"

"I fear so, chief," said my father. "Nay, it may be that one of these is more than equal to two melons."

"It is a matter known to the pakeha," admitted Te Moanaroa, sheathing his knife with reluctance. "The four I have eaten shall suffice."

And they did.

We laid him to rest with wailing and much feasting, for to his beneficent government the hapu was deeply indebted. And Piripi his son reigned in his stead.

Quite otherwise did fate deal with the ariki. The years during which he had dwelt almost alone on the mountain, collecting guns and keeping his own counsel, had invigorated rather than relaxed him. No pakeha novelties had played havoc with his constitution, seducing him into habits of sloth and gluttony. As he was when I first saw him, fair-skinned, dark-haired, big-framed, but not corpulent, so was he now. And, as his decline had withdrawn no dignity from his countenance, so now, in his time of triumph, did he betray no elation. For the hour for which he had waited was at hand, and all men knew it. No longer did high chiefs in passing rest at the foot of the pa, regardless of him who sat among the winds. One after another they made the ascent, greeting him in fair words and listening with attention to his rare speech. Had he put himself forward or given encouragement to those who would have done so, he might have imperilled the kingship of the son of Te Whero Whero. But his word on this matter had been consistent with his whole life policy. "First," he had said, "we will get rid of the kings and queens we have,"

There came a day when the noisy village council, muddling through its petty matters, heard far off the sound of the trump of doom. Then was felt the need of the son of the ancient gods. Unanimously they sent word to him, inviting him to join the assembly and direct their councils. Away went the messenger, climbing the steep escarpment, until at last they saw him disappear like a fly through the great gateway. Swift was his return. He had but vanished from sight when, lo ! he was back amongst them.

"Speak, then. What says the Great One ?"

"Thus does he answer you : 'Where the ariki sits, there is the runanga.'"¹

Truly a kingly answer, and for all the swollen pride of the years of peace and plenty, they bowed their heads in loyal subjection and climbed into his presence.

You will not suppose that his mind had suffered any change from recent events. He had but one stern word for them—War. And so, disquietened and yet in a way strengthened, they returned.

"He said so, and he was right," said Rangiora, in a voice which blended filial admiration and regret.

"Not unless you make him so, Rangi," I reminded him. "What part has the Ngatimaniapoto in the troubles of Taranaki ?"

"Then if the French invade Kent, that is no affair of Essex ?"

I had spent much time on Rangiora's education, and it was in such replies as this that I reaped the harvest of my tilling.

"But the Maori nation has always been divided like a Europe in miniature. Why this display of virtue now ?"

"Because, my friend, what happens to Taranaki to-day may happen to Ngatimaniapoto to-morrow."

¹ Runanga = the Parliament.

"Yes, that is a business-like reason. Let us continue to be business-like. You yourself have nothing to gain by war, and"—extending a hand to the cultivations, through which at the time we were riding—"everything to lose. Is that not so?"

"No," he said, and I drew rein in surprise.

"What gain do you propose to yourself?" I asked. "Or is it the possibility of loss you deny?"

"If war come and I outlive it," he answered, "here is all I have to lose."

"And this represents wealth. Surely regard for life and property should restrain you."

"Not if by risking them I might buy something more to be wished for. Come, my friend, we are brothers in misfortune. Is there nothing to gain which you would freely peril all you possess, even your life?"

My dead heart stirred at his words, revealing to me for a moment the darkness within.

"Ah!" he exclaimed restively, replying to the question in my gaze. "Some evil thing was born in the hour that I first beheld Puhi-Huia, to love her. Twice has the way to her arms led through a pool of blood. Once it was the blood of a man of my own race, now it is of the men of yours."

"You cannot!" I cried, horror-struck at the idea of a compact so malignant. "A union so contracted would be cursed and not blessed."

"The war is not of my making," he responded gloomily. "I shall but reap what others have sown."

"And is this the bait," I cried, a host of recollections thronging together in my mind, "wherewith the ariki would win you. Cunningly has he concealed his purpose all these years. Tell me, what share in the evil is to be yours?"

"None that he himself avoids. In the day of Armageddon I must stand at his right hand."

"And Puhī-Huia is to be the reward of your consent. Truly, my friend, it is but a lying light you follow, if you imagine she will wade to you through the blood of her father's people."

He looked up quickly, his lips framed to speech, but something that read to me like caution gathered in his eyes and checked the impulse. "Negotiations are not yet at an end," he said, evading my gaze. "Who knows but even yet the storm may pass without breaking."

I think it was on that same evening that my father met me with the glad news that Sir George Grey was returning to New Zealand. Recognising the seriousness of the position, the British Government, as once before, had sent us a man.

A wild, unreasoning hope sprang up in my heart as I heard the news. It could but be association that prompted it. "I must go to Auckland, father."

He laid his hand with gentle pressure on my shoulder. "You must go," he agreed. "You must be there to greet him. It is of the last importance—strong man as I believe him—that the views of the natives should not be misrepresented. This paper here talks of measures to suppress rebellion. The natives are not rebellious; they are restless. Their faith in the justice and benignity of the government of the whites is sick to death, and must be medicined back to health. How absurd, nay, how wicked, to talk of the rebellion of those from whom we have taken the earth! It is the clear duty of all living creatures to rebel against extinction; on that depends the advancement, even the continuance of life."

I was sobered by his earnest words. "He will listen to me," I said. "If I had not let our correspondence die out, I might already have done something."

He made no comment on that. Probably he knew as well as I the deadly listlessness with which I suffered

the passing years, and found therein nothing worth the doing.

After all I was not in Auckland in time to meet Sir George Grey on his arrival. An accident, due to the antics of a newly broken horse amongst thick timber, incapacitated me for many months, and though I have now sufficient modesty to believe that the fate of New Zealand was in no whit altered by that circumstance, I was of a different expectation then ; and the fear of what might be happening to undermine the humane feelings of the Governor kept me in a fever of impatience, and no doubt retarded my recovery. But at last I was pronounced fit to travel, and journeying by the same route as on the previous occasion, came in due course to the City of Sweet Memories.

A sentry among the springing oaks in the Government House grounds allowed me to pass unmolested, and soon I was in the presence of a young aide-de-camp, courteous but punctilious. His Excellency was at home. My card should be presented to him as soon as he was at leisure.

"I have no card. Would you say that Little Finger brings him a welcome from the Ngatimaniapoto ? "

The aide regarded me doubtfully. He regretted that he could not accept the responsibility of such a message.

"Then say that Cedric Tregarthen of Matakiki is here." I am afraid I spoke a trifle impatiently, for though no one had a greater regard for rank than I, it was the thing itself I revered, and not its fripperies and exclusiveness.

As the sound of my voice died away there was a hasty movement in the room beyond. Was it the swish of a skirt I heard, followed by the soft click of a closing door ? One has sensations of that kind through the organ of hearing, which cannot be dissected, and are impossible to verify. The next moment the curtain was swung aside and the Governor himself came hastily into the room.

His step slackened before he reached me, and doubt partly displaced the recognition in his eyes. "It is Cedric Tregarthen?" he said, scanning me attentively.

"Yes, sir."

His face cleared and he took my hand in a cordial grip. "You are bigger than I imagined, Cedric," he said, laughing, "but your voice is unmistakable"; and still holding my hand, he led me into his study.

The first thing on which my eyes fell was a sandal-wood box of chessmen with which Helenora and I had often amused ourselves, and so poignant were the memories it aroused that I stood rooted to the ground, forgetful of aught else. The box had been placed among a heap of papers; three or four pieces were withdrawn and stood upright among the litter. I did not remark the strange incongruity of their presence on that busy table—to me they were the sole things there, and they were less there than in the golden past, set out in the soft lamplight and warm from the touch of Helenora's fingers.

". . . Sit down."

I became conscious of the repetition and obeyed.

"... expressed interest in objects of art of that nature... fine workmanship... from Benares." He closed the box and looked at me steadily.

I nodded, vaguely understanding that he was explaining the presence of the chessmen among his papers.

"Your face is thinner than perhaps it should be," he said in a different tone; "sterner, too, than I imagined it could be."

"Life is sterner to the man than the boy, Your Excellency," I suggested.

"Here too?" he asked with a sigh, and I was reminded of the rumours I had heard of infelicity in his own private life. I took the opportunity of his momentary abstraction to examine his face more closely. Save a strengthening of

the characteristic lines, bringing out the forceful character of the jaw and a scattering of grey at the temples, there was no change that I could note. He might have been but a year gone instead of seven.

"I bring you a welcome from the chiefs of the Ngati-maniapoto," I said presently. "Their word to you is—'Well that our white father has returned.'"

"Fair words, Cedric," he replied; "but I hear that there are many of the Maniapoto away from their homes."

"But a few, Your Excellency; and of men of the highest rank, none. Yet it is well you are come. Not too soon for our needs."

"Yes," he said, with a sort of gay bitterness. "I am the stormy petrel of the Empire. Where the clouds gather, there must you seek for Grey. Why it is I know not, save that I am ticketed a soldier, and the son of a soldier."

"Some day," I said, "England will bethink itself and reward you; and if not, the new nations will remember."

A smile lightened the shadow on his face. "Now I am assured," he said, "that it is really Cedric Tregarthen before me. Well, let us talk. A pretty mess you have made of things amongst you." He rose and stood against the mantelpiece in an attitude I remembered of old, one eye partly closed, as though by the trick he assisted attention. "What is the grievance of the descendants of Maniapoto?"

And I put the case of the Maori before him as I beheld it with their eyes—the decay of the old customs, barbarous, it may be, but serving a useful purpose; the collapse of discipline amongst them; the futility of education, of religion even, to supply the place of what had been taken away; the absence of a consistent and, above all, a scientific native policy.

"No man could be more willing, more eager to save the native race than I," he broke in at last; "but ultimately

their salvation depends on themselves. The Maori can only be helped to bring forth what is already in him. But these are generalities. Let us get down to the concrete."

I was not without ideas of my own—it matters not now what they were—and I put them forth with what clearness and eloquence I could. He heard me almost in silence to the end, only now and then interrupting me with a brief question that served to eliminate what was visionary from my schemes.

"Times are changed, Cedric," he said when I had concluded. "The autocrat is an autocrat no longer. He has his advisers, and disobeys them at his peril. Still there is wisdom in your ideas, and they shall simmer in my mind. Meantime, with regard to Waitara, I am clearly of the opinion that the negotiations were faulty. I have gone exhaustively into the matter, and I see no escape from the conclusion that the sale was bad and therefore nugatory."

"And you will say so, sir?" I exclaimed, well pleased.

"I have already said so—to my advisers. I have suggested what I consider is in honour incumbent on us, and there the matter rests. But, he added with a frown, "the seizure of Tataraimaka is another matter. If our honour demands the redress of wrongs we ourselves commit, it is equally involved in the punishment of offences against us."

"It was but a *quid pro quo*," I urged. "They had remonstrated in vain. What do they know of the law's technicalities and delays? Restore Waitara, and they will quit."

"Not otherwise?"

"I do not say so. The word of the Governor that restoration is to be made will surely suffice. Believe me, sir, their eyes are bent on you with expectancy."

A look of anxiety shadowed his face. "God knows I

would not disappoint them," he said earnestly, "but you must concede the difficulty of my position. My own pride I might subdue, but the honour of England is in my keeping, and no official may lightly imperil that. Then again, my hands are tied." He paused a moment and added: "There is still another thing—the general attitude of the natives towards the settlers is far from conciliatory. Hourly and from all sides I receive reports, if not of actual violence, at all events of insolence amounting nearly to aggression. You see but your own little territory, my boy; my view extends over the whole North Island."

"Those are not the acts of responsible persons, sir," I pleaded. The old authorities have been suffered to die out, and now every man behaves as it pleases him, with only the checks his own disposition provides. Without the restraints of government where would our own race be?"

"I can recognise no distinction between the native and the settler; the Queen's rule subjects both."

"Then bring it to their doors. Restore the authorities which have been allowed to decay. Recognise their king and uphold him."

"That," he said firmly, "I can never do. Even if the tribes were unanimous in the matter, the movement could not in its present shape receive the support of the British Government; but they are very far from being unanimous. Your king is but king of a section. He will never be more. To acknowledge him would be to bring down upon ourselves the contempt of the powerful tribes who know not the son of Te Whero Whero."

"I am not thinking so much, Your Excellency, of the king they have chosen," I said, "as of the king they might choose with the help of the Government."

He shook his head. "Something I am already attempting, to restore authority among them, not, however, on

the lines of hereditary chieftainship. But I set before myself the making of a united New Zealand ; no factions must spring up to threaten its unity. The brown men must submit to the inevitable ; the white man must practise restraint, tolerance, generosity. He may move slowly, as a man adjusts his step to that of a child, but he must not pause, much less turn back." The dreamy abstraction of the poet softened and dimmed his blue eyes, and for a moment he was silent.

Suddenly his eye turned to the clock on the mantelpiece, and he bestirred himself.

"Your atmosphere is contagious, Cedric," he said, smiling. "Dreams are not for this practical room, where it is demanded that each problem shall be solved independently as it occurs. How long are you staying?"

I told him, and he appointed an hour when he would be at leisure to hold uninterrupted conversation with me. "Some great stars have appeared in the literary firmament since we read together in the early fifties," he said, as he accompanied me to a door opening on the shrubbery at the side of the house. "We will make the quiet midnight glow with them." Then, in sudden thoughtful transition—"You are aware that Lady Wylde is dead?"

"Yes."

"Colonel Wylde is in Wellington. He is to take command of the 58th Regiment. He has made remarkable advancement for a man of his years. The Crimea was his opportunity."

I hung expectant on his words. For the life of me I could not bring to my lips the question that ached to be spoken.

"Good-bye," he said, and we parted.

I went out through the shrubbery, looking about me with interested eyes. I could not deny the superior possibilities for beauty of the site of the restored Govern-

ment House over St. Kevens, but the latter held my heart. Away from the bushes I turned to look at the great house. My eye fell on a window. . . . It happened in an instant of time. Even as I sought to concentrate my gaze, she was gone and the room was empty. The curtains were drawn back ; the casement open ; sunlight poured in, revealing every detail, but nothing lived among its contents. Yet my blood was running like a mill-race. In haste I retraced my steps to the door I had left, raised my hand to the bell, and stood so, motion arrested, suffering the return of cold reason. If she were there, he would have told me. How absurd to suppose that he would remember my acquaintance with the brother and forget how close had been my companionship with the sister ! My hand fell, and once again I retraced my steps. The room as I repassed it was still empty. There was no sign anywhere of the face I had seen or imagined. Hoping, doubting, questioning even my sanity, I made my way to the gates.

CHAPTER XXI

I LEAVE AUCKLAND AND FALL INTO AN AMBUSH

I DO not remember whether it was on my first or second visit to the city—for my stay in Auckland was not continuous—that I ran across Richard Brompart. I should mention that some years previously Mr. Brompart had found it necessary to pay what he described to us in his correspondence as a “flying” visit to England. Whether he had ever really had an intention of returning I cannot say, but I incline to the belief that his long absence was not premeditated, but arose from the discovery that his endurance of his family was after all a vicious habit, of which he could very pleasantly break himself. At all events he was still in England, and there, for all I could learn to the contrary, he was likely to remain.

Shortly after his departure we received a notification to the effect that the business hitherto conducted by Mr. Brompart senior would, during that gentleman's absence in England, be carried on by his sons, who solicited, etc., and were our obedient servants R. and F. Brompart. But, untrained in business habits, the sort of services they rendered fell far short of what our growing business demanded, if only in attention and promptitude. I did not know what in particular it was that caused my father to put an end to the connection. He did not volunteer the information, and I did not ask him. Apparently it was something difficult or impossible to palliate, for

they made no attempt to do so, but suffered the business to pass into other hands without a murmur.

Recollecting this and the manner of our parting, I was surprised at the warmth of Richard's greeting. A happy boyhood spent together might have accounted for the exuberance of his pleasure at the sight of me. Hooking his arm in mine, he led me to his office, smarter and more business-like than I had expected, and there, for the best part of an hour, chattered away unreservedly of the years during which I had been an inmate of his father's house. His recollections were uniformly pleasant, even joyous, and but for an occasional gleam in the depths of his eyes I should have felt compelled to review my own memories of the period. But there was that in his eyes which conflicted with his words and tones, and kept me cold for all his appearance of friendliness. Janet, he told me, was still unmarried, and he laughed his high, gleeful laugh. "For all her scheming, it was little Sarah who drew the prize—Captain Mansfield—you recollect the Captain?—they are living in England."

"And Fred and John?" I asked.

"John married and went farming. He was always the fool of the family. Fred is away for a few days. You must come and see him when he returns. He will be delighted." Suddenly he fell to laughing. "Only just thought of it! That fight you and I had behind the stable. Forget what it was about, but it was a great go. Ended inconclusively, of course. You could beat me now, though," he added, measuring me with his eye. "Nothing like a country life."

"Fred also is still unmarried?" I asked.

He nodded. "Clear-headed chap, Fred. He is not one to throw himself away, and women with the where-withal to keep a husband in decent comfort are not too common in this hole of a place."

His voice was querulous but recovered its good-humour as he began to question me in my turn.

"You won't be able to stop up there long," he said presently. "The whole country will be on fire before we are many months older. Purcell was wise not to invest in land, though my father considered him a fool. He will be able to get everything away and lie by till the storm blows over. Look here, my boy; there is going to be a good time when we get through with the Maoris. The Waikato will fall into the hands of the Government, as sure as we sit here."

"Auckland might fall into the hands of the natives first," I said, repressing my disgust with difficulty.

He look at me thoughtfully, biting at his forefinger, a habit he had inherited from his father. "You don't suppose they could possibly come out on top?" he asked curiously.

"At all events, there will be no vindictive seizure of their lands," I replied. "The loser, of course, must pay in reason, but there will be no wholesale alienation. If it were so the war could not be ended in fifty years."

He sat a moment cogitating, then, putting out his foot, closed the partly open door till the catch snapped. "Could you do with a few cases of machinery?" he asked, leaning forward and lowering his voice.

"Machinery?"

"As before. I can put you on to a fairly big line; three hundred at least. I suppose they are worth almost anything now."

We sat staring at one another. I could discover no clue to the peculiar significance in his voice.

"What?" he exclaimed at last, puzzled. "Here!" and taking me to a high desk beneath the window, he pulled down an old and bulky account book from the shelf above. Running his fingers over the edges of the leaves,

he opened it at an account headed with my father's name. Without speaking, he indicated here and there with a pencil point certain items of cases of machinery and barrels of machine oil. They extended back a long way, even into the days when my own eyes had scanned and my own figures footed the page.

"They probably related to the mills," I said, still completely at a loss. "But everything is at a standstill now. We could find no market for them."

"Tush!" he exclaimed, laughing. "If it were any one else I should think he was bluffing. Can't you guess what these cases and barrels really contained?"

A cold wave of dread came over me, and for a moment I answered him nothing.

His eyes came slyly round towards me. "There won't be many more such chances," he said. "The authorities are getting suspicious. Shall we go round and arrange a deal?"

Cold rage was in my heart, but fear kept any expression of it from my lips. His manner gave me little hope that he was lying, and there were other reasons—now first obtruding themselves—for believing that he spoke the truth. Only one hope was left me, and I put it to the test.

"Certainly not," I said stoutly. "Since the repeal of the Act, we have, of course, not traded in guns or ammunition."

His hand rapidly turned a few pages, paused irresolutely, and finally closed the book. "It's all right, Cedric," he said, with a laugh that disquieted me. "If you don't want them you don't, and there's an end of it. Of course," he added, "you understand they are only made for sale or else——" and he shrugged his shoulders. "Well, now, when are you coming up to the old place?"

I left him, my mind full of foreboding. Unsuspicious, as Helenora had called me, I was keen enough once sus-

picion was aroused. Not for a moment did I doubt that my foster-father had trafficked in arms both with and against the consent of the law. Arms, no doubt, formed the basis of his agreement with Te Huata, the bribe where-with he had purchased the ariki's silence and goodwill. Had he foreseen the hour of conflict, or was his action erected on the precarious belief that peace would endure? I could not answer the question.

I have spoken of my own doings with the view of averting war, but my father had not remained quiescent. Letters which only persons of intellect and learning could thoroughly comprehend had appeared in the daily press over his name. Little men had replied to them, as little men are apt to do, missing the deep appeal, avoiding the unanswerable logic, fixing only on the espousal of the native cause, and heaping thereon their self-righteous contumely and personal abuse. They had more noise than he, and, as usual, the crowd followed the noise. He had become a marked man, and I dared not contemplate what might be the result of spreading broadcast the knowledge which now seemed confined to the Bromptons.

