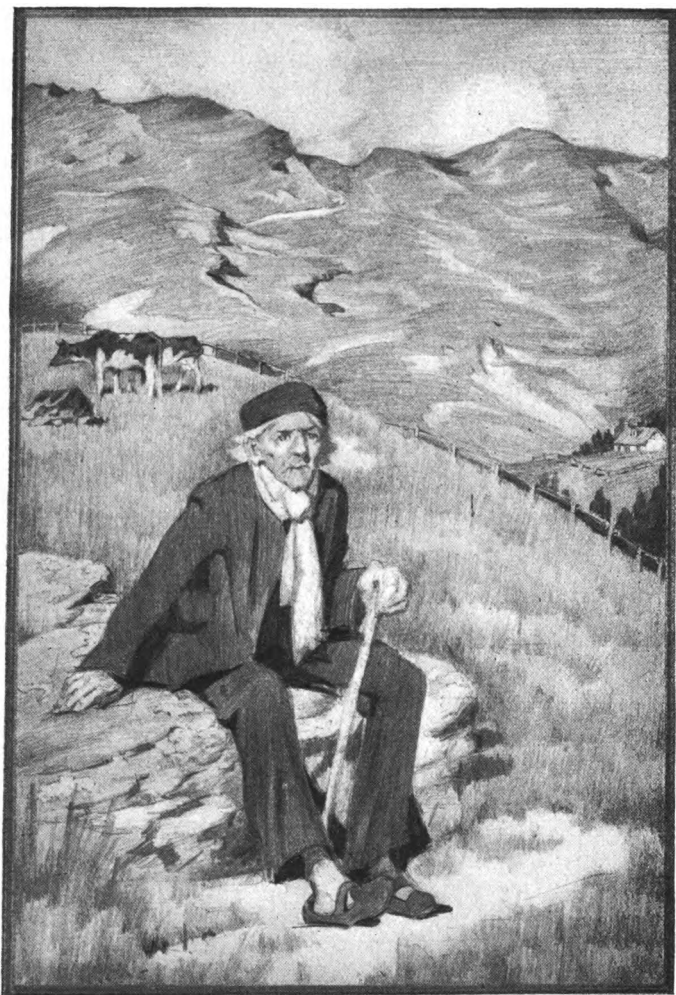


Mrs. Whitcomb

BROWN BREAD

FROM A COLONIAL OVEN



**"O FOR THE REAL THINGS—FOR THE LAKE THAT WAS NOT SALT,
FOR THE STREAMLET THAT FLOWED FROM SNOWS" (p. 87).**

Frontispiece

BROWN BREAD

FROM A COLONIAL OVEN

*BEING SKETCHES OF UP-COUNTRY LIFE
IN NEW ZEALAND*

BY

B. E. BAUGHAN

AUTHOR OF "SHINGLE-SHORT," "THE FINEST WALK
IN THE WORLD," ETC.

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WHITCOMBE AND TOMBS, LIMITED
ADDLE HILL, CARTER LANE, LONDON
CHRISTCHURCH, WELLINGTON AND DUNEDIN, N.Z.
LITTLE COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

PRINTED BY
HAKELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD.,
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.

PREFACE

THE greater number of these little sketches have appeared already in some of the New Zealand papers, and for permission to reprint them it is my pleasant duty now to thank the editors respectively of the *Christchurch Press*, the *Christchurch Weekly Press*, *Current Thought*, and *The Citizen*.

The reason why I want to put into book form efforts so fugitive and meagre is, that, with all their faults, they do yet seem to me honestly to delineate in some degree a phase of New Zealand life that is already passing, and that, so far at least as I have been able to gather, lacks not only an abler chronicler, but any chronicler at all. Young things alter very quickly; the lapse of five years, even, can render unrecognisable one of our Bush settlements; and, what with roading and bridging, telephones and motor-cars, movable wash-tubs, and acetylene gas, the rate of our up-country progress is becoming in these days so rapid that it is quite doubtful whether in another twenty years there will be left so much as one Colonial oven for a batch of brown bread to come out of. And the taste of that wholesome baking is to me so sweet that even a paper memory of it seems better than nothing, and I should think myself lucky indeed if so I could convey any least hint of it to those who come after.

One word as to the characters depicted. Let me say straight out and at once that, with one single exception, where permission has been sought and granted, not one is meant as a photograph. Nearly all, it is true, I have done my best to draw from the life ; but, after the fashion of most writers, I suppose, from the life of two, three, four models at once, one suggesting the eyes, as it were, of my picture-person ; another the nose ; others again the mouth or hands ; and always in the hope of representing "not what Life has made already," as the French poet puts it, "but what she might have made." So that, to those ever-present clever folk, who, in reading the following pages, may find themselves able to point out portraits here and there, I take this opportunity of humbly suggesting that they should give those good keen eyes of theirs just a little further exercise ; and, having made the discovery that any loaf, however badly mixed and baked, does really presuppose some growing grain, should go on to remark that, after all, a paddock of wheat is not really one and the same thing as a bit of brown bread.

B. E. B.

CLIFTON, CHRISTCHURCH, N.Z.

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BROWN BREAD

I

PIPI ON THE PROWL

PIPI was very happy. To an indifferent observer, it is true, the little mummy-like old Maori woman, bundled about with a curious muddle of rag-bag jackets and petticoats, and hobbling along the high-road on crippled bare brown feet, might have presented a spectacle more forlorn than otherwise. But then, what does the indifferent observer ever really see? That grotesque and pitiful exterior was nothing but an exterior; and it covered an escaping captive: it clothed incarnate Mirth. For Miria had gone to town, and Pipi, one whole long afternoon, was free!

She chuckled as she thought of Miria—Miria the decorous, Miria the *pakeha* coachman's wife, Miria,

who wore tan shoes. Miria did not like her grandmother to go roaming at her own sweet will along the roads; she did not even like her to smoke; what she did like was to have her squatted safe at the *whare* door, holding on to little Hana, whose kicking really began to be painful, and looking out that little Himi did not get hold of the axe and chop himself to bits. She had left her like that half an hour ago; probably she imagined her to be still like that—submissive, stationed, and oh, how lacklustre, how dull! Well, Pipi might perhaps be a little *porangi* (crazy) at times, but she was never anything like so *porangi* as that. How lucky that Ropata's wife was a trustworthy crony! How fortunate that the babies could neither of them speak! Pipi smiled, and showed her perfect teeth; she took out, from deep recesses of her raiment, her treasured pipe, and stuck it in her mouth. *E! Ka pai te paipa!*—a good thing, the pipe! There was no *topeka* (tobacco) in it, to be sure; but who could say whence *topeka* might not come, this golden afternoon? To those newly at liberty all the world belongs. And, like stolen waters, stolen sport is sweet. No urchin who, having safely conveyed himself away at last out of earshot of mother or teacher, bounds breathless to the beloved creek where "bullies" wait the hook, knows more of the mingled raptures of lawlessness and expectation than this old great-grandmother Pipi did, out upon the high-road, out upon the hunt!

Although it was midwinter, the afternoon was warm—there is never really cold weather upon that sheltered northern coast. The road ran right round the head of the league-long harbour, and showed a

splendid view ; for the tide was in ; every cove and inlet was full, and the sinuous, satin-blue sheen of the water reflected with the utmost fidelity every one of the little long, low spits, emerald-turfed and darkly crowned with trees, that fringed, as with a succession of piers, the left-hand shore ; while the low, orange-coloured cliffs of the fern-flats opposite burned in the brilliant sun like buttresses of gold. But what was a view to Pipi ? Her rheumy old brown eyes sought but the one spot, where, far down the glittering water-way, and close to the short, straight sapphire line that parted the purple Heads and meant the open sea, the glass of the township windows sent sparkles to the sun. The township—seven miles away, and Miria not there yet ! *Ka pai !* Pipi was ready for whatever fish Tangaroa might kindly send her on dry land, but meanwhile freedom, simple freedom, mere lack of supervision, was in itself enough ; and happily, happily she trudged along, nodding, smiling, and sucking vigorously at her empty pipe.

Before very long she came to the river—the sinister-looking river, black and sluggish, that drains the valley-head. In the swamp on the other side of the long white bridge, dark *manuka*-bushes with crooked stems and shaggy boles, like a company of uncanny crones under a spell, stood knee-deep in thick ooze ; some withered *raupo* desolately lined the bank above. Even on that bright day, this was a dismal place, and the *raupo*, with its spindly shanks and discoloured leaves fluttering about them, looked lamentably like poor Pipi. *Poor* Pipi, indeed ? Dismal place ? Huh ! what does a fool know ?

With brightened eyes, with uncouth gestures of delighted haste, out across the bridge scurried Pipi, slithered down into the swamp, clutched with eager claws at a muddy lump upon the margin, and emitted a deep low grunt of joy. Old snags, quite black with decay, lay rotting round her, and the stagnant water gave forth a most unpleasant smell. But what is foulness when glory beckons through it? Squatting in the slime, her tags and trails of raiment dabbling in and out of the black water, Pipi washed and scraped, scraped and washed, and finally lifted up and out into the sunshine with a grin of delight, a great golden pumpkin, richly streaked with green. The glint of its rind had caught her eye from the other side of the bridge. Evidently it had fallen from some passing cart, and rolled down into the swamp. It was big; it was heavy; it was sound. The goodness of this pumpkin! the triumph of this find! Pipi untied one of her most extra garments, tied the treasure securely in it, slung the bundle on her back as though it had been a baby, and went on.

From the river, the road runs straight uphill, through a cutting between high banks of fern and gorse, with a crumbly crest of *papa* clay boldly yellow on the full blue sky. The road is of yellow *papa* also, and unmetalled, and rather heavy. Pipi grunted a good deal as she toiled up it; and about halfway up stood still to get her breath, for the pumpkin, precious as it was, lay like lead upon her frail old shoulders. Why! at the very top of the bank, glaring in the sunshine against the yellow *papa*, what was that? A white paper only, with nothing in it—or a white paper parcel? Steep

as the bank was, go she must, of course, and see ; and up, pumpkin and all, she climbed. Aha ! Something inside. What ? . . . Bread ; and, inside the bread ? Jam ; thick, sweet, deep-red jam, very thick, very sweet, *very good* !

Next to tobacco, Pipi loved sweet things. She did not expend much pity upon the school-child that, heedlessly running along the top edge of the bank that morning, had lost its lunch and spent a hungry dinner-hour ; neither did the somewhat travelled appearance of the sandwich trouble her. She scrambled down again on to the firmer footing of the road, and there she stood, and licked and licked at the jam. Miria's face, if she had caught her at it ! Oho, that face !—the very fancy of its sourness made the tit-bit sweeter. The bread itself she threw away. Her stomach was not hungry, Miria saw to that ; but her imagination was, and that was why this chance-come, wayside dainty had a relish that no good, dull dinner in the *where* ever had. Sport was good to-day. First that pumpkin, now this jam ! *Ka pai* the catch ! What next ?

She resumed her journey up-hill, but had no sooner reached the top than she suddenly squatted down on the bank by the roadside, as if at a word of command, with next to no breath left in her lungs, but hope once more lively in her heart—for here, surely, advancing to meet her, was the Next—a tall young *pakcha* woman, with a basket on her arm. Only a woman. That was a pity, for there was the less chance of *topeka* ; still, what had that kit got in it ?

Pipi knew all about strategical advantages by

instinct. She sat still and waited on her hill-top as her forefathers had sat still on theirs, and waited for the prey. Soon it came ; a little breathless, and with footsteps slackening naturally as they neared the brow, just as Pipi had foreseen. Yes, she would do, this *pakeha*, this pigeon ; she would pay to be plucked. . She was nicely dark and stout ; she smiled to herself as she walked ; and such good clothes upon the back denoted certainly a comfortable supply of *hikapeni* (sixpences) in the pocket.

“ *Tenakoe ! Tenakoe !* ” (greeting !) cried Pipi, skipping up from her bank with a splendid assumption of agility, as the stranger came alongside ; and extending her hand, expanding her smile, and wagging her wily old head, as if this strange young *pakeha* were her very dearest friend in all the world. And the bait took ! The *pakeha*, too, stretched forth her hand, she, also, smiled. A catch, a catch to Pipi the fisher ! Let us, though, find out first how much she knows, this fish. . . Not to speak the Maori tongue means not to read the Maori mind, so :

“ *E hoa !* ” says Pipi leisurely, “ *E haere ana koe i whaea ?* ”

Good ! it is all right. The *pakeha* stands still, laughs, and says, “ Oh, please say it in English ! ”

She is ignorant, she is affable, she is not in a hurry. She will do, this nice young *pakeha* ! Pipi translates.

“ Where you goin' ? ”

“ I am going—oh, just along this road for a bit, ” says the girl vaguely.

Pipi considers. “ Along the road, ” in the stranger's present direction, means back towards home for Pipi ; it would surely be a pity to turn

back so soon? A fish on the line, however, is worth two in the water; also, after the feast is eaten, cannot the empty basket be thrown away? in other words, as soon as ever it suits her, cannot she pretend to be tired and let the stranger go on alone? Of course she can! So Pipi says, "Me, too," and, turning her back, for the time being, upon the enticement of the open road ahead, goes shambling back, hoppity-hop, down the hill again, at the side of her prey. She shambles slowly, too, by way of a further test, and, see, the girl instinctively adapts her pace. Excellent! Oh, the pleasantness, the complaisance, of this interesting young friend! Pipi takes hold of her sleeve, and strokes it.

"Ah, the good coat," she cries, with an admiration that she does not need to assume. "He keep you warm, my word! My coat, see how thin!" and she holds out for inspection a corner of her topmost covering, an old blouse of faded pinkish print, phenomenally spotted with purple roses. It is true that she has the misfortune to hold out also, quite by mistake, a little bit of the layer next beneath, which happens to be a thick tweed coat; but this she drops immediately, without an instant's delay, and it is well known that *pakehas* have as a rule only pebbles in their eye-sockets—they see nothing; while their ears, on the other hand, are as *kokota*-shells, to hold whatever you please to put in. "I cold, plenty, plenty," says Pipi accordingly, with a very well-feigned shiver. "How much he cost, your good, warm coat?"

"Why, I don't quite know," replies the *pakeha*. "You see, it was a present; somebody gave it me."

"Ah, nobody give poor Pipi," sighs Pipi, very

naughtily. Is it a good thing or not, that two of the Colonel's old flannel shirts, Mrs. Cameron's knitted petticoat, and Miria's thickest dress, all of them upon her person at that moment, have no tongues? "Nobody give *kai* (food) even. What you got in your big kit?" she asks coaxingly. "Plenty big kit!"

"Ah, nothing at all. Only air. It's just cramful of emptiness," says the girl, sadly shaking her head. "What you got on your back in the bundle there? Plenty big bundle!"

It is useless, of course, to deny the existence of so plain a fact as that pumpkin. Why had not Pipi had the wit to hide it in the fern?

"On'y punkin," she says, with a singular grimace, expressive at first of the contemptibility of all the pumpkin tribe, then changing instantly to a radiant recognition of their priceless worth, for her mind has been

"Stung with the splendour of a sudden thought."

"He *fine* punkin, big, *big* punkin," she cries, and then, munificently, "You give me coat, I give you this big, big punkin!" She exhibits her treasure as one astounded at her own generosity.

The *pakeha*, however, seems astounded at it, too.

"Why!" says she, "my coat is worth at least three thousand pumpkins."

Perhaps it is? Pipi tries to imagine three thousand pumpkins lying spread before her, with a view to assessing their value; but, not unnaturally, fails. Ah well! Bold bargaining is one weapon, but tactful yielding is another.

"E! You give me *hikapeni*, then, I give you punkin." She concedes, with an air of reckless kindness, and a hope of sixpence-worth of *topeka* to be purchased presently on the sly from Wirimu, the gardener.

But "I don't care much for pumpkins," says the stupid *pakeha*. "And I haven't any *hikapeni*," she adds. The stingy thing! A fish? why, the creature is nothing at all but an empty cockle-shell not worth the digging. And Pipi is just thinking that she shall soon feel too tired to walk a single step farther, when, suddenly producing a small, sweetly-familiar-looking packet from her coat, "You like cigarettes?" inquires the *pakeha*.

"Ai! *Homai te hikarete! Ka pai te hikarete!*" ("Yes! Give me a cigarette! I do like cigarettes)," cries Pipi, enraptured, and the *pakeha* holds out the packet. Alas! there are only two cigarettes left in it, and manners will permit of Pipi's taking only one. This is very trying. "You smoke?" she asks innocently. The girl denies it, of course, as Pipi knew she would: these *pakeha* women always do, and Miria, their slavish advocate and copyist, declares they speak the truth. Vain words; for, in the hotel at Rotorua, has not Pipi seen the very best attired of them at it? Moreover, why should this girl trouble to carry cigarettes if she does not smoke, herself? Plenty stupid, these *pakeha* women! Plenty good, however, their cigarettes, and greed (oh Miria!) overcoming manners, "E! You not smoke; you give me other *hikaret*", then," she says boldly.

This miserable *pakeha*, however, proves to be as a pig, that, full of feed, yet stands with both feet

in the trough—she only shakes her head, laughs sillily, and mutters some foolish remark about keeping the other for somebody else she might meet. Ah, well, never mind ; Pipi has at least the one, and she would like to smoke it at once and make sure of it, but “No right !” she says plaintively—she means “no light” ; she has no matches, and no more, it appears, has the *pakeha*. Boiled-headed slave ! How, without matches, can she expect anybody to smoke her cigarettes ?

“Perhaps this man has some,” suggests the *pakeha*, pointing to the solitary driver of a wagon coming down the hill behind them. She explains the predicament, and the man, with a good-natured smile, pours out half a boxful into Pipi’s upstretched palms, and drives on. Ah, and perhaps he had *topeka* with him, too, real, good, dark, strong *topeka* in a stick ; and, had Pipi only been wise enough to wait for him, and let this miserable person go by, she might by now, perhaps, have been having a real smoke. As for this *hikarete*, by the smell of it, Hana, aged thirteen months, could smoke it with impunity. No coat, no *kai*, no *hikapeni*, one *hikarete* of hay—Huh ! the unprofitableness of this *pakeha* !

“You go on !” says Pipi, with an authoritative gesture. They have got as far as the bridge, and she squats down by her swamp. All that long hill to toil up again, too !

But behold, the black-hearted one at her side says, actually, “Oh, I’m in no particular hurry. I think I’ll sit down a bit, too,” and does so. Now, who that has found the *riwai* (potato) rotten wants to look at the rind ?

Worse and worse—who can grow melons in mid-air, drink water without a mouth, or strike a match without something to strike it on? . . . What now? Here is the *pakeha*, in reply to this reproach, sticking out her thick leather boot right into Pipi's hand—an insult? She would kick the *hikaret'* out of it? Not so, for her eyes are soft. . . . Swift as a weather-cock, round whirl Pipi's mobile wits.

“*E hoa!*” she cries with glee. “You give me the *hu* (shoe)? Poor Pipi no *hu*, see! I think *ka pai*, you give me the *hu*.”

But the *pakeha* only shakes her head vigorously and laughs out loud. Is she *porangi* quite? No, not quite, it seems, for, taking a match from Pipi's hand, she strikes it on the clumsy sole, and lo! a flame bursts out. Pipi can light her *hikaret'* now, and does so, coolly using the *pakeha's* skirt the while, as a breakwind, for she may as well get out of her all the little good she can. And now, how to get rid of this disappointment, this addled egg, this little, little cockle with the big thick shell? Aha, Pipi knows. She will do what she has done so often with the prying Mrs. Colonel Cameron—she will suddenly forget all her English, and hear and speak nothing but Maori any more. That will soon scrape off this *piri-piri* (burr). What shall she start by saying? Anything will do; and accordingly she mechanically asks again in Maori her first question, the question she asks every one. “You are going, where?” But, O calamity! This time, the *pakeha*, the ignorant one, not only understands, but answers—and in the same tongue—and to alarming purpose!

“*E haere ana ahau ki a Huria* (I am going to Judaea),” she says. And Judaea is the name of Pipi’s own *kainga*!

“*Kia Huria!* and you know to speak the Maori!” she exclaims, startled into consternation.

“Only a very little as yet,” replies the girl. “But Miria is teaching me.”

“Miria! which Miria?” cries Pipi, in an agony of foreboding.

“Why, Miria Piripi, Colonel Cameron’s coachman’s wife—*your* Miria, isn’t she?” says this monster, with a sudden smile. “She has told me about you, often.”

The truant who should suddenly see his captured “bully” pull the hook out of its jaws in order to plunge it in his own, might very well feel as Pipi felt at this frightful moment. True enough, she had often heard Miria speak of the *pakeha* lady who came to visit Mrs. Cameron and was “always so interested in the natives;” and with the greatest care she had always kept out of her way, for Pipi had her pride—she resented being made into a show. And now——!

“Yes, and I have often seen you, too, though you may not have seen me,” pursued the relentless *pakeha*. “You, and little Hana and Himi. Where are Hana and Himi now? I shall be sure to tell Miria I’ve met you,” she finished brightly.

Alas, alas for Pipi’s sport! The fish had caught the fisher, and with a vengeance. She collected her scattering wits, and met the *pakeha*’s eye with a stony stare, for she came of a princely race; but cold, too, as a stone, lay the heart within her breast.

The heart of the *pakeha*, however, had also its

peculiarities. For all she was a *pakeha*, clad in a fine coat, wearing boots, and carrying cigarettes about with her only by way of Maori mouth-openers : for all this, her heart was the heart of a fellow-vagabond. It understood. She *had* heard Miria, and Mrs. Cameron too, talk of Pipi ; but with a result of which those superior speakers were not conscious. How often she had silently sympathised with the poor old free-lance kept so straitly to the beaten track of respectability ; how often she had wished for a peep at Pipi *au naturel* ! And now she had got it ; and she meant to get it again. She could not help a little mischievous enjoyment of the confusion so heroically concealed, but she took quick steps to relieve it.

“ Well, I must go on,” she said briskly, rising as she spoke. “ Take the other cigarette, Pipi, and here’s a shilling for some *topeka*. *E noho koe* (good-bye) ! Oh, and, Pipi, don’t let’s tell Miria yet that we’ve met, shall we ? It will be so nice for her to introduce us properly some day, you know ! ”

Pipi was game. “ *Haere ra* ” (good-bye) was all she answered, unemotionally. But she could not help one gleam of joy shooting out of her deep old eyes, and Lucy Willett saw it, and went on with a kindly laughter in her own.

That night, when she had rolled herself up in her blanket, and lain down on the *whare* floor (she disdained the foppishness of beds), Pipi glowed all through with satisfaction. Miria, on coming home, had found her seated, patient, pipeless, before the fire, Hana and Himi one upon each knee, both intact, both peacefully asleep ; and had been so

pleased with this model picture, as well as with the size of Pipi's pumpkin, that she had indulged her grandmother with schnapper for supper. And Pipi had found that pumpkin; she had harvested red jam from a fern-bank; she had had one cigarette to smoke, and with another had been able to encourage Ropata's wife to future friendly offices. More than that, she had had time for one blessed pipeful of real Derby, richly odorous, and in her most intimate garment of all could feel now, as she lay, safely knotted up, the rest of a whole stick. Nor was even that all. By some extraordinary good management that she herself did not quite understand, she had eluded the hook as it dangled at her very lips while yet she had secured the bait; and she had an instinctive, shrewd suspicion that, in cleverly causing the eye of the *pakeha* to wink at guilt, she had made sure of more patronage in the future. Who could tell? Perhaps, some fine day, that good thick coat, even, might find its way to Pipi's back. *Taihoa* (just wait)! Meanwhile, what a good day's sport!