My interviews with Sir George Grey had led only to a recognition of the extreme difficulty of the Governor's position. "War," he said to me on the occasion of our parting, "resembles a disease. Permit it to establish itself in men's minds, and it has to run its course. Skill can make it less terrible in its consequences, but it cannot prevent it accomplishing itself. The disease was already established in the blood of the people before I landed here, and no effort can eradicate it till it has run its course. Yet, for all that, effort must continue."

"If you would only abandon Waitara——" I began.

"I intend to abandon Waitara," he replied, almost impatiently. "But, my dear boy, it isn't that. It isn't Waitara; it isn't Tataraimaka. It's the germs; the

infinitesimal little things that fill the air where white men and brown men meet."

"I feel that, but——"

"Come, don't wear your heart out battling against the fates. England will strike with reluctance; she will hold her hand on a word of submission."

"To regard war as inevitable is to make it so," I objected.

"*Et tu, Brute!* My every action takes for granted the impossibility of war; but my mind sits up aloft and watches the making of the tide. There is an intuition that tells a man when his efforts are futile. I had it in the Waikato when I was arguing with Ngatihaua. He had it, too, beyond doubt; yet both of us would have made great personal sacrifices to preserve peace."

An aide brought him a dispatch, and I rose to go. It was past one o'clock in the morning, for the hours he appointed to receive me were usually in the neighbourhood of midnight.

"Wait," he said. "I was about to tell you that, General Cameron having occupied Tataraimaka without opposition, there is no longer an excuse for delaying the proclamation with regard to Waitara, and it shall be gazetted at once."

He broke open the dispatch in his hand and, with a murmur of apology, began to read it. I knew by the sudden rigidity that came into his attitude that the letter contained news of grave importance. Desiring not to obtrude my presence at such a moment, I was making my way to the door when he called me back.

"You may as well know the contents of this," he said. "It will be public knowledge within the next few hours. Heaven knows I have spared no pains to avoid a conflict. I have been long suffering—too long, perhaps; but that is at an end. The natives have set fire to the thatch, and now the house will burn. Listen," and he read to me that portion of the dispatch which reported the killing of

Lieutenant Tragett, Dr. Hope, and a party of the 57th on the beach near New Plymouth. Of the little party of eight only one had escaped to tell the tale of the ambush.

I sat down again, recognising that my stay in Auckland was at an end, and that to-night I must bid him good-bye.

"Does your humanity still see a way of escape?" he asked.

I shook my head. I was really too stunned by the news to think collectedly.

"What will you do?" he asked in a kinder tone. "Even for you it will be dangerous to return among the natives. Will you accept a commission in Her Majesty's forces?"

"No sir," I replied; "that is quite impossible."

"Then become an interpreter: we shall need such men as you. Shall I send you with a letter to General Cameron? In such a capacity your sympathy with the natives would be a help rather than a hindrance to us."

I hesitated. "Would you mind telling me what your first step will be, sir?" I asked.

"No. We shall of course occupy the Waikato in strength. Fighting must not approach Auckland. General Cameron's objective will no doubt be the seat of the disturbance—the King Country. Probably we shall call on all chiefs to take the oath of allegiance to the Queen. Failing that, they must retire beyond some natural landmark—say the Mangatawhiri Creek—which will become an arbitrary frontier."

"I must go, sir," I said, rising. "If you will give me the note to General Cameron, I will consult with my father as to whether I shall make use of it."

"You are going home, then," he observed, seating himself at his desk and drawing writing materials before him. "Let me advise you to lose no time going or returning. You must persuade Mr. Purcell to leave the place for the time being. We shall act with vigour, for that is the only

form of mercy left to us." He wrote the note, enclosed it in an envelope, and handed it to me. "Then I take it that for the present I shall not see you again?"

"No, sir. I shall start in a few hours. Thank you for your many kindnesses to me."

"I am as kind as you will let me be, Cedric," he responded, laughing and laying his hand with an affectionate pressure on my shoulder. "Is there nothing else I can do for you? Come, rack your brains. What in heaven or earth?"

"Ah, sir!" I said, moved by a sudden blind, wild impulse, "have you a voice in heaven? Then use it in my behalf."

I knew that he understood me: his momentary look of embarrassment was an answer to all my puzzling. It told me plainly as words that my instinct had not deceived me; that in defiance of all probabilities my love and I were beneath the same skies, even perhaps at that moment beneath the same roof. It told me also that some pledge held him—a pledge he would fain break if he might.

"There is something in being a figure of romance," he said with gentle whimsicality. "Do not seek to get rid of your nebulous splendour recklessly. As for my voice, it may not be altogether unavailing."

"That is all you can tell me, sir?" I pleaded.

"I can neither admit nor deny. It would be well if you could wait a few days. Colonel Wylde is on his way to Auckland."

"I must not delay," I said reluctantly, "even for that."

"Every hour will increase the danger you run," he agreed.

We parted then, and after wandering round the dark house with my new knowledge until the suspicions of the guard were aroused, I made my way straight to the Maori hostelry where I knew that my old friend Tetera was passing the night.

It was not until I had awakened many sleepers that I found him and led him shivering and yawning bitterly into the wintry night air.

"Friend," he said, when I had disclosed my business, "remain here. Here is well; but beyond"—he turned his face towards the dark, cloud-piled south—"there are many war-parties looking for the flying fish."

I knew better than to argue with him, and continued quietly to develop the plan I had formed. No ship was available for over a week; the route I had travelled on my previous journey, through the populous and now disaffected district of the Waikato, was one possibly of danger, and almost certainly of delay; but there remained the Piako—"A river of shallows and snags," interpolated Tetere—the Piako, which would carry me many miles on my way; but first of all to a village whose chief was my friend. Let Tetere, then, hasten with the making ready of his boat while I myself returned with all speed to my lodgings. I left him still unwilling and protesting, but by the noise that sprang up in the hostelry ere I was well away from it, I knew that he was arousing his crew.

Fortunately wind and tide were favourable for an immediate departure, and before day broke we had opened out the Firth of Thames and were heading for the mouth of the Piako. It was a gloomy and depressing morning, clouds hanging to the land and sweeping the waters in squalls of wind and rain. A prey alternately to hopes and fears—hopes when I recalled Helenora's presence in New Zealand, fears when I reflected on the stormy days to come—the weather affected me but little; but my three companions, insufficiently protected from its inclemency, and with nothing to distract their attention from it, fell shortly into a morose silence. Nor did matters improve when we had entered the river. The wind which had hurried us on our way died down, and thenceforth the rain

fell in torrents. I will not dwell on the rest of that miserable day. From the boat Tetera and I ultimately transferred ourselves to the dinghy and, as night was falling, landed with cramped limbs at the bourne of our journey.

The village children were the first to espy us as we walked up through the leafless orchard in the direction of the whares; their cries of "Pakeha! Pakeha!" causing every hut to put forth its inmates, many, even of the women, with guns in their hands. The chief himself was the last to emerge. He stood watching our approach until I had advanced near enough for recognition, when a quick word to those around him brought about an entire change in the aspect of the villagers. Weapons disappeared as if by magic, and the threatening silence gave place to cries of welcome.

Ihaka greeted me with a hongi and, regarding the lamentable condition to which my garments had been reduced, declared in the abundance of his hospitality that if I had but forewarned him everything, and inferentially the weather, would have been different. However, here I was. If there were no European clothes fit for a person of my dignity, there were at least blankets and fires. Food was about to be served. Some beneficent influence had moved the young men to go forth in the morning for pigeon and wild duck, and the pots were now full. Welcome also to the tribesman of the Ngatipaoa. Thus Ihaka, as he conducted me into the guest-house and set his hand-maidens to work to supply my needs. Not a word nor hint as to the trouble between his race and mine; not a question as to the object of my journey or its destination. These were matters for the guest to disclose if it so pleased him. And when food and fire had restored sensation to my chilled body, it did please me. He heard me in silence, agreeing with a lift of the brows to my request that he should transport me to the head-waters of the stream, a

long day's march from Matakiki. More, his son Hone was travelling in that direction and would accompany me to the end of my journey ; it was but taking one track in place of another.

Expressing my satisfaction with the arrangement, I asked if Hone were travelling far.

There was a momentary silence, the company looking expectantly at the bright-eyed youth of some twenty years, who sat a short distance away in company with several of his own age.

"Akarana (Auckland)," said Hone, showing his white teeth in a broad smile.

A titter of laughter, respectfully subdued in deference to the feelings of the guest, followed the bold reply, and all eyes were bent upon me. I could not mistake what was meant.

"It is a long journey, friend Hone," I said mildly ; for the waste and pity of war were strong in my mind as I contemplated his eager youth.

"True," observed some of the elder people, in voices that showed that they recognised the gravity of the position.

"What need for silence with the son of the Thumb ?" said Ihaka. "Loud is the sound of the war-trumpet at the pa in the mountains, and thither flock the young warriors of many hapus. Soon the great snake will wind down on to the plains and the driving will begin."

"Too long have the men of Taranaki stood alone for the Maori nation," said another. "Let there not be three deaths for Taranaki, Waikato, and Ngatimaniapoto, but, if it must be, one death for all."

"And yet," I said, "Maori will war with Maori, as it was in the days of their fathers. As Heke fought, so will you. But this is for the time to come. What of to-day ? What of the white men the ariki has sheltered ?"

"Where is the butterfly when the sun hides his face?" asked Ihaka.

His reply disquieted me, for I found it difficult to reconcile with the warmth of welcome he had extended to myself. "Does the chief say that all the white men have already left the district?" I asked.

"To them was brought the word of the ariki—'Go now, or remain for ever.'"

"And what was the answer of the Thumb?"

A murmur, as it seemed of surprise, ran round the interested group of listeners, and again I was aware that all eyes were concentrated upon me.

"The Thumb!" exclaimed Ihaka. "Of a certainty no such message was sent to a high chief of the Ngatimaniapoto."

I sat regarding him with fixed gaze, allowing the dread truth to penetrate to the inmost recesses of my mind. How often in the past had my step skirted the precipice unwittingly! Now, at last, the abyss lay revealed to my gaze.

"Does the chief suppose that the Thumb will take up arms against the men of his own race?" I heard myself ask, while my deeper thoughts were at work probing the gloom for foothold.

"Why not?" responded Ihaka coldly. "If Maori fight against Maori in this quarrel, why not English against English?"

Again I was reduced to silence. Was it indeed logical to regard the native ally as one worthy of esteem while he of our blood who took up arms against us was a proper object of execration? No shadow of doubt remained in my mind as to the correctness of what Ihaka had said. A hundred memories confirmed its probability. One in particular I had carried in my mind for twenty years. Puzzled by his easy command of tongues, I had once asked

him, "To what race do you belong, father?" "To the human race, my son," was his answer.

So intolerable was the oppression of my thoughts that with a murmur of excuse I rose to my feet and sought the outside of the cabin. Rain had ceased, and through the broken cloudscape I saw the brighter stars of the Cross and the brilliant silver lamp of Proxima Centauri. He was there too—in the heaven as in the earth. Where might I look for anything his mind had not touched and communicated to mine? He was interested in everything, the leaf, the blight upon it, the stone, the star—all spoke their message to him. What a splendid tolerance was his, but for that one fatal exception—civilisation! And now it had carried him—how far? And Puhī-Huia!

I wandered down to the stream and stood staring at the swollen, muddy water. Despair was in my heart. The swelling bud of hope withered and died within me. The solid earth seemed to have slipped from beneath, leaving me in some land of nightmare. Impassable barriers encompassed me. Look where I would, no road revealed itself.

"It is already falling," said the liquid voice of Hone beside me. "See the sticks the children have placed in the bank; now they are beyond reach of the water. The pakeha need not fear delay in his journey."

I fancied I heard curiosity in his tones, and caught at the cue he gave me. "I must go on at all costs, Hone," I agreed; "but the wind is in the south, and the day will be fine. Do you know if the Thumb is still at Matakiki?"

"He remains there," said Hone. "He is not of the first war-party."

"Let us return and sleep," I said, relieved of my first fear; "for we must start early. Who leads the taua,¹ friend?"

¹ Taua = war-party.

"Rewi is our war-chief. With him go Rangiora and other of the sons of the high chiefs."

"Rangiora, you say?"

"Well is it with Rangiora that when the driving is over he takes for his wife the singing bird of Matakiki. No maid so fair as Plume of the Huia."

Most of the company had dispersed when we regained the whare. In the dim candle-light Ihaka sat in close consultation with three or four leading men of the hapu, but the women and younger people had disappeared. Their voices died away suddenly as we approached, and it occurred to me that there was a new expression in the faces they turned towards me. Was it due to the shadows, or had doubt and embarrassment really taken the place of the candour and cordiality of their first manner? Had I, perhaps, absorbed in my own emotions, given them reason to suspect my sympathy with their cause?

The morning, as I had prognosticated, was fair, the flood waters had subsided, and everything conduced to an early start. Everything, that is, save the will of the chief. For some reason Ihaka was loath to part with me. Insisting that a full meal was a necessary preliminary for such a journey, he kept me kicking my heels until sufficient dry wood had been collected for the making of a hangi.¹ I could not observe that this task was prosecuted with any extraordinary diligence, nor in the preparing of the food did the women do justice to the nimbleness of their fingers. Long before the meal was ready Tetere, who had wished to see me start on my journey, found his patience exhausted, and came to bid me good-bye. I gave him a wad of notes and asked him to make a generous recompense to the two men we had left shivering in the boat some miles back.

He examined the packet doubtfully. "It is well that they should be paid," he said, "but here is too great a

¹ Hangi = food cooked among heated stones.

reward. Does the Little Finger propose that they should live hereafter in idleness? As for me, I take no payment from my friend of many years," and, subtracting two notes, he attempted to put the packet back into my hand.

"Nonsense!" I said, with friendly roughness. "What are these scraps of paper, that they should lead to a quarrel between us two? Take them, and if you are without needs yourself, buy a gown for your wife and new clothes for the little ones, that so they may remember the pakeha with kindness."

"An evil thing it is," he replied, "that now for the first time I should wish myself without a wife that so I might accompany my friend to the end of his journey." And again he attempted to thrust the money upon me.

"Listen, Tetere," I said. "Here we part. Heaven knows where, if ever, we may meet again. Let there be no dispute between us. This is a thing that I truly wish, that you should take freely from me, as I would not hesitate to take from you. For long I have contemplated making you a present, and now behold it accomplished."

"Your memory is short," said Tetere, unmoved. "Is not my boat named *Little Finger* after the friend who gave it to me?"

He had me there, but I was resolute not to accept return of my gift, and, feigning annoyance at his persistency, he was shortly reduced to submission.

"Go then, friend of my heart and the Maori people," he said. "May the gods of pakeha and Maori keep all evil things from your path and bring you to the desire of your heart."

"Go, friend," I responded. "Remain with the Ngatipaoa at peace; so shall no harm come to you, and so shall I find you in safety on my return."

The sun was high in the heavens before our canoe was finally launched and, with Hone and another youth at the

paddles, began the ascent of the stream. So late was it that, despite the cheerful assurances of Ihaka, I knew that it would be quite impossible to reach the end of our journey before the decline of the sun made further travel impossible. Once started, however, the young men seemed disposed to lose no further time. Encouraging one another with staves of a boat-song, improvised for the occasion, they urged the vessel along at a speed which soon took us out of sight of the settlement. Sunk as I was in unhappy reveries, their gay voices scarcely reached my consciousness; even the sound of my own name in their songs awakening no curiosity in my breast. Had I roused myself to attend, it may be I should have caught an inkling of something which nearly concerned me, and so given to this chapter of my life a different reading.

As we neared the head of the stream, the speed of our progress was interrupted by difficulties in the water-way; snags blocked the channel, and at times we were forced to land and transport our light vessel by well-defined but muddy portage ways on the river bank. It was thus past noon when we arrived at the end of the first stage of our journey, where the ten-mile track to the Waikato debouched on the stream. It was a wild and desolate spot, with no sign of habitation, and I was consequently surprised to catch sight of a smaller canoe, partly concealed among the foliage a few yards from the landing. I was on the point of opening my lips to comment upon the circumstance, when the dense manuka¹ that fringed the water rustled and parted, and a native stepped into view. He was a stranger to me; a youth of about the age of my companions. Though we were in the midst of winter, his face was beaded with sweat, as though from violent and long-continued exertion. From his deep breathing I concluded that he had been running. His presence could not but

¹ Manuka = the tea-tree scrub.

have been observed by the others, yet not a word in reference to it escaped them. Even when, on catching sight of us, the stranger hurried down the bank, slipped into his canoe, and suffered it to be borne rapidly away down the stream, they still continued to ignore his existence. So little was this in keeping with native character and custom, that a feeling of uneasiness, if not of actual suspicion, arose in my mind.

"Is it a ghost that passes us in the daylight?" I asked, "that we neither see him nor call to him in greeting?"

Hone hung his head and murmured something to the effect that the stranger was but a youth of no importance, and driving the nose of the canoe into the mud he stepped lightly ashore.

"It would have been better, Hone," I continued, "if we also had started last night; then could our journey have been finished before nightfall."

"It is a difficult thing to come up the river in the darkness," said Hone.

"Yet what one man may accomplish, three should have no difficulty in doing," I answered significantly.

He looked all ways and was silent.

With a word of farewell to the boatman, whose evident eagerness to be gone was due, I had no doubt, to a desire to overtake and enjoy the companionship of the man we had just seen, I joined Hone on the track, and we set off briskly on our way.

I had no fear that any harm was intended me. Yet as I brought together the incidents of the night and morning, I could not avoid a feeling of disquietude. Not only had Ihaka sent a message in haste some time during the night, but he had delayed my departure with excuses in order that the person he addressed might have time to act upon his information. Would he have gone to all these pains merely to announce to some wayside village the coming of

a guest ? Then the secrecy with which the thing had been managed—only failing of completeness by the odd chance that the return of the messenger to the landing should coincide with the arrival of our canoe—was not calculated to reassure me. However, as I knew of no other track than the one we were pursuing, there was no help for it but to proceed on my way and trust to my wits to avert any difficulty when it actually obtruded itself.

For an hour and more all went well. We had ascended from the watershed of the Piako to an elevation which gave us a view of the mightier Waikato, urging its silvery stream to the Tasman Sea. The air was crystal clear. Bathed in golden sunshine, every height and hollow seemed to render up its secrets and convey to the heart a message of peace. Immediately before us the track fell away through fern to a little arm of bush, which, climbing from the valley, crossed it at that point and, as if exhausted with the effort, dwindled again into a scrub of veronica and tea tree. Descending the narrow, overgrown track with Hone in the rear, I crossed the flat and entered the little bush. It was probably less than a hundred yards from side to side, but, as is the way with native trails, it pursued a sinuous course through the growth, so that but a yard or so of the way was visible ahead of me.

I had traversed some half the distance when the absence of any sound in my rear caused me to turn to look for my companion. He was not in sight. I waited a while, listening. Neither rustle of leaf nor snap of twig broke the silence. Yet as I stood there, wondering and impatient at the delay, an idea—an instinct—rose up in my mind that I was not alone.

Scarcely had the suspicion time to frame itself, ere the thickets parted on every hand, and a body of natives came silently out on to the track and surrounded me.

CHAPTER XXII

PRISONER

"YOUR name, friend?"

The speaker was a man of between forty and fifty, of a plain but not ill-natured countenance. I had no recollection of having seen him before, and I searched in vain among the ten or dozen of his followers for a familiar face.

I answered him, giving him the name by which I was commonly known among the Ngatimaniapoto.

"It is well," he said. "Waharoa¹ has need of his little finger. Therefore have we come to guide you to him."

"Alas!" I replied. "It is a thing to be regretted that at this time my business is urgent."

"True," he agreed phlegmatically, "since it must necessarily wait until the affair of the chief is disposed of."

We gazed at one another steadily, with the result—so far as I was concerned—that I recognised this was not a man to be trifled with. "I am, then, your prisoner," I said at last.

He made a movement of deprecation. "The pakeha will walk at liberty in our midst," he said. "No hand shall be laid upon him, nor any indignity offered him."