II

GRANDMOTHER SPEAKS

“AND so you’ve pretty nearly all got telephones now, down in the Bay, an’ can hear folks talk in Town? Well, well! An’ Doubleday’s buildin’ another side on to his store—is he, now? little Johnny Doubleday, with his pants made out of a sack, that used to come a-tormentin’ me for to give him a bite o’ cold porridge, or a spud, in the days when provisions was run short, an’ the whale-boats weather-stayed. . . . *Johnny*, eh? Times change, so they do! What’s that about the wharf? A new one already? Nonsense, girl! What, further out, you say, so bigger boats can come? Well, my word! I call that clear extravagance. Why, in them days all the wharf we had was the men’s shoulders, an’ they waist-deep in the sea. . . .

“You like to hear tell o’ them days? Do you, now? Well, an’ I’m sure I like to talk of ’em. Get the kettle, an’ put it on to boil, against your mother comes back; an’ lay the tea-things too—then we can talk uninterrupted. . . . Them days, eh! when

the country an' me was young together, nigh on sixty years agone. Eh, dear me, them days! Only to think of 'em's like goin' out into the paddock right early when the sunshine's on the dew. . . . Got the table all fixed? That's right. Then now we can begin.

“ Well, father an' mother an' me come out together, as you know, early in the fifties, when I was but seven year old; an' nearly five months we was in comin', by the way; like everythin' else, ships was slower then. Soon almost as we'd a-landed here in port (that was pretty nigh nothin' else then, only tents, mind you), father, he got word for to go down to sawpit work, down along the coast. An' so, down along the coast we went, in a little bit of a cutter; an' all day long it took us, the men sayin' it was a good trip, too; an' by the time we got there, in the evenin', it was a-rainin', an' a-blowin' very cold; an' never will I forget the look upon my poor dear mother's face as she sat in that boat a-gazin' an' a-gazin' on the land, an' a-seein' what she'd left London town for!

“ It was just a little bit of a beach, at the top of a long narrow bay, that looked for all the world like a finger o' water, two or three miles long, stuck up in between the hills, an' a-dintin' of 'em down—but there! *you* know the Bay. It looked a bit different though in them days; for the hills, that's grass all over now, an' cocksfoot, was covered then with standin' Bush—there was Bush, and nothin' *but* Bush, for what looked like miles above the sand, as well as miles on either side of it; an' the only other thing to be glimpsed, strain your sight how you would, was three or four funny-lookin' huts,

thatched with tussock-grass, an' a-standin' nigh on to the water's edge.

“ ‘Cowsheds, I see,’ says mother, as they carried us out o’ the boat, ‘but where do the poor things feed?’ Poor mother! when they told her all the cows there was in Rakau could go through her weddin’-ring, an’ the furthest house was ours, she just up an’ dropped herself down upon a lump o’ wet seaweed, an’ burst out a-cryin’.

“ It *was* hard on mother, mind you! In them days it was just about as bad as dyin’, in one way, to come out to the Colonies. For you left all your friends behind you, an’ you knew you could never get back no more for to see ’em; leastways, people like mother couldn’t. That was why it was best all to come in a family, when you could, fathers an’ mothers, an’ brothers an’ sisters, an’ the little children—all together, an’ all a-lookin’ the same way. But mother, there she’d a-left her own dear mother behind her, an’ she’d been livin’ in a nice three-storied house down Bermondsey way, with butcher and baker just round the corner, an’ chimney-sweeps, an’ newsboys an’ all, up an’ down the street—haven’t she ’minded me about it, often and often? An’ now here she was, come out to live in a one-roomed hut at this God-forsaken last end o’ nowhere, right the other side the world; an’ no way out o’ the mess but to go straight through with it. Yes, there she sat an’ cried, nor I don’t wonder at it—no more I don’t; an’ couldn’t be got even to look towards our hut, much less to go into it, whatever poor father could do; an’ I sat there with her, while they got the chests and things out of the boat, an’ cried too, for company, at first; only

presently there was a two-three children come a-runnin' out o' one o' the other huts, an' them an' me stood a-lookin' at each other.

“An' then, all of a sudden, I give a great start, an' caught hold, *hard*, o' mother's hand ; for there, stole up so silent out o' the trees that we hadn't heard him come, an' a-standin' straight up before us, was a great tall Maori man ! Mother she looked up, saw him, give one screech that you'd think they could a-heard in Town, an' was off into that there hut of ours, an' me with her, an' the door shut, with both our backs against it, before you could ha' blinked. In them days, you see, a blanket was a native's full dress, an' they mostly didn't trouble to dress full, an' that man hadn't. . . .

“Well, but you can get used to pretty much anything, bless you ! an' specially when you must. It wasn't very long before the Bay was home to me, an' every day a holiday. Not that I hadn't work to do—every one in them days had to do their bit, soon as they was born, almost ; but there wasn't any school (another thing to tease poor mother, but I know it never did me, not till I was grown up), an' all you did was done out in the open, an' there was the sea, an' the Bush, an' I'd my little mates in the other *whares* ; an' then, everythin', pretty near, was contrivance—an' young ones always like that ; it's as good as a game. We'd no oven, I remember, nor no camp-oven neither, at the start ; Mother used to bake in her biggest saucepan. An' we'd no bedsteads ; father, he boarded over the floor, first thing, an' mother used to keep it strewn deep with fresh sawdust from the pits (bright reddish-brown it was to look at, an' as *sweet* ! for

nearly all the trees was pine), and she'd a-brought out her feather-beds with her, an' we spread 'em on the floor an' slept soft. For all chairs an' table, we'd our wooden chests that we brought with us ; an' mother, I remember, made curtains of a bit o' print she had, because she couldn't abide the sight of a naked window—it looked so mean, she said. Mother, she got more contented, after a bit, specially after your great-uncle Mat was born ; but she never come to like the life as father an' me did. See England again ? Poor soul, poor soul, nay, that she never did !

“ What did we do all day, an' how did we live ? I'll tell you. The men (they was all sorts, from them that lived respectable in the huts alongside ours with their wives an' children, to them as had built theirselves little shacks right back in the Bush, an' was mostly Tasmanian ticket-o'-leaf men, an' nothing' for nobody to boast on), they used to work some of 'em at fallin' the Bush, an' some at sawin' the timber in the sawpits. An' then, when they'd got enough cut, one o' the craft 'ud come down for it from Port, an' some o' the men 'ud go away in a whaleboat up to Town with it—plenty o' the wood Town's built of grew green once in the Bay ; an' then, with the money it fetched, they'd buy stores an' bring down. So the men wasn't so bad off, you see, for they did get a change, once in a while ; an' rare old sprees some of them used to have too, don't I know it ! when they found theirselves back among faces again, an' talk, an' news, an' liquor ! But the women, with all the cookin' an' cleanin' an' clothin' to do an' mostly nothin' to do it with : an' they a-grievin' for them they'd left behind, an'

scarce ever a letter : an' all the change ever *they* got, just to look from the Bush to the sea an' then back from the sea to the Bush : an' the little children a-comin' an' a-comin', with never no doctor to call ;—well, my word ! I didn't think of it then, nor understand, but many's the time since I've thought, an' I reckon them women had *pluck* !

“ As for us young ones, it was our part to bring in what wood we could for the cookin' (you ever use black-pine bark nowadays ? It's *the* thing for bakin'—can't be beat), an' to gather mussels off of the rocks when the tide was low ; aye, an' many an' many's the fish I've a-caught an' brought home for dinner from the Point there. There was two winter mornin's I remember, us children found a frost-fish an' brought home. Just a-layin' there on the sand one was, all as *quiet* ! for all the world like a long silver sash-ribbon. . . . Eh, I remember I did wish it *was* a sash . . . wouldn't I ha' got it round me quick if it had been ! though a rare sight it would ha' made, to be sure, a-tyin' in a dungaree over-all. But that other fish, we saw that a-comin' in ; an' it come in a-leapin', an a-loopin', and all in a flurry (nobody knows, you know, what fetches 'em ashore ; only they comes of a frosty mornin' ; nor there ain't nobody as ever caught one with a hook or net, far as I've heard say) ; an' that one, when we got it home, it was long enough to hang right from the top of our door to the bottom, six foot.

“ Then we'd to see, us children, to the gardens. That was easy work, bless you ! All you had to do in them days was, scratch up the soil where any logs had been burnt, or that was anyways clear in the

Bush, an' put in your potatoes, or pumpkins, or maize, or wheat, or whatever it was, an' up they'd come ; there didn't want no manurin' or deep spadin' in that kind soil, I can tell you ; an' next year, you could make your garden somewhere else—there was plenty o' room. Then, when the wheat come up, us children had to grind it, in a coffee-mill as we'd brought from board-ship. The bread, it was made from the bran an' all ; but, seems to me, there's never any now tastes half so sweet.

“ What else had we to eat ? Well, there was wild pig in the bush, an' the men 'ud get one now an' again ; an' there was plenty o' parrots an' pigeon—ah ! them pigeons was good ! Father 'ud go out a-shootin' in the Bush sometimes of a Sunday mornin' (they didn't work of a Sunday, an' of course there was no church ; only once there was the Bishop, Bishop Selwyn, came—it was he as christened your great-aunt Mary Ann there, in old Martin's barn ; but that was later) ; well, an' I'd go with him, an' sometimes he'd shoot as many as twenty, bless you, or twenty-five. Some he'd give away to the neighbours, an' some we'd stew an' eat right hot—I wouldn't mind havin' some of mother's stewed pigeon to-night for my tea, neither, that I wouldn't ! An' as for the rest, mother, she used to put 'em in her big pot, first a layer o' pigeon, an' then a layer o' pig, an' like that, pigeon an' pig, pigeon an' pig, till the end of 'em ; then a little water, an' seasonin', an' stew 'em, stew 'em, stew 'em slow an' slow . . . till when you come to eat 'em cold, there they was all in a jelly, an' *tender*—my word ! Autumn, when the black pine berries was ripe, was the best time for pigeon—but not

spring, for in spring they'd feed on the "goasi"* bushes, an' that made their flesh all bitter. It seems funny now, don't it? to think that every bit o' butter we saw in them days come from England, but so it was; an' all the salt beef too, which was all the meat, but pig, ever we saw. Once, when supplies was pretty low, we tried porpoise—a steak of it; but there, bless you! I'd as soon eat nothin' at all, an' a great deal sooner; though some o' the men said it was all right. An' once we tried shag—an' never no more *but* the once! They did look so nice too, roasted all brown, an' a-smellin' just as *tasty*; but there, the first mouthful, a' that was the last!—don't *you* never cook no shag an' waste good bastin'!

"Tea an' sugar an' tobacco, an' such things, we'd get from Town as we could, any time the men went up with the timber. When they got back depended on the weather, an' sometimes we'd be pretty near clear out o' everythin', an' it was just borrow from whoever could lend till nobody could, an' then, to wait. We'd make tea out of all kinds of Bush things, *manuka* for choice; an' for tobacco the men would grind up different kinds o' bark; but, bless you, they never seemed to get no satisfaction out o' ne'er a-one an' 'twould be grumble, grumble, grumble amongst 'em until the boat got back—about as good company as a teethin' baby is a baccy-lovin' man without his pipe. Clothes? Well, we'd have a roll o' dungaree down at a time, an' everythin' made from that, pants an' jumpers, an' skirts an' bodies', an' all-round pinnies for us children—I can't remember that we ever wore anythin' else in the

* *Kowhai*.

summer ; I'm sure it was warmer then ; I'm sure the climate's changed—without *I* have. On our heads we'd have dungaree hoods because o' the 'lawyer' a-catchin' at us in the Bush, an' us children always went barefoot, like the Maoris.

“There isn't a Maori left in the Bay now, as you know—not a full-blooded one. Some they went to the North Island ; most is dead. . . well, well ! But in them days there was a pretty big *pa* of 'em back there in the Bush, an' in spite of all poor mother could do, it was my dear delight to get to it. Mother, she was good to 'em, though, mind you ! Once she even dressed old Marama's hair up in braids, just like her own—an' can't I see old Marama yet, a-pattin' of her head so proud, an' a-sayin', 'All a-same *te Pakeha*, all a-same *te Pakeha*,' an' never took it down, bless you, for a week.

“I remember Marama cookin' *hapuka* once. She'd a great iron pot, an' what did she put in first of all but a great heap of this here sow-thistle, an' on top of that the fish, all washed an' scaled, an' then fills up the pot with more sow-thistle an' a little water, an' steams it ; an' when it was ready we all sat round on the ground in a circle, an' Marama she tipped the pot right out on the ground in themiddle, so that the fish lay on the sow-thistle ; an' we all took what we wanted—no forks nor plates nor nothin'—an', my word, it was good ! You'd ha' thought the sow-thistle would ha' ruined the taste of everythin', nasty, bitter stuff ; but it didn't.

“How them Maoris did use to catch fish too ! They was the ones, my word ! I've a-seen a Maori man a-layin' down on a rock over the sea, with a bare hook in his hand, no bait—an' him a-bendin'

over, an' a shoal of fishes a-passin' underneath, an' him a-haulin' of 'em out with this 'ere hook, same as I might spoon dumplin's out of a pot. An' the Maori women too—how I did like to see them women a-catchin' eels ! Along in the creek they'd go, with their things tucked up, or off, an' they'd stir up the mud as they went, an' feel along the mud for eels, with a wisp of grass in their hand. An' whenever a woman felt a eel, down she'd stoop in the water, an' slip her hand, with the grass in it for grip, right under the eel—for they're slippy things, them. . . an' my stars ! next minute there'd be that eel a-squirmin' right out there on the bank afore you could say 'Snuff,' an' the Maori woman a-feelin' with her feet for the next.

“ My word, though, didn't some of them sawpit fellows use them poor women bad ! There was one of 'em, Roimata (well-named, for it means 'Tears ') used to live with Black Joe. My ! he was a bad one !—an' there he'd knock her about, an' lock her in so's she couldn't get away, an' carry on all sorts, till the poor soul was fair desperate, an' tried to hang herself with a flax rope. But it broke, so it did, an' cut her throat bad in the breakin'. The tumble, an' the sight of her own blood scared her so as to save her ; for a-lookin' up an' around an' all ways for somethin' to help, there she sees the chimney ; an' lively wi' fright, she does what she'd never ha' thought, most-like, o' doin', else—she scrambles up that chimney, an' out, an' down the other side, an' comes to mother, all over bruises an' blood (my word ! she was a sight), but anyway, safe from Joe. Mother she kep' her till it was evenin' an' she could get away to her own people,

an' they smuggled her out o' the Bay, an' Joe never got her again.

"Eh dear! I remember Roimata said a thing that afternoon, though, as must ha' made mother feel a real Christian to help her after. You see, the Maori women's ways wasn't just our ways, nor our men hadn't helped 'em, mostly, to be so; an' while Roimata an' mother was a-talkin' friendly together that afternoon, Roimata, she says, quite innocent, 'An' how many men,' she says, 'you had?' 'Me? Why, whatever does the woman take me for? Why, one, of course, an' that my own lawful wedded husband!' cries mother, a-bridlin' an' a-bristlin' of herself till she didn't look like the same woman—she was a meek-lookin' woman, mother was, an' pretty too, even to a Maori taste, it seemed; for Roimata, she puts her head on one side, an' lookin' at her kind of sly, 'Too much the lie!' says she, quite positive, as if you couldn't hope to take *her* in about it—she knew better than you, if needful. 'E! too much the lie!' she says, an' looked so sure, that mother she gave up bein' angry all of a sudden an' just burst out a-laughin'. 'The poor heathen!' says mother, as soon as she could speak, an' ever after that she always spoke of Roimata as 'that poor heathen.'

"Yes, that Joe, an' some o' the others, was proper bad lots, so they was! Poor mother, she went in terror of her life of 'em, at one time; for they'd get them liquor down from Town, an' there they'd take an' drink it till it was done (an' they done too, pretty nigh), in a little rotten shanty near to ours on the shore, that they called 'the Old House at Home.' I used to think it wasn't any wonder

they'd a-left Home, if their old houses was really like that ; an' mother, she used to wish more than enough they'd a-stayed there ; for the noise they'd make at night in that quiet place, where mostly there was nothin' but the lappin' o' the sea, and the morepork callin', you couldn't ha' believed,—an' o' course there was fights as well. The Maoris used to say when they heard them noises, that it was *Taipo* (that's the devil, you know), an' I reckon they was about right.

“Well, but at last, one night after they'd all cleared out, that there 'Old House at Home,' it got burnt down ; an' nobody ever rightly knew how, only them as done it. The men was no-ways daunted, though ; soon as ever they could, they gets down more liquor an' puts up another shanty, an' that they christened in raw rum, 'The New House at Home.' But the very first night of their carousin' in it, there's a note gets thrown in at the door a-tellin' 'em, how, if it didn't behave itself no better than the Old, the New House at Home was a-goin' to be burnt down too—an', my word, if it wasn't ! no more than a couple o' nights later. My ! the men *was* mad. Why, they even got the constable down from Town, for to see into it—an' a new novelty it must ha' been to most of 'em, I'll warrant, to be playin' hounds with the constable, 'stead o' hare. But, bless you ! he never found out nothin' no more than they, an' pretty soon he went back.

“Morris, he'd a-lent them his barn for to house the liquor as had come down from Town with the constable, an' to drink it in too ; only you may be sure the drinkin' was quite polite so long as the constable stayed. They was a-reckonin' on a real

good spree, though, the night he left, an' there ! I declare I could almost feel sorry for them men, it's so hard to 'a counted on a thing as didn't never mean to be there, like that there spree. For no sooner was the constable's boat safe round the Head, than I'm blessed if Morris's barn wasn't found to be on fire, too—just too late to save it—an' the kegs inside of it ! Well, that just about settled them men. They begun for to think, like the natives, that *Taipo* was in it ; an' they didn't trouble to build 'em no more Houses at Home ; 'stead o' that, they begun to drop away out o' the Bay theirselves. By that time, for one thing, you see, the most o' the big timber was down, an' the settlers was beginnin' for to settle straight. We didn't begrudge 'em their journey, you may be sure. . . . An' who did burn down them places really ? H'm . . . Well . . . whoever it was knew better than to let a secret like that out in front of their teeth ; but between you an' me an' that there doorpost, I've always had a taste of a suspicion that there peace-lovin' *Taipo* was very much the same shape as my dear good mother !

“ After them men was gone, the Bay was another place. We'd begun to get on a bit, things was more comfortable, the land was getting clear, an' everyone was friends. It was like one big family. We'd all the same aims an' purposes, you see ; an' we all had only each other to look to for help, an' sympathy, an' amusement, an' everythin'. Martin, he had a medicine chest, so he was doctor ; an' Burns, he used to read us the Bible of a Sunday, an' do the buryin'—there was a baby or two died. Seems to me, lookin' back, that there wasn't half the spite

nor the gossip among us that there is among folk now ; maybe it was so much fresh air, as well as so few folk ; or else maybe there *was* the gossip, only that I overlook an' disremember it ; an' a good thing if I do !

“ As the Bush got felled, we sowed grass ; till by an' by, all the place begun to get a lighter green, an' stock was bein' brought. Well I remember that first cow—Blackbird was her name—an' Punch, the first bullock—father bought him ; an' mother an' me we used to have a sledge an' put him in to bring down firewood—though do you suppose we could get him to go ? Not we ! He'd go all right when he felt like it, an' when he didn't we just had to wait till he did. It wouldn't do to have Punch an' the sledge with mother an' me for drivers, these days that you want to catch the steamer so quickly. An' the first horse . . . an' sheep . . . An' the first lamb ! my word, it was a great day for us children when that first little lamb was born. Just you try an' imagine what all them animals meant to youngsters that had been pinned in all their lives, there between them two great spurs of Bush, an' the open sea. Wild pig an' porpoise was about the only big live things, besides men an' women, as we'd ever see ; and who could be friends with either o' them ? Dogs, indeed, the men had had from the start ; but don't I remember my first pussy ? Tortoise, she was, with a yellow face. . . .

“ Soon, too, we begun to build us better houses ; an' pedlars started to come from inland by the new roads cut everywhere through the Bush. By an' by Silas Doubleday (that's Johnny's uncle), he set up a store. My ! how mother did use to

grumble at his molasses. Next thing was, there come a schoolmaster, an' then, 'stead o' swimmin', an' fishin', an' gardenin' all day long, as we'd a' used to do, the children had to sit still an' learn—an' a very good thing too. I was a young woman by that time, an' a silly I felt, I can tell you, a-settin' there among the little ones, an' a-learnin', at last, how to cipher an' write—read I always could; mother she'd took care o' that. There was some others my own size, though, that was one comfort; an' well I remember your grandfather (as was to be) a-settin' beside me an' a-helpin' me with 'seven times,' which I never could remember . . . eh, them days! . . .

“Then they built a church. Before that, the parson used to come over from Port, every few months, for to marry, an' christen, and preach us a sermon in Martin's big barn. An' then we started a choir—I used to like that fine! All our organ, to be sure, was for years Tim Rafferty's fiddle, the same as was our brass band on the nights when the moon was our 'lectric light, an' the hard sand of the beach our ball-room floor; but our singin'-hall was big enough, anyway, for it was the whole Bay, an' our benches was the boats—we was always great hands for singin' on the water. Water seems a natural soundin'-glass for song, like it's a lookin'-glass for light. Sounded nice it did, an' felt nice, too, I can tell you! An' often as not, we'd make a picnic of it, as far as the Head rocks there; boil the billy, an' have our tea, an' sing ourselves home by moonlight. I used to like them trips.

“An' then at last there came the first steamer! That made more difference to the Bay than any-

thin', I do believe ; for it hook-an'-eyed the Bay folk an' the world. My word, though, how them natives did holler when that first steamer—the little *Jane Seymour* she were—come into the Bay of a windy mornin' ! They'd a-seen 'em go past the Bay's mouth often enough, to be sure ; we all had ; but they'd never seen one a-comin' straight as a string for the head of the Bay in the teeth of a southerly wind. Made sure, they did, as it was *Taipo* a-comin' for to carry 'em all away ; an' they let loose one yell out o' thirty throats, an' then up an' away an' back in the Bush, the quickest things on God's round earth. They always thought as everythin' they didn't understand was *Taipo* ; but, mind you, once finish their fright, an' they'd tumble to an' understand pretty quick. . . .

“ Ever I tell you that there tale about the pigs ? No ? Well, it was after I was grown up, but afore I was married, an' it was one year when we had a good lot o' fine big pigs. We had a neighbour, too ; Larry O'Neill was his name, an' you can guess his nation ; and father an' he was partners that year in pig. Well, Larry, he wanted some pork one day, but what he didn't want was to kill any o' his an' ours ; so what does he do, but he hollers out a pum'kin, one o' them long yellor kind, an' cuts slits in the rind, two for eyes, one straight down for nose, an' another for mouth straight across ; an' then, at night, he puts a candle inside of this here pum'kin, lights it, an' goes, very soft, up close to the fence of the Maori *pa* ; an' there he begins to groan, an' to whine, an' to whimper, an' to screech, an' to make in general the most ungodly noises you ever did hear ; an' then, when the

natives peep out, scared to death almost already—for you know they didn't dare out ever after dusk for fear of *Taipo*—there was this here horrible face in the pum'kin, all a-lit up, an' a-grinnin' at 'em !

“ So they knew there *was* a *Taipo* after them that time for sure, not only havin' heard but seen him ; an' the next day some o' the women come down to mother, an' says, did she see that *Taipo* last night ? an' to take care o' our pigs because *Taipo* he'd a-gone off with one o' theirs. If they'd a-looked into Larry's house on the way back, they'd a-seen where he'd gone off with it *to* ; an' mother she said she never felt so mean in all her born life, an' not a bite o' that pig would she demean herself for to touch, nor yet any of the others—for, after that, whenever Larry felt like fresh pork, he'd up an' play another game o' *Taipo*. Three fine fat pigs he got for nothin' that way, an' goodness knows how many more it might ha' been, but that one mornin', very early, before any of us was up, we heard a great squealin' o' pigs up at the *pa*, an' mother, she says, ‘I doubt Larry won't get much more Maorified pork, an' a very good thing, too ; for they seem to be killing the lot.’ An' then, while we was a-dressin', we saw their biggest canoe a-goin' out the Bay, an' ‘There goes the Maori pigs up to Town,’ says mother again.

“ But, O dearie me ! it wasn't the Maori pigs as had gone to Town. When father went down for to feed 'em, he found it was *ours* ! ours, an' that thief of a Larry's ! It seems, the natives they'd tumbled at last to the *Taipo* business, an' this here was the way they was a-settlin' the fresh-pork bill, an' a-havin' their little joke all in one—they'd stole all

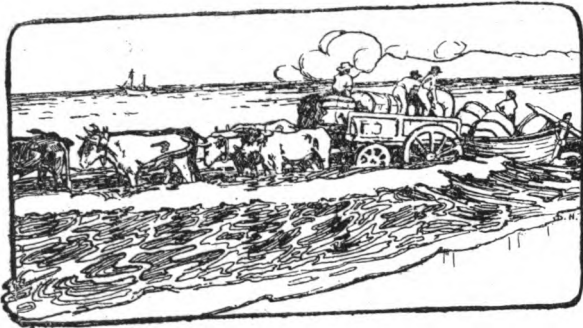
our pigs before we was up, killed 'em in our very ears, an' sent 'em up to town afore our very eyes, an' that at the rate o' ten to three. Larry he laughed fit to split his sides when he saw it all, an' father, though he was a bit vexed—an' I don't wonder—he couldn't help but laugh too. . . . Mother she didn't. Anybody say anythin' to the natives about it ? No, how could they ? But I can tell you one thing though—*Taiipo* didn't trouble the *pa* much after that.

“ Well, well ! the *pa* itself is gone now, an' there's the cheese-factory in its place ; an' you've church every week, an' a public hall an' library, an' a couple o' stores ; an' a steamer a-callin' every other day for to bring you mails from Town, an' the mornin' paper, an' baker's bread, my word ! an' to carry you off for to see your grannies any time you've a mind. Civilisation on tap, as you may say. But I'm not a-goin' to give in to it, for all that, as you've a-got all the meat while we had all the shell. There's many a worse thing to be had in this world than light hearts, an' good nature, an' neighbourliness ; besides, we've all of us grown up tough an' hearty, an' done our day's work in the world.

“ But yet I'm not a-goin' to say as we had all the best of it either. The want o' too much jam on your bread don't make everythin' else sweet, so far as I can see ; an' ours was a rough life, an' a narrow. It's good to think as the children can be taught. It's good to think as the men needn't now to drop asleep all wore out, or to stay awake fit for nothin' but liquor, after the tough day's work o' sawin' or burnin' ; an' to know that the women can have their washin' machines an' their sewin' machines,

an' stoves—yes, an' their pianos, too, an' their time to think as there's somethin' else in the world besides children an' the Bay.

“ Yes, I reckon there's a good word to be said for these days, as well as them days—an' for them as well as these. Well! Well! but for my part I must own as I'm glad it was in them I mostly lived. It's good to be in at the sowin' o' seed that's bound to grow, be it cabbage, or a country. Look now, an' see, does the kettle boil? For there's your mother a-comin' up the street.”



III

ABOARD A COASTING SCHOONER

AMONG the many steamers which line the wharves of any fair-sized port in New Zealand, there will generally be found two or three specimens of another class of vessel, less imposing to the eye, but to the fancy perhaps even more endearing—I mean the coasting schooners. Upon a sea renowned for its storms, and off a coast that bristles with dangers, these adventurous and often beautiful little boats—sea-butterflies in appearance, sea-housewives in utility, sea-heroines in pluck—flit continually back and forth, and succeed in carrying, month after month, and with a degree of punctuality surprising under the circumstances, cargoes of commodities, passengers, and news, to the tiny settlements or single homesteads which they serve as flying bridges between solitude and the world.

Towards the close of a golden summer's evening, now several years ago, one such schooner, the *Tikirau* (82, Captain Fletcher), pushed and panted

her way down Auckland harbour, her white wings fully spread, and her little oil-engine resolutely, for once, at work. She had done exactly the same thing many and many a time before, for she was a boat with a regular trade-route of her own ; and more than once had I enviously admired from the shore the gliding of her exquisite white hull and snowy canvas, and her air—that air which belongs of right to every small craft going forth to front great seas and skies, but which always seemed to hang doubly glamorous about the *Tikirau*—of bravery and adventure and romance.

This time, however—*this* time—aha ! there was a difference. No longer was she mere, remote, cold “ she.” No longer must I wistfully watch her from the “ steady, unendurable land.” Oh, triumph, no ! From a snug, if somewhat narrow, niche upon her own deck was I this time proudly regarding her ; I, yes, actually I too, was aboard ! All the way down to her southernmost limit, all the way back to Hauraki, she and I—we—we, warm *we*, if you please—were going a-coasting together ! Witness of the bravery I was to be, sharer of the adventure, *in* the romance. Hurrah !

She was a full boat that evening. As I looked along her deck (flush fore and aft), I wondered if ever a portion of space had been more thoroughly packed. There were the fixtures, to begin with, the galley amidship, freshly painted to an appetising pink-and-white ; the wheel ; and, right aft, just forward of the wheel, the low oblong roof of the “ house,” with its microscopical cabins and nutshell of a saloon. And then there were the extras—and everything that term included, it would take pages

to recount. From bow to stern, to begin with, the deck was overlaid with a consignment of yellow-brown *kauri* timber, the uppermost tier of which was fairly on a level with her rail ; and on top of this were heaped and piled, lashed and carefully secured under a great tarpaulin, a multitude of queer-looking lumps, whose nature it was far from easy to determine : together with a quantity of casks, kegs, and oil-tins, many wooden cases, and a boat for some settler upon the coast—rurally converted, this last, for the time being, into an agreeable vignette of barn-door life at sea ; for the bow and body of it were richly green with fine fat cabbages and cauliflowers, while the stern was shared by a black, red-ribboned cat (passenger), and a rooster in a coop. There was also a lady-like camellia, in a pot, displaying its glossy leaves just forward of the “house,” and all but concealing a certain little dark gap in the deck, and a miniature funnel close by. The gap, I found afterwards, was the entrance to a tiny engine-room ; the funnel took one by the nose with a double-distilled breath of benzine, and explained itself on the spot as belonging to the little auxiliary oil-engine. It was early in the days of engines aboard such vessels as the *Tikirau*, and ours was something of an adventurous innovation. . . . To tell the truth, there were times when it was *all* adventure ! Lack of pretence was its abounding virtue, and seldom, indeed, so long as I knew it, did it dissemble, by any false alacrity in starting, its deep reluctance to proceed. On the starboard beam, a beautiful whale-boat painted white, like the rest of the ship, swung from her davits ; fore- and main-masts shot

up burnished in the evening light, hoisted head-sails, fore-sail and main, caught and held its gold. With these, and the orderly confusion of the rigging, the very air above the deck appeared as fully occupied as the space below—which, in addition to all the inanimate objects already catalogued, found room too, as we dropped down the harbour, for the entire ship's company, eight all told : for a little knot of passengers, respectfully keeping out of the way in the neighbourhood of the wheel ; and, really to end the list at last, for a satin tabby-cat (on top of the galley), a white fox-terrier, a black retriever, and a couple of very plump pups—rioting, these last, among the men's feet, and acquiring with howls some of the rudiments of discipline.

My fellow-passengers, it soon appeared, included a schoolmaster and his wife, returning to their charge, a native school ; a storekeeper and *his* wife homeward-bound after a trip to town ; and the rather numerous offspring of both couples. The *Tikirau* was their customary conveyance, and they all seemed quite at home.

“ Not too much room, is there ? ” responded one of the ladies good-naturedly when, in shifting my position, I had to apologise for standing upon her feet as well as my own. “ We shall be pretty snug below, I reckon, but it's only a couple of days or so, is it, after all ? How far down are you going ? Our crowd all gets off at the first port.”

“ Pretty snug,” we certainly were when it came to “ turning in.” Indeed, how we actually were all stowed away, I cannot now conceive. But it was managed somehow ; the *Tikirau* was a resourceful ship—and not resourceful only. She carried aboard

of her, besides cargo and crew, a spirit of cordiality and easy comradeship, of hearty and active willingness to make the best of things, that won over into cheerfulness and "roughitability" the most fastidious, and translated every drawback into a joke.

The lights had begun to sparkle and twinkle at our heels and on either shadowy shore, before we reached the Head. We rounded it—and suddenly the city was obliterated, the lights were gone, and, in the deepening dusk, space grew about us. The engine, too, was stopped, the sea-silence fell, and, amid the silence and the darkness and the ever-widening space, the little *Tikirau* stole ghostlike out to sea. The voyage had begun.

I fell asleep listening to the silence, but during the night I heard from the next cabin a child's voice, pleading pitifully for the ship to stop, "an' I'll *walk* home, mummy, I truly will!" The breeze with which we had started was, in fact, freshening considerably; and when morning came, and we staggered, those of us who could, out upon a very slantwise deck, we learned that it was blowing half a gale already, and about to blow some more; that the coast hereabouts was too dangerous to be trifled with, and that we were already running for shelter to an island close by.

It was a wild, magnificent scene. The sun was as brilliant as the wind was furious, there was not one cloud in all the great, shining sky, the sea was a flashing battlefield where the richest, most gorgeous blue imaginable strove for mastery with the brightest and most glittering white; and over the riotous waves, and before the invigorating wind, the little *Tikirau* was flying spiritedly along among a regular,

or rather irregular, network of islands—some mere pinnacles and spits of black volcanic rock, bursting out, as it were, from the windy blue amid sharp outbursts of foam : others running out upon it, in long necks and headlands, capped with tawny turf enough to pasture a few wild goats, and low, shaggy Bush : while others again boldly reared themselves up, and braved its azure on-rush with radiant rose-coloured cliffs. All alike were uninhabited ; and, for a fancy that loved adventure, as well as for an eye that loved colour and light, a better playground would have been hard to find. Then all of a sudden we ran round a bluff, and found ourselves in a small, sickle-shaped bay, deeply sunk between the horns of two high promontories, rimmed with snowy sand, and enclosing a shining crescent of smooth, sapphire water, which looked as though no breath of wind had stolen across it for a week.

There we anchored, and there we stayed all day, for the gale outside continued unabated. Inland, the cliffs ran up into great boulder-strewn hills, sparsely covered with short turf, and low *manuka*-scrub ; and here, fossicking about for the rough-looking lumps of what, when scraped, revealed itself as *kauri-gum* (for *kauri* forest once covered all these barren isles), and setting the boulders to race each other down-hill—oh, the glorious pace they put on !—we managed to amuse ourselves well enough. From the Captain's point of view, however, the delay was less enjoyable, and the old schoolmaster too, Mr. Quin, was already " behind his time " and anxious to get back to duty. He was, however, a gentle old man, and blessed with a remarkable talent for equanimity—the credit of

which, if the crew's demure report was to be trusted, was partly at least due to Mrs. Quin's equally remarkable talent for giving it exercise ; so presently he observed ; " A bad start, my long experience has led me to believe, frequently makes a good finish. And, after all, what a sad pity it would be, supposing we were never granted any opportunity in life for being philosophical ! "

Cheerfulness is, perhaps, one of the very most desirable qualities a shipmate can possess. One felt obliged to Mr. Quin. And his wife was cheerful too, never mind what her other proclivities may have been. A heartening thing it was to see that worthy woman making the best of it at meal times—" Sure, I've no teeth an' no appetite, an' a wee bit of pitaty is all I can be 'atin' . . . an' just a toothful of cabbage, Mr. Black. Eh ? No ; a little bit more than that—an' a crust of bread, Quin ; an' mind you, now, for you cut the last too thin for annythin' solider than a speerit—an' now, Cap'n, I'll just be troublin' you for the least littlest taste more mutton, if you plase—wid a lump o' that fat to it. Sure I've not much appetite ; I have not."

We got away again during the evening, and the next day made a good run past a stretch of the coast where the *Tikirau* did not trade. That was a capital day. The wind was now right aft, and we sailed "goose-wing," the foresail swung out to port, the main to starboard, and the vessel shooting buoyantly forward upon an even keel, with a joyous, exhilarating motion. The boom of the mainsail thus obligingly out of the way, the house-roof suggested itself as a pleasant point of vantage, elevated, and uncrowded ; and there luxuriously

within a coil of rope I sat for most of the day, and revelled in my mercies. It was a world of motion—splendid, unimpeded, exultant ; only to be aware of it was power ; to share it was to be ten times alive. The clean wind blew and blew, and the clouds raced before it ; the great merry waves leapt high into the air, as they came chasing after us, and shoals of porpoises rollicked along in the bright clear water on either side of the vessel as though they recognised in her a playmate—now vigorously rolling their bright black bulks in and out the sparkling surface, now like a company of pale green meteors streaming swiftly below and through it. (“ With all our knowledge we don’t come near *their* power,” old Mr. Quin mused aloud, as he leaned over the side to watch them.) And, with all these forces of Nature, the little *Tikirau*, as she hastened along upon her routine business, with her humble and homely cargo and us humdrum folk aboard, seemed somehow freely to be one. Elemental, spontaneous, gleeful, she too appeared ; she was an incarnate joy, a sea-spirit of delight, a spark of perennial and quenchless activity, somehow encased in canvas and iron and timber ; she was—I don’t know what she was ! but she looked like a bit of Nature ; she behaved like a live thing ; she felt like a friend, and I loved her ! Ships are like horses and people—they have a very definite personality of their own, readily to be felt by those susceptible in such matters. And, of all the ships that I have ever known, the little *Tikirau* stands out in my fond remembrance as easily the kindest, the happiest, and the sweetest-natured.

The day after this, we made our first port, and

there my fellow-passengers were landed, all except the Quins. It was a picturesque little place. Mountains, clothed to the summit with thick virgin Bush, ran in a long, unbroken wall parallel with the shore, from which they were separated by a narrow stretch of tableland, treeless and low. The sea-line of this stretch was broken by the jutting forth of a small promontory, above which the white spire of a little church, a noticeable landmark, rose up from among the low clustered roofs of a native settlement. Tumbled fragments of black rock studded the foot of the promontory ; the wind had fallen, and the sun, although gradually brightening, was veiled in haze ; it was a morning of mauve and lavender, and the water lifted and sank in long even glassy swells, so pale as to be almost colourless.

While the whaleboat was making her first trip ashore with passengers and luggage, the rest of the crew busied themselves in preparing the next load, and the ship showed, so to speak, another side of herself, and turned, as she swung comfortably at anchor, into a market-place. The hatches were off, and all kinds of household riches began to come up out of the holds—white bags of flour, brown ones of sugar, boxes of soap and candles, cases of drapery and provisions, and “sundries” of all sorts, shapes, and sizes. The mate’s voice came up thin and distant from the main hold, deep in the depths of which he was singing out the various items as the winch hauled them up ; while on deck, the purser, seated upon a cask, kept a careful tally. Everybody, I observed, engineer and cook included, was “bearing a hand” in this business of discharging ; it was never, aboard that boat, natural to

be so haughty and select as to stick to your own job only.

Some of the timber had already been lashed into a raft, and this, presently, was vigorously shoved over the well-greased rail, and left to drift ashore. The faint sunshine brought out all the mellow hues of the wetted planks as they rose and fell upon the waves ; it dwelt pleasantly upon the green " garden " in the boat, polished the camellia leaves, slightly lit the masts as they swayed to and fro, and painted to pale gold the mainsail lying heaped in its lazy-jacks, and the fore- and head-sails drooping in gathered bunches as one sees them in the old sea-pictures. Overhead the shrouds and ratlines rocked, sharply black, upon the gentle grey sky ; and the holds at one's feet presented pits of a rich darkness. A little column of blue wood-smoke streaming up from the galley brought the Bush out to sea ; Tim, the cook, splitting *manuka* for his stove at an odd moment of leisure, and the two pups fighting for a bone—white Floss and black Darkie had hilariously gone ashore in the boat—lent an air of real domesticity to the scene. But, ah ! all the while, underneath, swung, heaved, breathed the joyous instability !

At the captain's invitation, I went ashore with him in the " second boat," just to have a " look round." We were greeted by an eager assemblage—all native, with the single exception of our late shipmate, the store-keeper, who was watching the delivery of his goods—and all very smiling and gay. The arrival of the *Tikirau* was the event of the month, for no other vessel traded to this port, and a track along the coast was its only other link with civilisation. The sight of all these brown,

bright-eyed faces waiting beside the surf carried one's fancy clean back to the days of Captain Cook ; and nothing, at a little distance, was easier than to imagine ourselves the original *pakeha* explorers of this shore. But the moment we landed, yesterday took to its heels, and pale fancy proved nothing of a rival to robust reality—robust, and lively !

Tall, well-built men (the Maori of this district is among the finest of his race), all in European dress : women in loose, fluttering garments of indigo, pink, or white, with the blue tattoo (is it not really rather becoming ?) beneath the lower lip, a silk handkerchief over the rich, rippling hair, and rosy bloom beneath the golden-brown of their cheeks : young girls, lads, children of all ages :—the whole crowd dashed at once upon their visitors with the loudest and friendliest of welcomes. Cries of the all-embracing *Tenakoutou* (Here you all are !), of the discriminating *Tenakoe* (Here thou art !), came musically from every mouth, and there was much enthusiastic shaking of hands. The captain, it was instantly evident, was a popular and universally trusted visitor, and everybody who was anybody began at once to pour into his ear (poor man, he needed dozens, and large at that !) tidings of some unexampled need for *huka*, *hopi*, and *paraoa* (melodious Maorifications of *sugar*, *soap*, and *flour*), or inquiries as to some private consignment, such as a pipe, a walking-stick, or a hat with flowers in it ; while the rest, biding their time, occupied themselves meanwhile in talk and laughter with the boat's crew, vociferous comments upon the goods already landed, and a minute examination of each package.

Several horses, with remarkably long tails, stood patiently waiting beside a *puriri* tree a little way along the beach—the owners had ridden in from their scattered homes at the first word of the *Tikirau's* approach ; many of the women squatted in conversational groups upon the sand, and puffed at short black pipes ; the younger men helped to bear the packages up the beach, the elders looked on and gave advice, and there was much excitement on the part of many dogs, of course including ours. The little *Tikirau*, riding so peacefully out yonder, had sent ashore quite a stir.

It was good to see that, with scarcely an exception, the children seemed to be in the best and bonniest of health ; they were well-formed, well-grown, and plump. But among the grown men and women the ravages of tuberculosis were, alas ! only too evident. One face I vividly remember. It was that of an old man. Pitifully emaciated, wrapt in a thick blanket for all the sunshine, which was by this time cloudless, and leaning over a stick, he stood a little aside from his active, eager neighbours and with hazel eyes paled by mortal sickness gazed wistfully, not at them, not at the bounty-bearing *Tikirau*, but away out over the empty sea to the void horizon—and beyond. Still in life, already he was not of it.

While the unloading, the squaring of accounts, and other general business thus proceeded on the beach, I took a tour round the settlement, Te Kaha by name. It was an excellent example of the type general upon that coast, therefore a brief description of it will be economical and save words about the rest. Its public buildings were three in number—

the school-house, of the usual anti-picturesque appearance, the landmark church already mentioned, bare and clean, and the native hall or meeting-house, which was no bad type of the native race in its present transitional condition ; for its roof was of grey galvanised iron, while the barge-boards of its deep eaves were richly carved with the characteristic Maori patterns, and crowned by a very fine *teko-teko* (carved figure), with the customary grimacing face, protruding tongue of defiance, and gleaming *pawa-shell* eyes. Inside, matters were more purely native. Panels of scroll-work painted in harmonious dark-blue, crimson, and white, brightened the single, long, barn-like interior ; rolls of mats and blankets indicated its use at night as a community bedroom ; hanks of dressed flax glistened like white silk upon the walls, and a couple of pleasant-faced women, careless, for some cause, of the ship's arrival, were busily weaving a mat. Even here, too, however, there were incongruous traces of the *pakeha*. Between two of the panels, there hung a *Graphic* picture of one "Adeliza," highly coloured, golden-tressed, low-bodiced, very tight-laced ; several cloth jackets richly trimmed with jet hung beside it, and a large swing looking-glass, such as more generally stands upon a dressing-table, decorated the floor in the neighbourhood of the two women and emphasised, slanderously, I trust, the proportions of the passing foot.

As to the private dwellings, they were the ordinary *whares*, of varying size, standing in separate plots of ground, with palings of brown *punga* (tree-fern stem) between them, and over the palings very brightly striped blankets flung forth, most sensibly,

for an airing. Streets, in our sense of the word, there were none ; but little paths of grass meandered between some of the fences, and provided, no doubt, all the access needed among neighbours so near. By the sighting of the *Tikirau* the little town had been "emptied of its folk that pious morn." Peace and silence brooded above the *whares*. Blue-gums, willows, and poplars here and there stood sentinel over the low, smokeless roofs ; there were rose-trees as well as potato-blossom in some of the garden patches ; while, beyond the outermost palisade of the *pa*, broad, fenceless fields of tasselling maize spread away towards the forest-dark hills, and before the sweet blues and purples of the now sunny sea laid an unshadowed strip of sweet and lively green.

During the afternoon we made and worked another port—a little grassy bay this time, containing in itself no buildings at all, except a kind of open barn stacked with golden maize cobs ; but tapping a trade district, and possessing some special advantages. One side of it ran out into a curious little peninsula, of the usual black volcanic rock, which terminated in an island, and made of the bay a natural harbour, familiarly known aboard as the "Boarding-house." That very same night proved its virtues ; within the breakwater we lay snug, though the wind had swung round and was blowing strong from an undesirable quarter.