I looked round the group and weighed my chances in a rush for liberty. Every man was armed and plainly on the alert. Even if they hesitated to shoot me down, there

¹ This peculiar use of a great father's name when the son was intended was not unusual with the Maoris. Tamihana, the son of Waharoa, is here alluded to.

was little hope of evading such a number in a country all but unknown to me. Nevertheless, a rage of impatience, hard to control, possessed me. "If," said I, "the chief of the Ngatihaua can wait two days, I will give you my undertaking to visit him at that time."

"That cannot be either," replied the leader; "your coming is already looked for."

"Well, my friend," I said bluntly, "I am afraid I must refuse to come."

His eye shot a warning signal around his followers and again returned to me. "The wisdom of the pakeha is in many men's mouths," he said, "but here it is not evident. The command of the chief must be obeyed." He paused, expectant of my answer, and clearly ready for action in the event of a further refusal. To have offered it would have merely involved me in an undignified and futile struggle, and I submitted.

"Lead on then," I said bitterly, "and let us get through with this business as quickly as we may."

The leader of the party expressed his satisfaction in my decision, adding that it would be well also that I should deliver up any arms I might be carrying. I told him that I had none, and he accepted the assurance on the instant. At a word of instruction the party began to advance; five or six natives went on in front, the leader and myself followed, the remainder of the troop bringing up the rear. Through the bush we moved in single file, but beyond the way was more open, enabling my captor to range up alongside. Meantime my thoughts had been busy, and recognising the futility of a display of ill-temper, I resolved to make myself as agreeable as possible.

"You are of the Ngatihaua tribe, friend?" I began.

"Those with me are of the Ngatihaua," he agreed; "but I myself am of the tribe of the Ngatimaniapoto."

"Indeed!" I said, wondering, for I had no recollection

of his face. "Then I am surprised you should make prisoner one who may claim to be a member of your tribe by adoption."

Again he protested against the use of the word "prisoner." It was an ill word wherewith to designate my amiable acceptance of Wiremu Tamihana's invitation. "I have been much away from the district, Little Finger," he continued, "and yet you and I have met before."

"Where?" I asked, regarding him more closely.

"At the runanga of the religions. Remember you that occasion? Ah, but you were fleet of foot and agile as an eel! Few might have escaped from that ordeal. I have many swift runners with me to-day," he added as an afterthought.

"They will need their swiftness, friend," I said, unable to resist the opening he gave me, "if this quarrel is proceeded with."

He accepted the jest with undiminished good-humour. "The bayonet," he remarked candidly, "is a thing to be avoided by persons of sense. The gun is good. The loading, the taking aim—bang! One enemy the less. That is a thing that warms and pleases. But the bayonet—Ugh! That is not a weapon to be used by Christian peoples."

"Then what of your tomahawk, friend?" I asked, indicating the short-handled, workmanlike tool he carried in his belt.

"That," he said, "is good. Sometimes the gun fails, but one blow of the sharp axe will release the suffering spirit and speed it on its way to Te Reinga."

"One blow does not always content," I said. "I have heard that the men of Taranaki struck again and again, till it was difficult to distinguish one dead man from another."

"It may be so," said he; "for all men are brutal

with their first killing. Who was to say what would suffice for the slaying of a pakeha? It was a new thing and a madness."

His words so probably contained the true explanation of a fact which had aroused the horror and indignation of the whites that I was silent.

"You pakeha are strange beings," he commented. "There is but one Death, though he wear a hundred faces. Is it a more beautiful thing that a man should lie screaming with his entrails pierced by your bayonets than that his skull should be cleft asunder and his face disfigured in the quick death of a Maori axe?"

I kept him in conversation, hoping to discover a clue to the reason why Tamihana had taken such pains to intercept me; but, though his manner was friendly in the extreme and he talked freely of the possibilities of the war, he was too wary to drop a hint of the matter immediately in hand. The chief desired to see me. He was not a great distance away. He would be gratified by my ready acceptance of the invitation. I might be at liberty to-morrow or the next day or the day after. There was no hurry. All was well with the Thumb and Puhi-Huia and Roma; they remained quietly at Mata-kiki. He looked at me blankly when I inquired the whereabouts of my fellow-traveller. He had understood the pakeha was journeying alone. Possibly Hone had caught sight of the party and, fearing delay, had gone on by another trail. I was not deceived by his glib answers and soothing speech, but I saw that it was useless to question him, and that if any explanation were forthcoming it must be from Tamihana himself.

A tramp of about two hours brought us to the banks of the Waikato, where a large canoe, manned by a dozen stalwart natives, was in waiting to transport us across the stream. I judged that it was not one of the usual ferry

places from the fact that there were no habitations or cultivations in sight; indeed, in its mingling of swamp and bush it was as unlikely a place for a Maori settlement as could well be imagined. There were again no familiar faces among the warriors in the canoe, a fact which surprised me at the time but was afterwards explained by my captors' desire to avoid the possibility of some boyhood's friend and sympathiser providing me with a means of escape; but again there was nothing but good-humour and politeness in the treatment I received from this fresh contingent. The canoe made a slanting passage of the river, landing us some half-mile lower down on the opposite bank, and immediately returning by the way it had come. Some leafless willows fringed the bank, probably denoting the house of a settler, or at all events a Maori village, close at hand, and drawn up beneath them was a group of six horses, ready saddled and in charge of some ragged, bare-headed children.

Aporo's eye brightened at sight of them. "It is well," he said. "It shames me that the pakeha should have travelled so far on foot. Choose now, Koroiiti,¹ the horse that pleases you."

I made my selection, and, picking four men from his troop, he gave the rest their dismissal. Two riders were sent on in front, the leader and I followed, and the remaining two brought up the rear. I did not fail to note that before mounting every man renewed the priming of his gun—indeed, I had no doubt I was intended to observe the action.

Our route lay away from the river, a little to the south of westward, and it has remained a puzzle to me to this day why, in view of our destination, I was not taken down the almost straight reach of the Waikato in the canoe we had just quitted rather than the more tortuous channel

¹ Koroiiti = Little Finger.

of the Waipa, for which we were evidently heading. They could scarcely have hoped to confuse me in a country the topography of which I knew so well, and I can only suppose that the presence of a body of my own people on the major waterway instigated their choice of the other route.

Whether, being now in the neighbourhood of friends, Aporo suspected I might make a bolt for liberty, his manner now took on a sterner and more watchful air. Speech in the ranks of his followers was reprovèd with a curt word. He himself, save for an occasional low monosyllable in response to some remark of mine, maintained a dogged silence, and if I happened to raise my voice above the key he set me, he would look around with an expression of irritation and answer me not at all. His evident desire for silence gave me an idea, which I at once put into practice by speaking loudly and at length, and, disregarding his uneasiness and annoyance, I went on to call his attention to an ancient waiata¹ of the tribe, the staves of which I proceeded to drone out in a voice which I flatter myself could have been heard a mile away. He bore it awhile in silence, then laid his hand on my arm.

"Little Finger," he said, "a wise man is known by his silence, but only death can still the prattling of a fool."

"You are afraid to be overheard," I retorted; "but with me that is not a matter for fear. Here I am in the country of my friends."

"Sing, then, if it please you," he replied. "Yet you have more need to fear than to welcome the interference of your friends. The command of Te Waharoa is as the sky that covers all things, good and evil."

His reference to the chief by the dread name of his father was not without its influence upon me. Throughout my childhood, and until it was in a measure supplanted

¹ Waiata = song.

by the living figure of Te Huata, the great warrior had personified for me all that was most terrible in his race. Memories of a hundred ruthless deeds still lived in men's minds and found a voice round the charcoal fires, and among them were acts of treachery, such as the Matamata massacre, which, once heard, could never be forgotten. Very differently did the tongue of rumour speak of Wiremu Tamihana, yet the blood of the father flowed in the veins of the son and might yet pulse to a like purpose. There was no mistaking the meaning of my companion; attempted rescue would only result in instant death for me. Had help actually appeared, it is more than probable I should have thrown caution to the winds; but the woods were silent: scarcely a bird's note broke the afternoon stillness, and, resolutely closing my lips, I spoke no more till with the fall of night we came down on to the banks of the Waipa.

Towards the end of our journey we had turned aside from the wide horse-track or road we had pursued since leaving the Waikato into a narrow trail which could only be followed in single file. Two horsemen were again sent on in front, the captain of the troop fell in behind me; and so, with the nose of one horse at the heels of another, we pushed through the thick growth, bending beneath the overhanging boughs, which here and there scarcely sufficed for the passage of a horseman below them.

Arrived at the stream, the leader bade me dismount and accommodated me with a seat beside him on a fallen log, while the rest of the party gathered together what dry sticks they could find close at hand and lit a small fire on the water's edge. I had no doubt it was intended for a signal, and as I observed that our party was now reduced to five individuals, I concluded that one man had been sent on along the track we had quitted to make arrangements for the continuance of our journey. Hitherto

it had not occurred to me to doubt the truth of what I had been told, but now, as I reflected on the distance we had already travelled, I began to observe discrepancies in Aporo's story. It was impossible that the man I had seen on the banks of the Piako could have made and returned from such a journey in the short space of time at his disposal. Tamihana was evidently still some distance away, and it could therefore not be in accordance with any instructions from him that I had been waylaid and captured.

"How far have we to go now, friend?" I asked.

"About two hours," was his answer.

"The chief, then, is at Ngaruawahia. It would have been an act of courtesy if he had come some little way to meet me."

"Perhaps. But he has but this morning returned from the Lower Waikato."

I feigned to examine his back in the glow of the firelight. "Where are your wings, friend?" I asked, "that you are able to travel so far and so fast?"

He was only disconcerted for a moment, recovering himself with a laugh. "The order of the chief is not of yesterday," he explained; "we have been looking many days for the return of the Little Finger."

This—save for the unlikelihood of my returning by way of the Piako river—was plausible enough, but it did not convince me. I could not imagine myself of such importance that every way to Matakiki was patrolled with a view to my capture, and in the alternative I was forced to the conclusion that the scheme, whatever might be its object, had originated with Ihaka and was being prosecuted under his orders. I was, however, shortly to find that a brain more subtle and far more to be dreaded than Ihaka's was at the root of the matter.

Nearly an hour lapsed before the chunk of paddles

became audible above the crackling of the fire, and a large canoe emerged from the dark shadows up the river.

My companion sprang to his feet and, directing two of the party to return with the horses, he led me to a seat in the stern of the vessel. Once again I scanned the boat's crew for the sight of a familiar face; every man, so far as the flickering light enabled me to observe him, was a complete stranger, and doubtless selected for that very reason.

At a word of command from Aporo, the paddles dipped the water together, and in a few moments we were engulfed in the blackness of the night. On either hand of me sat a native, the knees of another touched my back, and I had but to put my hand forward a few inches to discover the presence of a fourth. Escape in these circumstances was next door to impossible, and, resigning myself to the inevitable, I slid down to the *kaiwae*¹ and, resting my head against a thwart, was soon fast asleep.

It seemed that but a few minutes had elapsed when a hand on my shoulder and a voice in my ear called me back to consciousness. The canoe had come to rest. Even in the darkness and with sleep benumbing my brain I recognised the meeting-place of the waters, the delta at the junction of the Waipa and Waikato rivers. My guess was a correct one. I had been brought to Ngaruawahia, the heart of the rebellious district and the capital of the Maori kingdom. A few men were gathered together on the shore in the bright flare of a torch; but for the rest village and villagers were lost in the darkness.

"Come, Little Finger," repeated the voice of Aporo. "A few steps will bring you to a more comfortable sleeping-place."

"There is time for sleep," I responded. "We will go first to the dwelling of the chief."

¹ *Kaiwae* = a floor of sticks lashed together.

"It is not possible to see the chief to-night," he replied.

"Why not?"

"It is a time of great trouble," said my captor, soothingly. "Tamihana has been called away and will not return till morning."

By this time we were ashore and had advanced to the midst of the group which had stood in silence awaiting our approach.

"What is it that you want of me?" I asked, gazing round upon them. "Let the men of Waikato and Ngatihaua disclose their business, that we may discuss it freely together."

They stood looking at one another in silence, as though each called upon another to answer me.

"It is a matter for the chief," said my captor at last. "Let the pakeha wait until the morning, and the business will be revealed to him. It is late, and he has travelled far; also for many hours he has eaten no food. Let these matters be first put right, then we may talk of other things."

The suggestion evidently met with the approval of the others, and, seeing it was useless to offer any further objection, I allowed myself to be conducted into the village. After proceeding about two hundred yards, the party paused in front of a building which appeared to be constructed in European fashion, partly of sawn timber and partly of stout slabs; the latter portion forming an addition against the house wall. There was a small aperture at one end, high up and unglazed, suggesting that the place might be used or intended for a stable.

Throwing open the door of the main building, the whole party trooped in. A candle was lit, disclosing to view an extremely dirty room, some twenty feet square, containing a few rough articles of furniture and a number of sleeping-places battened off on the floor along the walls and filled

with the bedding commonly in use among the natives, the tough, springy, climbing stems of *Lygodium articulatum*. Rugs of gay colours lay folded at the heads of the beds. In the centre of the room was a small table, on which, as though in readiness for the arrival of a guest, was spread a meal of potatoes, kumaras, and steaming fresh-water fish, flanked by a pale and heavy-looking loaf.

The food spread out on the bare and dirty table offered no temptation even after my daylong fast, and I was on the point of refusing my captor's invitation to partake of it, when the inadvisability of doing so occurred to me. I should be hungry presently, if not now, and why add physical craving to my mental anxiety? The whole party stood in silent attendance on my meal, following every morsel as it travelled to my lips with a vicarious satisfaction. But as soon as I pushed away my plate I was reminded that I was not a guest, but a prisoner.

Lifting the candle from the table, Aporo conducted me into the further room. The place showed signs of having been roughly cleansed, but the dry mud caked on the walls, and the absence of windows, save for the one small opening near the roof, gave it a dismal and depressing aspect. Little did I dream, as I looked distastefully around me, how familiar I was to become with every slab and crevice of that ill-smelling prison-house! However, there was a small iron bedstead in one corner, with a mattress and blankets upon it, which, in the expressed view of my captor, more than compensated for every other defect of the apartment. Cutting short his encomiums on this head, I wished him a curt good-night and watched him go forth and close the door behind him.

This door opened into the room I had just left, and being thrown wide against the wall, had escaped any special observation till the sound of heavy bars falling into place directed my attention to its size and strength. Lifting up

the candle he had deposited on the floor in the absence of any other convenient resting-place, I scrutinised my prison. The walls, as I have said, were of rough pine slabs, two to four inches in thickness and some nine or ten feet in height. They were sunk into the earth floor, as I afterwards discovered, to a depth of over a foot, and strongly nailed to stout cross-pieces at top, middle, and bottom. In each corner and at the middle of the outer side were roughly squared timbers, holding the building rigidly together. Lighter slabs formed the roof, concealing the outer covering from view. The window or opening to the air was close up under the roof, square in shape, and not more than nine inches in diameter. Having convinced myself that escape, for that night at least, was a matter of impossibility, I divested myself of a part of my clothing and, weary from exertion and trouble, was soon sound asleep.

I do not propose to make a long story of my captivity. Though it lasted for eight interminable months, it was diversified by few incidents, and these are soon related.

Despite Aporo's promises, it was not until ten days had elapsed that my protestations at length brought me into the presence of Tamihana. I was taken from my dungeon under strong guard to the house in which he was momentarily staying. It was a bare enough place for a "maker of kings," no doubt, but it was comfort itself as contrasted with mine. The room he occupied was floored with a cheap oilcloth and boasted a suite of furniture in the mahogany and horsehair of our grandfathers. A pedestal table of cedar occupied the centre of the room, and at this the son of Te Waharoa was seated, a large Bible open before him.

If you would know what this man—the best and greatest of his race—was like in appearance, conceive an Irish peasant tanned to a rich bronze, with shock black hair and heavy, nearly-meeting eyebrows, and he is before you.

There was nothing about him to suggest his savage ancestry. His face was without tattooing, his forehead high and well developed ; his brilliant dark eyes were full of kindness and intelligence. Only in the prominence of the cheek-bones and a slight distension of the nostrils did the Maori reveal itself.

As my guard ushered me into the room, he rose quickly to his feet and came forward with extended hand, greeting me by name in English.

I had proposed to myself not to reciprocate any courtesy he might show me until he had first explained his high-handed action in causing my arrest, but so compelling were the charm and sincerity of his manner that my resolution was forgotten, and I took his hand in a cordial grip.

"Is it the hand of a friend or an enemy, Tamihana ?" I asked.

"Alas !" he replied in Maori, "that you should have reason to ask. It is not my doing." Then, turning to my escort, he bade them leave the apartment.

"Sit down," he continued, when we were alone, "and let us speak openly to one another. To begin—if I were to say to you, Go now, whither would you go ?"

"Where, chief, but to my home and my tribe ?" I answered diplomatically.

"Your tribe is the English," he said after a moment. "Go, then ; the way is open."

"It is of the Ngatimaniapoto I spoke," I replied ; "my tribe by adoption. It is to Matakiki that I desire to go."

"You have heard of the Thumb, that he is no longer of the people of England ?"

"So I have been told, but it is a matter I would be convinced of from his own lips."

"And when you are convinced, what then ?"

A glimmer of light came to me, and I hesitated. "It is a matter for grave consideration, chief," I said at last.

"Speak truly, Tregarthen," he rejoined. "God has made all good things in pairs—the day and the night, the man and the woman, the friend and the enemy. Only He Himself can be both."

"I cannot fight against the men of my race, Tamihana," I replied. "It may be that my soul is not great enough; but so it is. Yet, on the other hand, I will not fight against the men of yours."

"He who is not with us is against us," he said, placing his hand on the Bible.

For a while I sat silent, a prey to anxious thought. The object sought by my arrest was now clear to me. They dreaded not my open enmity but the influence I might have on my foster-father in his espousal of their cause; that, given freedom, I should use every means in my power to deflect him from his purpose I knew quite well, and their action in taking me prisoner showed they were equally certain on the point.

"Do you mean," I asked at length, "that to gain my freedom I must either fight against the men of my race or give an undertaking not to see my foster-father?"

He lifted his brows in assent.

"It is a hard saying, Tamihana," I cried; "for either I must desert my people or my father. Can you find in those pages any passage that justifies the traitor?"

"The third way," he answered, "is to remain here until the war is ended. Why should the pakeha appeal to this book in his troubles? Does he even believe in it? It is good that the Maori should follow its teachings and become a Christian, submitting to all things; but it is good only for the pakeha when it pleases or advantages him. Your missionaries have told us that the Bible is no longer for the Jews, but for all mankind; yet when we speak to the Government the words of the Bible they smile at us or are silent. Was it not because we made a king of our own

people that the Government first became angry with us ? Then hear the words of the book: ' One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee ; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother.' Have the Government a Bible of their own, better than the Bible of the missionaries, that these words are of no account ? ”

“ It is to the New Testament you should look, Tamihana,” I answered, “ and not to the Old. There you will find little of kings, but much of peace and goodwill. Is it not possible even now to bring this trouble to an end by wise and temperate words in place of guns and tomahawks ? ”

The light of argument died from his eyes. “ It is too late,” he said. “ If I spoke such a word in the Parliament no man would listen. Mine would be a voice crying in the wilderness. The thirst for war is in the blood of the people. It is a passion that has no end but in fruition.”

Though he chose a different simile, his answer was identical in substance with that given me by the Governor. Brown man and white looked into the heart of the mischief and interpreted it alike. The road to peace ran through the iron gateway of war.

“ I must consider my answer, chief,” I said, rising ; “ for at present the two ways you offer me seem alike impossible.”

“ I would give you your freedom if I could,” he responded, and repeated that my capture was none of his doing.

“ Then if it be not yourself, Tamihana,” I said, “ where must I look for my enemy ? ”

“ Among the Ngatimaniapoto,” he said, after a moment of thoughtful hesitation. “ I will speak to him, that he also discuss the matter with you. Then make terms quickly ; for soon, if not already, all roads between here and Auckland will be closed against the white man.”

My guard had retired no farther than the passage, and

when I had bidden farewell to Tamihana they again surrounded me and conducted me back to my prison.