Morning brought with it no moderation ; it was useless to think of getting out. "So much the better," one of the men observed to me in an undertone. "Like peaches ? 'Cause this is the shop for them." And, accordingly, after breakfast nearly

all of us were off ashore, and kits and sacks went with us. I have no space, and I should like to imagine that I had the power, to describe that rare ramble. We peered down from the low cliffs through black boughs of *pohutukawa* trees, still starred here and there with blood-red blossoms, upon the great, green, glassy combers that rolled majestically inshore, to slip suddenly over, as they neared the yellow sand, in long crashing waterfalls of snow. We scrambled through undergrowth, fought through "lawyer," waded through fern, jumped little creeks, apostrophised supple-jacks, and from time to time kept coming out upon some unexpected open glade. Green grass would spread it with the softest carpet, and in the middle of the grass there would be a tree or two, perhaps a little grove of trees, with the rosy gold of ripe peaches glowing between the leaves.

The early missionaries, I was told, had planted these trees, which now, in the little clearings from which all other sign of human occupancy has long since departed, still flourish faithfully, and bear fruit. "Missionary," in the North Island is frequently an alternative spelling for "sweet-brier," which is a pest. As a matter of mere justice, therefore, I am glad to take this opportunity of pointing out that it can also spell "peaches," which are not. We found apple-trees, too, figs, and plums along the coast, all planted by the same long-quiet hands, and grapes, I was told, later in the year might be had also for the gathering.

One very pleasant half hour of the afternoon was spent in repairing our friend Mrs. Quin, the valiant struggle of whose fourteen stone or so through the

Bush had left behind her, in addition to a very fair wake, a considerable portion of petticoat. Our implements were but plain; they consisted of a sail-needle, some blue worsted with which it happened to be threaded, some green flax (throw a copper into the fountain of Trevi if you wish to revisit Rome: if you would come back home to New Zealand, sew a garment with green flax), the mate's fingers, and every one's ungrudging advice; but the effect they produced was striking, and it gave us great satisfaction, in spite of the heroine's scathing "Sure, 'tis a walking piece o' patchwork wid a bite out of ut I do be lookin'—no offence to ye, Mr. Black, for I know ye done your best!" Finally, we harnessed Floss and Darkie to our kits of peaches, and raced them home to the whaleboat across the soft sand of the beach. That was a very good day.

By the morning following the wind had shifted a point or two, and the skipper decided to put out. The engine was accordingly started, sail set, the anchor hove in, and we had just got beyond our breakwater, and well into the tumble outside, when, at one and the same moment, the wind failed, and our imp of an engine stopped dead.

So there we were, with all that spread of canvas, and our getting-out just as far advanced as to have brought us beyond shelter—helpless, and extremely close to a shore that, of a sudden, had completely lost all charm. It was an anxious moment. "If worrying would help, I would worry," murmured gentle Mr. Quin, "but it won't; so I don't." Far less "philosophical" were the rest of us, I fear; and the maker of that engine ("Engine? Darning-

machine, you mean ! ” snorted one of the men) must have had more anxious moments than one—many more—if only half the wishes then expressed so frankly on his behalf came true. Mrs. Quin was eloquent for a long time ; then I suppose her conscience pricked her, for she finished with the following comfortable combination of “ pious ” with “ natural ” feeling. “ Oh, lave the poor man to God ! Isn’t that what my mother advised herself when a mean skunk of a fellow went an’ killed the wan little goat on her, that was all she had, bless her ! to feed us childer wid ? And widin’ the year, was there wan baste in all that gentlemine’s paddick but had died ? There was not. Now ! ”

The boat meanwhile had been sent out with a kedge anchor, by means of which the *Tikirau* was soon warped back to a safe position ; and this was no sooner accomplished than the engine, of course, started work. It puffed us forth once more into the wind with the greatest good-will, apparently, in the world, and seemed ready to go on for days. But as soon as we were well out, instead of stopping us, I am glad to say the darning-machine got stopped itself, and away with all her might (somehow, one never thought of the engine as being part of her might, or indeed part of her in any way), flew the *Tikirau*, bounding and dancing, swinging and leaping over the great blue hills of water like a wild thing rejoicing in liberty.

That afternoon we were able at last to land the loudly thankful Quins—Mrs. Quin’s expressions having a deeper depth than we understood at the time, for among her various bundles and kits she was slyly conveying ashore with her (“ convey, the

wise it call ") the greater portion of our harvest of peaches. Peace be with her! On our way back she made amends after her own fashion with a cake—made after her own fashion, also; it must have had pounds of butter in it. "That's the worst of Ma Quin—never no reasonableness with her," Mr. Black observed, on getting clear of his first and only mouthful. "Got a tongue o' leather that'll never wear out, an' yet a heart o' gold; do hanythink for you if you was sick—an' then go and *make* you sick with truck like this 'ere. Got no moderation, the old lady hasn't." Well, and she was in consequence much more interesting than some people one meets, who have nothing else! I missed "Ma Quin."

After they went I was the only woman aboard, and remained so for nearly all the rest of the trip. People have sometimes asked me whether I did not find the position awkward. Never; not a bit! there was nothing to make it so. The crew were a steady, respectable set of men—upon that point the captain was particular; I never heard a foul word from any one of them all the time I was aboard; and the *Tikirau* carried no liquor. "I suppose, then, you were treated as a kind of princess?" has been sometimes an alternative suggestion, to which, "Not a bit!" is again the answer. No; I was treated just as an ordinary woman is ordinarily treated in New Zealand by her male fellow-citizens—that is, with a frank friendliness; respectful because self-respecting, easy without familiarity, and probably due, partly at any rate, to the political equality of the sexes—certainly not in the very least endangered by it. Nothing, perhaps, in all

New Zealand intercourse is more marked and more charming than this trait. A princess aboard the *Tikirau*? No, thank you! I was something infinitely more to be envied—an equal, a comrade, a shipmate; to be freely talked to, listened to, helped, confided in or laughed at, as occasion demanded—And have I ever enjoyed myself more?

A word or two now as to the individual members of the ship's company. Skipper first, of course. Captain Fletcher was a short, wiry man, with a beard already turning grey—for a seaman ages early as to looks; essentially active both in mind and body, and in manner rather reserved, although he was excellent company when you knew him. As a man, he bore a well-merited reputation for kindness, integrity, and, best of all, scrupulous justice; as a seaman, he had often been proved both skilful and wary. "Never knew the old man's equal for dodging weather," was an approving sentence that I often heard aboard the *Tikirau*. He had an extreme dislike to being better off in any way than his men; and, to the scandalisation of Tim, the cook-steward, who considered such a state of things "unnatural," afterguard and foremast hands upon that democratic vessel took their meals together; nor would the skipper even permit, to Tim's extra disgust, the least additional luxury at his end of the table. He often worked side by side with his crew; and I have known him fret at having to set one of the hands to do what he would have disliked doing himself. At the same time, so safely and completely, other things being equal, is position secured by character, he was in every conceivable way the master of his ship, and possessed, moreover, the unqualified

respect of every one aboard. "When he likes," too, I was informed, "the old man can say *what* he likes, an' mean it too, and no mistake about it!" I could say a good deal more concerning Captain Fletcher; and I only do not say it because his eye may possibly fall upon these words, and I have no desire to endanger, by falling foul of that stern modesty which is another of his characteristics, a friendship won during that trip upon the *Tikirau*, and, I am proud to believe, flourishing still.

Next, Mr. Black, the mate—a square-set little cockney, rough in appearance, somewhat gruff of speech, all at sea as to his "h's" and of a nature most hot-hearted and impulsive. "Jolly funny," I learned, could Mr. Black be, when he "had a full cargo aboard"; and I did not doubt it, although happy to be spared the entertainment. On the other hand, he was easily the most domesticated sailor I have ever met. Without the faintest hesitation, it appeared, he had at a week's notice dashed into marriage with the widowed mother of a large family, and to use his own words, "hadn't never looked back on it neither." "W'en we was spliced, wot's more, we 'adn't no more than a one arf crown between us!" he added, and seemed to think this was the crowning triumph.

"Most imprudent!" said I.

"Imprudent?" said he. "Tell you w'at. That's twelve year ago, that is, an' I on'y wishes it was twenty-four." The heartiness of his tone explained these somewhat ambiguous words as a noble tribute to Mrs. Black. "Now, you jest look a-here, an' berlieve *me*," he went on with emphasis. "Merriage, w'y—merriage is orl *right*, I tell yer!"

“ Hold on a bit ! there’s two sides to every plate, chum,” objected Tim, who was also a married man. “ Look at all the worries you get, an’ the responsibilities, an’ the bills, an the kiddies gettin’ sick—I got one sick now—an’——”

“ An’ w’en yer gits ’ome, the pair o’ sleeves wiv two harms in ’em roun’ yer neck. An’ that’s worf it hall ! ” finished Mr. Black, with feeling.

Upon my spinster liberty he was wont to comment with a bitter disapproval. He only scowled when I suggested with a sigh, that the otherwise blameless existence of Mrs. Black had now blasted my prospects for ever ; and used scathingly to refer to me as “ the man-hater ”—most unfairly, for I liked Mr. Black.

Mr. Scott, the old engineer, was hale and hearty, rosy and smiling, but somewhat taciturn and very deaf. Intercourse with him was difficult in any case, for at meals his plate received his undivided attention, and the remainder of his waking hours appeared to be spent in silent communion with his sphinx of an engine, which he never left, whether she were working or not. She had, as previously hinted, not the sweetest breath in the world ; so that there was point in Mr. Anstruther’s suggestion that her adorer must have an affection of the nose as well as of the heart.

Mr. Anstruther was the purser, and a good foil in many ways to old Mr. Scott ; for he was a sprightly and active young man, the impersonation of light-heartedness and good-humour, always ready for anything, work or play, and a great hand at making and appreciating practical jokes, against himself if occasion demanded—he was not particular. The

puppies adored Mr. Anstruther. Cats have no sense of humour, and poor Tib did not.

Of the foremast hands the *Tikirau* carried three ; Phil, Tom and Fritz. Tom was steady and sturdy ; a silent, fair-haired fellow, and one of the best workers aboard. Phil was tall and dark, and loved a jest ; he was now making his last trip down the coast—as a seaman, at least ; for on the death of a relative he had lately “ come into a bit of land,” and intended to turn farmer. He was a good-natured, friendly fellow, but everybody has his limit, and poor Phil’s shared his watch, wore a stout Teutonic form, and answered to the name of Fritz. None of us, I think, knew Fritz very well ; he had what is known as “ a queer temper.” I ventured one day to ask him about his friends in the old country. “ Fräulein,” he replied, almost it seemed to me with sour satisfaction, “ I haf not one friend in de vorld.” “ Won’t choke nobody to swallow *that*,” was Phil’s comment, when he heard this sad statement. The pair were continually at logger-heads. The last time I heard of Fritz, he, too, had quitted the sea, had got married to a portly Maori dame with some land of her own, and, like Phil, had turned farmer. What a frightful thing it would be if those two farms touched !

Last of all, though by no means least important, comes Tim, the cook-steward. Tim was a half-caste, and a picturesque creature, full of contradictions and contrasts. To begin with, he had the physique of a warrior—over six feet tall he was, and broad in proportion—a noble figure of a man ; yet he spent his days contentedly in housewifely dealings with pots and pans, and within quarters so

narrow that I used to watch for his entrances and exits to see how he managed them. Then he had a very violent temper, very ready to be roused. "Ought to have been on deck a bit earlier," I was told one morning, "and seen old Tim a-kicking his bread-sponge round the deck, because it hadn't rose." Yet at the same time no one aboard, not even Mr. Anstruther, could more positively scintillate with good humour, nor could any one ever be gentler or more patient with women, children, and dumb animals. Easily elated, again, by some very little thing, he was equally capable of enduring fits of depression. "I'd a sister once," he told me; "she was my mainstay—it was before I married—and she died. Straight off on the bust I went, and drank for seven solid months after." Blessedly clean about his work was Tim, and a really clever cook, too, and proud of his job. Much of our domestic harmony aboard the *Tikirau* was probably due to him; for although we were soon "down to tins and salt tucker," and our meals were simple, as all meals at sea anyway ought to be, yet they were both nourishing and varied, and always interesting.

Oh! those meals aboard the *Tikirau*! They have not lost their relish yet. I have but to close my eyes, and the whole scene comes back to me—that little, artless saloon, fairly filled by its long centre table, with the swing tray of glasses above, and the filter in one corner: the sweet, bright air and sunshine gushing freely through the open skylight, and down the two or three steps of the companion—interrupted there, however, at times, by the massive form of Tim descending with a load of steaming dishes, or that tea-can of phenomenal size—and,

round the table, all our expectant, sunburnt, shining faces, and eyes bright with the genuine sea-swing.

I can see once more the Captain at the head of that family table, gravely attentive to his paternal task of distribution ; old Mr. Scott, equally absorbed in the sacred duties of consumption ; Tom, his fair hair brushed carefully into a verandah above his bashful eyes ; Fritz, chin to plate, silently ladling in enormous mouthfuls, *more Germanico* ; Mr. Black, putting into his dealings with his dinner the same heartiness and dispatch which had secured him Mrs. Black ; Mr. Anstruther, brimming over with some humorous nonsense or other : and Phil's brown eyes readily responding to the joke. Yes, indeed ! Our plates were not of porcelain ; we drank from mugs, and there was no butter-knife ; the tablecloth (yes, we had a tablecloth, boiled once a week in a kerosene-tin, hung on a backstay to dry, and ironed while yet a little damp, by the primitive process of being folded underneath a locker cushion and sat upon daily until wanted), our tablecloth lacked gloss perhaps, and our *menu*, as I have said, was limited, and strictly of a sea-going description : but not for the very choicest and most delicately served banquet ashore would I have exchanged one of those hearty reunions. "Aha ! *you* know how to take the lee-side of the duff, I see," Mr. Black was wont to say in friendly approval of my excellent appetite. Alas ! I would be content to take but the weatherside, if it might only be again aboard the genial, the congenial *Tikirau* !

But now to get back to the trip. The same day that we landed the Quins, we succeeded, by a bit of rare good luck in the matter of wind, in rounding

the chancy, or rather, unchancy, headland, that makes a sharp angle in that part of the coast-line—Cape Runaway, namely ; and ran, just at nightfall, into Hicks Bay, a small, deep indentation upon its farther side. Here we had a surprise, and a pleasant one, for the riding-lights of no fewer than four other small vessels twinkled through the twilight, shot streamers of gold down through the quiet water, and lent to this remote and lonely inlet the cheerful and homelike appearance of a peopled port. The men named these boats readily from their rig. “That’s Peters in the *Resolution* ; an’ that’s the *Konini* next, an’ the *Coronation*—ought to ha’ been in Auckland days ago ; an’ the little ’un she’s the *Aorere*. No’therly bound, all of ’em, an’ put in here for shelter. Visitin’ cards in the cabin soon, you’ll see.”

And, sure enough, the *Tikirau’s* anchor was scarcely down before the splash of oars resounded alongside, and the calling had begun. Our little saloon was shortly refurnished with a tableful of quite new faces, and the evening sped away like a shot in animated discussions concerning weather, trade and—engines.

Just before sunrise next morning, while we were loading our first boat, one after another the rest all slipped past us, out upon their homeward way, for the wind had come fair. Hicks Bay is perhaps the most picturesque spot on all that picturesque coast ; and a lovely sight it was that morning. A tawny, grass-grown promontory ran out upon the sea to our right, the opposite barrier was a tumble of black rocks and Bush, and the head of the bay was formed by lofty mountains, covered almost to the water’s

edge with thick virgin forest. As at Te Kaha, a little white church stood out upon the shore with very precise distinctness against this dark background, and the grey, silken sea was sprinkled by the white sails of the escaping craft. Everything was clear, almost curiously clear, in the still, sober atmosphere. Then suddenly, from the sharp-ruled sea-line eastward, leapt the bright round forehead of the sun, and the daily miracle of light was wrought! Everything came instantly *alive*. The clearness was coloured now, the clearness polished; visibility was radiance, movement became manifest and shone. The awakening world opened its eyes, and there was a laugh in them; all life drew a deeper breath. The breeze freshened. The ripples that ran shoreward before wind and sun were now of a lively blue, and crisped and ruffled with gold. The wide free air and sky were bright as gems—almost too bright; ashore, the black solidity of the Bush was broken and quickened into green tree-tops of a hundred tones, glossy *karakas* twinkled above the rocks, and the grave little white church smiled. About the sparkling bay, silvery sea-swallows now flashed and darted, and those four homely coasters running out with the wind became four visions of most aerial beauty. The *Aorere* passed close by; her deck and spars were of gleaming gold, her sails were cloth-of-gold; sparkles of light broke from the brass upon her wheel and the ripples at her foot; the unkempt, weather-beaten faces of her crew, turned sunward, were transfigured as if by triumph, and light flashed from heavy eyes.

By and by we rowed ashore in the whaleboat, and then I saw the *Tikirau*—she was the loveliest of

them all! The naked, newborn radiance full upon her white hull, and broad upon the mainsail under which she was riding, there she swam upon the water like a shining sea-bird, with one gold-white wing uplifted, the quivering water-lights, blue and silver, playing upon her beautiful bows, and the gleaming glassiness below her faultless mirror. The white whaleboat, with her exquisite lines, was the worthy daughter of so beautiful a mother: I never could watch her leave the schooner's side without appreciating afresh that old imagination of the Maoris when first they saw the *pakeha* frigate with her pinnace—that the one was the parent-bird and the other the fledgling.

Three loads ashore, and then we were off again; and by noon were rounding a second great cape, East Cape, off which, at a little distance, lay a precipitous and barren islet, a mere, but mighty, rock. A zigzag path toiled up it, and on the top appeared the conspicuous white building of a lighthouse, with some lower roofs huddled beside. In our small vessel, and with the breeze then blowing, we were able easily to pass between the mainland and the rock, and, as we slid close by, "Give 'em a good-day," somebody suggested; "it's a lonely life, that!" Every one of us, except the man at the wheel, accordingly seized something—anything that was handy, from one's neighbour's cap to the dinner-cloth—and waved it with hearty goodwill; and immediately, as if by magic, answering white signals broke from the watchful windows and doors above.

With the glass we could pick out the forms of women and little children; one mother had a baby

in her arms. A lonely life indeed ! and what a setting for the impressionable days of childhood—no trees, no grass, no birds except the sea-fowl, no paddock but the flat and barren tumble of sea, no room except for the eye, and, instead of the thousand-and-one friendly and pretty details of Mother Earth, simple, sheer, uncompanionable space. No bad abiding-place perhaps for a mind stored with theories calling for arrangement, or big with thoughts demanding birth—a kind of attic, indeed, of the Universe ; but what does a child make of it ? and what does it make of the child ? I should greatly like to know. The hardship of having to endure so anchored an existence seemed to us that day almost intolerable ; for we ourselves were gloriously leaping and flying along before a gallant wind and over a sea of gleeful green and silver. There were islets of cloud in the sky, and these could travel with us ; but that poor pinnacle of rock was swiftly left behind—left to rooted loneliness. Now it was a mere cloud on the horizon—now it was gone.

The port at which we called next had a pleasant distinction. It owned a bullock-cart. Generally speaking, upon that shallow and surf-beaten coast our men had to do a great deal of wading in the course of loading or unloading the whaleboat—wearry work, with heavy kegs and cases on your back ; so that it was a grateful relief at Waipiro to find a team of eight great bullocks, with a capacious cart attached, waiting in the surf for our boat-load. How picturesque they looked, too, in addition ! with their wide-branched horns, and great bulks of glossy red and chestnut and black, very vivid above the vivid blue of the sea and whiteness of the surf,

in the midst of which they stood patiently planted, like unusual rocks.

So the bright days ran on. Now we were at sea, now ashore; sometimes we hung off and on a little, to give the tide time to make or ebb, or the surf a chance to abate; once or twice, indeed, we were compelled to give up all hope of a landing, and to run past some expectant port or homestead; but, upon that lucky trip, not more than once or twice. Our return loads on the way down were mostly empty casks or cases ("Passenger with personal luggage," I remember Mr. Anstruther once unkindly announcing as they brought me back from shore upon a load of empty beer-barrels); but, as we proceeded south, we began, too, to take in some bales of wool. Would you care for a succinct and accurate account of a specimen day? Here it is, then, straight out of the ship's log, which was laboriously made up each night in the saloon by Mr. Black (pipe in mouth, elbows spread, head laid upon one shoulder, severe frown on brow—can I not see him?), and which lies before me now as I write.

"*Tuesday, 12/1/19*—. At 5 a.m. lowered boat and landed cargo at 6.15 finished, started engine, secured boat and anchor went on to tuparoa and landed cargo, received 18 bales of wool on board at 10 a.m. finished and went on to reparoa and landed and shipped cargo at 2 p.m. set all sail secured boat and anchor and went on to port Awanui at 4. p.m. rounded E cape, light S. wind, 8. p.m. Howerea point abeam midnight calm clear weather. Barom 30, 20 pump and sidelights carefully attended to.

"JOHN BLACK, Mate."

The scenery changed as we proceeded south ; not for the better from the picturesque point of view, though perhaps a farmer's eye might have found it more promising. The abrupt black crags and rocks of scoria gave place to the smooth smugness of *papa*, blank and biscuit-coloured ; the proud, Bush-covered crests and deep gullies were supplanted by undulating grass-lands, treeless but for a spiky cabbage-tree here and there, a starry *ngaio* or so, and a good deal of *tauhinu* scrub, aromatic but unprofitable. A coach road, too, began to be visible, with now a trickling mob of sheep, now a vehicle or horseman proceeding along it. At Tolago Bay, Captain Fletcher showed me the place where Cook lay all one winter and overhauled his ship ; as well as a strange, eerie spot in the hills near by—a sort of deep grassy crater, at the bottom of which, through a great tunnel, the sea comes washing back and forth into the very heart of the hills.

And the scenery aboard the *Tikirau* changed too, as we neared our southernmost port of call. The "farm-yard" boat had disappeared long before ; its cabbages were now green but in memory, the cock, the cat, and the camellia had long been landed ; day by day the casks diminished and the cases dwindled ; day by day the leap into the whaleboat grew longer and the climb aboard more steep. There even came an hour when the final raft of timber went over the side ; and at last, one fine morning, lo and behold ! new-washed and immaculate, the actual planking of the deck appeared, and the vessel looked as strange as a familiar room does when all the furniture is out of it. The next day we ran into Gisborne.

At Gisborne we lay some three or four days, discharging and reloading. Then, homeward-bound, and once more with a well-piled deck, the *Tikirau* went out again, to trade up the coast instead of down. Places, like people, are extremely different according to the way in which you approach them ; and although we steered practically the same course, and called at pretty nearly all the same ports, our passage up, nevertheless, stands out clear in my memory as quite a different trip from our passage down. We had still, however, the same brilliant weather—I remember scarcely one grey day, although plenty of rough ones—it was still an epic of brightness, a long delightful tale of “blue days at sea.”

Once we dipped our ensign, run up for the occasion, to a man-o'-war, whose trim hull and yellow funnels were dodging in and out among our remote haunts, taking soundings, we supposed ; she looked like Behemoth in comparison with our insignificance. Once we sighted a whale, once we caught a young shark, and several times we had a porpoise hunt. These were quite exciting. One of the men, armed with a harpoon, would take his stand in the chains ready to strike at any polished back as it rose or rolled beneath him ; another man stood by with a bowline to be slipped instantly over the tail of the “catch” by way of support, while Floss and Darkie, rigid with excitement, paws upon the rail, hindfeet on the deck, rapturously barked and squealed. Once a porpoise did get “fixed” ; but the bowline was not ready at the moment, and the poor victim, breaking away from the harpoon, ripped a great square out of his back, and left a

horrible stain upon the blue surface beneath which he shot away. "Pity! His mates will eat him now, an' porpoise liver is as good as calf's any day," said the regretful Nimrod in the chains. "Ought to ha' looked a bit livelier with that there line, mate. But there! ought stands for 'nothing,' don't it?"

One beautiful evening we spoke another of our own fleet. We were anchored in a bay beneath mountains covered with Bush, which in one place was on fire, and sent a ruddy, pulsing glow across the sky and deep into the water. Opposite, in perfect contrast, hung the full moon, peaceful, and pure, and pale; and I was lying on the "house" roof, lulled into delicious dreaminess by the humming of the surf ashore, the wash of the water along the vessel's side, and the satisfying loveliness all round, when—gradually—I became aware of an approaching, mystical presence; felt, rather than saw, a ghostly glimmer come gliding alongside; and there, by us, all of a sudden, in full moonlight, lay the white-winged *Rongomai*!

Her skipper came aboard the *Tikirau* and stood talking awhile on the deck; and something started him telling, in that tranquilly romantic place, a story of quite another side of the sea-life. It was a story that began with a wreck. The vessel had been thrown on her beam ends, the decks were a-wash, and the speaker, with only one other of the crew, found himself in the main-rigging, eye to eye with Death. "The chap with me was a very smart young fellow—hard case, regular pirate, an', says he, 'Watch below must ha' been drowned, an' the rest o' watch on deck looks to be well overboard. What say,' says he, 'if we was to try an' save her

on our own, an' keep her for ourselves?' Well, she was under fore an' main torps'ls ('twas that what done it), an' first thing was, to get that main torps'l down. God! that was a business—aye, that *was* a bit of work! There she was, bangin' about, an' there was we, *bein'* banged—flesh and blood gettin' knocked clean out of us in lumps, though we knew nothin' about it till next day. Every minute, thinks I, 'We'll never live to see another'; but hows'ever, down comes the blessed sail at last, an' then, what with the lift o' the sea, an' a lick o' wind that shifted her round, she started to right herself. An' now here comes in the cream o' the thing. We was beginnin' to move a bit smart about her, and heart'n' each other up, tellin' what a good deal we'd made of it, when, all of a sudden, blessed if a man's head don't pop up from below, with the rest of him followin'! an' then another, and another, an' another, with all the rest o' *them*—until there was *both our watches out on deck, and both full, mind you, not a hand missin'*! Bit of a sell, eh?—How's the wind? Southerly draw, ain't it?"

It must have been on the following night that we anchored opposite a great gully, or river-gorge, with a little native settlement at the mouth of it, and a small church, that, beside that great gash in the hills, and by the widespread sea, had somehow an air of facing all alone tremendous odds. The early mists were still upon the mountains, and the dew upon the seaside turf, when we landed our cargo next morning, and returned to the *Tikirau*. But we had barely got aboard before we noticed, streaming from the mouth of the gully, a long procession of people, some riding, others walking,

and all advancing very slowly towards the church ; and then the captain told us how he had heard ashore of the sudden death of a girl lately come out from England to keep house for her brothers away back there in the mountain Bush, and this was her funeral. We had finished our business at the place ; and, as we bounded out again upon the brilliant sea, brightness, speed, and strength everywhere about us, light in our eyes, and full life racing through our veins, there was not one of us, I think, that was untouched. " Travelling half the world over, eh ? " as Tim put it, " for *this*. Come all the way here, to find a grave."

We re-entered Hicks Bay that same evening. No friendly riding-lights were this time to be seen ; but, instead, there was a wonderful sunset. Great wafts and washes of pure fire suffused the sky, here and there narrowly separated by rifts of a clear blue-green, almost icily cold ; and over all this bright delirium of colour, dark wisps and featherings of cloud seemed to have been wildly flung, and now to be lying in wait, as it were, with a sort of sinister stillness. " A nice sunset, yes," said the skipper ; " but, all I have against it, a windy one." He was right, of course ; and in Hicks Bay we lay, wind-bound, for the next five days.

What did we do all that time ? Well, luckily for us, it was " a dry blow," and one from which the bay itself was well protected ; so we went ashore and visited the natives, explored the rocks and beaches, and hunted about in the Bush for peacocks' feathers and late cherries. A shipwrecked crew had once " dossed " for days in the Bush, the men said, and we discovered their camp, and appro-

priated, for Tim's benefit, some of the lumps of coal still lying about. Then every day before dinner the men enjoyed what must have been truly a glorious sport. They would put on their oldest rig—I am afraid my presence aboard was a sad drawback here—dive from the bowsprit into the clear, dancing blue below, and there swim and tumble about like so many dolphins, chasing each other round and under the vessel, and vigorously splashing the while to keep the sharks away. With what envy I watched them—I who could not swim! They used to try and persuade me to jump overboard and join them, promising not to let me drown, but I never had the nerve. I have been sorry for it ever since.

Then there was work to be done. The *Tikirau* had her hull painted during this enforced "lay-up," and went out of Hicks Bay looking more of a snowy sea-swallow than ever. And there was a settler to be "removed" from his old house on one side of the bay to his new one on the other. We removed him; sitting patiently in the whaleboat while his beds and tables and chairs came casually down the breakneck track—some of them on a sledge, more of them off it—feasting upon apples from his orchard, which we roasted at a fire kindled on the rocks; and being feasted on in turns by multitudes of mosquitoes, who seemed to have been keeping Lent for years. It was the only place upon the coast where we met them, and the meeting was one they must have thoroughly enjoyed.

Phil, by the way, told a rather good mosquito yarn on this occasion. "Two skippers," he said, "were having a kind of a talk about the mosquitoes

they'd met. 'Biggest ever I saw,' says the one, 'was when I was a-layin' once off the east coast of Africa. Whoppers they was—and *powerful*? why, look here, now, blest if a swarm of 'em didn't go bang through my main's'l one day, easy as stones through a parlour window. What d'ye say to that, now?' 'Say?' says skipper number two. 'Why, I should say as how they must ha' been the very swarm I met with once down Florida way. Whoppers as you state, and powerful, as you'd lead one to suppose; and every one o' them with his little legs rigged out in a pair o' canvas pants.'"

Then, too, the men used to go off frequently upon fishing excursions. While we were at sea, lines baited only with native hooks of iridescent *paua*-shell trailed often from the stern, and secured us a welcome change of diet; but while we were in the bay, fresh fish, dried and drying, hung daily in the shrouds, and Tim was relieved of some anxiety as to stores. Poor old Cookie! The delay was hard upon him. "You know, I got word, last port, my little chap's worse," he wailed, "an' here we are stuck up in this hole of a hole, and maybe he's——"

"Now, never you fret, Tim," interrupted kindly little Mr. Black. "Kids is no sooner down than they're hup. You look at my Ted, now. I was in just such another stew over him one trip—an' you know the kind of a young devil 'e is now. Sings like a bloomin' thrush, swears like a trooper, eats 'is five meals a day, and brings 'ome 'is money to 'is mother at the week-end reg'lar. You just take and cheer up, Timmie! It's on'y the little born angels wot 'oists their wings so quick; and I take it you and yours ain't fish and flesh, eh?"

He backed out of the galley as he spoke, but he left Tim refreshed.

At last, too, we did get out of Hicks Bay, and round the Cape. After that a good deal of maize-shipment was done. Here and there, as we proceeded north, a smoke signal would go up ashore, the *Tikirau* would lie-to, and the whaleboat would fetch off the load. Sometimes the natives would come off in their own boats—I remember one that looked exactly like a flax-leaf, for it was painted bright green both inside and out, and had a gunwale of red—and our deck was full of brown faces and melodious with talk that lacked the “s.” The scene ashore meanwhile was most picturesque. Beside the open storehouses of bright yellow grain, groups of natives would be gathered about the fragrant fires of corn-cobs. Perhaps a few of the girls would be shelling maize, and a pretty sight that was. Dressed generally in dark-blue cotton, their long hair rippling glossy down their backs, they squatted beside the yellow heaps already shelled, against which their smiling faces showed like darkly sparkling jewels, and from between their brown fingers the maize fell fast from the cobs in showers of golden rain. The mothers, meanwhile, would most likely be using the signal-fire as a community cooking-stove. Roast sea-urchin I never could induce myself to taste, but steamed fish *à la Maori* is super-excellent, and never have I eaten more toothsome *kumaras* and potatoes than those taken all piping hot between the finger and thumb (one’s own) and consumed without further sauce or ceremony, upon the windy beach.

Of my many hostesses, I remember especially one.

She was very, very old—nearly a hundred years old, Phil maintained—and as she advanced to greet me, I thought at first that never had I seen a wilder woman. Her face was one network of wrinkles; her hair, a remarkable reddish-brown in hue, was tied upon the top of her head in a fuzzy knot; her dress was an indescribable muddle of shawls, and perhaps her face might have been washed when she was fifty. Rich, yet scarce distinguishable at first, was the tattoo below her mouth; above it, at one corner, a cigarette stuck out. She made me heartily welcome, however, with outstretched hands full of baked *karaka* kernels, and a flood of talk and gestures. The talk, unhappily, I could not understand at all, and felt decidedly shy at first of the kernels; but the friendliness was irresistible: we squatted down side by side and entered into a brisk exchange of smiles.

Mr. Anstruther meanwhile, Phil, and even Tom the diffident, kept shouting out to her something in Maori to which she made always the same reply, accompanied by many shakes of her dishevelled head and a certain air of dignified protectiveness that aroused my curiosity. When at last we had parted, with much cordiality and warm handshakes, and I had got back to the boat, I asked the men what they had been saying.

“Only wanted her to rub noses with you,” said they.

“Thank you,” said I, not, I fear, without a wriggle. “And what did *she* say?”

“Said she wouldn’t, ’cause she didn’t believe you would like it.”

How glad I was that I had mastered my hesita-

tion about those *karaka* kernels! "Lady is as lady does"; and old Harete, the unkempt, the unwashed, has remained delightful to my memory ever since as one of the most perfect hostesses I ever met, one considerate before all things of the feelings of her guest. As for a Maori estimate of European gentleness, did you ever hear this little story, which was repeated to me by the captain? Some up-country settlers were one day speculating as to the social status of a new arrival, who himself had fixed it so high that he could not possibly get down from it to help wash the dinner-dishes. There happened to be a Maori present who solved the problem very simply. "*Rangatira* (real gentleman)? That fellow? No!" says this true Daniel come to judgment. "*Gentleman* gentleman never mind what work he do. *Piggy* gentleman very particular!"

Such were some of the incidents of our homeward trip. But it is with a voyage as it is with a life—you may chronicle every event, and yet leave out the essentials. The characteristic things are less the things that occasionally befall than those that continually *are*: and, as I look back, the main features and chief charms of that trip were just the common, everyday staples of it—the wholesome, hearty company aboard; the frankness and care-free-ness that come of living always with the open light, and air, and waters; and the inexhaustible riches of the eye. It was a life full of pictures. Day after day one woke to a different landscape (even when we were windbound, the ship's position altered, of course, with the tide), but never to one unenlivened by a foreground liquid and shining. Day by day,

hour by hour almost, there was always a different sea. Now it would be rough and bright, then bright and smooth ; now streaked with gold by the early sun, now one field of broad blue, or gallant blue-and-white ; silver-and-green that flashed, or bloomy hyacinth, surely the true *ówoψ*—wine-dark. Sometimes it really looked asleep and dreaming, sometimes it glittered with argosies of sunbeams—or was it with “ innumerable laughter ” ? Now, it seemed sobbing and unquiet as with grief ; now it meant business, it was stern, fierce, even ferocious ; now again it lay all molten silver, soft, tranquil, and at ease. Best of all, whatever its mood, it was always itself, always the living sea—restless, tireless, great : incomprehensible, yet the dear sister-soul of Man.

Then there was the excitement of landing through the surf—the waiting in smooth water between two huge white-crested breakers ; the rowing back to meet the one astern, till it hung almost over us, and swamping seemed inevitable ; the sharp swing skyward of the stern ; the breathless, momentary poise and pause ; then, the tremendous *thump* down, as the great wave passed beneath the boat ; and, finally, our victorious rushing shoreward, upon its swift streams of snow. There were, too, the various, felt though unseen, glories of the air, that other wide ocean whose mercies were perpetually about us—its first freshness of a morning, its sweet intensity of cleanness when we were well out at sea, its evening aromas of sun-baked turf, warm *tauhinu*, and spicy smoke ; and the splendour of its unreined vigour, when, rounding the sails like apples and piling the bright water into hills, it dashed us along

through dashing music, and motion, and spray, and whipped one's blood to a wild, unreasoning exultation. Aye, one had three kingdoms in those days--the air, the sky, the sea; and a fourth, within; and all full to the brim with vigour.

And then there was the ship herself, real and companionable entity that she was: airy and beautiful creation somewhere between Nature and Man, and in touch with both; a marvel always, and always a friend. Seen from the shore, her white beauty drew the eye like a magnet, and gleamed like some jewel which the blue sea existed apparently only to set and so enhance; but the real heart of her beauty, as of all living things, lay in her *livingness*—and that, you must be aboard to feel. I used to love to get up in the bow, to watch her sharp white stem cleaving the wide water into twin curls of crystal, and taste the purity of the immense air as she divided it by her advance; then, turning, see her whole white, lovely self, coming as it seemed, towards me. Or, from the stern, to see her go about on a breezy day—deck all aslant, wind dinting the sails into deep hollows, sun filling them with gold, and pencilling them with the dun shadows of shrouds and dangling reef-points, water all a brave and white-capped boisterous blue on this side of her, roughly dark and silver on the other. . . . And now it is “Lee O!” from the captain, as he takes the helm, and the steersman runs forward to help in letting go the headsheets. Over goes the helm, out fades the wind from the great mainsail overhead, and like a disappointed, helpless thing, all the life out of it, there it hangs, listless, flat, unlit . . . till, as she recovers the breeze, first the headsails, then the

fore, and finally the mainsail fill and swell out again ; again all is taut above, a great plump cheek of gold, and away and away we dance, all alive, over the buoyant water, and through the singing air. Or perhaps the boom is being gybed, and swings deliberately over above our heads, to the strain of brawny shoulders at the bits, and a hoarse accompaniment of "Come in! Way-hay! Ay-way! Hay-ho! As she will! Now then! Again! As she must! Come in!" Or we are just coming to anchor and it is, "Haul down your outer jib!" in stentorian tones from the wheel. "Haul down outer jib," in obedient response from the bow . . . more orders, further echoes. Then the rattling of the anchor-chain over the deck, the scamper of the hands to make down fore and main sail and, lo! the *Tikirau*, with her wings furled—and yet how beautiful still!—and tethered, and yet how still alive!

Often when evening came and the rest of our mates that were not on duty had turned in, the dogs and I would get up on the house roof, and there, warm between their slumbering forms, I might watch the night come on. . . . First, the late grave twilight, sky and water both fading, stars peeping out dim-eyed above the swinging trucks ; then, glimmering dusk, with points of light brightening out all around, and faint wakes beginning to trail down through the guessed-at glassy swell ; last, the immense Dark, powdered with sparkling constellations overhead, infinite in number, each one a world ; and paved with a floor of wandering blackness, here and there streamered with light from above, and with a pathway of softest wool-white glimmering astern,

jewelled by the phosphorus with green-twinkling beads and balls. And all the while, and all around, silence—perfected as it seemed, rather than broken, by the faint, pleasantly familiar ship-sounds—the movements of the wheel, the quiet creak of block and tackle, the whisper of the wind, and tapping of reef-points on the sail, the talking of the water to the side. And through the silence and the darkness the vessel, above all: the vessel, gently curtseying on her way, seeming almost to breathe beneath one as she rose and fell with the heaving of the sea-breast; such a speck in the universe, all alone, and yet so sure; a creature not seaworthy alone, but world-worthy.

But why multiply words? No summary of their details could ever give the living spirit of those sea-days, no description ever convey their incommunicable charm. The voyage finished as it had begun—emphatically, with a couple of days' grand gale. But this time the wind was in our favour, and we flew before it. How it rained! how it roared! The mainboom, usually so serenely high overhead, was now continually sousing in and out of the wild water; the sail scooped up sea, tons of it, as well as wind; a double reef had shortly to be taken in it—and with what envy and admiration I watched my mates accomplishing the task! barefoot along the plunging boom, torn at by the wind, swamped by the sea, knocked and beaten by the canvas, but all the while, active as cats and resolute as men, steadily getting the points tied, as a matter of course.

Our last sunrise saw the Auckland windows flash. We had been away just a month. As we sailed up

the harbour, "My old hen can see me now," said Mr. Black, in the tones, if not perhaps the usual terms, of sincere affection.

"See that sheet waving out at that window there?" said Mr. Anstruther. "My mother never misses our coming in."

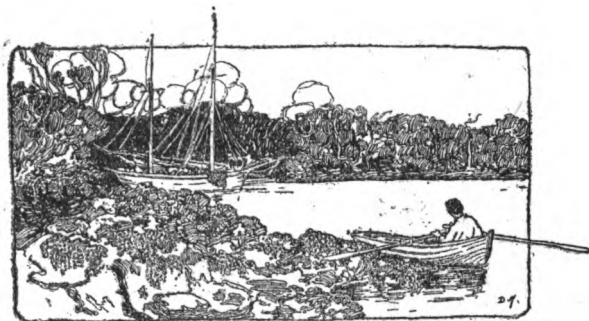
"Steak and eggs for tea to-night, Tim," stipulated Phil.

"Steak an' eggs! Vot nonsense is zat?" growled Fritz. "Zozzages . . . big!" And Tim beamed upon them both, for he had had news at the port before that his little sick son was better. It was only the passenger who made a little private moan to herself, as we made fast to the wharf, and the jolliest holiday she had ever had in her life was over. She was but little consoled, although certainly much cheered for the moment, by the discovery among her possessions, that first night ashore, of a damp parcel insinuated somehow among them, and labelled, "A keepsake from the *Tikirau*," in Mr. Anstruther's hand. It contained a large slab of duff.

Alas, the *Tikirau*, beautiful and beloved! Facing so willingly all the chances of the sea, she was not spared their last extreme of tragedy. A little while ago, from the deck of a bigger but not a better vessel, bound on the same trip, Captain Fletcher pointed out to me, upon the beach near one of the little ports we had touched at that bright summer, a white, lopsided object. It looked like the hull of a boat, or part of it, turned upside down. "There," said he, "that's all that's left of the *Tikirau*," and neither of us said much more. Carrying, as at least I might be thankful to learn, none of her old crew,

she had been caught at a dangerous anchorage, one winter's night, by a terrible, suddenly-veering storm, and perished with every soul on board. No light without shade, it seems, even in a ship's career. So ended, in gloom, that busy, bright, seeming-sentient existence.

But I never think of it as ended at all ; in my private and particular cosmos, the world of my experience, safe for me still sails the *Tikirau* ! Staunch, willing, and nimble, a friendly and a happy ship, there for ever she hastens upon her sparkling way, a winged and snow-white presence, bright as a sea-bird in the sunshine, or a flake of flying foam : still linking little green port with little green port along the flashing blue : still beautifying the seas, still gilding humdrum matters with romance : livening duty with beauty, buoyantly taking risks, bright, beneficent, and brave.



IV

CAFÉ AU LAIT

THE long, curving main street of the little harbour town looked very bright and clean. Half the houses seemed to have been just freshly painted ; some were yellow, some white, and most of the roofs were red. There had been a little spring shower, too, and now the wet asphalt of the side-walk shone nearly as blue as the bright, new-washen sky, and the heart-shaped lilac-leaves in the little garden beside the shop were tossing in soft, moist airs, and glittering with wetness and light. One branch was in flower already, and its plumes of dark, chocolate buds, and blossoms of fresh, pale purple looked almost audaciously young. The old bush that bore it came of stock that had crossed the ocean more than half a century before ; but what did this little bough care about that ? its blossoms were new this year. As the wind swung it, now it sprang jauntily up towards the sky, now it swept down towards the springing green grass, and now it scattered a whole shower of sparkling rain-diamonds over the crown of Philippe's rusty black hat, as he passed beneath the lilac-bush and out into the road.

The wife of the man to whom he had last year

sold the shop, and with whom he now boarded, was standing at the open door beside the windowful of clocks. "Why, Mr. Philip!" she said, in a tone of diffident remonstrance, "ain't it almost a bit too damp for you to get your walk to-day?" But old Philippe merely raised his hat, and stalked on past her. He did not like to be interfered with by people who had not the right—and who had? Mrs. Watchmaker Brown, for her part, looked after him with a mixture of feelings, as he took his way, rather waveringly, up the street. She was a kindly-hearted woman, but he was a "proud," unsociable old man. He did look really very feeble. She could hardly help thinking that, if—"anything should happen". . . why, after all, it would be nice to have the whole house to themselves.

Poor "proud" Philippe! The air, as it blew in, sweet and fresh from the sea, gathered more sweetness yet from the blossomed gardens that divided the painted houses; Mrs. Selincourt's wallflowers breathed so strong that even he could smell them; the sunshine soothed with a delicious warmth his withered, sunken cheek—it was spring, yes: but Philippe did not look much like spring. His bent and lean old figure, his cadaverous, pale face, spoke far more plainly of the end of things than of any fresh beginning. All the winter through, old Philippe had been ill. It was only within the last few days that he had been able to put on his queer "outlandish" shoes and get outside at all; and that famous cherry-wood stick of his, with the curling handle and the *edelweiss*-flower carved on it, really needed now to be what Bossu had in jest been wont to call it—"The old man's third leg."

Ah, Bossu . . . so *he* was gone ! . . . buried a month ago, they said. Old Bossu, last but one of all those thirty-five shipmates who had come out to Pakarae from Havre upon *La Belle Etoile*, fifty-one years ago. Fifty-one years is a long time. They had built, those early settlers, that curving street of quaint, two-storeyed, gabled houses so much prettier than New Zealand houses are wont to be ; they had planted the walnut-trees and willows, the peaches and poplars and the vines : they had bequeathed to this little, out-of-the-way angle of British territory its subtle, still persistent "foreign" flavour ; and now they were all lying, all, all but one, very far away from Provence and Savoy, with white stones at their heads, in the little cemetery yonder, underneath the sighing pines.