The time came when I fell into a state of listlessness, taking no heed of the passing days ; but at first a rage of impatience possessed me. Hour after hour I paced the squalid room, despair and fury alternating in my heart. No harm or indignity was offered me, and of food, such as it was, I had plenty ; but the guard over me never relaxed. All day long men came and went in the outer room, now in grave conversation, now relaxing in boisterous mirth. Even when long-continued silence seemed to denote the place was deserted, I had but to make an unusual sound to rouse an answering stir without. From the night of my coming I had seen no more of Aporo. Probably he was far to the front, watching the advance of the British arms into the historic basin of the Waikato, laying more deadly ambushes than that wherewith he had trapped me.

My chief gaoler was a big, imbecile fellow, who seemed capable of understanding only two things, that I must be fed at regular intervals, and that I must not be allowed to escape from my prison. On every appearance he carefully scrutinised the cell with his wild, blank eyes, searching floor and walls and roof for any sign that they had been interfered with since his last visit. Often I have awakened in the night with the glimmer of his candle in my eyes, or heard, as through a crevice in sleep, the falling-to of the bar without that terminated such an inspection. He never entered the room save when there were others outside to hinder any effort at escape. Mad or sane, no poor prisoner was ever cursed with a more efficient gaoler. Many a time during the first few weeks did I gaze into his vapid countenance with murder in my heart. Now and then, especially when his eyes were turned elsewhere, he looked more like a great overgrown schoolboy than a man, and on such occasions there came over me an ill-defined

notion that at some time in the past I had encountered him before. He seemed incapable of replying to a question or even understanding it, and, after one or two efforts to trace home my obscure recollection by gleaning such particulars as his name and place of abode, I let him alone.

The first month of my confinement was nearly at an end when one morning he came hurriedly into my cell, mowing out some scarcely intelligible words, which I took to denote the arrival of a visitor. The ordinary wildness of his manner was greatly accentuated, and as he stood muttering and gibbering in the doorway, looking alternately towards me and back over his shoulder, I was impressed with the feeling that the whole of the creature's mind was one ghastly terror. Speculating on the cause, I turned my eyes to the room without, in time to see the outer doorway darkened by a black shadow. Little as I could see of the man entering, it was sufficient to establish his identity, and in a flash I knew also my gaoler. The intervening years passed as an obscuring vapour. Once again I stood with my boyish companion in the gateway of the pa; once again I heard his cry of derision, "Here comes Hoppy with the bird's claw." No derision was in the heart of the poor wretch now; only an abject and unspeakable terror.

"Go!" said the tohunga, curtly; and in an instant we were alone, the door closed and barred upon us.

Te Atua Mangu moved with his eyes bent on the floor and seated himself on the edge of the bed. I had seen him often since the day of the runanga of the religions, but never thus near at hand; nor in the whole of my life had I exchanged a dozen words with the bogey of my childhood. He looked slowly round the room, taking in floor, walls, and roof; then, with a motion of his hand, silently invited me to a seat beside him.

"Welcome, Black One," I said, setting my shoulders

against the wall ; " friend or enemy, you are better than solitude."

" Why does the pakeha remain here ? " he asked in a low, even voice. " Here are no comforts, such as the white man loves."

" True, O priest," I answered with a short laugh. " Perhaps, then, it is after all the solitude of which I am enamoured. Set wide the door, that the matter may be made clear."

" Presently," he said calmly. " Let us talk. Tamihana has told me that you desire to return to Matakiki. It is a good thing that the bee go back to the hive to which it belongs, and not to that of the stranger. Where, then, is your hive ? "

" Is not the home of the bee the place where it has lived and laboured ? "

" Good. There is trouble in that hive. The bees are angry. They have sharpened their stings against an enemy that would despoil them. Go, then. Make ready your weapon, that you also may defend the hive that nurtured you."

" My heart is not in this quarrel, Black Spirit," I answered. " I can neither fight with you nor against you."

" Then why do you seek to return to Matakiki ? "

" That is easily answered—I would be with my people in their trouble."

" When trouble comes to the hive the drones are driven forth. They have mouths, but no stings. You are answered."

I find myself wondering if a man's moral sense becomes laxer as he grows older, or is it merely that he is more tolerant of weakness in others ? It seems marvellous that I did not attempt to deceive him with lying promises, yet to the best of my belief no such thought found a moment's harbourage in my mind. Nevertheless, so possessed was

I with my single idea that even liberty itself seemed worthless if it could not help me to the side of those I loved.

He rose to his feet and took a lingering step towards the door, then, as though arrested by a fresh thought, returned to his seat. "That talk is finished," he said. "There is another matter. The mind of the Thumb is troubled. He looks two ways, and he who looks two ways stumbles. It will be good, therefore, that you send a message to him, that his heart may be free from care concerning you."

I saw what I conceived to be my opportunity, and grasped at it. "If an account of my present condition will relieve his mind, Black One," I answered, searching in my pocket for paper and pencil, "he shall have it."

"Good," he responded stolidly. "Write these words: 'I go to the city of the pakeha until this trouble is over. Proceed with the thing you are doing; it is a good thing. With myself all is well. Enough for this time.'"

I laughed and closed my pocket-book with a fierce snap. "What terms do you offer me for doing this, Black One?" I asked.

For the first time his shifty, red-litten black eyes looked steadily into mine. "Your life, pakeha," he answered.

For a moment I was staggered and at a loss. Ruthless as I believed him, it seemed incredible that he should proceed to such an extremity in cold blood. Yet, as his sinister eyes continued to gaze into mine, revealing not only an unshakable purpose but even, as I seemed to read, a gloating desire, all illusion as to my value in the eyes of the natives fell from my mind, and I recognised the imminent peril in which I stood.

"Has the Maori so many friends among the white people that he can afford to destroy even one of them?" I asked.

"Write," he replied. "Many of your race have fallen

in the Waikato. The war-parties pause not to ask if they be friend or foe, enough that they are white."

Slowly and with an appearance of reluctance I opened the book and began to write as he had directed me. I had little hope of deceiving one so astute, and yet it was at least worth the trial. The words he had given me I wrote in English, adding immediately beneath in German—"This is written under compulsion. I am a prisoner at the meeting-place of the waters." I dared not write "Ngaruawahia," for that word would certainly be recognised among its unknown companions, and I chose English rather than Maori in the hope that the tohunga, having but a slight knowledge of the former language, would be unable to distinguish between it and the German that followed. No doubt his first act would be to submit the note to an interpreter, but as the first part was almost in his own words, there was just the possibility that the interpreter, having translated this, would be ashamed to display his ignorance of the few words remaining, and either give to them some innocent meaning from his imagination or ignore them altogether.

He took the leaf I tore from the book and folded it in his hand without looking at it. "It is well," he said. "The talk is ended." And, rising to his feet, he limped to the door and gave it an imperative rap with his knuckles.

"How long am I to remain here, Black One?" I asked, as the bar fell and the face of my janitor appeared in the doorway.

"Wait," he said. "Presently I will send a party to guard you to the lines of the pakeha. There are many on the war-path, and alone you could not escape them." With that the door closed behind him and I was left to the solitude of my prison.

For a fortnight or more following this I was in daily expectation of release, or at the least a message from my

father, but days and weeks passed and nothing happened. Long afterwards, when my foster-father's papers came into my possession, I found the note I had sent him. The message in German at the foot had been neatly cut away, showing that in the prosecution of his business Te Atua Mangu had taken no risks. As for the party that was to transport me through the war country, it never appeared, and in all probability was never intended to do so.

Convinced at length that my release must depend entirely on myself, I began to devise and practise schemes for escaping. One after the other they resulted in failure. The only one I shall mention—perhaps it came the nearest to success—was an attempt to burrow out beneath the wall. I had no idea what a prodigious quantity of soil is packed into a few cubic feet of ground until I attempted to store the product of my exertions beneath the bed. Then, though the hole widened with painful slowness, the mound of soil grew with such alarming rapidity that I was at my wits' end to know what to do with it. By letting my blankets hang to the floor I managed for two days to hide the effect of my labours, but thereafter concealment became next door to an impossibility, and it was almost a relief to me when my janitor, detecting some crumbs of brown earth on the black floor, pulled aside my bed and disclosed my handiwork to the admiring garrison. I have read of ingenious prisoners who have broken through stone walls with no better implements than wire nails ; all I can say is that they deserved their freedom. For me, it was but a wooden shell that held me, and yet I could by no means get out of it.

These attempts were all in the first three or four months of my captivity, for afterwards, what with the confinement, the semi-darkness, the relaxing of my muscles, and, no doubt, the shrinkage of my brain, I fell into a state of lassitude and melancholy from which I could only rouse

myself to an impotent fury. Books or papers were not to be had, and my one relief from self-absorption was in listening to the conversations in the room without. The parties using the house seemed to come and go, for I seldom heard their voices for longer than a week at a time, and always their talk was of the war ; of battles and ambushes, of wounds and death. At first laughter and boasting prevailed. I heard of the small fish that fell here and there to the nets of the scattered taua—the unarmed settler and his boys tomahawked at daybreak in their fields ; the farmhouse burning redly at dusk ; milch cows driven off along the sloppy forest trails ; and the feasts of good beef which closed the dreadful days.

But as the months went by and winter gave place to spring, jest and boast failed, and doubt took possession of the minds of the warriors. The young men still made the house ring with their war-songs, still looked forward to a day of victory, but it was not so with men of mature years. Many white men had been slain, settlers and soldiers, yet there was no relaxing in their advance. It seemed that for the white man there was but one road—forward. When the Maori suffered reverse he fell back ; so much ground was lost. Not so with the pakeha. If he were checked, he lay still, enigmatically silent and motionless. Weeks went by, many weeks, and still his place was as a cemetery of the dead ; then of a sudden, behold, he was alive again. On he came, cannon and men, driving all before him, and at night he was established in new country. To waylay and slaughter him was satisfactory only for the moment. To-day his dead might be counted, but it was a hard thing to number his living on the morrow. There was nothing easier than to elude him for the time being, or more difficult than to turn him aside from his chosen path.

There was scarcely an incident of the war that did not reach my ears. . Skirmishes far and wide were graphically

described by participants in them. I learned of the division of councils that followed each reverse. Arguments for and against the fortifying of certain points were debated night after night. I do not think that any of the leaders ever entered the building, but no doubt what I heard was an echo of their disputes. A slow paralysis was creeping over the Maori arms. I heard of the battle of Koheroa, the evacuation of Meremere, the retreat on Rangiriri with the subsequent engagement at that place, the abandonment of the long-debated idea of fortifying Taupiri.

Then one night I was awakened by the sound of bustle in the village. Lying still in the darkness, I could hear the confused sound of voices, men's and women's, all tuned to a note of excitement. Horses were stamping the ground in the neighbourhood of the hut, and now and again I caught the sound of hoofs galloping away in the distance. In the room without a low-toned argument was in progress. I could distinguish the voices of three or four men, each adding his quota to the debate, while occasionally others—apparently pausing in the open doorway—would cry out to them to make haste.

My heart began to beat till, in the weakened state of my body, I could fancy the room trembling with the throb of it. Was it death that was coming, or freedom? I cared not which, so that the living death of my six months of captivity might come to an end. Thrusting my limbs out of bed, I hastily drew on my clothes and sat, sick and trembling, awaiting the *dénouement*. There came at last into the voices a sharp, louder note of finality, and a moment later the bar of my prison fell to the ground, the door opened, and my janitor, accompanied by several natives, appeared in the entrance.

"You must come with us on a journey, Little Finger," said one of them—a sallow, consumptive-looking man with fierce eyes; "this place is no longer safe for you."

He gave a signal to the others and, ere I had time to guess their intention, they had seized and bound my arms together behind my back. I made no resistance, for my mind was consumed by desire to leave the house on any terms. The end of the rope which secured me was passed to my janitor, and we trooped out into the open. The earth was bright with moonlight. Ah, that first breath of fresh, early-summer night air ! So abject is the dependence of the mind on the body that as I drew its invigorating balm into my lungs it seemed that the rapture of it was worth the cost. And to experience it I had endured six months of semi-darkness, amid filth and evil odours I have not attempted to describe, without once going into the open air.

They led me to the brink of the river, where I was bidden to sit down in charge of my gaoler while the party dispersed, presumably to get together such goods as they proposed to carry with them. My mind, awakened from its long torpor, noted every detail of the scene with interest. Close at hand a large canoe lay nose on to the bank. From the prostrate position of many of its occupants, and the low wailing of the women who came and went about it, I concluded it contained either the dead or the wounded, possibly both. This canoe, no doubt, had been the bearer of the ill-tidings which had roused the village.

At first, seated apart, we attracted no attention from the busy crowd, but presently one individual wandered up, and then, as the news of the captured pakeha spread, another and another, till a score or more had satisfied their curiosity by a sight of me. Some regarded me in silence ; others threw me a taunt, a jest ; and a few a word of compassion. Some—and these were all women—launched at me abuse and threats of violence, and, but for the interference of my gaoler, one or two of them would possibly have proceeded to greater lengths.

The idiot was plainly anxious about something, muttering disconnectedly, and continually turning to look behind him in the direction of the whares. I took his disquietude to be on my account, until, with an exclamation, as one might cry, "Eureka!" he seized the free end of the rope and knotted it round my ankles until the cord cut to the bone; then, springing to his feet, he ran swiftly towards the village. There was something very horrible in the creature's entire disregard of the suffering he inflicted; I might have been a bale of wood for all the ruth he displayed in trussing me. For a few moments the pain was excruciating; then followed a sensation of numbness and a feeling that my feet were swelling to bursting-point.

By this time the owners of the canoe had apparently satisfied their curiosity concerning me. Three or four minutes elapsed before any one again came near. At length I noticed a solitary woman emerge from the shadows immediately below me. For a while she stood looking about her, then, with a studious appearance of aimlessness, came step by step towards me. My blood chilled as I watched her; the rush of a savage with brandished weapon would have been less blood-curdling than the stealthy, watchful advance of this woman. At last she stood in front of me. So far as I could see, her hands were empty, yet I had no doubt but in a few instants cold steel would be plunged into my bosom.

"Alas, Little Finger!" said a soft, compassionate voice.

She turned her face to the moonlight, and with a wave of joy I recognised her. "Pepepe!" I cried, and verily I believe, had I been free to move, I should have caught her in my arms, so great was my delight in the sight of a friendly and familiar face.

"Alas, Little Finger!" she repeated, crouching down beside me. "Who is it that has done this evil to you?"

"I know not, Butterfly," I answered, "unless it be at the bidding of the black tohunga. For many months have I lain a prisoner in the village, and no friend has come near me. But now hasten to Ruka and speak to him, that he may take me under his protection before my jailer returns."

She buried her face in her knees, and there was no need for the words in which she told me that her husband lay among the shrouded shapes in the canoe.

"And there is no friend among the others?" I asked, after I had condoled with her in her misery.

"They are Waikato and Ngatihaua," she replied. "The flower of the tribes has fallen, and it is but a remnant that flees into the country of the Ngatimaniapoto."

"Then find a knife to sever these cords," said I, "and I will shift for myself."

She rose to her feet and, darting down to the water's edge, went rapidly along the bank until I lost sight of her among the folk round the canoe. A minute later she appeared again in a bright patch of moonlight betwixt the black shadows, coming fleetly back on her errand of mercy. As she turned directly towards me I glanced over my shoulder, and there was the idiot coming at a wild gambol down the hill. Yet she was the nearer, and fell panting beside me while my custodian was yet some twenty yards distant.

"It is too late, Little Finger," she breathed. "If I free you, you will be taken again on the instant. But have no fear; if not at this time, then some other."

"Quick, Pepepe," I cried, "put your knife to my breast as if you would strike me."

The clever girl caught my meaning on the word and, changing her aspect of compassion to one of hate, she brandished the knife above my heart. I had only time to give voice in a yell for help before the idiot was upon

us. Striking the girl in the breast, he sent her rolling down the bank; then, paying no further attention to either of us, he seated himself on the ground and poured from a broken gourd he carried in his hand a collection of shells, pebbles, and miscellaneous rubbish, the acute recollection of which had no doubt led him temporarily to desert his post.

Ever since I had learned the creature's identity my emotions had been in a state of fluctuation over him. Loathing and compassion daily overthrew each other. Now I could have strangled him with as little compunction as I could find for a wild beast; again he was so clearly an object of pity that my other mood brought shame in the recollection. Murderous fury, all the more fierce for its helplessness, was in my heart as I watched the poor girl creep away, her hands to her breast, and turned to see the creature fondling and gloating over his treasures. No doubt I but brought myself nearer to his own level when with a swing of my feet I sent his collection of trumpery flying in all directions, but I know that for the moment the act filled me with a glowing satisfaction. For a long instant he turned on me the wild glare of some savage beast despoiled of its young, but even as his great hands came out towards me I read in his eyes the displacing of fury by terror. Muttering thickly, he set his fingers to the knots at my feet, and released them from their bonds. Clearly he was bound by a will not his own, and that will, while it demanded that I should remain a captive, insisted that my life should be preserved.

After an hour's delay the great canoe, with its freight of dead and wounded, got under weigh, and a quarter of an hour later I was conducted to a seat in a second canoe, already loaded with fugitives and their belongings, and we set off in the wake of the first. By this time the moon was declining, and the heavy shadows cast by foliage on

the river banks rendered the distinguishing of faces difficult. I knew that there were women in the canoe by the sound of their voices, and presently I discovered, by the feel of her skirt against my bound hands, that there was one on the seat immediately behind me. She was very still and silent, and I guessed, as was the case with many of the other occupants of the canoe, that she was asleep.

My custodian himself showed signs of sleepiness; every now and then his chin would fall forward on his breast, recovering itself with greater difficulty as time went by. However, he had taken the precaution of passing the end of the rope that bound me round his own body, so that I was not likely to reap any advantage from his lack of attention. The thwart was only wide enough for the two of us. Three-quarters of an hour went by, and I was myself slipping into a semi-comatose condition, when I was suddenly startled into complete wakefulness by the pressure of hands against mine. They were a woman's hands, soft and small; and in a flash I knew that Pepepe had not deserted me.

A warm breath tickled my ear: "You must swim, Little Finger."

I pressed the hands that held mine.

"Soon," breathed the voice again.

The night had grown very dark. Beside me the idiot muttered in his dreadful sleep. The swish of the paddles alone broke the silence save when at intervals the cry of the look-out in the bow carried a message to the paddlers. The few minutes of waiting seemed to spread themselves out into hours before at length Pepepe's hands again pressed mine, giving me the signal to be ready. A moment later the cords fell lightly from my wrists and my numbed arms dropped apart. A dread fear that I should be unable to use them was dispelled as the tingling blood,

regaining its channels, revived the starved muscles. For nearly a minute I sat quite still, till every vestige of cramp had been smoothed away; then, leaning sideways as though in sleep, I slipped over the side, and, diving beneath the canoe, struck out beneath the water for the further bank of the river.

CHAPTER XXIII

I REACH THE END OF MY CAPTIVITY

I soon found that Pepepe had chosen the spot for my attempt with judgment born of knowledge. At the point where I entered the water the strong current of the river, instead of sweeping with full force down its channel, ran at a wide angle from one bank to the other. Apart from my own efforts, it bore me in a few seconds out of sight of the canoe; and when at length I raised my head from the water, even the voices of its occupants, excitedly discussing my escape, sounded far away. No doubt their first impression was that I had overbalanced in my sleep, but the discovery of the severed cord must have quickly caused them to change their minds. I had no fears for Pepepe. What she had the wit to accomplish she would doubtless also find the wit to conceal, and, in any case, her action, if discovered, would rouse only admiration in the chivalrous and romantic minds of her countrymen.

After listening awhile to the hubbub, I again turned my face towards the shore, and despite the fact that I was encumbered with the weight of my clothes and my boots, I accomplished the distance in safety and threw myself, exhausted but happy, on the dry ground. A few minutes sufficed for recovery from my exertions, and, rising to my feet, I blundered upwards through the thick scrub until the darkness of the forest received me. Further travel was impossible till daylight, and, groping with hands

and feet, I accepted the first spot that seemed to offer a measure of comfort for the night. There, in my wet clothes, at the mercy of a swarm of mosquitoes, I slept the sleep of the blessed.

I awakened with the sound of birds' notes in my ears. Parson birds, high in the tree-tops, were welcoming the golden light of the sun. With rapture I gazed around me at the familiar bush scenery. A cluster of tree-ferns had sheltered me; their spent fronds formed my couch. Close at hand a hidden stream tinkled merrily on its way to the great river. Here and there a gleam of sunlight turned the greens to gold. My heart singing as a bird, I raised my cramped limbs from the ground and wandered away in search of the creek. A slender, pulsing thread led from pool to pool, losing itself momentarily in a rich growth of ferns.