Certainly they had left children ; the old names were still to be seen upon the corners of the streets, and above shop-doors. But they were barbarously mispronounced, these names ; and, as for the children, who had grown up in this, the country of their birth, they were all British now—there was to be found among them scarcely one who could make shift to stammer, and that with an accent truly frightful, three syllables of his father's tongue. For the last five years, Philippe and Bossu had been the last remaining representatives of "*la patrie*," the sole survivors of the "Originals." . . . And Bossu now was gone !

Yes, he was gone ! Here, halfway up the street, was his house, all shut up. The green shutters—Bossu's was the only house that had retained the gay green shutters of Home—were fast closed ; springing grasses, and darkly shining wreaths of

periwinkles, lit with purple stars, hid kindly the unwashed step, and surged against the never-opening door. Upon the little lawn, smooth once as Bossu's hairless head, the scythe was now sadly needed, and shears should long since have been used about the shell-paved weeping-ash arbour where the two old comrades had been wont to sit together, to smoke their pipes of modern (how inferior!) tobacco, to drink the Australian vintage that compared, how unfavourably! with the old, rough red *vin du pays*, and to speak one with another the dear old tongue. Bossu, it is true, had been of France, not of Switzerland, and had been wont, therefore, at times, to suggest alternatives to Philippe's phrases and pronunciation; not always without a little natural irritation on both sides; Ninon had often had to allay excitement. Still he had been, in some sort after all, a compatriot, and in all ways a comrade.

And Ninon, too. Not so pretty, not so pretty, as that earlier, fresher Ninon, laid to rest—could it be, *eh, mon Dieu!* forty-two years since? in the little churchyard *over there* by the milk-white glacier-stream . . . but named for her, and young like her, and kind—Ninon, too, was gone away; they said, to the married sister in the North Island: there was nobody left! And a shingle, see! was off the roof; the chimney needed repairing, the gate swung loose. The old place was staunch enough to last for years to come, if it were but properly looked after, but, left all to itself like this, it would soon grow damp, it would quickly rot, and young Bossu would presently have excuse enough to pull it down and build upon its site that cheese-

factory he was for ever speaking of. Milk and money, milk and money—that was all this country ever cared about. . . And the old house did remind one so of Home !

Ah-h-ha ! What was this—this delicious, this reviving whiff of some perfume truly familiar ? Coffee ! Yes, coffee—in berries—being roasted. But who, then, actually roasted coffee still, in these lax days ? Ah, Métrailleur, to be sure—Métrailleur *fi*ls, who kept the grocery store past which the old man's feet were just now languidly bearing him : Joseph Métrailleur, who called himself nowadays Meat-railer, if you please ! in deference, forsooth, to the British tongues of his customers. Yes, Joseph was roasting coffee beans—and when he had roasted them and ground them up, and tempered the flavour a little—oh, judiciously, without doubt, for Joseph was a worthy man—he would put the mixture into some tin whose lid was loose, or lost, perhaps ; and in the course of the next six or seven months would sell it, doing it up in paper bags, to people who would make it as they did tea and then offer it one to drink. Did not he, Philippe, know ? Sore had been his longing for some coffee during his tedious convalescence ; and once, in response to his repeated requests and as a great treat for the poor old foreigner, Mrs. Brown, the well-meaning, the incapable, had served him, with noisy anticipations, a muddy *tisane* which it would have disgraced a pig to drink. But this, which Métrailleur had not yet gone beyond roasting—ah, this was coffee indeed ! and Philippe halted his steps, and stood still for quite a little while outside the grocery door, drinking in, with his heart even more than

his sense, that exquisite aroma—subtle, magical. Melmotte's tame penguin, with its broken leg, its yellow eyes, that seldom spied a live fish nowadays, and useless flippers that never felt the waves, came waddling up to greet a fellow-exile, and assumed a portly, sprawling attitude almost upon Philippe's feet. But the old man never noticed him—how should he? He was sixty years, and half the world, away. . . .

. . . Outside, all was shining. The early sunshine was bringing out every rich tone of brown and red in the resinous timbers of the old chalet. Inside, the coffee-berries were roasting, roasting. Ah, the good smell! Ah, the first morning freshness! Now he himself, Philippe, *le petit Philippe*, in his clean blue blouse and wooden shoes, stood dutifully crushing the brown berries in the coffee-mill fastened to the table . . . now, again, his mother bent above him with a shining-bright, long-spouted pot in either dexterous hand, from which the good streams of boiling milk, and real black coffee, velvety yet clear, descended to a perfect union within the handleless bowl of green earthenware. And, all the while, the cuckoo calling and calling outside, and the rocky rivulet running down the mountain, merrily, even as he himself would presently run merrily down to school. . . . Ah, the good mother, the old home, the long, long ago! Jumbo, the penguin, tired of inattention, here pecked viciously at Philippe's foot, and the old man moved absently on up the street.

Here was the Pakaræ church-belfry: differently roofed with those red tiles, it was true, and rather squat than lofty, yet in its shape, a bell-hat on

top of a tower, how curiously like the one at St. Armand ! Upon the mountains on the other side the harbour there was still some snow—stainless as the snows of old, above Barue : and the harbour itself, so shut in by these spring-green paddocks, so satin-smooth to-day, did not look any more like the salt and separating sea, it looked precisely like the little lake of Mec ; the jetty, too, though he had never noticed it before, was the wooden twin of that one to which old Mathieu's boat had been wont to bring an occasional tourist in search of his father's beautiful wood-carvings, his *boiserie*. . .

. . . What were these globe-like yellow flowers in old Mrs. Pochette's garden ? She had never had them before ; or at least he had never remarked them before. Surely, surely—they were that very same yellow ranunculus of which he had been used to pluck bouquets for Ninon in that lush riverside pasture by old Fleury's mill ! *Boules de beurre*, she called them, or sometimes *boules d'or*—butterballs, or balls of gold. He remembered ! Only those flowers of Home were finer—everything at Home was finer. Why should he think so much of Home this morning ? Hark ! wasn't that surely the cuckoo now ? Alas, no ; only a sea-bird, and how tired he felt all of a sudden ! *Miséricorde*, how tired ! Yonder to the right, only a very little way up the hill, was that sunny paddock of Métrailleux's that had the dry rocks in it. He would go and sit a little on those rocks and rest. Why not ? . . . There, at last ! How very fatigued he was ! Ah, how weary !

Métrailleux's paddock was a long, grassy slope, with a fine view out over the lake above the clustered

roofs of Pakarāe. Just now, in all the glory of its spring verdure, it looked like a stripe of the freshest and softest green velvet, only here and there the exquisite surface was roughened by a little outcrop of grey, volcanic rock. A little below one such lichened ledge, on which Philippe had seated himself, there ran a belt of pine-trees ; a snow peak soared above them in the distance across the harbour ; and, beyond their spiry tips and between their latticed boughs, the lake spread out its blue, bloomy sheen, full of violet and green hill-mirrorings. There were cows in the paddock ; cows with richly shining skins, of fawn and white and chestnut ; and one of them, a velvety black creature, wore a bell about her neck, that tinkled musically as she browsed. The little bright, brown creek, on its headlong way through the paddock from the summits above to the sea beneath, tinkled also, and sprang from rock to rock with a shining and merry delight. And the sun was cloudless, the bright air was thin, and crisp, and pure ; there was an Alpine look and feeling everywhere—it all was really very like Switzerland. Philippe, as he sat there resting in the sun, began mistily to wonder which of the spring Alp-flowers were out yet, and actually looked about him for some, in the fresh, green grass. For the little thin white crocus that follows the heel of the melting snows it was of course too late, and for the fairy fringe of the violet soldanella ; but a cowslip or two, surely ? some gay little bright pink primula, or sulphur-coloured anemone ? above all, at least one gentian, one bright little star of heaven's own blue, to look up at one with the face of a friend upon this sunny, green Alp ?

There was, of course, not one. Moreover, the little hut beside the pines, as Philippe's fixed gaze at last slowly apprehended it, revealed itself most plainly to be wrought of no dear picturesque dark timbers, but of galvanised iron only, pale and ugly. The old man roused himself out of his waking dream. He sighed. Ah, yes ! it might certainly all be very like, but it was not the same—it was not Home ! There are times when similarities do but accentuate a difference ; and a wave of the most bitter yearning and homesickness overwhelmed poor Philippe now as he sat there in the sun.

O for the Real Things—for the lake that was not salt, for the streamlet that flowed from snows, for the grass all full of flowers ! O for the old Home landscape, for the old, familiar speech, for the dear, the true, the real, the right, old ways ! Philippe had not been in Switzerland for half a century ; his youthful manhood, his prime, his age, had all been passed in New Zealand ; and he was in general extremely proud of his adopted country, of her beauty, her resources, her rapid growth, her happy and spring-like prospects. But now, on this radiant morning, whether it was the result of his years, of his illness, or of some rare climatic quality of the day, it seemed to him that he had made a great mistake, that he had been somehow duped, defrauded, ruined ; that he had been made to spend all his strength, all his life, in the wrong place. And for the right one, for that far-away lost country, of his childhood, of his early strength, of his first and only love, a desperate longing fed by all these strangely reawakened memories and associations grew and grew, until it over-

whelmed him : until there was no more room in his mind for anything but remembrance, no more room in his heart for anything but regret. It was the true, the terrible nostalgia. He wanted his country, his own familiar country, as a little child wants its mother, as a sick child cannot do without her ; and the slow, pathetic, helpless tears of old age escaped from his closed eyes, and ran down his pallid cheeks unhindered.

So possessed was he by the agony of this strong yet impotent yearning that he never noticed certain shuffling footsteps which now came near to him, and halted, and then again shuffled hesitatingly away. Presently, however, they returned.

“Mister finds himself not well ?” a voice said softly. Philippe opened his eyes with a start.

An old woman was standing before him. She had on a brown stuff dress, bulkily gathered in at the waist, and a large apron of very dark blue linen ; on her head, instead of a hat, there was a three-cornered yellow checked handkerchief ; and under one arm she carried a round wooden milking-stool, in the other hand a bucket of milk. Just so, exactly, Philippe remembered his own mother to have looked, on any midday of her life ; and he looked at the vision in bewilderment. Yet this woman was not his mother—she had not his mother’s face. Her own, however, was full of so mother-like a compassion and sympathy that it spoke straight to his heart, and drew an answer from it.

“I have been ill,” he faltered, as naturally and as appealingly as a child ; and then he felt ashamed, and turned away his head. He did not know how far that child-like impulse had decoyed him, or that

he had spoken those words not only in the tone but in the speech in which he would have said them to his mother. But his hearer did, for it was the *patois* of her own native *canton* that she had heard.

“*Eh, mon Dieu!*” she ejaculated; “*mon Dieu!*” She set down, first, her bucket of milk and her stool with all the carefulness of the good housewife; and then she clasped her hands, looked up with streaming eyes to heaven, and addressed, surely to every saint in the calendar, a medley of thanks and lamentations and thanks again, of which Philippe understood every word, for it, too, was in his native tongue.

“You are of Mec, *ma mère*, of Boissy?” he inquired with eagerness, when at length she paused for breath.

“I am of Evremond, monsieur,” she replied. Philippe grew very white. It had been the village next his own.

“Ah, you know then the bridge,” he said hoarsely. “You know the church of St. Armand? And the house of Martin the miller, that stands midway between the church and the bridge?” He could scarcely breathe as he finished.

“But which bridge?” inquired the old woman. “And which church would monsieur distinguish, since there now are several? But as for the house of Père Martin, the miller—ah, yes—but it is twenty years since that was pulled down. There stands a fine, magnificent hotel in its place now,” she added with pride, “and the railway runs by the stream.”

“How! Through Fleury’s pasture?” cried Philippe in dismay.

“Fleury’s pasture? I know it not. But yes,

it is of course that, that, in these days, is the station," she replied. "One sees well that monsieur certainly cannot have been at St. Armand within these great many years. Oho, the little place! it has grown all out of the memory of that which it used to be, as a little child grows out of his shift. Many people come now to St. Armand year by year. The steamboat brings them twice in the day, and, of a summer evening, the band plays on the fine pier where once was the old black jetty; and the pleasure-parties dance.

"And the churchyard?" Philippe stammered out. He was growing paler and paler.

"The churchyard? Oh, the churchyard of the old, the little, church—that, yes, assuredly that remains," she answered soothingly, with quick, instinctive comprehension.

Apparently, however, it was almost all that did remain of Philippe's own old St. Armand. To every one of his succeeding questions her answers came ever the same. "Gone, changed, this or that instead." The little secluded hamlet had in fact been "discovered" by tourists and hotel-proprietors; and Philippe as he listened perceived, with a horrible sinking of the heart, that, could he at that moment have been miraculously restored to his native place, he would have found it unrecognisable. Home? Home was gone; it no more existed; it was no longer real. There was no such place in the world any more! A dizziness came over him.

"Monsieur must please to drink!" said the old woman's voice in his ear, with a note of authority. She was supporting his head, Philippe suddenly

found, and holding to his lips a wooden bowl, the like of which he had not seen for fifty years. Somehow, he did not seem to mind this woman's ministrations—they were not at all like poor Mrs. Brown's—and he obeyed her without irritation, and swallowed the draught of warm milk. It revived him.

“A bowl of coffee would have been better,” he heard her mutter as though to herself, and was able actually to smile.

“Seat yourself, *ma mère*,” he presently directed in his turn. “And tell me how it comes that you too are at Pakarae.”

It was very simple. The old woman, it appeared, was Joseph Métrailleux's grandmother. Her husband had died, over there at Evremond, some months before, and she had found herself without kith or kin or any one to look after (“I, who am still so very strong, monsieur,” she said, in a tone of expostulation), excepting these unseen, far-away relations in New Zealand. After them, since she was one of those to whom all kin seem kind, her heart had longed; to them surely she might be of use in the new, rough country? So she had written to them, begging piteously that she might come out, and Joseph's good, impulsive heart had been touched; he had assented, he had helped, she had arrived at Pakarae during the winter, while Philippe had been ill—and now here she was, poor soul! forbidden by both pride and sense of fairness, to beg for repatriation (“Only figure to yourself, monsieur, the expense! and whom, in addition, have I, there?”), and yet a most bewildered stranger in a most strange land, unbelievably homesick, and lonelier, alas! than ever. For Joseph, yes,

he was indeed a good one, he, a perfect heart of gold, but ever at the shop : Suzanne the wife, she too, oh certainly, was also good, but . . . as was no more than natural, she had her own ways, she did not understand the old woman's, she did not require her help : while as for the child, the little Suzee—the old dame stopped abruptly.

“And you ?” asked Philippe. “What is your name ?”

It was, if monsieur pleased, she answered meekly, “Nanette.” Nanette ! It sounded so like “Ninon” that Philippe's face grew white again. Nanette was much concerned.

“It is very easy to see,” she observed, “that monsieur has indeed been ill. Monsieur requires attention, above all, he should have nourishing food. A good soup, now, with cabbage in it, a cutlet, a tender *poulet* with salad, a flask of white wine, and a good little cup of coffee to bury it all—black, with cognac.”

Philippe felt his long-lost appetite come suddenly back as she enumerated with zest the savoury details of this once-familiar menu. It was with a heart-felt sigh that he answered, perhaps a little impatiently :

“Yes, yes ! But then it is impossible to get such things here—the right things—properly prepared——”

“Why not ? I will wager that I can prepare them,” interrupted Nanette with a confident chuckle—which ended in the middle, however, and her good old face clouded over. “It is true !” she said, in her turn with a sigh. “I have not my own kitchen, my own utensils. Here, one puts the potatoes into

the water, the *gigot* into the oven, by and by one makes the mouth-wrying tea, the *tisane* that so ravages the interior—and the dinner is served. One eats, one is fed, it is true ; but that is not to say one has dined. The very stomach is an exile in this land.”

And Philippe sadly assented. He knew so well that dinner, even now awaiting him at Mrs. Brown's. A thousand times already he had eaten of it, and the thousand and first made no appeal to him. Most of all did his languid appetite resent the suggestion of that “long-stood” cup of tea. Tea, indeed ! Again he seemed to smell the aroma of that coffee, freshly roasting at the store ; and again it spoke to him of comforts, not so much of the body as of the mind, the heart.

They talked on and on, still in the old pleasant dialect. Nanette was younger than Philippe ; she had married early in life, and so had her son, the father of Joseph ; still, she was able to tell her countryman the fortunes of nearly all the old friends he so eagerly inquired after, and, alas, alas ! those fortunes, as it seemed, with scarcely one exception, were all finished ! Philippe felt his heart, his horizon, painfully contract. Each death, as Nanette recorded it in her simple chronicle, sounded to him like yet another stroke of the tolling bell at the burial of all that had once made Home. He sighed again and again as she proceeded. What was there left ? And yet, for all the sadness, what a sweetness, too, in hearing again those well-loved names, in speaking the remembered childhood tongue, in being understood !

“Gran'ma ! gran'ma !” called suddenly a very

shrill and consequential little voice ; and in at the paddock-gate next minute there ran a very emphatic little girl. With her starchy pinafore-frills, her perked-up hair-ribbon, her lifted eyebrows and sharp little nose, she somehow presented the effect of having been sharpened into a point all over. "Why, here you are, all the time ! an' I've been hunting an' hunting for you, gran'ma," she proclaimed indignantly. "You're just to come right straight home this very minnut—mumma says so. Here's mumma coming now, her own self," she ended, with a pout ; and in fact a very stout woman, with a large, florid, good-natured, but rather stupid face, was to be seen just entering the paddock-gate. She puffed and panted as she came.

"Why, gran'ma," she called out wheezily, "I'm sure I'm right-down glad to see you safe. We just couldn't make out what was keepin' you—thought old Blackberry must ha' knocked you over or something. Joe, he's a-give her that black cow, an' she will milk her midday, as well as mornin' an' evenin'—an' it *does* keep the dinner about so," added Mrs. Métrailleur, between gasps, and rather apologetically, to Philippe, of whom, like almost everybody else in Pakarae, including even the acute little Susy, she stood somewhat in awe.

"It is the custom, where she comes from," Philippe answered stiffly. He did not like to see the bewildered, helpless expression now stultifying Nanette's kindly face ; she looked nearly as dull as Mrs. Métrailleur herself. "We are of the same country, Madame and I," he added, with a courteous bow in her direction.

"Why now, just think o' that !" responded the

worthy Mrs. Métrailleux, mildly interested. "It's a pity you don't want no housekeeper, Mr. Philippe—not but what I know Mrs. Brown does for you, an' she's as good as the next two, as they say. On'y you'd understand the old lady's ways, an' her lingo, an' they're both beyond me, I'm sure. Been sick quite a long time, ain't you? You must mind an' take good care o' yourself now—look as if you could do with a real good old feedin' up, so you do—an' that reminds me, gran'ma, your dinner will be all dried; I put it in the oven; Susy an' I done ours. You won't come in an' have a bite with her, Mr. Philippe, I s'pose? I'd make you a real good cup o' tea. . . . Well, you must drop in some other time, then, an' have a chat with gran'ma. We'd be pleased to see you any time, I'm sure. Joseph, he was sayin' on'y at breakfast what a lot he thought o' you. Come on, gran'ma. Bless you, she don't take in more than half a word at a time o' what I say! Goodbye, Mr. Philippe."

"Come on, gran'ma!" repeated Susy, officiously. "An' why ever in the world didn't you go an' put a hat on, instead of that silly old hankey?" she added loudly as they went away—resolved that Mr. Philippe should see there was one member of the family knew what was proper, anyhow. Susy was universally reckoned "a pretty smart little girl."

Philippe watched the three of them thoughtfully, as they crossed the paddock and entered Métrailleux's back-door; he sat thinking for a minute or two longer, and then he too left the velvety paddock, and went back down the street. Like the poor old Nanette, he also was late for dinner; and Mrs. Brown, although she would not dare to scold, he

knew would have upon her face that aggrieved, martyr-like expression that he found always so peculiarly irritating. As for the dinner, the dinner could go to the dog—the only creature it was fit for. . . . That coffee still smelt very good as he passed the store. What if he stopped and bought some? A little of it for breakfast, now, mixed with plenty of good milk—the milk of this country was all right, if it could be flavoured with coffee. Ah, but then, the coffee must be made, not murdered! It was no use buying any to take home to Mrs. Brown.

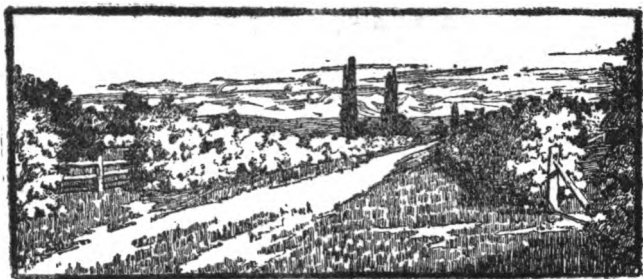
There were two men busy by the fence of old Bossu's house as he came past. They were putting up a sign—"To Let," it said, quite plainly. Young Bossu did not mean to pull the old place down just yet, then—Ah! . . . Philippe stood suddenly stock-still, staring at the green shutters but not seeing them at all, in the full radiance of the idea that, ever since Mrs. Métraille's remarks, had been slowly dawning on his mind. He, Philippe, was not poor; the old house was not large; Bossu *fil's* could not demand an extortionate rent, and, in the little paddock at the back, Nanette could keep her cow. Such were the simple, practical thoughts that were at work, altering his whole world for him. The old woman, the old house, the old man—why not convert them all, by associating them in one companionship, into a little remnant of departed Home?

No rash idea of marriage was in old Philippe's mind. Nanette, the withered everyday housewife, could never be a rival to Ninon, the ideal, the ever-young—neither would she, in her peasant meekness,

ever dream of such a thing. But she could be his housekeeper, his *bonne*; they could have again, between them, the old tongue, the old ways, the memories of old. She would not have to put up any longer with Mrs. Métrailleur and the terrible Susy; he could escape from Mrs. Brown. Nanette could make him omelettes, like his mother's; he could eat them out of doors, within the leafy ash-tree arbour, as they used to eat at Home. . . Ah, Home! Home was gone, vanished, dead—surviving only in his brain—and in hers. . . . Well, one must just make the best of where one was; there would be something to make the best of, now. Why, she could make him coffee! Swiss coffee to mingle with New Zealand milk. . . . Eh, and what if, at the same time, one could mingle with the insipidity of the present something of the poetry, the aroma, of the beloved past?

Café au lait, properly prepared, is delicious. . . .

Poor Mrs. Brown, watching with long-suffering Philippe's tardy progress down the street, had presently the additional annoyance of seeing him, when he had at last got within two yards of her gate, suddenly cross the road, and walk into young Bossu's, with a step grown wonderfully firm.



V

SPRING IN AUTUMN

AWAY and away across the tawny plain of tussock, absolutely flat, the white road runs between its two converging hedgerows, absolutely straight. To right and left the vast, sea-like level, interrupted only at wide intervals by little islets of dark, pointed trees, which hide the homesteads they surround, spreads serenely into space; behind, the empty stretch of it engulfs even the road, and rounds out upon nothing save the open, airy, and deeply coloured distance which, all the world over, proclaims the neighbourhood of that further void—the real sea. But, right ahead, monotony and naked space come all of a sudden to a full stop, and the plain and the road run together straight to glory; for there, up from the ended flat into the endless heavens, sweeps and springs, soars and stands, the long, lofty, pinnaced rampart of the Alps—snow-peaks flinging a dazzling fringe of silver along the fresh blue of the sky, bases of purple and ravines of indigo showing deeper and darker yet in the radiance of this bright spring air.

Yes, it is Spring! From the wide leagues of air

and sky on every side come showering down the carols of innumerable larks—Nature's clear cry of joy. The grassy borders of the white road are green, its gorse hedges in flower. What masses of bloom! What clusters of burning orange, purest yellow, gold of unimaginable softness! The double, dark-green walls are one long blaze; the brilliance intoxicates one's eye; and the colour! the intensity of the colour! surely it must be as much with weight of colour as of substance that the great grape-like bunches droop. Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist, who fell upon his knees before the glory of the gorse in bloom upon an English common, what would Linnaeus have done here in New Zealand, at the sight of this tenfold illumination?

For miles and miles these running lines of gold tip and trim the road with light, sweeten as with a smile the snowy grandeur of the prospect beyond, and smooth the racy air with puffs of balm, rich and dreamy. Little runnels and "races" of water, led through the plain from the mountain rivers, ripple, brightly blue, here and there across the road; their flat rims of musk and clover, flowerless as yet, are lushly green. A field of oats, running and shimmering in sheets of emerald before the sunlit breeze, laughs through the grey bars of yonder gate; from the paddocks on either side comes up the cry of lambs; and look through those trees a little off the road! Can you not catch light glimpses and twinklings, past the dark soberness of pine and macrocarpa, of a green more gay and lively, and a dapple of pink-and-white?

"It must be an orchard. There must be a homestead there?"

That there is—a homestead, and a home ! For this is Sunshine, where the Rosses live—Peter Ross, and Catherine his wife. Twenty years ago, Peter, then already on the wrong side of thirty, and with indifferent health, came out from the Old Country ; and, after years of toil and saving (for he never became strong, and never met with “ luck ”), took up this bit of tussock-land, and started to make a home. Many and many a year more, of unremitting toil and scraping and self-denial, it took to do it ; but, at last, the little prudent hoard was large enough, Catherine, waiting still faithfully and hopefully while for her part she drudged along, earning a dull livelihood at Home, received at last her tardy summons in a letter that enclosed the passage-money ; and the long journey, seventeen years long, did at last actually end in happiness and lovers’ meeting. The pair were wed, and settled down at Sunshine, to begin life. Peter was fifty years old, and Catherine forty-nine ; yet it really was life that they began, for all that !

I dare say that the mistresses of some of the thriving homesteads which lie at no great distance from the Rosses’ place may have smiled to themselves and one another at some of the newcomer’s ways, when first they came to see her. Very likely, indeed, they smile still, and with a little superior pity, perhaps, at her infinitesimal bakings, the few pounds of butter she makes up every week, her careful selection of a basket of strawberries, or anxious packing of a box of eggs, to trade with at the store in town. And I dare say that their husbands, too, may sometimes get a little amusement out of Peter’s microscopic holding, his handful

of stock, his tiny paddocks of rye and turnips, his minute methods, his humble, inconspicuous hopes. But, if all these good people do laugh, it is certain also that they respect and like, while as for pity—pity forsooth!—pity is clean out of it. Not another couple in the district is one half so happy. It is not only that, after years of separation, they can be at last together; not only that, after years of dependence on the one side, of rigid scrimping and saving on the other, they are, actually, and oh, wonder of wonders! *landowners* (Peter is a feudal-hearted Englishman, Catherine cannot conceive that the freehold question may have two sides); it is also the daily duties, toils, trivialities of their present life that they delight in—the daily round, the common task, that fills their every moment with interest, and awakes them fresh every morning to a whole new fortune of zest. Trifles all; but it is the pennies that make the pounds.

Catherine, for example, had eaten baker's bread and "shop butter" all her life, until she came to Sunshine: now she makes her own, and never thought she could have such an appetite for breakfast! Living in that one little room of hers, with the pot of geranium on the windowsill, how she did use to envy, though always without rancour, the "gentlefolks" their gardens! while now, she can pluck whole posies for herself, of pinks or sweet-williams, red roses or white lilies, as many as she likes; and when, at the heel of autumn, she makes up sweet dark bunches from her violet-bed each time Peter is going into town, she takes less delight in the thought of the easy shillings they are going

to bring in than in the prospect of the pleasure they are going to bear forth.

And as for Peter, Peter is breeding his flock after a theory of his own, that he has never before had the opportunity to put into practice—and it is succeeding! “Ross’s brand” begins to be favourably known in the sale-yards. With his Orpingtons, too, he is experimenting, and his white Leghorns; and this year he has fifteen coops of them, all fine birds. Strawberries again—he grows three varieties of strawberries, and deeply are they loved, and jealously attended. Out of sympathy for Peter and his strawberries, Catherine has learned to detest the pilfering blackbirds—who, at Home and landless, once she loved. The other day, even, so she confessed to me in a whisper (a little bit shamefaced, like one having consciously done a rather unwomanly thing), with Peter’s pea-rifle she actually *shot* one! impudently feasting before her very eyes, while Peter was in town; and she keeps, too, a dreadful little Bluebeard’s Chamber of a box, full of dried blackbirds’ heads, for which she now and then proudly claims so many pence per dozen from the authorities. “And pence are pence,” says thrifty Catherine. “I made my best hat over again the other day, and fourpence was all it cost me. You might say it was trimmed by the blackbirds, now, mightn’t you?” I was reminded, a little dolefully, of the four and twenty blackbirds that went to make a pie; but Catherine pointed out that she was now, first and foremost and last, and for good and all, a practical farmer’s wife, and had no time for sentimentalising over blackbirds’ rights—and no doubt she was wise.

No doubt, either, that the hat so contrived—no matter whether its aspect be that of the latest thing in hats or not—sends a thrill of triumph and satisfaction through its wearer every time she puts it on her good sound head. After all, joy, like that Kingdom of Heaven of which undoubtedly it is a part, does lie within, and I would rather be Catherine in her humble fourpenny affair, than Miss Angelina Snooks, peacocking it in that three-guinea creation straight from Paris, which is depraving into jealous “copy-cats” half the girls of her acquaintance, and which, after all, no later than next season is bound to be out of season itself!

You would like to see Mrs. Ross? Come along, then, through this—gate, I was going to say; only, you can see for yourself it is not, properly speaking, quite a gate, as yet. Peter will make the gate, some day, when he can spare the time; and really, for the present, this pair of hurdles, placed together a little slantwise and secured by a leather strap, makes quite an efficient substitute. If Mr. Ross were in sight, I should feel it my duty to undo these straps—he is so very thorough, that, when I am with him, I always feel certain the slowest way must needs be the best; but, since he is not here, suppose we just climb over?—a much shorter process. Now we are in the paddock, between the house and the road, and have only to follow the clear little water-race which runs across it—oh, but do be careful! That is the second of these foot-high trees, look, that you have nearly stepped on; and you don’t know what you are endangering! Every one of these tiny treelings was grown from a real English acorn brought out

from Home by Catherine, and this, that you are trampling on, is the Sunshine Oak Avenue !

Hark, there is old Shot barking ; he is Catherine's door bell, and will give warning of visitors on the way. And here is gentle Peggy coming up to be stroked—good old lady, then : nice old white nose !—but not the foal ; the foal, see, is suspicious, and holds off. Grey old Peggy is Catherine's pet pride. She never thought she should live actually to own a horse—let alone drive behind it down a town street, and that in her very own cart ! As for the foal, I have not seen its mistress since its birth, but I have no doubt that in her eyes it has at least a dozen characteristics delightfully distinguishing it from every other foal that ever was—as indeed no doubt it has, to any properly seeing eye : like Catherine's, quick by nature, and kept single by simplicity, and true by sympathy, and keen by love.

Across the water-race where the musk is beginning to spring up, over another pair of hurdles, and here we are, in the roomy, rambling garden— isn't it a pleasant garden ? It is one of the very pleasantest I know. Here, you see, forming the boundary on one side, is the race again, tinkling and twinkling now through shoots of willow, all in their first new tender green, and some beautiful young silver-poplars. The latter make a line of pale-gold all down the race in autumn, but on this October day they are all glancing and laughing, with their blossom-like leaf-buds looking as though they were made out of silver and ivory and moon-light—all in one, and much more beautiful than any, and alive.

On the other side of the grass-track up which we are walking lies that orchard that you guessed at from the road—orderly row upon row of apple-trees : Pearmains, Nonpareils, Irish peaches, Bess Poules, Pippins, stone and orange, great Purities, and a whole host more. What charming names apple-trees have : not like those of the poor roses and sweet peas, all William This, and Mrs. That, and Adolphus Ebenezer the Other:—and what a charming sight this apple-orchard is ! all a delicious froth of fresh white and pale pink, and new, shy green ; and, expanding beneath it, hidden in the new-sprung grass, I know what green fans, what soon-to-be-white wide flowers ! for that is Peter's strawberry bed. And, between us and the race, look at Catherine's broad flower-border—herb-garden, too ; where the wallflowers, primroses, and polyanthus now, the stocks and lavender, tiger-lilies and Seven Sisters roses in the hot days coming, mingle kindly with grey sage and marjoram, with mint that steps down into the water, and thyme that spreads a fragrant cushion beside the path.

A little further, and here, beneath the apple-trees, are the coops of the Leghorns in sight. Cheep, cheep—only look at all the little ones ! Catherine must hear the voice of Fortune calling to her quite clearly now, whenever she comes this way. All of them in coops ? Ah, yes—for a certain reason which you have but to look up in order to see for yourself. How beautifully hawks do fly, don't they ? sailing round and round with scarcely a movement of those splendid wings. But for all that, Mr. Hawk, *not* a white Leghorn for dinner, if you please ! Go and dine, if dine on tender chick

you absolutely must, from some farm where the owner's wife does not know every feathered thing by heart and with her heart.

Here we are now at the house. . . . It is the rarest thing to happen, but I am afraid Mrs. Ross really must be out, or Shot's frenzied barking from the pines would surely bring her to the door. Just a little grey, unpainted cottage, as you see ; with four rooms in it, and an attic overhead, that runs the whole length and breadth of the house. The cold South room is the dairy and apple-store ; it is always fragrant with fruit, and bright with wide tin milk-pans brimmed with cream. These two front rooms that take the morning sun are the bedroom and the little sitting-room ; the kitchen, at the back, gets the sunset. The attic is the choicest room of all, to my mind, with its wide views—seaward over the plain at one end, at the other out into the heart of the mountains ; or, rather, that mountain-window in reality is a door—fling it open, and you stand in a

“ Bright chamber level with the air,”

and level also with the velvet middle depth of a great old pine-tree, breathing spice, where the birds love to hop up and down, and the raindrops play at being diamonds.

But Catherine glories in her scrap of a sitting-room, with its motley collection of furniture, bought bit by bit at sales, transmogrified to meet the Sunshine needs, and upholstered by patient fingers into an effect somehow harmoniously old-fashioned, although the stuffs are new. And both of them are immensely proud of the whole dwelling—for did

not Peter build it all himself ? The kitchen dresser is a packing-case, and packing-cases in disguise make up most of the bedroom furniture ; there is not a single cupboard in the house, and Peter has yet to put up the scullery and shed—but what of that ? He has got as far as planning them, anyway ; and the wants that are hopes only make looking forward the more pleasurable ; they furnish the future. Philosophers tell us that the best way to be rich is, to have few wants ; but whenever I visit the Rosses I have my doubts of this, and suspect instead that the really richest man is he who has the most schemes up his sleeve.

Ah, at last ! a sparkle of something bright moving behind the westerly pines, and here comes Mrs. Ross round the corner, a little tin pail in each hand. Look at her well, for you shall see a happy woman. Not very handsome is Catherine, with her spare figure, a little stooped, her weather-beaten, life-worn face, and hair long since gone grey. Neither is she elegant, or even picturesque, with those tucked-up skirts, that must already have been old when she brought them out from Home, that tweed cap of Peter's on her head, and those clumping, thick boys' boots. But Catherine Ross has things to think about far more interesting than her own outward show ; and the moment we really look into that pleasant face of hers, with its honest, kindly glance, and its settled look of happiness, so have we.

“I was feeding some chicken we've got up yonder, beyond the rye-patch,” she explains, the first greetings done. “You really must come up by and by and see 'em, for they're real beauties,

the finest, Peter thinks, he's ever had—and you know that's saying something!" She goes over to the water-race that here, close to the house, runs right across the path beneath a miniature bridge of planking, and drops her tins beside it; there they lie and twinkle to the sun from the fresh grass; treacle-tins I see they are, with the paper label scoured off them, and a bit of wire set in as handle—just the thing for watering the coops.

"Peter's gone to town," continues Peter's wife. "We'd two dozen wethers ready, and he'll see if he can get his price; if he can't, of course he'll just bring 'em back again. Isn't it a blessing stock still keeps so high? Now, come you in, and get a cup of tea." For to that colonial weakness, a cup of tea at all hours, I am sorry to say Mrs. Catherine took most kindly from the start.

So in we go, to the little clean, bare kitchen, with all its litter of work under way (what a difference there is between such busy, "still-alive" litter and mere left-over untidiness!) and before long are drinking hot tea, and eating puffy brown fried scones with home-made apple jelly. To these delights we may sit down, but our hostess, excusing herself on the plea that, being a farmer's wife, she must needs be every moment busy, moves about the kitchen cup in hand, attending to twenty little odd jobs: setting milk upon the stove to warm, chopping up firm white skim-milk curd to mix in with the fowl-feed, stirring up Shot's daily cake of oatmeal, to be fried, presently, in hot mutton-fat: tidying here, rearranging there, and talking all the time. It is always a treat to Catherine, brought up as she was in the bustle of a town, and inevitably missing

it a little now and then, to see a fresh face; and her tongue runs on "as if it had just been oiled," as she presently interrupts herself to say—and, if we are really quite sure that we won't take any more, will we just come and see her feed the lambs? for it is high time she did.

And, accordingly, she pours some of the nicely warmed milk into a clean lime-juice bottle, fitted with an india-rubber teat; the rest, for replenishing the bottle, is put into a billy; and out we go, across the race, through the kitchen garden, with its lines of sprouting peas and cabbages, and so down to a little patch of grass, held, as it were, in an elbow of the race, and sheltered by a tall gorse-hedge. Here, in sunshine and safety, in a green pasture literally, and beside still waters, dwells Catherine's especial flock. The dear little snow-white things! Absolutely fearless, leaping and bounding, up they rush—ears of pink velvet, faces of innocence, voices. . . . Oh dear! of the very shrillest—They know it is meal-time, bless them!

"Those two are Peace and Plenty, and this dandified chap is Algernon," says Catherine, presenting eager Algy with the bottle, while Peace butts at her knee, and Plenty lifts a plaintive nose to the billy in my hand. "Only three this year? yes! and I'm sure I want no more, they do so take one's time. How many times a day am I feeding them? Only five now, but that's quite enough. Every time Peter comes in from the paddock these days, I'm in a real fever for fear he brings more 'pets'—last year I had eleven, and that *was* a treat! Not but what you can't help but get fond of the poor little lonesome dears, all the same,"

she adds, with a tender little note in her voice. A pretty picture it all makes—the brilliant blue and snows beyond, the golden gorse beside, the green grass before, and in the midst this homely, elderly woman, patiently kneeling to mother her family of frisking orphans.

The lambs fed, we are taken to admire the ultra-precious chicks, the new yard or so of fencing, Shot's fresh kennel, made out of a beer-barrel ("Don't I wish every beer-barrel had got a dog in it!" cries Catherine, that ardent Prohibitionist), and, finally, a happy family of yellow single daffodils, laughing and nodding at the reflection of their own sunny faces in the race. "They're very late this year, we'd moved the bulbs; but I think that only makes their coming all the pleasanter," says Peter's wife. She stoops, to lift up and smile down upon one of the golden heads, and the spring sunbeams lie like a blessing on her own grey one.

"But aren't you lonely, Mrs. Ross, here all day by yourself?"

"Oh, no, never!" she responds, with ever so bright a look. "I'm far too busy ever to be lonely. And then, there's the lammies, and the chicken, let alone Shot and Peggy, you know, for company; and Peter's mostly in to his meals, and always done by dusk. But I know what you mean, too. We don't have so very many neighbours, and we always live retired—once a fortnight, coming out of church, is mostly my only chance to see folks. Sue Simpson, now, at Home—or Martha Pope . . . no, I don't know a single one of my old friends, perhaps, as could have stood it; but *I'm* perfectly happy! Maybe I mightn't have been, that's true, had I

come here quite a young person ; but, you know, I'd seen a deal of life already, considering my station. And then, we always read in the evenings, Peter and I, and discuss things. Having the Bible taught in school is what we're at just now—I can't seem to make up my mind about it . . . And I always did use to say too, when I was Home, and looking out of window upon nothing but chimneys, as I did hope, before my time come to die, I'd have got me to some place where I could have enough sky for once——

“Happy ?” she suddenly burst out. “Why ! this is the very best time of all my life ! It's as if I'd only just got to things, and there's so much to do ! Ain't God good ? for He gives me the work to do, and He gives me the strength to do it with. Happy ? Why, sometimes I feel *that* happy I can scarce contain myself, and am forced to go and give the chicks an extra bit, or take poor Peggy a carrot, so as to do a little something for somebody, and get a mite of it worked off !”

And I warrant that Peter, too, is happy ! that, as he footed it leisurely this morning, behind the little flock of his own rearing, in the spring sunshine and along the sweet-smelling road, he whistled like his enemy the blackbird as he went—or else was silent only with a happier silence, a glad uplifting of the heart. For with him, as with Catherine, a deep, unspoken piety lies quick at all the roots of life. It is not only literally and in the body that this plain, unpretentious couple have their home among serene pastures, under wide skies, near to everlasting hills, and in full sight of Glory. Nay, and that inner, spiritual scene and prospect they

were able still to share in soul when physically they were held apart by half the width of the world. Perhaps that is why, during all those long and barren years of waiting, they were able to preserve their freshness and fecundity of heart, to keep their lives still capable of this eventual blossoming.

It is a pity that they have no children, though, nobody to work for, and hand this cherished place to, when they die? A better land system, now, would earlier have rewarded Peter's labours, and done its best to secure to the country descendants of so worthy a stock. Well, that is as it may be. I believe, too, that there is a little nephew of Peter's, an orphan, still at home in England, whom Catherine has set her heart on bringing out as soon as it can be afforded. But I should like to see you suggest either to Catherine or Peter that they are not still quite young people themselves, with years and years of vigorous toil before them. Heaven grant they have!

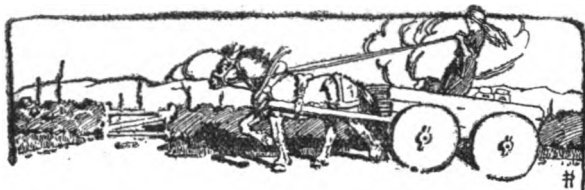
But what is Shot barking about now?—so gleefully, too, and with such a welcoming tail. Is it your master, old fellow? Why, indeed, it actually is—here comes Peter, walking up the grass-track: a long, cadaverous, but wiry-looking man, with serious, deep-set eyes. Back already—and alone? the wethers sold, and so early? What, and at top-price, too? Well done, Mr. Ross! Brains are better than muscle, after all, even when it comes to farming. Long-headed experience is not altogether out of it in the race with dash and go.

But come, now, we really must be off, despite the kind and pressing invitation to "stay dinner." Well, at least they will walk down the orchard with

us, then, and see us on to the road (H'm! the hurdles will get untied this time!); and on the way Peter has his two new beehives to show us, white with clean paint, under the apple-green. This is a fresh venture—good rains to the clover-crop! And Catherine—well, there now! she *knew* there was something else. Why, she has clean forgotten to show us her new hope in carnations, out back there by the race—deep crimson and flesh-coloured, and such good, firm flowers to travel into town, come summer, with the butter and the eggs. Well, we must be sure to see them next time. Good-bye, then, good-bye! As we step out again upon the road, and look back for a last glimpse, there goes the pair of them arm-in-arm up the Oak Avenue, and deep in the discussion of what new enterprise? Good luck to it, whatever it is! Good luck to the little oaks! and God-speed to all the rest of this brave adventure!

October! . . . It was autumn in England. In New Zealand, it is spring!





VI

AN EARLY MORNING WALK

MILLICENT opened her eyes. A patch of sunlight lay gold along the brown boards of the bedroom wall ; the crisp air of April came in through the open window, but there was no rustle of the full white curtain. Footsteps were going to and fro in passage and kitchen, and from the latter she could hear crackling the just-lit kindling wood. Millicent lay still awhile, and luxuriated in those sounds of work. It was so delicious to feel that it was not she who had to sweep the passage this morning, and light the kitchen fire ; that at last, at last ! she was away for a holiday, and in a house where the daily duties were to be no concern of hers. What ! she would actually be able to take note of other things in this fresh morning light than broom and dust-pan, and the tardy bubbles in the family porridge-pot ? The thought was so enlivening that she sprang at once out of bed. She would begin with a look at Nature's morning housekeeping ; she would take a before-breakfast stroll out of doors.

Presently she came out into the great corridor beyond her bedroom. The house was old and large ; the walls and floor and ceiling of the passage were all

alike of the same unpainted wood, pale-brown, and clean, and faintly shining. Here and there, through some open doorway, the sunlight shot a slant of gold, and splashed a golden pool upon the floor, but all the rest was shadowy and dim, and neutral-tinted. Millicent walked the length of the passage, opened the door at the end, stepped out upon the broad verandah, then. . . . "Ah-h-h!" she caught her breath.

There had been a frost in the night. That was the reason why the curtain had not fluttered—there was no wind. The air was still keen, and of a faultless clearness, but the early sun had now melted the rime, and everything was sparkling. On the little lawn in front of the verandah, the thick-strung dewdrops flashed like diamonds; here and there, one that had caught the light at an angle swung to and fro from some slender grass blade a fairy lamp of glow-worm green, of fire-colour, or blue. Down in the little orchard beyond the lawn, the still-ungathered quinces hung like golden moons in a green night, and a rosy globe or two smiled out through the fast-thinning leaves of the apple-boughs. It was none of these several brightnesses, however, that had so captured Millicent's first look—no! but, out there—beyond the lawn and the orchard, past the aspiring, leafless poplars, and dark mass of macrocarpas that framed between them a glimpse of curved white road . . . out, and above, and beyond—the mountains, the mountains, they were there! The new sunshine fell full upon them, and bright with that, and with the first new snow, up they stood, one glorious great white wall! their summits cleanly cutting the clean blue of the sky,

their knees shrouded in a deep bloom of purple, vaporous, velvety.