I was in my own country at last, but where exactly remained to be discovered. We had travelled far enough up the Waikato to bring me, as I judged, within a score of miles of Matakiki. My route lay towards the east, but whether south or north of it was the point to be decided. Refreshing myself with a drink of water, I began to search about for a track which would lead me to higher ground. At first everything I found in the way of a trail ran more or less circuitously back to the river, and if I sought to retrace my steps and pursue it in the other direction, it died away in impenetrable thickets. There was, however, a well-defined track along the bank of the river itself, now running close to the water, now winding a short distance away from it, where some natural obstacle intervened, but always eventually returning to the waterside; and, after many futile efforts to break directly away, I decided to follow it in the hope that it would prove more propitious farther along.

I had little expectation that I should be allowed to reach

my destination without an effort being made to recapture me. If the others were indifferent, there was always the idiot to be reckoned with, and in such a juncture, and inspired to activity by his terror of Te Atua Mangu, he was perhaps more to be dreaded than a whole-witted man. With this thought in my mind, I was careful before crossing any open part of the trail to scan the water for signs of life. So far as I observed, the river was everywhere deserted, and it spoke volumes for the effect of the war upon the natives that not a single canoe laden with produce of field and orchard was visible that fair morning on its placid surface.

At length I came in sight of a spot I knew, though I had never before approached it from the same direction, and at once my topographical difficulties were solved. It was the landing-place at the end of an ancient way connecting the Waipa and Waikato rivers. A considerable native settlement existed at this point, and during the last half-dozen years several white men had commenced to carve out for themselves homes in the neighbourhood. Much traffic had brought about a clearing and widening of the track, so that now it had assumed the proportions rather of a road than a trail. Moreover, it led through the very centre of the cultivated district, the great granary I have spoken of in an early part of my story, from which the rebellious tribes now drew their supplies.

The sight of the village and the consequent illumination as to my whereabouts brought me to a standstill. For the first time it occurred to me to doubt whether I could anywhere be in a friendly country outside the British lines. My own feelings of affection for the friends and playmates of my youth had suffered no diminution from the treatment I had received from their fellow-countrymen ; but could I be sure that this was also true of them ? Was it not more likely that the tribe, embittered by its reverses, was no

longer disposed to discriminate between one white man and another? Should I put the matter to the test by marching openly into the village? The longer I hesitated and reflected the more difficult the problem became.

Gazing from the shadow of the trees, I was presently struck by the complete stillness of the scene. Nowhere could I detect a sign of life or movement. The house doors were shut and no smoke went up from the spot where I recollected having seen the cooking fires in bygone times. Following the discovery of the desertion of the village came the reason why it should be so. Having broken down the resistance of the Waikatos, what would be General Cameron's next objective but the possession of the fertile soil and teeming storehouses which had so long sustained his enemies in the field? Hither, then, he presumably was, or shortly would be, marching, and either the villagers, in anticipation of his coming, had fled far off into the fastnesses of the ranges, or somewhere, possibly not far away, they were preparing to resist him.

By this time the delicious air—at first a feast in itself—had given me an appetite for more solid viands, and, thinking that I might possibly find something eatable left behind by the villagers, I stepped out of my covert with the intention of making a search. Scarcely had I done so ere I was aware of a solitary figure moving among the huts. One glimpse sufficed to disclose his identity, and in an instant I was back under cover. The idiot—for it was he—carried a tomahawk in one hand and a coil of rope in the other. As usual he was bareheaded, his long, tangled hair falling almost to his shoulders, and adding not a little to the wildness of his appearance. His movements showed that he was searching the empty whares, and I could not doubt but that I myself was the object of his search. Fortunately he had been too deeply engrossed by the numerous hiding-places provided by the village to look

afield ; otherwise, as he was scarce fifty yards distant when I first perceived him, he could hardly have failed to detect me.

Of an ordinary sane individual I can safely say I would have stood in no fear whatever ; but the mystery in which the creature's imbecility enveloped him, so that his actions and moods were not to be foreseen or calculated upon in any terms of human experience, added greatly to the dread which his apparently superhuman strength and agility, combined with a cold-blooded indifference to the infliction of pain, were calculated to arouse in the mind. At one moment he was standing still in the attitude of one who listened attentively, at another he was darting swiftly round a building or peering through a partly opened doorway, or crawling between the piles of a storehouse. There was a horrible fascination in the thought that he was hunting me as a dog hunts a rat, so that for many minutes I could not take my eyes or my mind from him.

Yet what to do now I could not determine. By a detour through the bush I might gain the track beyond the village, but once upon it, with the open country on every hand, I should have little chance of escaping him should he decide to proceed in that direction, and his presence in the village seemed to indicate that he had a knowledge of my probable destination. On the whole it seemed wiser to wait his departure and follow in his footsteps than to endeavour to outstrip him on the road. My mind made up on this point, I retired further into the thickets, burrowing my way through the dense growth until at length I came in sight of the road. A clump of bracken gave me the shelter I sought, and here I lay, my eyes on the trail, the hot sun beating down on my covert, until drowsiness supervened. My hunter was a long while making his appearance. Was his search of the buildings not yet completed, or had he gone off in some other direction ?

Despite my efforts at wakefulness, I had lapsed more than once into a doze before at last I caught sight of him, not half-a-dozen yards away, standing motionless on the edge of the road. His back was towards me when I first saw him, but presently he turned and gazed directly into the thicket where I lay concealed. For an instant I made certain that I was discovered ; his wild eyes seemed to look straight into mine, and I was in momentary expectation that he would leap upon me ; but even as I braced myself for his coming, he turned his head and, looking towards the east, ran off at full speed along the road. With a deep breath of relief I lifted my head from the brake and watched him till the winding trail concealed him from view. Then, quitting my retreat, I set off in his wake.

For the remainder of the journey I saw no more of him. Now and then I caught sight of a few natives—mostly women—among the cultivations, and once a party of horsemen crossed the trail, riding northwards ; but I had no difficulty in avoiding their notice, and late in the afternoon, having had nothing to eat but a handful of green corn plucked by the wayside, I reached the Waipa river, within a mile of my destination.

The rest of the journey lay along the river bank, through bush with every tree of which I was familiar ; yet I judged that it was here, if anywhere, I should again encounter the idiot. Having satisfied himself—as he might easily do—that I had not already reached the house, what more likely than that he would return thus far to wait my arrival ? Full of this idea, I advanced with the utmost circumspection, now on the track itself, now, when the nature of the growth permitted, making a fresh path for myself and pausing every few yards to listen for any sound that might indicate his presence. But a deep quiet held the woods ; even the whirr and tick-tack of the cicada, a sound which had filled my ears throughout the day, was

not to be heard here. If there were any birds in the trees, they uttered no note, and only at long intervals the foliage high overhead stirred softly with a sound as of a sigh.

Now at length, as I was on the point of realising the desire which for so many long months had occupied my mind almost to the exclusion of every other thought and wish—the desire for home—a great depression fell on me. Nothing I had overheard or elicited in response to question threw any light on my foster-father's movements. Of what part he had taken in the war I had no idea. I knew not even if he were alive or dead. And the same was true also of Puhi-Huia. Was it likely that during all these months they had remained quietly at Matakiki and that I should find them there now, as though nothing had occurred in the meantime to disturb the equanimity of their lives?

These two currents of thought—one of fear that on the eve of achievement my journey might be arrested, the other that it was probably, in any case, of no avail—ran side by side in my mind as I traversed the remaining distance, and from a place of concealment peered out across the river at the familiar scene. One glance sufficed to lift my spirits from despondency to exultation. The house was still inhabited. Door and windows stood wide as I had always pictured them, and though no smoke came from the chimney, there was nothing in that circumstance to inspire doubt. The store, indeed, was closed and padlocked, and I could see no sign of movement in the village or among the dishevelled huts that crowned the pa; nor was sight or sound of life noticeable anywhere during the few minutes I spent in surveying the scene.

Yet these facts aroused no suspicion. I had expected trade to be at a standstill, both from a depletion of goods on the one side and of money or produce on the other. As for the absence of movement in the village, it was not an unusual thing at that hour of a summer's day, ere the

land breeze gave place to cooling airs from the ocean. And even if I had been inclined to doubt, the lounge chair in the veranda, with something which I took to be a book in the seat, spoke so clearly of Puhi-Huia that my suspicions must have been dispelled.

One circumstance and only one gave me a moment's surprise. The little canoe which was used to ferry passengers across the river lay on my side of the water. It was knotted to a broken sapling, and, with its paddle in it, had such an air of appropriation to my needs that it was impossible to escape the suggestion of design in its presence. However, the thought was too fleeting to make much impression on my mind, and, satisfied that the idiot, even if he were lurking in the vicinity, could not prevent my reaching the house, I slipped down the bank into the canoe and, paddling across the river, ran up through the orchard.

The door, as I have said, was open, but so also were the glass windows of the sitting-room, and it was towards these I made my way, passing the lounge chair as I did so. It was not a book but a bunch of flowers that lay on the seat, and, though I took but one glance at it, it sufficed to tell me that Puhi-Huia was not in the house, for the flowers were dried and withered. Giving myself no time for reflection on this circumstance, I stepped from the sunlight into the semi-darkness and gazed about me.

For a moment my eyes saw only the familiar room with its chairs and tables and its book-lined walls; then a pair of glittering objects in an obscure corner attracted me, and gradually the eyes and face of Te Atua Mangu resolved themselves from the gloom. He was squatting on a rug on the floor. In his hands was a gun, which needed but the slightest deflection to be pointing directly at me. Scarcely had I perceived these details when I was aware of a shadow behind me, and, turning quickly, saw the idiot with his tomahawk and coil of rope standing in the window

A trap had been set for me and, simpleton as I was, I had walked straight into it. For a while not a word was spoken ; the pair fixed their eyes on me from opposite directions, and waited ; while, for my part, racked by disappointment and rage, I needed all my strength to control the mad passions that urged me towards violence and certain death.

"Tene koe, pakeha,"¹ said the voice of the wizard at length. "You have put yourself to much trouble to visit me. Now what is your wish ?"

"Where is the Thumb ?" I asked, swallowing my rage.

"I know not," he replied indifferently. "Perhaps he is at the pa of the Great One. Why does the pakeha inquire concerning his enemies ?"

"Your words are false, Black One," I answered. "There is no enmity between me and my foster-father, nor between me and the Ngatimaniapoto. You alone are my enemy. Moreover, if you are responsible for the continuance of the war, then I say that you are also an enemy of the tribe. The Waikatos are broken, and many brave men of the Ngatimaniapoto sleep far from their ancient burial-grounds. It is no well-wisher of the Maori people who would encourage them to further resistance. Make peace with the white men before your territories are invaded, or they will pass from you. The pakeha will listen ; he is merciful. He is sick of a war which brings him no glory, but is but as a mustering of sheep."

"You speak well for your race, white man," replied the tohunga with a cold smile, "but General Cameron shall find that he musters not sheep but wolves in the country of the Ngatimaniapoto. As for your other saying, I answer that the peace of the white man is more to be dreaded than his war. What will it advantage us that his soldiers retire ? While they are here we are at least free from the rats who devour our substance and whose gnawings have thrown

¹ "Greeting, white man,"

the pillars of the Maori house askew. Will they not advance again as the soldier withdraws, and overrun us as they did in the past? Enough. Now listen, Little Finger. You are troublesome, and I am tired of you. Make then your choice from two things quickly—either to seek the war-parties of General Cameron or to die here and now.”

As he ceased speaking, he shifted the muzzle of his gun, so that it pointed directly at my breast. If I had followed the deepest desire of my heart I should have thrown myself upon him and thus, no doubt, chosen the latter of his alternatives, but there was still in my brain a group of cells that retained their sanity and, in the end, directed my submission. They told me that escape was next door to impossible; that even if I succeeded in reaching my father I could now do no good; that I might easily be of more service to the cause of the natives inside the British lines than out of them; and finally they threw me the *douceur* that if I was bent on taking vengeance on the person of the tohunga I might find a more favourable opportunity and could not easily discover a worse.

“I will go to the British lines,” I said.

“Good,” he responded, rising. “Then our talk is at an end. This man shall be your guide. Go with him. He is an idiot, yet beware how you attempt to deceive him. He lives but to do my will. You will go, not by the water, but by unfrequented ways through the forest. See that your bones be not left to moulder on the trail.”

My destined companion stood, his eyes fixed on his master's face, drinking in his words. I did not doubt that though my own speech found and left his mind a blank, he understood every syllable that was uttered by the wizard.

“Do I go free or a prisoner?” I asked.

“What matter,” he replied. “You are free to go to

the camp of the English; the moment you turn aside from that path he will kill you; therefore it matters not to bind you. Go now, both of you."

I took a last look round the room. Usually books cumbered every convenient resting-place, but there was a tidiness about the place now which spoke of an ordered and deliberate departure. The dust on the furniture might have been the accumulation of a week or many weeks. No sacrilegious hands had been at work on the property of the white chief of the Ngatimaniapoto. Evidently the house had been opened merely to trap me, and would be closed again immediately on my departure.

With the consent of the tohunga, I went—the idiot in attendance—to my own room, where I collected together the clothes of which I stood so badly in need. I changed my apparel on the river bank, after a bathe in the water, during which I disported myself under the muzzle of the priest's gun. Even outside the house the tapu which clothes the property of a high chief had preserved garden and orchard undespoiled. Puhi-Huia's flower-beds were a blaze of midsummer splendour, and beneath the trees peach and nectarine lay rotting on the ground. There was nothing else ready to eat in the place, though I secured a portion of a bag of flour and some tea and sugar from Roma's stores to help us along the road. These, together with a billy, I gave into the charge of the idiot, and, picking the withered nosegay from the seat as a memento of my foster-sister, I followed him down to the boat.

The priest had told me that food would be available at our first halting-place, but beyond that point we would have to forage for ourselves. Accordingly, at about seven o'clock in the evening we came on an opening in the bush where we found a solitary couple, man and woman, engaged in preparing us a meal. They were an ancient and morose pair, not to be drawn into conversation on any

topic, and, having set our supper of potatoes, kumara, and tea before us, they departed without more ado.

From that moment until when, a week later, I responded to the challenge of a sentry outside the British lines, the idiot was my only companion. Whether if he had afforded me an opportunity I should again have attempted to escape I cannot say, but he gave me no such chance. Day and night his watch never relaxed, and, greatly as I flattered myself on my powers of endurance, they were no match for his. With a petty malice for which I am afraid my own sufferings afforded but a poor excuse, I kept the creature continually on the rack. At night-time, when he gave signs of falling into a dose, I would rise to my feet and feign to seek for a more comfortable sleeping-place. When he was for hurrying forward I lagged behind, and, on the contrary, when for any reason his movements seemed to bespeak the necessity for caution, I would become possessed of a feverish anxiety to push forward. Half mad with hunger and the fatigues of a trail which for the greater part of its length could be followed only by main force, it may be that the seeds of mental disorder were already at work in my brain.

The idiot had many habits which displeased me, but the most irritating was his joy in his paltry treasures. The shattered gourd was his antidote to myself. As soon as the day's march was over and my fastidiousness was satisfied with a lodging for the night, he would undo his dirty package and set its contents out before him. He seemed to have a method of numbering them, or perhaps it merely was that he named them. Sometimes, when my better nature was in the ascendant—the idiot's foraging had perhaps been more successful than usual—I would watch him and endeavour to follow the workings of his broken mind; but far more often I was scheming to get his treasures into my possession, that I might destroy

them. They were an incongruous lot of rubbish, such as a child might collect. Scraps of broken pottery, old and evil-smelling pieces of bone, the half of a child's leaden soldier; but the object on which he appeared to set the highest value was the withered talon of a hawk. Perhaps it recalled that other talon which had been his undoing, for he treated it differently from the rest, arranging the other objects around it and handling and regarding it with a mingling of veneration and terror.

For a time I watched and schemed in vain, but at length my opportunity arrived. The rustling of swine in the scrub for a moment distracted his attention from his treasures, and, leaning forward, I picked up the withered talon and cast it into the heart of the fire. I can recall no honourable action of my life which brought with it such a glow of delighted satisfaction as this evil deed. Verily I was as mad as he was. His despair when he discovered his loss passed all bounds. For some reason he never suspected me, but seemed to see in the disappearance of his fetish the working of that malignant power whose thrall he was. But enough of this. Had he possessed but one grain more of intelligence he must have dashed out my brains long before we came to our journey's end, and richly I deserved it.

Many years afterwards I endeavoured, but with small success, to trace out the trail of that dreadful journey. The whole country was altered; forests had given place to cultivations, and potatoes grew luxuriantly on the dreary swamps, the passage of which rose before me in all its dismal horror. My guide obeyed his master to the letter. If we skirted the edge of a plantation it was but to snatch food to keep us alive, and not once did we come face to face with a human being. He shunned the dry sidings, along which run all the ancient Maori paths from one end of the island to the other, descending into bottomless

gullies and morasses, skirting the hills, and making of one summer's day journey the arduous toil of seven.

And so at last he pushed me forward on the sentry and, turning on his heel, dived again into the untamed country from which we had emerged.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST STAND

It often happens that when we are driven by stress of circumstances to a course of action we have sought to avoid, we find in it advantages of which we had formed no conception; and so it proved with me. Throughout my term of captivity my mind had been turned for the possibility of succour to my native friends, while of those of my own blood in this connection I had not thought at all. The letter from the Governor to General Cameron had remained all the while in my possession. I must have handled it at least a score of times, and yet it never occurred to me to reflect that Sir George might one day recall my existence and take steps to ascertain my whereabouts. Yet within a few minutes of my making myself known to General Cameron I found that the information for which I had been so long hungering had lain for many months awaiting my arrival in the camp of the English.

"His Excellency has been uneasy at your long silence," said the General, as he handed me a package inscribed in the Governor's handwriting, "and I have several times caused inquiries to be made among our prisoners with regard to you. The results were conflicting. That you were still alive seemed probable; but we could hardly accept the account of one informant, who told us that you had allied yourself with the Queen's enemies and taken up arms against us."

The General smiled, but my heart was as heavy as lead. I rapidly sketched for him an account of my adventures from the day I left Auckland in the early winter until my arrival in camp, suppressing every detail which might tend to throw light on the reasons which had inspired my captors.

"Strange," he commented musingly. "You have been, I understand, a resident among the natives."

"Yes, sir."

"Possibly then you are acquainted with an Englishman of the name of Purcell?"

"He is my foster-father, General Cameron."

He looked at me, and his face was grave. "Indeed!" he said. "I am bound to tell you that there are rumours in regard to Mr. Purcell rather more circumstantial than in your case."

"But probably no more true, sir."

"Possibly."

There was reserve in his tone, inciting me to fuller speech. "You must remember, General," I said, "that my father and I have spent our lives among the natives, and inevitably we have an affection for them. We recognise that government by the whites is the only government possible in this country, and that it must be ensured, even though it be at the cost of many lives; but it is not possible for us to regard the natives vindictively, or to be witnesses of the calamity which has overtaken them without the deepest regret."

"With that view I have no quarrel, Mr. Tregarthen," he said more warmly; "indeed, it has my sympathy, and no one would more gladly welcome the submission of this unfortunate people than I. But I hope that may be all."

There was something so significant in his voice that I looked at him for enlightenment.

"Sympathy with the natives is one thing," he went

on, "encouragement or open espousal of their cause quite another. For such action I could find no excuse. A man who actively sides with the enemies of his own countrymen commits the gravest crime known to martial law."

I was startled at the emphasis with which he spoke. "No doubt," I said stiffly, "your remarks have some application to the circumstances."

"Yes," he replied clearly, "I regret to say they have. I have heard over and over again that Mr. Purcell is assisting the rebellious tribes. If it is not so, how may we account for the persistence of the rumour? He is helping them with advice, which, no doubt, we can afford to neglect, and also—a far more serious matter—with arms and supplies."

"That is impossible, sir," I interrupted. "The only arms in the country were collected together years ago by the paramount chief. I would ask you not to condemn my father on merely hearsay evidence. It would be natural for the natives to make a boast of what are probably simple acts of humanity to the sick and wounded, the women and children."

He seemed on the point of continuing the discussion when some thought caused him to change his mind. "However," he said, "the affairs of Mr. Purcell are no concern of yours. Sir George writes me that your knowledge of Maori is of a special order. I hope that occasion may arise to employ it to the full before many weeks are past. In the meantime you will remain at the headquarters camp."

I thanked him and made my way from the room, which I have omitted to mention was no other than that in which I had interviewed the King-Maker a few days after the commencement of my incarceration. An orderly entered as I quitted, and as I moved down the passage I fancied I heard a name spoken which added not a little to my

anxiety. I told and half convinced myself that the General's words had aroused the recollection of an unpleasant episode and thus led to the changing of some slightly similar name into "Brompart." So far as I knew there was no "Captain Brompart," yet such sounds clung to my mind with an ominous persistence.

Betaking myself to a quiet spot, I opened the packet the General had given me. Sir George Grey's note consisted of a few hasty lines covering the several enclosures. It was dated in midwinter, rather more than a month after my departure from Auckland. He merely expressed the hope that he would hear from me before long, and added that though he himself had no fears for my safety, it was difficult to convince others that I was not under great risks. I could not doubt to whom the word "others" referred, and but for the sense of impending disaster, which had been intensified by my conversation with General Cameron, I should have been lifted into a heaven of happiness by the thought of Helenora's relenting. But my father's letter was in my hand, and hoping against an intuitive knowledge that here could be nothing to bring me ease, I unsealed it.

"MY DEAR SON" (he wrote),—"Your note has reached me. You have chosen well. To divine what may be the issue for us who remain here is beyond human foresight, but the knowledge that you are safe will be a happiness to us in the worst that can befall. In all our lives there has been, I think, only one subject of moment which has not been openly discussed between us—the course to be pursued in the event of what has now happened. The avoidance on my part was deliberate. It was not a matter on which I should have been willing to influence you, and my hope has always been that you would choose as you have chosen. Though we avoided speech I think you have guessed, or even known, for two or three years past

that a position of neutrality could never be mine. My wife is a native woman ; my child is the daughter of a native woman. Nature knows no stronger bond than that which binds us to wife and child. There are men who carry patriotism to the length of crying ' My country, right or wrong ! ' They should have no quarrel with him who answers ' My people, right or wrong ! ' Even what are regarded as the noblest of virtues are liable in certain circumstances to lose their beauty or even to be metamorphosed into crimes. Patriotism in a civilised state surrounded by barbarians is doubtless a virtue of the finest ; but the patriotism that, as in Europe, keeps a number of civilised communities at arm's length or incites them to the destruction of one another is surely none but the reverse. But I will not give you a dissertation on the matter, my dear boy. From the point of view of the patriot I am doubtless a monster, but considered as merely a human being it may be that I have my redeeming points. And, Cedric, I am getting old. I would sooner be sitting reading a book, with my wife and boy and girl within reach, than buckling on my rusty armour to fight in this, or any, cause. I am not under any illusions as to the result of the war ; nor do I expect to achieve any good by allying myself with the native cause. But for thirty years these have been my people, and for thirty years their country has been my home. I shall not go far afield, and you need expect from me no deeds of derring-do ; but I should be a sorry knave if I deserted my friends in their need, or failed to strike a blow in defence of those I love. That, at any rate, is how the matter appears to me. Think me a foolish old man, if you will, but do not let the tongues of men mislead you to feel ashamed of your connection with me. Well then, in the spirit I take your hand and wish you good-bye and all that your heart desires. I have deposited my will with Browning. You will find everything

in order. I have provided for Roma. The rest you and Puhi will divide between you. The girl's share will be larger by the amount I have already given you. In the event of the death of either of you without issue, the survivor takes everything. It is all quite simple (except in so far as the lawyers have translated my intention into their own phraseology). Good-bye, my son. Your loving father."

Despair in my heart, I laid down his letter at length, and opened that of Puhi-Huia. Her pretty handwriting was spoiled by signs of haste and anxiety.

"MY DEAR CEDRIC,—My mind is full of misgivings with regard to you. It is impossible for me to believe that the note which was brought to us by a young warrior of the Ngatihaua was really from you. The writing is strangely like yours, and yet I would sooner believe the sun will not rise to-morrow than believe you wrote it. You left us for the last time so harassed and anxious on our account, half fearing to go, and speaking in every other sentence of the speed with which you would return, that I cannot dismiss from my mind the thought that harm has befallen you to account for your long absence. The letter purporting to come from you has only alarmed me more. Father, usually so clear-sighted, does not share my fears. His great affection for you finds satisfaction in the thought that you are safe from the approaching horrors, and quite blinds him to what to me is so evident, that it is just because of what is coming that the note could never have been written by you. There are many things I wish to say or write to you, but till I see or hear from you and learn what has happened it seems useless to go on. I had hoped for your help to get father away before it is too late. Rangi left here ten days ago to join the Waikatos. Ah, Cedric, if you

do not come back to help us we are all lost ! Yet if I could really believe you safe I would not repine ; that would be one anxiety the less. Your loving sister, PUHI-HUIA."

So poignant were the feelings aroused by this cry from the silence that had so long enveloped all I loved, that I started to my feet and would have rushed off there and then on the backward trail had not the recollection of my empty home held me before I had gone a dozen yards. Then too, as a crushing weight, descended on me the thought that, instant as seemed the appeal in my sister's letter, it was already seven months old. Winter had passed, and spring and now summer was hastening towards the fall. How had time, that panacea for all ills, wrought with the distress of my sister ? Sober reflection quelled the wild impulse that would have set my feet once more on the trail for home. Even if I succeeded in breaking through the net by which the wizard held my dear ones from me—and of how difficult this was I had already had ample experience—I could not at this late stage hope to achieve any good. I might share the fate of those I loved ; I could not hope to avert it. On the other hand, by attaching myself to the staff of interpreters it was not difficult to foresee opportunities for successful mediation which might at any moment bring the war to an end.

Hope will germinate and grow luxuriantly even in the barrenest of soils, and as I folded my letters away and turned my face towards the bustle of the camp, my spirits had risen to a height which challenged a fall. It was not many minutes before they met with it.

The first person I encountered, as I came up from the water-side, was Bishop Selwyn. He was striding along the road with all his accustomed energy, dust instead of mud on his boots and clothes, and giving to the full-bodied

officer of militia who accompanied him no easy task to keep pace. He stopped dead at sight of me and stood staring as though I were a wraith.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed at last, stretching out his hand. "Where have you sprung from? Only within the last few hours I heard of you from a wounded prisoner. He told me that you were held a captive, and that on the coming of the troops you had been taken still farther into the King Country. But come to my tent and give an account of yourself. Captain Brompart, this is Mr. Tregarthen, who disappeared mysteriously at the beginning of the war."

With a start I turned my eyes on the other figure and recognised in the person of the stout officer of militia my old housemate and finally inveterate enemy, Fred Brompart.

"Mr. Tregarthen and I have met before," said he pleasantly. "Though recently we have seen little of each other, we are quite old friends, eh, Cedric? Dear me! It must be six or seven years since we met."

I returned his advances in kind, but I was not deceived by his appearance of cordiality. There was that in his eyes not so amenable to discipline as the inflections of his voice, and it spoke to me to beware. He excused himself after a few minutes, promising to see me again before the day was out, and it seemed to me that the Bishop shared the relief I felt in his departure.

"I am glad you have arrived, Cedric," he said musingly. "The civilian soldier is not in my idea so desirable a person as the civilian peacemaker. I have no doubt you will have your opportunities; there are signs of the end, but progress is slow—slow. Captain Brompart is an active officer. Your treatment at the hands of a section of the natives has not, I hope, made you feel vindictive against the whole race?"

"I would give all I possess to see peace established before the sun goes down to-night," I answered.

He laid his hand on my shoulder with a friendly pressure. "They have ravaged my vineyard, Cedric. Many years and many labourers will be needed before the traces of this evil are swept away. But it is God's will that the hearts of my flock should be purged by fire."

His simple sincerity touched me. "What man can do you have done," I said.

"I wonder," he replied doubtfully. "I am detested by pakeha and Maori alike, and that speaks somehow of failure. The settlers hooted me as I marched with the Maori prisoners, and the natives fired at me as I returned from succouring the wounded. They have logical minds. What warrant does the New Testament give for our actions? I have preached the doctrines of Christ, and the followers of Christ come against them with fire and sword."

We sat for an hour or more discussing the prospects of peace. He was returning to Auckland on the following day, and promised to carry a letter from me to Sir George Grey, whom he would see immediately on arrival. There was little prospect, he thought, of any important engagement occurring during the next two months. General Cameron spoke of advancing to a post on the Waipa almost immediately, but the country was reported to be practically clear of the enemy for thirty miles ahead. Te Huata, it was said, had quitted his stronghold on the mountain and was advancing to the assistance of his war-chief, Rewi.

About a fortnight after my arrival the camp was advanced some fifteen miles up the Waipa, where headquarters was established on the first day of the new year; but it was not until a month later that a further advance of about the same distance brought us into touch with the enemy. The spot chosen by the natives to check the advance of the British was within a dozen miles of my home.

Here they had thrown up three redoubts, connecting them with lines of rifle-pits, the works being manned by upwards of three thousand warriors of the Ngatimaniapoto, Ngatihaua, Waikato, and other tribes.

It was impossible to look upon this formidable position without admiration for the genius of the untutored race who had devised and constructed it ; yet, as it proved, all their energy and toil was to go for nothing. Neither by force of numbers nor of arms could the Maori dictate the conduct of the war. His it might be to pay the bill : he could not call the tune. Thus at the mid of a February night the dusky sentinels on the heights heard the sound of a column, not rushing to the attack, but passing away yet deeper into their beloved lands, and making of their heroic toil a hollow mockery.

In the morning the great pa was found to be abandoned, every man of its defenders having flitted away between midnight and dawn. No attempt was made to interfere with our movements. Dismay had spread through the Maori ranks, and neither the persuasions of Rewi nor the inflexible optimism of the ariki could hold together, or again assemble, that great band of warriors. A few resolute spirits, a few whose homes in the locality were no longer tenable, clung to the leaders, but the great mass of fighters dispersed to the points of the compass, never again to strike a blow. Throughout the march to Te Awamutu not a shot was fired, nor when, at daybreak, the smiling landscape unrolled itself to our gaze was there sight or sound of any to give check to our advance. I was in hopes that this experience would repeat itself as we pushed forward ; that the natives had had timely warning of our approach, and that everywhere we should find their settlements abandoned.

Before us lay the beautiful native village of Rangioawhia, embowered in orchards ; and here I had many lifelong

friends. My heart was in my mouth as I watched our advance guard enter the settlement in skirmishing order. This, I told myself, might be the hour of destiny, of which I had stood in dread for so long. The minutes of waiting seemed interminable, and even the arrival of an orderly with news that there were armed natives in the village was a relief from the tension of those moments. At once I sought the General and begged his permission to enter the settlement and endeavour to secure the submission of its occupants. I urged that every man in it was known to me, and for that reason I would probably be more successful in negotiating with them than a stranger.

"Very good," he replied. "They must lay down their arms and take the oath of allegiance to the Queen. Ten minutes should suffice for them to make up their minds."

I found the once-populous village well-nigh deserted. Probably there were not more than two score individuals in the group who stood silently awaiting the approach of the flag of truce, and even they had only delayed in their belief that we would not push on beyond Te Awamutu for some hours. But what they lacked in numbers they made up in resolution. To the General's message they returned but one word—"Kahore."¹ In vain I pointed out the overwhelming force against which they were opposing themselves and appealed to them by name to submit and save their lives.

"Enough!" said the chief, at last. "Lie down, Little Finger, that our shots may pass over you."

Even then I might have continued my efforts had not the officer in charge, recognising that our lives were in jeopardy, given us orders to fall back, and we were scarcely out of point-blank range ere a fusillade from the natives brought down on their devoted heads the fire of our troops.

¹ Kahore = no.

There is a spot at Rangioawhia, neglected and forgotten—I doubt if I or any man could find it—that should be marked with an imperishable stone. A British soldier fell there—more than one, indeed—yet not on their account would I commemorate it. It should enumerate the names of the heroic seven, who, when all their friends were slain or dispersed, held a whare for hours against a thousand British troops, to perish at last in its flaming ruins.

Two days later we heard that a body of natives had occupied the old pa at Haeirini, but as they were rapidly dislodged from the position I have always suspected that this was merely a cover to more extensive works in progress elsewhere. At all events, there can be no doubt that the famous pa at Orakau was already in a measure prepared for their reception when they fell back on it in the last week in February.

I think it was on March 20 that the first definite news of my father reached me. It was from a fellow-villager, who had surrendered and taken the required oath, that I heard of him, and then it was that I first learned of the preparations at Orakau. To that spot, he told me, had repaired the remnant of the great band of warriors who had sought to give battle to General Cameron at Paterangi. There was collected the flower of the Ngatimaniapoto, few in numbers, it was true, but great in spirit. There was Te Huata and his son, Rangiora, who had come unscathed through a dozen battles and acquired much wisdom in the art of war. There was the war-chief, Rewi, oft defeated but still unconquerable. There was Piripi, the chief of Matakiki, Te Atua Mangu and his band of diviners, and a score or more of the headmen of the tribe. And of that company was my father. And not only he, but Puhihuia and Roma, Pepepe and Tuku-tuku, and many others, the devoted wives, daughters, and mothers of this last band of defenders.

I pass over my feelings of despair on hearing this long-expected but none the less terrible news. I was within a few miles of my dear ones at last, but the barrier that divided us was more impassable than leagues of ocean. For days I could neither sleep nor eat for the storm of misery that racked my brain.

On the morning of the last day of March orders were given to advance on Orakau, and in a few hours the pa was completely surrounded. At that time the spot, now grass-grown, was covered with a rough growth of flax, which together with a grove of peach trees, still full of foliage, completely concealed from the British advance the strength of the position. Rolling gently upwards from the direction of Rangioawhia, the land breaks abruptly into a precipitous decline bottomed by an extensive swamp. This was the spot chosen by all that were left of the fighting men of the rebellious tribes, barely three hundred in all—to make their last stand against the army of General Cameron.

Having surrounded the position, the main body of the British advanced to the attack, and driving in the enemy's pickets, came unexpectedly on the formidable defences which had hitherto remained concealed from them. Instantly a withering fire was poured into their ranks, and, unable to withstand the heat of the engagement, the troops fell back, with the loss of their captain and several men. A second attempt proved no more successful, and, recognising that the position was too strong to be taken by assault without grave loss, Brigadier-General Carey, in charge of the forces, caused two six-pounder Armstrongs to be turned on the works, while a number of men were dispatched into the swamp to construct gabions. A sap was then commenced, which continued to be pushed forward throughout the night and during the day and night following. On the morning of the third day of the siege

it was in such close proximity to the native works that hand-grenades could be thrown into the pa.

Thus much of the attack: what of the defence?

Hemmed in on all sides by the fire of their enemies, without sleep, with little food, and from the middle of the second day no water, theirs was a position to try the stoutest hearts. Yet—and though they knew that a scrap of white rag displayed on a ramrod would save their lives, if not their lands—not a voice was raised for submission. Once, on the second night, twenty or thirty young braves, under the leadership of Rangiora, burst from the pa and made a gallant effort to check the advance of the sap, which must presently undermine their works, but naught could withstand the hail of lead that encountered them, and they were compelled to retreat, dragging their wounded with them.

At midday on April 2, General Cameron arrived and took over the conduct of the siege. The sappers had by this time advanced their trench to within fifty feet of the palisade, and it was thought that the most sanguine of the defenders must now recognise the hopelessness of their position. In this expectation the first act of the General was to order one of the Armstrongs into the sap, and while the gun belched grape through the palisade, a heavy rifle-fire was opened on the fort from all sides. That this bombardment was intended rather to reveal our strength than to inflict injury was evidenced a few minutes later, when above the deafening clamour of a thousand weapons the bugles shrilled the command to cease firing. I was standing within sight of the General as the sounds died away, and at once he beckoned me towards him.

“Now, Mr. Tregarthen,” he said, “you will accompany Mr. Mair into the sap, and between you endeavour to obtain the surrender of the pa. I can offer its native defenders no terms but their lives, unless it be a recog-

dition of the honours their gallantry has won for them. You may say what you please on that score ; you cannot well say too much. They have kept us at bay for three days under circumstances, as I understand, which would test the courage and endurance of the finest soldiers in the world. Now let them submit, for they can do no more."

We entered the sap, and, pushing along to the end, past the smoking Armstrong, peered through a space between the gabions which had been opened for its discharge. Before us was the outer line of the native rifle-pits, with the redoubt in the rear. The defenders stood to hear us as they had sprung from their entrenchments in response to the call for parley. Neither my companion nor myself can forget as long as we live the appearance of this heroic band. Their bodies caked with sweat and dust and smears of blood, their tousled hair, their bloodshot eyes, the tense look on their faces, are all pictured in my mind as I write. Some few of them were strangers to me, men from Taupo and the Urewera country, but in many I looked upon familiar faces, men with whom in happier days I had broken bread and interchanged a jest ; only with difficulty could I recognise them now.

"Listen, friends," said the voice of my companion beside me. "This is the word of the General: Great is his admiration of your bravery. But now enough. Come out to us that your lives may be spared."

The reply was not immediate, and my heart beat high with hope as low words, inaudible from where we stood, passed to and fro in the ranks. But at length their deliberations, if such they were, found voice. My eyes had traversed the ranks several times from end to end before at last they fixed themselves on one figure, so startlingly changed that it was no wonder I had failed hitherto to recognise him. It was Rangiora. I had parted from him, clothed in good broadcloth, handsome with robust health, and

happier, for all his unsatisfied passion, than he had any idea of. Now I saw a half-naked savage, a bloody clout about his brows, a fleck of bright crimson on his lips, and in his face an ashen greyness that spoke of a serious if not a fatal wound. Even as my mind pierced to his identity, I saw him draw himself together and make answer for the garrison.

"Friend," said he, "this is the word of the Maori: We will fight against you for ever and for ever."

Then said Mr. Mair: "That is the answer for you men; but it is an evil thing that the women and children should die. Let them come out."

Again they seemed to deliberate, and though, as may be guessed, I was not in the state of mind which makes for accurate observation, to this hour I think that it was a woman's voice that answered for them; moreover, in my heart I believe it was the voice of a woman dearer to me than any, save only one, on earth.

"If the men die, the women and children will die also," said she.

"It is well," said my companion, with a deep note of regret in his voice; "the talk is ended."

"Wait," I cried distractedly, as he was on the point of stepping down into the sap. "They must surely be capable of persuasion. We cannot consign them to death without one more effort."

"It is useless," said he; "and in another second they will open fire."

But I was past heeding such a consideration. "Rangiora!" I cried. "Rangiora, listen to the voice of your friend—the man whose life you twice saved, and who would now save yours. Come out, all of you, with the honours you have won, that we may be happy together again as in the old days."

He must have recognised me the instant I appeared

beyond the palisade, but now for the first time he gazed steadily upon me. "Little Finger," he replied, wiping a trickle of blood from his lips—and in his voice was the old, magical sweetness—"you and I sought to close the Greenstone Door with a bond of love—that will always remain to us in our honour; but it is in blood that the sealing will be done. But let be. Those words that have passed between us are for always; this word that divides us is but for a little time. Now go, my brother, for we have chosen."

I might have continued my supplications had not Mr. Mair ordered me peremptorily to get down, and ensured my obedience by dragging me with him as he leaped into the trench. Nor was he wrong in his prognostication, for a rifle-bullet cut his revolver strap at the shoulder even as he sprang to cover. It was but a solitary shot loosened in accident, or perhaps in the madness of his sufferings, by a man of the Taupos; but we were no sooner out of range than fire broke out from every part of the Maori position, and in a few minutes the siege was being prosecuted with more vigour than ever.

So, amid the thunder of cannon, the bursting of hand-grenades, and the deafening rattle of musketry, the afternoon wore itself away. With the steady approach of the sap, the trench from which the natives had bid us defiance became presently untenable. A premature move to take it at the point of the bayonet had resulted in casualties to half the British attackers, their captain and several others being mortally wounded, and a number of men and officers killed outright. But it could be held no longer, and with this final blow at their enemies, the natives retired to their last defence.

Inside the redoubt Rangiora lay dying. The scalp wound was but a trifle, but a shot, better directed, had passed through his shoulder, grazing the lungs in passing.

Slowly, for hours, he had been bleeding to death. His head was pillowed on the knees of my foster-sister, and Spider's Web, his mother, sat by holding his hands. For long he had maintained his post, the stamp of death in his fading face. Then weakness mastered him, and he lay among the women, masking his sufferings with a smile. That was until delirium clouded his mind and the fierce need of the body was no more to be kept silent.

"Water!" came the cry from his cracked lips.

And there was no water in the pa.

"Take my place, Tuku-tuku," said Puhi-Huia, lifting her eyes from the face of the dying man.

The mother obeyed with alacrity. What matter the other woman's reason? This was her only child.

Before she surrendered her post, Puhi-Huia laid her lips to the brow of her lover. Who can say what wild, impossible scheme was in her mind? But in that farewell kiss she revealed her knowledge of its danger. Rising to her feet, she ran quickly across the redoubt and sprang into the trench of the fighters. Rewi, the war-chief, sitting sheltered from the fiery missiles, pondering over the omens that made of Orakau the day of fate, saw her pass and counted her among his dead. Te Atua Mangu and his acolytes paused, ere they looked at the newly thrown divining sticks, to watch her flit by them. Te Huata might have held her as she slipped panting down beside him; but his mind was fixed on the unlucky redcoat who was destined to raise his total to a score, and of her he took no heed. In a moment she had scaled the parapet. Then, indeed, all within sight became alive to her danger, and a dozen hands were stretched forth to draw her back. She could scarce have raised herself to her full height, her eyes could hardly have seen the lines of the British investment, ere a bullet pierced her throat, and without cry or moan she fell lifeless into the arms of those below.

God forbid that either by words or the absence of them I should imply that it was a deliberate shot that took her life. I hated the work of the soldiers, but the men themselves I could not but like and admire, and to conceive of the lowest amongst them firing at that defenceless girl with full knowledge of her sex was no more in my nature than the act itself was in theirs. A veil of smoke hung over the redoubt, interfering with the vision of the attackers, so that whether she were man or woman might not at first be perceptible; but the chances are that the shot was a random one and he who fired it remained in happy ignorance of its fatal effect.

Thus, as was related to me, many months afterwards, these two lovers died, and so—or in part—was it written in stone in the cave we frequented as children.

And still the resistance of the three hundred continued, and no voice cried out to yield. To the British force the end presented but the alternatives of surrender or annihilation. The pa was completely invested, and the strictest orders had been given to maintain an unbroken cordon round the doomed garrison. Escape seemed impossible, and yet for valour and desperation the gods will sometimes open a way.

Between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, the soldiers on guard in the swamp below the steep escarpment heard a sound as of the onrush of naked feet, and in a moment, wielding gun and tomahawk, holding their women and children in their midst, the heroic band swept down from the heights they could no longer hold and, breaking through the lines, made a final bid for life and freedom.

Then from every side broke forth a clamour of cries, and the spirit of the hunter awoke in every Anglo-Saxon heart. Abandoning their positions, the whole force of the British started in disordered pursuit. Intercepted in the

direction of the ranges by a body of mounted troopers, the little band was forced back into the swamp. Every few yards saw a lessening in its numbers. Here fell Te Atua Mangu, the last of the great tohungas, and here, swiftly following the shade of his son, departed the implacable spirit of Te Huata, the Great One. But the little remnant fought and struggled on. Kindly night was at hand to veil them from their foes, and from its shade the waters of Punui called to them to drink and be healed. Many stars were in the sky when, far off and faint, the weary men of Orakau heard the bugles sound the retire and the hunters at last failed from their heels. Then by the waters of Punui they sat down and wept as they remembered those of the gallant three hundred who were no longer with them. Far and wide over the swamp and in the trenches of the pa, stark and still, lay one hundred and forty of their braves.

CHAPTER XXV

A BLACK DAWN

ALL that night I spent in searching for the body of my father. Would that my efforts had proved successful! Of him as a participant in the battle I have said nothing, nor will I break that silence now. Many things were told to me, but, with the solitary exception of his care for the wounded—he was an excellent amateur surgeon—none could I wholly believe. I have tried in vain to realise him in the midst of that inferno of shot and shell; the book will not go down from his hand, the tender, whimsical smile will not pass out of his eyes; it is the book-lined room that holds him, not the redoubt nor the rifle-pit. And for that I give thanks to Heaven.

It was in the trenches they had excavated for their defence that we interred the bodies of the fallen warriors. But Rangiora and Puhi-Huia I laid apart from the rest. Death was kinder to them than life, for in death the desire of their hearts was realised and they lay for ever united. But neither swamp nor trench yielded the body I sought. That night and throughout the next day I followed the burial parties like a shadow. Not a corpse was laid in the ground until I had first looked upon the face of it, and so insistent was my demand to see every one that at length the soldiers came to regard my importunity as an institution and even to take satisfaction in furthering it.

At last the withered hope in my breast began again to

put forth leaves. Since the day I had delivered to him my letter of introduction, General Cameron had not again broached the subject of my father. I knew that his confidence in my own integrity was complete, for often he had let fall words of impatience to me, such as I never heard him speak to any other person, that showed how the soldier and the man conflicted within him. But he might very well feel sympathy for the natives and yet entertain a very different feeling for those who abetted them in their resistance, and I could by no means make up my mind that his silence on the matter that engrossed me denoted that it had passed from his recollection, or that he was willing to forget the rumours of which he had spoken to me. If my father were not among the dead—and of that I was at length convinced—then it was all the more necessary that I should find him. To quit the camp without authority was an act which my duty forbade, nor was I willing to revive the General's attention by any request of a merely personal nature. Only one means of escape from my difficulty offered, and of this I availed myself.

Every day parties left the camp to beat the country for miles around for signs of further resistance. Occasionally they brought in a prisoner, but for the most part the villages were deserted or were hastily evacuated on their approach. It was with one or other of these parties that I left the camp, losing my companions on the first opportunity, and thenceforth conducting my own researches in solitude. Acquainted with every trail and every village, I could move more rapidly and to better purpose than the troops, and the country which the company reported "clear of the enemy" was by no means always so to the solitary traveller. In this way I picked up a good deal of information with regard to the recent battle, and learnt that my father had certainly been among those who escaped and that he and Roma were yet living.

One of the most indefatigable of the hunters was Captain Brompart. No officer of the force was more keen than he in the days following the siege, and many of those who had survived the dangers of retreat from Orakau fell victims to his vigilance. As a rule he was back at night-fall, haling his batch of captives—often quite inoffensive people, whose sole connection with the fighters was the fact that they were of the same tribes; but sometimes fifty or sixty hours would pass before the exhaustion of his supplies drove him from the fascinating sport. I joined none of his expeditions, partly because I distrusted his air of friendship, but mainly for the reason that his battues were always in the one direction, and that, as it seemed to me, the one least likely to be productive of what I sought.

Of all the spots in which my father might conceal himself until the hunt was over and the peace which every one expected was actually made, there seemed to me none less likely of selection than Matakiki. I could not imagine him so foolish or so careless as to return to his home while the British army lay within a score of miles of it; and it was therefore with no more than a passing apprehension that I learned that day after day Captain Brompart and his troopers haunted the Waipa river in the vicinity of my home. My own belief was that my father had made for the Maungatautari ranges, there to seek refuge in the kainga of Tamihana, than which he could probably find no safer retreat; and in consequence I chose by preference to ally myself with parties going in that direction.

It was on the morning of April 15 that, having fallen out from my company, I chanced on a small party of natives, from whom I obtained the first definite news. They not only knew of my father, but they had seen and parted from him within the last twenty-four hours. As I had conjectured, he had made for the ranges, there establishing himself in the pa of the King-Maker, and giving his voice

in the council—as throughout the campaign he had never ceased to do—for the making of peace. But it appeared that, after being settled there for rather more than a week, he awoke one morning to find his wife missing. Several hours were wasted in fruitless expectation of her return, before it became clear that she had left the settlement, and with a definite object. What that object was my father had no difficulty in guessing. I have spoken of the time when, many years before, we had abandoned our home on the pa to take possession of the newly constructed mansion on the river flat ; how for months and even years afterwards she would climb the hill to weep in the ruins of the home to which her husband had brought her on her bridal day, and where her child was born. It was doubtless a similar impulse that actuated her now, and to that conclusion my father came. He delayed but to get together a few necessities of travel, and already, said my informants, he must be within sight of his destination.

No sooner did I hear this unlucky news than as a lightning flash came on me the conviction that my passing apprehension of Captain Brompart's persistent search of the Matakiki district was justified, and that my father alone was the game for which he was seeking. Scarce pausing to say farewell to these innocent bearers of evil tidings, I turned on my heel and set off at a pace that was almost a run on the long trail for home. It was yet early in the day, and I did not doubt that, if nothing came to interfere with my progress, I could accomplish the distance before nightfall.

Of that journey I remember only the mental agony that accompanied it. Of the things around me I took no heed ; my mind was already at the end of the road, busying itself with every possibility. Would this be one of the rare days when Brompart lay idling in camp ? Surely he had searched Matakiki often enough to be away at this

critical juncture. If he were only a mile away it would suffice. Fortune stood to me so far that the sun had not yet disappeared behind Pirongia when, breasting the last fern-hill, I came in sight of the beloved and familiar scene. A wave of anguish came over me as I gazed, for there rose before me visions of Puhi-Huia in her flower garden, and her I should never see again. But stern work was before me, and, brushing the tears from my eyes, I plunged into the bush that intervened between the open country and the river.

The first things my eyes encountered as I emerged from the bush were the horses of the troopers tethered in the orchard. I knew then, instinctively, as surely as I was to learn within the next few minutes, that the worst had happened. A number of troopers were sitting a short distance down the stream, bathing their feet in the water, and to them I called to ferry me across.

One of their number complied, and from him I received confirmation of my fears. "They've got that chap Purcell," said he; "found him on the top of the hill with his missus. They're tryin' of him now."

Waiting for no more, I sprang to land, and, directed by the sight of the sentry in the doorway of the produce shed, ran up the roadway and burst without ceremony into the building.

Standing unbound in the midst of a number of troopers was my foster-father. Roma sat crouched at his feet. At the head of an improvised table sat Captain Brompart, with the officers of his company to right and left.

He was the first to break the silence that followed my abrupt entry. "Always pleased to see you, Tregarthen," he said; "but I may mention that this room is private."

"Then it is you who are breaking its privacy," I answered, pulling forward a box and seating myself.

"I should have said our business is private," he corrected himself mildly. "This is a military court."

"And I am entitled to be present at it as one of the public," I responded. I had, indeed, no knowledge of military law, but then I doubted if he were any better provided, and, in any case, my determination to be present was as fixed as the heavens.

Whether he had any real objection to my presence I cannot say. Possibly he had spoken merely to preserve appearances, and in his heart rejoiced that I was to be a witness of his vengeance. I cannot help it, reader, if I make this man a monster. They tell me that a human being without one good trait is to be found only in fiction. All I know is that even now, after forty years, I write of this man as I feel.

"Then we will proceed with the evidence," he said, clearing his throat; and he turned towards Roma. "You have said that your husband was present with the rebels at Orakau, that he remained in the pa during the whole of the engagement, and that he finally retreated in company with Raureti, Rewi, and others of its defenders. Is that so?"

"Ai, pono tena" (Yes, that is true), replied Roma.

"You remember the pa at Paterangi?"

"Ai."

"Was the prisoner among the natives who occupied that position?"

"Ai."

I moved restlessly at these confirmatory replies. Surely, said my impatience, Roma should have denied everything. But a glance at my father's face led to a relinquishment of the thought. He was looking placidly down upon her, his eyes very gentle under their fierce grey brows. I knew that no word but the truth would be spoken in his defence.

I should mention that these questions, though put in English, were translated into the vernacular by a sergeant of the corps, whose dark skin betrayed his mixed descent. I was keenly on the alert for any error in the interpretations.

"In short, your husband was associated with the natives in their resistance to the Queen's troops," continued the inquisitor; "he sat in their councils and participated in their battles?"

"Why not?" asked Roma, rising to her feet, and looking round the faces at the table, as though for the first time the significance of the proceedings had come home to her. "He is a chief of the Ngatimaniapoto."

It was an unfortunate defence, and I knew by the sudden glitter in Brompart's eyes and the slight movements of the others that its effect was far other than the unhappy woman had contemplated.

"That will do," said Brompart. "Sergeant Wren, attend to me."

"Yes, sir," said the half-caste interpreter briskly, turning towards the table.

"You were for some time a clerk in the employ of Brompart Brothers of Auckland?"

"I was, sir."

"The accounts of the firm came under your notice, and among others the account of the prisoner's dealings with your employers?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you notice any items for arms and ammunition?"

"Yes, sir. A good many."

"Before or after the enactment which prohibited the sale of arms to the natives?"

"Both before and after."

"And you say there were a good many of these entries. Can you tell us how many?"

"Not exactly, sir. I should say there were between twenty and thirty."

"Thank you. That will do."

"One moment, Sergeant Wren," said I, springing to my feet. "You say that these charges were for arms and ammunition. How do you know?"

For a moment his glibness deserted him, but in the next instant he had turned with a smile to the captain. "Because I can read, sir," he said.

"Of course," said Bramport, quickly, with an answering snigger. "And now——"

"Pardon me," I said. "Sergeant Wren tells us he can read; perhaps he will tell us what he did read?"

"I read the word guns," said the man, defiantly; "guns and powder."

"It is a lie," I cried hotly. "I, too, am familiar with the account he speaks of, and I swear that no such items are to be found in it."

"Nevertheless the statement of the man is true in substance, Cedric," said my father gently. "I did purchase arms through the medium of this firm."

"That settles it, then," said Brompton. "The fact of the purchase is admitted. Call Hone Tahai."

Now Hone Tahai was a native of Matakiki, a common fellow of low repute in the settlement, on whose evidence I would not have hanged a dog. He had surrendered to the British shortly after the evacuation of Paterangi, and by certain, doubtless unworthy, services had gained complete freedom so long as he remained in the precincts of the headquarters camp. The trooper told off to call him must have found him in the immediate vicinity, for he was back in little over a minute, the new witness with him.

"Your name is Hone Tahai? You are a resident of this place, Matakiki? You know the prisoner, Purcell, and have had dealings with him?"

To each of these statements Hone responded in the affirmative.

"Among other purchases made at the prisoner's store you bought from him, on May 15 last, two rifles and a box of a hundred cartridges?"

"Yes."

"That is untrue, Hone," said my father mildly.

The wretch hung his head and shuffled with his feet, but he did not retract the statement, and on being again questioned reaffirmed the truth of what he had said.

"The man never had the price of a rifle in his life," I said contemptuously.

Brompart paid no attention to me, but, having exchanged a few words with those near him, announced that the witness's evidence was accepted. "The Court will now retire to consider its verdict," he added.

"What!" I cried. "Before it has first heard the defence?"

"The prisoner may speak in his own behalf if he wishes to do so," he replied, after a moment's hesitation.

"I have only these things to say," said my father. "In the first place I deny that this is a properly constituted military court and that it has power to try me for my life; in the second, I deny that I am a British subject. I was in this country before—if ever—it became a possession of the Queen's, and I have lived here for upwards of thirty years without once seeing a shadow of her civil authority in the district. Lastly, though I have shared the sorrows of the natives, I have fired no shot in their quarrel, and persistently and at all times I have urged the making of peace. Not that I have thought the native cause an unworthy one, but because I remembered the weakness of its supporters. I have nothing more to say."

Again Brompart affected to consult with those around him. "As to the power of this court," he said at last,

"I take the responsibility for its actions. You have denied that you are a British subject, but you were born one, and you cannot cast off your allegiance at pleasure. Whether or no you have fired upon the Queen's troops is best known to your own conscience, but there is overwhelming evidence that you made it possible for others to do so and stood by while it was being done. The court will now consider its verdict."

In silence they filed out, and for ten minutes we were left to our own reflections.

I could feel my father's eyes upon me, but it was long before he spoke, and then in such a quiet voice that we might have been in the old book-lined room alone together.

"You buried her, Cedric?"

"Yes, father; her and Rangiora together."

He was silent a moment. "Whether or not there is another world," he said musingly, "there is need of it, for there is much that is out of sorts in this."

He was thinking of the unhappy lovers, oblivious of his own fate hanging in the balance. He did not speak to me again directly, but addressed himself to the cheering of Roma, who, again crouched on the floor, was moaning and rocking herself to and fro.

At length a movement on the part of the sentry in the doorway heralded the return of the judges, and once more they took their seats round the table. A dead silence followed; even the troopers, whose interest was as nothing, stood in rigid attention as Brompart turned his eyes on the prisoner and moistened his lips preparatory to speaking.

"Prisoner," he said, "the court has found you guilty of treason in that, being a British subject, you took up arms against the Queen's forces and aided and abetted her enemies in the field. For this crime you are sentenced to be shot. The sentence will be carried into effect at dawn."

The room had been slowly growing darker with the decline of day, but now of a sudden it was as black as night. With a fierce effort I stilled the wild beating of my heart and moved forward to the table.

"Brompart," I said, "do you forget that you, and for many years your father before you, were the trusted representatives of this man, whom so calmly, even cheerfully, you now sentence to death?"

"Personal feelings," he replied, "must not be allowed to interfere with my solemn duty. And after all, for the money we received, we returned an equivalent in services."

"For all of it, Frederick Brompart?" my father asked, with the faintest note of sternness in his voice.

His face took on a dusky hue, and then for the first time I understood why our connection with his firm had come so abruptly to an end.

"The Court is dissolved," he said in a high voice. "Remove the prisoner." And, coming quickly down the building, he passed out into the open air.

But I could not let him go so, and following in his footsteps, overtook him ere he had gone a dozen yards. For the sake of that life, a hundredfold dearer than my own, I who in my own case would have laughed him to scorn, was content to crawl in the dust at his feet.

"Fred," I cried, catching him by the arm and speaking in a voice I could myself scarcely recognise, "why are you doing this thing? Is it because we fought and quarrelled as boys that you would revenge yourself upon me now by taking my father's life? Tell me."

"Why, what an idea!" he replied. "Did we fight and quarrel as boys? But your father's is a serious offence: you don't seem to recognise how serious. If such actions were tolerated——"

"Brompart, you know in your soul that it is because of your hatred of me."

"I know no such thing. You seem incapable of listening to reason."

"Reason! Good God! But I won't wrangle with you. Consider. You are taking a fearful responsibility. Your court is a farce. Why, if you have no personal feelings, should you shoulder the responsibility? What is the reason for your hurry? Take your prisoner to General Cameron and save yourself trouble hereafter."

"I have General Cameron's warrant for what I am doing."

"His warrant! Then show it me."

"The matter has been thoroughly discussed in all its bearings."

"How is that possible when the General has heard neither the prosecution nor the defence?"

"He deputed me——"

"Brompart, you are lying. That is, you are mistaken. Listen——"

"I can spare no more time to argue the matter. Besides, you are too agitated to consider the thing fairly. Do you suppose if my conscience did not approve——"

"Your conscience, you devil!"

By an adroit movement he evaded me and my hands clutched the empty air.

I could have bitten my tongue off for those words, and yet if my hands had closed on his flesh I might have killed him. I hastened after him, calling his name, humbling myself in the agony and terror of my soul, but he took no heed, disappearing with a word to the sentry into the store. The man would not let me pass, and when I attempted to brush past him thrust me back with the butt of his rifle.

Night fell, moonless and overcast. The troopers had built a fire on the river bank. I could hear their gay voices as they sat round the blaze. There was a smell of cooking in the air.

The thing could not be !

Again and again I sought to gain admittance to the officers' quarters. Good-natured troopers carried my messages to Brompart, but he refused to see me. The thought that I might win him over with money gave me hope until note after note—offering him finally everything I possessed in return for my father's freedom—were returned to me unread and unopened. At last, by verbal message, I begged permission to see my father, and this was accorded me.

He was confined in a little building erected at the back of the house for the storage of tools. It would have been useless as a prison but for the armed guard at the door. He had an open book in his hand as I entered, and a circumstance that gave me almost a sensation of awe was that in the glimpse I caught of him before he was aware of my presence he gave me the impression of being absorbed in what he read. Indeed, he spoke of the volume as he put it aside.

"It is well that our friend Bacon chose to glorify action rather than being," he said ; "for according to the philosophy of Plato he would have made but a poor showing."

"Oh, father !" I cried, taking his hand and holding it between my own, "talk not to me of books ; tell me only how I may save your life."

"You cannot, my son," he said gravely. "There is no way unless Brømpart relents ; and even then it is but to defer the end."

"Why should he desire your death ? When he robbed you, why did you not prosecute him ?"

"Ah, why ! It was bad citizenship."

"Father, if you have no care for your life, have compassion on my misery. Tell me what I can do."

"Life is no less desirable to me than to other men,"

he said, "but I recognise the inevitable when I am in front of it. There is a fire in this man's heart that nothing we can do will quench. Be at peace, my son. It is but to forestall by a few years an inevitable natural event. Come, let me hear your adventures. Only within the last few weeks have I learned of your captivity. Te Atua is dead. Brompart himself will die."

But I could not answer him. There was no room in my mind for any but the one thought that within a few hours he was to die. I pressed his hand and told him that I would come back, and so returned to the attempt to placate the fiend who held us in his toils. But I could neither see him nor induce him to read my notes.

By this time the men of the troop had come to an understanding of the position. As I wandered hither and thither, unable to rest for an instant in any one place, many of them gave me a rough word of compassion or advice.

"Come and sit by the fire." "If you could manage to eat a snack." "I'll go if you like, but it's no damn good. He won't even touch them."

At last one of them took me by the arm and led me a few paces out of the hearing of his comrades. "Look here, old chap," he said. "Why not go to General Cameron? He might give you a reprieve, if he don't do anything else."

"It's impossible," I replied, standing still and staring into the blackness. "I could hardly get there, let alone return in time."

"But," he whispered, "if you copped a horse, I'll smuggle a saddle down to the river bank. It's just possible you might do it, if you don't waste time thinking you can't."

"God bless you!—God bless you!"

"Right! That's all right. You get hold of the horse. There's a real good one with a pair of white stockings just

beyond the pine tree. Take him down to the water. I'll meet you."

My heart was on fire with excitement as, having swum the animal across the river behind the canoe, I squeezed the hand of my benefactor and climbed into the saddle.

"Good-bye and good luck!" he cried. A moment later I was on the pitch-black darkness of the forest trail.

I had barely eight hours to go and return, and on a made road, however poor its condition, it would have been an easy feat; but for two-thirds of the distance the way was but a narrow track, not easy to follow in the daytime, and by night full of difficulties. There were stretches, miles long, where neither persuasion nor brutality, and I used both, would induce my horse to adopt a faster pace than a walk.

It was two o'clock in the morning as, on a good road at last, I thundered through the village of Te Awamutu and sprang from the saddle at the door of the General's house. Fortunately the officer of the guard, attracted by the noise of my approach, had not to be summoned, and after one or two questions, to which I replied only that my business was of the utmost urgency, he consented to wake the commandant.

Within five minutes I was summoned to the General's room. He was only partly dressed, and sleep—and, I am afraid, annoyance—were in his eyes. Rapidly I told my story and made my request.

He regarded me attentively, making no comment until I spoke of the illegality of the proceedings, when he said: "This country is under martial law. Had he caused the man to be shot without even the form of trial you speak of, it would not be an act without precedent."

"Yet, sir," I pleaded, "with his commanding officer close at hand and no necessity for hurry——"

"Yes. Well, I will do as you wish." He drew pen

and paper towards him, and, on the point of writing, glanced at the clock. "But," he asked, "if he is to be shot at dawn, what hope have you of being in time to prevent it? When did you leave?"

I told him, and he tapped off the hours on his fingers lifting his brows with astonishment. Then he turned to and wrote with alacrity.

"I must hope you will succeed, Mr. Tregarthen," he said, as he sealed the envelope and handed it to me; "but I am afraid there is disappointment in store for you. However, don't let me detain you another moment."

With a fervent word of thanks, I sped from the room, and hastening to my horse, again woke the echoes of the quiet village with the noise of his flying feet.

Ah, that return journey! Let me have done with it in a few words. Joy and fear fevered and chilled me. Often I saw the east blazing with light when only the darkness reigned there. On and on I struggled, sparing neither my own body nor that of my steed. Half the distance was accomplished—three-fourths, and still the blessed night prevailed. All through the skies had been densely masked with cloud; but now, as I essayed the last quarter of my journey, stars began to break forth with promise of a clear sky at sunrise. At first I could not keep my eyes from the east, but towards the end I dared not look at it. It was not the sky but the earth that at length convinced my unwilling mind of the approach of day. And there was still the bush to be accomplished. Easier and easier became the track; swifter and swifter went my horse's feet among the knotted roots. A bird gave a sleepy chuckle overhead. At last I heard the sound of the river, and, springing from my horse's back, I left him standing there and ran with all speed to the water's edge.

Clear light lay over Matakiki and on the summit of the

pa was the first gold of the rising sun. I could see a crowd of moving figures near the store, and even as I was on the point of plunging into the water, it took under my gaze an order full of dread significance. I saw the firing-party halted in line, my father facing them, his back to the wall; the officers in a little group to one side; the troopers, a larger group, to the other.

With a loud shout I flung up my hand, waving full in their view the message of reprieve. Many eyes were turned towards me. I could hear the voices of the troopers calling attention to my presence, and from the motions of the officers judged that they too were urging the advisability of delay. But Brompart gave no heed. I saw the rifles of the firing-party brought to the present. I saw the puff of smoke and heard the sound of the shots that took his life.

And I had not bid him good-bye !

And I remembered all he had done for me !

I stood stock-still like a creature turned to stone, and for nine months thereafter I remember no more.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREENSTONE DOOR

FROM that moment until, as one who wakes from sleep, I looked around me in the woods below Pirongia, well-nigh a year later, I can tell you nothing of my own knowledge. It is from what has been related to me by Roma, by sundry natives, but for the most part one other informant, that I derive what is here written of that time.

With the fall of Orakau ended the war in the Waikato. Peace was established shortly afterwards, and those natives whose homes did not come within the confiscation boundary returned to their settlements. Among the rest came the villagers of Matakiki, still numerous in men past middle age and women and children, but sadly depleted of young braves. The house was reopened, and here Roma and I dwelt during the whole of the time of which I write. For my part, the place was a home only in so far as I made use of one at all; for there were days and even weeks together when my shadow never darkened its doorway, and the wild birds alone knew my sleeping-place. I suffered from no bodily ailment. It was only when my recollection of the past was touched at some point that there was much in my actions to distinguish me from normal men.

The central idea in my clouded mind seems to have been that I was still on my way to the British lines, or, rather, that I had escaped from the custody of the idiot and was now alternately concealing myself from him and

seeking the recovery of that lost intention which had incited my escape. This could scarcely have been so had I not continued to be aware, however hazily, of my identity. Perhaps it was the partial recovery of this lost intention which brought me back time and again to my home, and yet, arrived there, I asked no questions and seemed to be without anticipations with regard to it. Abroad, my travels were never to or over the actual scenes of my journey with the idiot, but veered continuously in the direction of Pirongia ; so that with the main motif appears to have mingled another of which I can offer no explanation, unless it is to be found in the fascination the mountain had always possessed for me.

I have often wondered if it was some blessed instinct that urged me thus into the wilds, far from the haunts and taunts of men ; that made of me a solitary wanderer, braving all weathers, careless of rain and storm, of the damp earth that formed my couch, sleeping with the sun and rising with it, till the health of a wild animal pervaded my body and the cloud lifted and passed away from my brain.

Conceive of me, then, as a creature of the woods and mountains, capable of thought and speech, harmless, timid, self-centred in my idea that I had escaped the idiot : and so let the autumn pass, and the winter ; let spring be far advanced into summer. And now behold me, standing stock-still, my feet on the forest trail, bereft of the power of motion, watching the approach of the being I had so long successfully avoided. When he was but the creature of my imagination the wild bird was not swifter in its flight than I, but now that I beheld him in the flesh the power of movement failed me, and abjectly I awaited recapture. It was he ! I knew him less by his appearance than by the stirring of my blood that stood to me for remembrance. I doubted not that it was in order to allay my fears that

he had disguised himself in the attire of a woman, and now, with swift movements, interrupted by sudden pauses, he drew near to me and, staring on me with great eyes, breathlessly spoke my name.

" . . . Cedric ! "

" Yes, idiot, it is I. Now take me, for I see I cannot escape you."

" Where shall I take you ? "

" To the General. Have you forgotten the Black One's instructions ? If it must be done, let us go quickly."

" Wait here awhile, for I am tired. I have followed you a long way. Let us sit here and rest. Cedric ! Cedric ! O God, be merciful ! See what I have brought with me in my basket."

" I know ! Pah ! But you lost the kite's talon."

" . . . Bread and butter. . . . And a fowl—I got Roma to cook it for you. And here are some peaches, the first fruits of the orchard. There ! You wouldn't think, would you, that these little things were so heavy ? Now you must find us some water."

" It is your place to fetch and carry," I said, and threw myself on the ground before the good things.

" Yes, I will fetch it. That is the beauty of New Zealand ; there is always water close at hand. I passed the creek not two minutes ago."

I lay still till the sound of footsteps had died away, then, quickly restoring the food to its place in the basket, I picked it up and ran at full speed down the trail. I had put several miles between us before, delighted with my ruse, I sat down to enjoy my meal.

In that hour my fear of the idiot began to wane. I had successfully outwitted him. His strength—had he not spoken of the flimsy basket of food as heavy ?—no longer impressed me. I moved more carelessly, with the result that three or four days later I was captured again.

"Apricots this time, Cedric. How long is it since you have been home? And the flower garden is just a picture. Come and sit down. We won't need any water until we have finished. That was cruel of you. And I have been looking for you every day since."

"Then sit farther off. It is not fitting that we should be such near neighbours."

"As you please. Eat, and I will wait upon you. . . ."
'I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile.'

"Wordsworth."

"What do you know of Wordsworth?"

"Wordsworth," I repeated, frowning. "Wordsworth. He was a chief of the Ngapuhi." And I began to carve the fowl into two portions.

"Then what does he mean by his 'rugged Pile'?"

"A pile, creature," said I, "is the block used for the support of a food-store to preserve its contents from rats." And I smiled contentedly at this ingenious elucidation of a remembrance that had puzzled me.

"Is that for me? But I don't want it. You need not have stolen the basket, for it was yours."

"Eat," I insisted. "We have a long way to travel, and Heaven knows if our next meal may not be the heart of a nikau."¹

The creature made so poor a pretence of obeying me that my fear suffered a further relapse. I remembered having seen him take a bird from the spit ere the fire had well warmed it, and devour it, scarce troubling to discard the bones. But he was strangely altered.

"Eat," I urged again. "Though you may not sit at my table, you may divide my fare, and in a few minutes we must start on our journey."

"Cedric, will you come home with me?"

"What need of a better home than this? Here is shelter

¹ Nikau = native palm, *Ariha sapida*.

from the sun and rain, wood for fire, and soft bedding for our limbs."

"But food! How do you exist and keep your strength? Often you must suffer from the need of it. Come, and we will go back together."

"When I feel hunger, it is a simple business to satisfy it. I have but to walk into a village at morning or evening, and take pot-luck with my friends. Why should I travel many miles for what I can obtain close at hand?"

"East, West; home's best. Listen, Cedric—do you remember St. Kevens?"

"I detest memory. It gives me a headache."

"Ah, but you remember the poet Wordsworth! Do you remember the garden and the narcissus flower; the boy who died of love of his image in the water; and the "host of golden daffodils"? Don't frown at me. Think! In the garden there are two children, a boy and a girl; they are standing looking down at the flowers. Now they have moved on. They are on a seat, talking together of the past that still lives and the future that is to be born. Look, you can see them. It is winter time, but the sun is shining."

"It is a pretty story, idiot," I said; "but I could never understand why she ceased to love him. I remember now that you are right with regard to Wordsworth, and I am sorry that I threw your claw into the fire."

He drew back, looking at me disconsolately. "Why do you call me idiot? Was that too among the terrors?" Again he leaned forward, and in his voice was a wonderful seduction. "Call me by my name."

"If I ever heard it, I have forgotten long since," I replied. "What is your name?"

"Helenora."

"I told you that I detested memories. Now my head is splitting—tell it me again."

"Helenora—Helenora Wylde."

"You are jesting with me. I suppose you think that I don't know that I am as mad as you are. But you cannot delude me into the belief that you were christened by a woman's name."

"No more a woman's name than I am a woman. Oh, Cedric, open your eyes. Was your idiot clothed as I am? Was his face like mine? Had he such hands?"

Hesitatingly I took the white hands she stretched out to me and scanned the soft palms and lissome fingers. "Mad! Mad!" I muttered. "Yet who was Helenora?"

"She was the girl in the garden: the girl who, thinking of the past, consented to the future."

"But why did she cease to love him? If I could remember that——"

"You must not remember that, for it never was. She always loved him."

"And your name is Helenora?"

"Yes, yes. And you were the boy in the garden. Oh, Cedric, if you but will it, you may awake." Suddenly she drew her hands from mine and, throwing herself on her knees, raised them in supplication to Heaven. "Merciful God," she cried, "have pity on me and on this afflicted one. Forgive my wickedness. Let his memory be restored to him."

"Prayer is good," I said approvingly, and knelt down before her. "Hear me, Father in heaven! For those wrongs I have committed, pardon me, and let not Your wrath continue against me. Lift this cloud from my mind, so that I may be as other men."

Her eyes, shining with tears, searched my face expectantly. "Ah, don't frown at me!" she cried at last.

"It is not my displeasure," I said. "If your head ached as mine does you would frown too. See, while we have been talking the sun has gone down."

She stood awhile, looking musingly about her in the

golden twilight. "Have you a place to sleep, or do you just lie down anywhere?" she asked presently.

"Come, I will show you"; and I led her to a cave in the rocks. Probably I had more than one such retreat, but this is the only one of which I have learned. It contained a small store of food—potatoes and kumaras—and a thin mist of smoke rose from my covered cooking fire. In a few minutes the hot embers were coaxed into a blaze, but the pain in my head had now become intolerable, and, sick to death, I could do no more. Giddy and half blind, I groped my way to the cave and sank into my couch of fern fronds.

"Cedric, shall I put some water on your head? . . . We did not need the fire. There is a beautiful moon. The forest is a carving in silver and ebony."

". . . Never mind the cloth; just your hands, and say some of Wordsworth's poems."

"But your head will get worse."

"No matter. There is one on the verge of memory. I should know it in a moment. . . . Not that one. . . . Nor that."

"Can you tell me one line in it? One word?"

"I should know it."

"Are you sure it was Wordsworth?" suddenly her voice checked, and then, as one who recovered a memory:

"Wie ein Gebild aus Himmelshöhn
Sieht er die Jungfrau vor sich stehn."

"Yes, yes."

"O zarte Sehnsucht, süßes Hoffen,
Der ersten Liebe, goldne Zeit,
Das Auge sieht den Himmel offen,
Es schwelgt das Herz in Seligkeit——"

"Cedric." And softly, again, "Cedric." And the silence and the moonlit night.

And in God's good time and at the call of Love I awoke, and my madness had passed and left no vestige in memory. I stared at the cave and the bush beyond. The sun was well up in the sky. A golden beam slanted to the entrance of my retreat, and down it—as an angel of heaven might come to the gateway of death—came Helenora.

The day was well advanced as hand in hand we turned our backs on Pirongia and followed the trail for home through the golden lights and leafy shadows of the bush.

"And they are all dead save Roma, and the war is at an end."

"Ah, Cedric, if you have lost all, so have I. Didn't you hear that Arthur was killed at Rangiriri?"

I drew her to a standstill and kissed the tears from her eyes.

"You remember," I said, "the image of the Greenstone Door?"

She nodded, and lifted her lips mutely to mine.

And so at last for us two also the Greenstone Door was closed.

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GLOSSARY

- Ariki**, the Priest-Chief. See note.
Atua, a spirit, god.
Haeremai, welcome.
Haerera, farewell.
Hangi, food cooked in a Maori oven.
Hapu, a sub-tribe.
Huia, a bird (*Heteralocha acutirostris*).
Kai, food.
Kainga, the home.
Kaiwae, the floor of a canoe.
Kakino, bad.
Karaka, a tree.
Kauri, the great N.Z. pine tree.
Kehua, a ghost.
Kiritangata, the innermost barricade.
Kiwi, the wingless apteryx.
Koe, korua, kotu—you, you two, all of you.
Kowhai, a tree.
Kumara, the sweet potato.
Makutu, magic.
Mana, authority, prestige.
Manuka, the tea-tree.
Marae, the village common.
Maro, an apron.
Matai, a tree.
Matakite, second-sight.
Mere, a stone or jade club.
Morepork, the settler's name for the native owl.
Nikau, a species of palm.
Niu, divining rods.
Noa, cleansed from tapu.
Pa, a fortified village. See note.
Pai, good.
Pakeha, a white man.
Pakeha-maori, a white man living as a Maori.
Papa-tea, an untattooed person.
Patu, strike.
Pikau, a pack carried on the back.
Pounamu, jade, greenstone.
Pupurangi, a species of large snail.
Rangatira, a chief.
Reinga, Te, the Land of Shades. See note.
Rongo pai, the Good Word.
Runanga, a Parliament.
Taepo, a supernatural being.
Taniwha, a fabulous saurian monster.
Tapairu, High-Priestess. See note.
Tapu, sacred, infected. See note.
Taraire, a tree.
Tatau, a door.
Taua, a war party.
Tawhara, the flower spathe of a climbing plant.
Te kai tango atua, the undertaker.
Tena koe—korua—kotu, sing., dual, and plural greeting.
Tetere, a war trumpet.
Tiki, a breast ornament.
Titoki, a tree.
Tohunga. See note.
Tohunga-ta, a tattooer.
Tui, the parson bird.
Tutua, a slave.
Umu, an oven of heated stones.
Uto, vengeance.
Utu, payment in compensation.
Wahine, wife, womenfolk.
Wai-piro, alcoholic beverage.
Waiata, a song.
Whare, a native house.
Whare-kura, the Maori university.
Whare-matoro, the Maori pleasure house.
Whare-puni, the sleeping house.

NOTES

- ARIKI**, the Priest-Chief, the eldest son of the eldest son, tracing descent back to the Maori gods.
- PA**, a fortified village. It was usually situated on the summit of a hill, so as to command a view of an approaching enemy. Its defences consisted of ditches and palisades, one within the other.
- TE REINGA**, the World of Spirits. The soul having quitted the body was supposed to travel to the extreme north of New Zealand, where was the leaping-off place or entrance to the Land of Shadows. See p. 61.
- ROYAL HUIA BIRD**. The tail feathers of the huia, black tipped with white, were highly prized as hair ornaments. See p. 38.
- 'THE SOUTHERN CROSS'**, one of the two newspapers published in Auckland at that date, adopted a tone highly antagonistic to the Governor. It is said, however, that Grey never read it. See p. 172.
- TAPAIRU**, the first-born of an exalted lineage of the female sex, a High Priestess.
- TAPU**. Mr. Tregear, to whose valuable work, "The Maori Race," I am much indebted, says: "The true inwardness of the word is that it infers the setting apart of certain persons or things on account of their having become possessed or infected by the presence of supernatural beings, particularly of the ancestral spirits who were guardian deities of the tribe." The reverse of *tapu* is *noa*, "cleansed from *tapu*," "common."
- TATAU POUNAMU**. This figurative expression was used to denote the making of a lasting peace. The Greenstone Door, through which war and rapine might enter, was conceived to be finally closed with those making the compact. It was the most sacred bond of peace to a people whose chief delight was in war. See p. 71.
- TOHUNGA**. The tohunga was the master of arts and sciences or trades, the teacher, the priest, and the physician, though not all of these were combined in the same person. Common usage has considerably reduced the scope of the word, and the tohunga nowadays is merely a rather discredited medicine-man and religious mystic.

PRONUNCIATION

The stress is on the first syllable.

A is pronounced *Ah*, as *Pah* (*Pa*).

Terminal *i* equals terminal *y*, as *Hahng-y* (*Hangi*). In other places *i* has either the sound of *ee*, as *Pee-Cow* (*Pikau*), or *i* in *thick*, as *Tick-y* (*Tiki*).

O as in English.

U as in *goose*, *Oom-oo* (*Umu*).

E as in *merry*, terminal *e* as *eh*; *Mer-reh*, nearly same sound as *merry* (*Mere*).

Ng is sounded as in *song* and *singer*.

Every vowel is sounded, but this is not always evident at a casual hearing. Compare *Mah-o-ry*, *Maury* (*Maori*), *Kah-y*, *Kye* (*Kai*),