There was a fine old pine-tree near the gate, swinging out across the distant white-and-purple, its great boughs of kind and sunlit green ; and Millicent, her eye still upon the snows it emphasised, moved slowly towards it. Like a blessing upon her head, a warbler hid in its branches trilled out his brave little song, and the honeysuckle on the old grey fence beneath breathed into her face the summer scent with which it was welcoming the summer-like sunshine. Millicent opened the gate, and went out upon the road.

It was, it certainly was, a glorious morning ! Here, out on the open road, unhindered by the garden trees, she had it in all its beauty. Between her and the mountains there was spread a mighty prospect, leagues wide, of open burnt-bush country, penetrated by light—bathing, soaking in it as it were. Above, the deep blue sky had not one cloud, and the unmoving air shone with that large serenity, that warm splendour, which is characteristic of a New Zealand day after frost, and, so far as I know, is peculiar to it.

Everywhere there was not only light, but radiance. It was as though the frost, and after the frost, the sunshine, had drunk up every little dimness from the face of earth and air and sky ; it was as if all dullness was dead, and that for ever. Nothing but looked as new as though it had just been made ; not an object but was suddenly a jewel, and shone. In that atmosphere, so keen, so clean, and yet so genial too, only to breathe was one pure joy, simply to exist another—to see, was

exultation! Millicent's heart laughed within her, and her lips would have laughed aloud, but that something held them silent, as it seemed to hold everything else. Absolute as the glory was the hush.

Not for very long, though. Before she had taken twenty steps along the road, "Get on, you beast! get on!" cried a passionate voice behind her. Startled, she paused beside a paddock-gate, and turned. A little way back, opposite the house, the slip-rails of another paddock were down, and, coming slowly over them, one by one, was a small and very straggling procession of cows, some ten in all. At their heels, bareback upon a bony horse, rode an uncouth stripling. His dress was composed of a blue-striped shirt, very muddy, tucked into tweed trousers, and his bare feet had been thrust into unlaced boots of an amazing thickness of leather, supporting a still thicker deposit of dirt. A shining jewel this object could scarcely be said to resemble, or anything else possessed of the smallest polish. His shouting ceased, however, the moment he caught sight of Millicent.

One by one, and certainly with exasperating slowness, the cows filed over the rails, crossed the road, and came hesitatingly up to the gate by which Millicent had paused—an open gate, that led into a bit of uphill pasture with a grey cow-shed atop. They looked reproachfully at the human obstacle in their path, but, finding that it did not move, obeyed the mitigated adjurations of their driver, and proceeded slowly, and each one with a nervous fling of the head as it passed, through the gate, and up towards the bails.

“Mornin’!” said the boy, as he in turn approached. “Up early, *you* are, ain’t you?” His voice was now incomparably gentle, his blue eyes shone with friendliness. He had driven Millicent in from the railway the day before; they were, too, old acquaintances. “Beautiful mornin’, ain’t it?” he went on eagerly, as though he longed above all things to speak, and feared to lose the chance of doing so. “Reg’lar germ of a day, I calls it.”

“It’s glorious,” Millicent agreed. “And how are you getting on, Ken?”

“Me? Oh, fair to middlin’,” answered Ken, scratching his hatless head as though puzzled why any one should bother to ask. “‘Cep’ for these here jolly cows, which—look here now, Miss Milly, they’re about enough to make a parson swear an’ burn his books—my word, that they are! Old Ruru, now! My word, she’s about the unmannerliest beast God ever put grass into; knocked me over yesterday, she did, flat as I was long—an’ the bucket with me; an’ me with a clean shirt on me shoulders, an’ likin’ to get dirty by degrees. I say, though! you wasn’t comin’ to try your hand again at milkin’, like, I s’pose?” he added, with a sudden lively accent of hope.

“No, indeed, I was *not*,” replied Millicent, with heartfelt thankfulness—milking is an art which many practise but few, very few, love. “And I’m not going to delay you, either, Ken,” she added, with edge.

Ken sighed. “It’s a poor job, cowbanging’ all alone,” he said wistfully. But he took the hint, and moved on after his charges, pulling to the gate behind him with a bang, and spurring his horse hard

on to the tail of the hindmost cow. A lively scene followed.

“ I wonder how long it will be before he has all those poor beasts ruined ! ” Millicent said severely to herself as she walked on. Yet she smiled a little, too. It was very often hard to keep from smiling at irresponsible, irrepressible Ken ; though very often still harder to keep from hurling maledictions at him, together with anything else that stood handy.

In the paddock on her left, she soon came abreast of a group of pine-trees, that made a bouquet of grateful duskiness amid all the surrounding tawny-green ; and in this duskiness there sat a little cottage of unpainted timber, grey with weather and age. It had a long, narrow garden sloping down towards the road ; and this was full of the most gaily coloured chrysanthemums, flame-colour, gold and crimson, pale canary, deep maroon. The frost had not hurt them at all, and they made a splendid show of colour. There was also a line of newly washed garments, pink and white and blue, hanging out already thus early beside them, and fluttering in a little draught of air that had sprung up. They only looked like a row of bigger, more summery blossoms.

Beyond this cottage Millicent found herself between wide, bare paddocks, simply divided off from the road by fences of barbed wire. Just as far as ever she could see, the land between her and that mountain distance still beckoning ahead was all one huge ocean of naked grass country, running up into lumpy ridges, traversed by sharp-lipped gullies, and everywhere, alas ! strewn with the unsightly remains of burnt Bush. Here and there,

it is true, a clump of native trees might yet be seen ; but even these were doomed, for Bush trees are gregarious, and will not long continue to survive without the shelter of their fellows ; and for inches of such verdure there were acres and acres of the barren devastation. The great half-burnt skeletons of the forest, grey and black and bleached and piebald, stood gauntly up, as though in mute protest, from tawny hillside and green flat. They were splintered and shattered ; at their feet lay multitudes of their brethren—enormous rotting logs, and the mouldering black stumps from which they had been severed ; and it was only a question of time before they too would rest their ruins on the ground.

In one paddock Millicent could see, in spite of the bright sunshine, a little bluish film of smoke rising from the earth here and there, with a red flower or two of fire twinkling through it, as it veered and wavered in the unequal breeze. The settler who owned that paddock was trying to clear it. He had set it alight the day before, when there had been a wind. At night, when the fire smouldering at the heart of every stump would show itself in the darkness, the whole paddock would be spotted with crimson, and look all eerie, like a witches' camp.

The paddocks bordering the road lay low ; there were rushes growing in them, and from among the rushes the rains of March looked up into the sky with eyes that were bright blue pools. The grass sprang fresh and thick on these low flats ; the ground looked all inlaid with vivid green and blue. Minas, with their bold, important bearing, their yellow beaks, and handsome dark wings patched

with white, flew chattering from log to log ; larks sprang singing up into the bright, elastic air, and the whole stretch glistened with wet light.

By the time Millicent had walked another mile, surmounted a ridge and reached the house beyond, the Scandinavian settler to whom it belonged, industrious and "fore-handed" as "Scandy" settlers are wont to be, had already finished his milking. The cows were being driven back to the paddock by a couple of sturdy urchins, and the settler himself was loading up his milk-cart. His wife, with a blue handkerchief over her yellow head, was busy washing in the open. She had a tin bath, a fire of logs, and three kerosene-tins full of water upon it, by way of equipment, and, as Millicent passed, was giving orders with a shrill emphasis to a plump little flaxen-haired daughter at the house door. "*Melon* jam, now, you mind!" Millicent heard her insist—pie-melons are good and fleshy, and one of them will provide quite a large quantity of jam, but the younger and less thrifty members of the family have been known not infrequently to prefer apricots.

Over the "Scandy" garden fence, beside the road, there leant a tall white poplar, its silver leaves already transmuted by April's finger into the purest gold. It seemed to light up the air like a great, glowing lamp, and the radiant blue of the sky looked amazingly deeper and richer seen through its exquisite filigree, so delicate, alas ! so frail . . . like little golden birds, a score of leaves came gently fluttering and twisting through the air as Millicent went by, and the ground beneath was full of faded wealth. Close to the poplar, a wattle was showing

already in its plumes a hint of yellow buds ; but it would not blossom until spring, and spring was four months away. The warm freshness of the morning made it seem much nearer than that, though ; and now upon its clean brightness there came another touch—Mrs. Hansen's geese, no less : straggling across the road, and down into the rich green of the swamp below, in a long line of shining white.

After Hansen's, the road went, straight as a shot, up a hill lavishly crowned with trees, and with a number of little grey outhouses. As Millicent neared the summit, she could hear from the outhouses the grunting of numerous pigs, and from among the concealing trees the whirr and humming of machinery. This must be the butter-factory, then ; she had heard of Morrisby's starting one—he was a man who had always some fresh plan in his head. His neighbours were now wishing that they had had the sense to forestall him with a co-operative affair of their own, but they found his factory a boon, nevertheless, and gave it solid support.

Hansen overtook Millicent just as he reached the gate. He drove his low, heavy vehicle, with its load of tall, shining tin cans, and its huge wheels made entirely of wood, alongside the building, into whose open upper door his cans were immediately hoisted for weighing and emptying. Next, he backed his cart, with its emptied cans replaced, alongside another loft, whence, presently, from a great vat connected with the separator, that had got to work at once upon his contribution, he took aboard his cargo of skim-milk, and drove away.

Morrisby had handed him down an envelope before he went, and Millicent, still standing by the gate as he came out, could see between his fingers a strip of white and green paper, and on his face a smile of honest satisfaction. It was the cheque for his month's milk that he had received, and his cows had clearly done well.

And now the road ran level for awhile between a double line of blue-gums. Is there anywhere, for catching the light, anything better than a blue-gum tree? Smooth and bare, its slender silver pillar springs shining up, its delicate twigs respond to every least play of the wind, its long, polished leaves arrest every sunbeam and turn it to a flame of bright white light. Millicent walked the length of this glittering avenue, inhaling with delight its pungent and wholesome aroma, and came out beyond it upon the brink of a sharp declivity, down which the road went winding. This, she realised, must be the limit of her walk; so she sat down for a moment upon a blackened log, carefully choosing a part of it that was not festooned with the delicate but designing tracery of tentacled "lawyer," and took a good, heart-satisfying look at the country spread beyond.

Burnt Bush, to those that have ever lived in it, has a beauty all its own—a curious beauty, lying in the very lap of ugliness. These great stretches of denuded tawny and russet-colour give room for the spirit to expand. They are spacious, sea-like, still. Here and there, too, amid the solitude and the ruinous remains, a little grey iron roof, amid a handful of new trees from over the water, tells of Man—the successor of the forest he has destroyed.

The whole land now lies waiting for his work, and there is room in the landscape for imagination, just as there is room, too, for every ray, every modulation, of the light, and for the faithful reflection of every delicate interplay of shadow and shine.

From a line of willows at the foot of the hill, a thrush sent suddenly up a real "shout of Spring"; he was thinking, perhaps, of English April, yet this withered and wintry landscape before her was also, Millicent reflected, full of another, a figurative sort of spring, brimful of hope. The green leaves of the willows were famished to thin gold, and through them she could see the shining of a creek. It glittered between the dark sparkles of water-cresses as it neared the road; and the road crossed it by means of a little bridge buried in bushes of fuchsia, then climbed away up out of this nest of greenery, streaked the tawny opposite side of the great gully with white loops and angles and zigzags, and disappeared over the ridge into the next gully beyond.

Millicent did not miss it. Road and gully and widespread radiant stretches—all these were only the foreground. The picture, the real picture, lay still beyond—the unimpeded mountain-view. Away to the right, away to the left, ran the immense white barrier, of which, from this vantage-point, she could just discern both the beginning in the north, and, in the south, the end. Shaggy forest, showing at this distance darkly blue, clothed the foot of the ranges, the lower spurs were bare of snow, the middle heights were only slightly powdered—blue gullies gashed them, and they had brown

brows of rock ; but the soaring peaks above were purely, ethereally white. Already, however, the sunbeams of this summerlike day following the night's hard frost were at work upon the mountain-tops ; and from the highest points were to be seen already floating those little flying pennons of silvery cloud that, as the day advanced, would build another mountain-wall of white air above the snows of earth.

Clank ! Clank ! Millicent turned her head. An old man was coming up the road from the factory : a very old man, bent low beneath a wooden yoke, from either side of which depended a kerosene-tin, full of skim-milk. He smiled and nodded to Millicent, but did not recognise her ; she, however, knew him. It was " Old Mercer," once, in the old, pre-certificate days, school-teacher of the district. Now, in his eightieth year, he kept the wolf from the door, and himself from the Old Men's Refuge (he had forfeited his claim to the pension by a few years' residence in Australia), by means of a few cows ; but he had no horse, and was forced to carry his laborious loads himself to and from the factory. " Poor old man ! " Millicent said to herself, with a pang of pity—in reality, quite unneeded. With his dog and his liberty, old Mercer, as a matter of fact, was a good deal happier than most people.

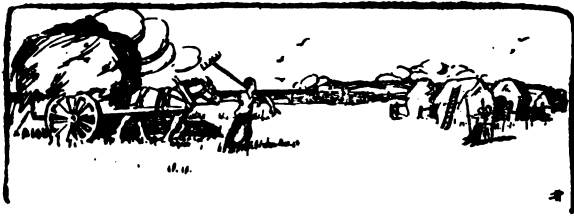
His coming had roused her from her reverie. It was time to go back, and she began to retrace her steps. The road now wore quite a different aspect—it was populated. A number of milk-carts were rolling heavily towards the factory ; their bright cans glittered in the sun, and the horses' hides showed finely glossy. It was getting on for

school-time, too, and a flutter of little girls came frolicking out of Morrisby's gate. In their white pinafores and large white sun-bonnets, they looked like a company of frilly daisies. As they flitted past the Hansens', a whole tribe of little "Scandies" hurried out to join them. Many of these were boys, but boys and girls alike were serviceably clothed in what had evidently been portions of the same roll of thrifty dark-blue dungaree; and the ever-useful flour-bag had manifestly been under contribution for the little girls' aprons. All the children, Morrisbys and Hansens both, went barefoot, and carried, slung over their shoulders, satchels of yellow leather, containing school-books and lunch—Millicent hoped the melon-jam was generously thick! Two more little boys and one little girl rode up behind her, all bestriding the same fat pony. Stirrups or saddle they had none, only a sheepskin flung across the pony's back; but they seemed entirely at their ease and quite secure.

As she passed the chrysanthemum cottage, a neat young woman in a clean blouse and dark skirt came daintily down between the flowers; and she guessed, rightly enough, that it was the school-mistress. As she reached the cow-gate, Ken and his cart came rattling at a great pace out of it—he was late, of course; he might even be too late for Morrisby to accept the milk. A white dribble marked his course as he fled; he had not put on his can-covers straight.

Turning at the great pine to go in, Millicent had one last delightful vision. Down the road came a returning milk-cart, furiously driven by a young Scandinavian girl, perhaps fifteen years of age.

She was standing upright in the cart, and her lissom body was swaying easily to and fro with its motion ; her yellow hair streamed out bright behind from under her crimson cap, her blue eyes shone, her face was all aglow. Very likely she was only hurrying in order to be in time for school ; but, as she whirled by, Millicent had a sudden vision of some Viking's daughter standing at a helm, and felt, as she opened the gate, and re-entered the house, that upon her impressions of country freshness and mountain glory there had suddenly blown in also a sense of the adventurous wide sea.



VII

AN ACTIVE FAMILY

THE Post Office clock was just striking seven, that fine midsummer morning when "Mother" and "Dad" and I drove out of town and took the sea-coast road. "Dad" was a spare, spry little man, somewhere between fifty and sixty, with a shock of grey hair and an eye of burning fire; "Mother" was a buxom presence, comfortable and comforting, I just a stray guest; and we were all off, this rare mid-week holiday, to see how the up-country farm was getting on, and "the children," who were in charge of it.

In less than five minutes the country spread all about us—the good, green, grassy country, rolling in gentle swells and undulations like a summer sea. Here and there one lonely cabbage tree stood up, curiously distinct; at long intervals we passed a squad of plantation-pines, or some homestead nestling in among the gentle hills; but otherwise all was wide sky and billowy grass, interspersed with browsing cattle. The skylark sang overhead; there was a fine fresh breeze; and away to the west, along the bright blue of the sky, there lay, straight and low, a dark blue band of sea.

Dad flicked the whip at Brownie with a nervous energy ; he was " in a bit of a rush to get home." Always full of nervous energy was Dad, and more often than not " in a bit of a rush." He was a delicate man, who had survived, Mother alone knows how many " bad turns," and he was often ailing and irritable, but never without a certain dash and vigour. " More pluck than bulk," a neighbour once summed him up, and, " You'd think he'd a fire inside of him," agreed one of the listeners. Suppose it was so, then this fire had two flames—a love of music, and a passion for the soil.

The latter was paramount and urging. Dad, without capital, and with a numerous family, of which the eldest were but just emerging from school age, had nevertheless, some few years previously, managed, at last, to take up a bit of land ; by dint of stern determination had ploughed and fenced and got it into some kind of going order ; then, with the same sternness, had torn himself away from it. It needed money ; that money he must make. The children were now growing up ; they could manage things between them, and he would go back to town and earn. Accordingly, for the sake of his heart's delight, he banished himself from the sight of it all week long, and served in a grocery store, hurrying home, each Saturday night and every chance holiday, to take a general survey, and issue orders. Mother would not leave him—of all her children he was the one who needed looking after most. " So he's bachelorisin', an' I'm keepin' house for him," she would explain, with a twinkle. And " the children " managed the farm.

As we drove along, Mother related reminiscences—tales of the early days when she had just come out to New Zealand, and the Maori troubles in that part of the country were at their worst. “Dad was ordered off, with all the rest of the men, the moment we landed, and all us women and children were herded together for safety,” narrated this Pilgrim mother. “I remember how I sat down with my young one in my arms—he’d been born on board ship comin’ out—an’ cried an’ *cried*. I was but only eighteen, and I’d made my mind up that we’d come out just to get killed. Things quieted down a bit after awhile, but for long enough they wasn’t properly settled. Once, after we’d got us a house to ourselves, there was a band of Maoris come into it at the front door, just as I’d caught my babies together (two there was by then), an’ run out into the flax-swamp by the back. Everything they could put their hands on they stole, them natives did; not a crumb of any one thing did they leave behind ’em; and, as I peered out from behind the flax an’ watched ’em go, I could see they was finishin’ up with eatin’, what do you think, now? *Soap!* Then, there was another time, an’ that was in the winter—bitter cold. I locked all the doors an’ went without fire for a week, that they might think the house deserted, for there they was, bands of ’em again, goin’ a-singin’ an’ a-screechin’ up an’ down the road. Hows’ever, none of ’em come in that time. . . The babies? Nay, I’d lost ’em, dear. I never reared them two.”

So peaceful looked the smiling country all about us, so placid were Mother’s soft tones, that it was hard to realise what danger and excitements, what

sore straits at times, both land and woman had suffered in those bygone days—not bygone so very far yet, either.

The hills grew steeper as we proceeded, and the road rougher, but Brownie was a good horse, and she had a resolute driver. “They’ll have begun the stacking to-day, I shouldn’t wonder,” Dad kept observing, whenever there was a pause in the talk ; and we made good time. It was not yet quite nine o’clock, when we passed a hollow filled with glossy *karaka*, mounted the hill above it, up which ripe grasses ran before the wind—and there we were, at a white gate before a thick plantation, and—yes ! they *had* “begun the stacking.” Dad flung the reins to a girl who came flying out of the gate just as we stopped before it, kissed her somehow as he passed her, and bounded straight for the oat-paddock, pulling off his coat as he ran.

“Let him go !” says Mother with an indulgent smile, leisurely descending in her turn from the gig. “Well, Flo, how’s everybody ?”

“Oh, fine !” says Flo, a big, broad-shouldered girl, of perhaps eighteen, with a happy face, a friendly smile, and two long plaits of rich dark hair hanging nearly to her waist. “How do you do ?” (to me) “you must be pretty well starving, I’m sure ! I’ll take Brownie, Mum, you two go in. Nance is in the kitchen.”

So we leave Flo to unharness, and turn in at the gate. The path beyond it leads, first, through an avenue of breakwind pines, through which, turning for a moment to look back at Flo, I catch the smile of sunlit sea half a mile or so away ; and then out upon an open space, bright with hardy flowers,

and surrounding a ramshackle wooden house, with an overflow of outbuildings, all stained, rather than painted, with a various, weather-washed red.

"Nancy's flowers!" says Mother, stooping to smell a bit of lemon verbena, and to lift up a branch of fuchsia, all bowed down beneath its load of royal purple and crimson. "That child would grow flowers in a dust-pan, I do believe—Ah, Nance, here you are!" as another girl comes flying out of the house—they all seem to take after their father as to movement, and carry the wind in their hair.

Nance is slighter than Flo, and fairer; perhaps she is a couple of years older. Her pale-green blouse is faded but spotless; and the untrimmed "gégé" hat tilted back upon her head frames in a face that is very nearly pretty, and so happy that it has the effect of being pretty quite; and that is a real triumph of mind over matter, since one cheek is red and swollen, and Nance's hand goes up to it, even as she smiles a charming welcome.

"Toothache?" asks mother, sympathetically.

Nancy nods. "But it'll go," she says brightly. "Come along in! The kettle's on the boil."

"None of 'em really strong, someway," Mother confides to me. "But they all take after their dad—they won't give in till they must."

The house door leads right into a large bare room, with a long table and some benches in it, all polished by much use, and a great open hearth, fit for burning huge logs of wood. The brown wood walls, guiltless of paint or paper, are decorated only with a couple of Christmas Supplement pictures, unframed; the floor is covered with a brown linoleum which lost

its pattern long ago ; the cupboard that occupies one corner, the dresser, hung with mugs and cups, that runs along one wall, the lounges underneath the two great windows, are all obviously home-made. But, frugal though its furnishing, there is a most comfortable *homeyness* about the place. A green jug upon the table, too, holds a handful of Canterbury bells, purple and white ; plump cushions, with bright covers mollify the lounges ; there is plenty of light ; above all, there is plenty of air, for both windows are open, and another door, opposite to that by which we entered, frames another glimpse of garden-green. Through this second door Nance disappears, while Mother smooths out an imaginary crease in the cloth laid at one end of the long table, and straightens the quite straight cups and plates.

“ We’ve a cooking-shed outside,” she explains, as Nance returns with a tray and a steaming teapot. “ Where’s Eva, Nance ? ”

“ Eva ? Oh, still at the butter, I expect,” says Nance. “ There’s a splendid lot this week.”

It is hours since we breakfasted, and the delicious bread and butter and jam, all home-made, of course, are more than welcome, not to speak of the hot tea, and sweet rich cream.

“ How about Dad, though ? ” says loyal Mother, as she takes her seat.

“ Oh, Dad’s all right,” Nance answers, putting brisk finishing touches to a great “ kit,” covered in with a spotless tea-towel ; “ I told Benny to be down for the lunch just about now ”—and even as she says the words, in shoots a breathless, towheaded twelve-year-old. He smiles to his mother, nods to

me, catches up the kit, together with a mighty billy by the door—and shoots out again.

“Who’s up there ?” asks Mother, “and how are they gettin’ along ?”

“First-rate ! They reckon to be done to-night,” says Nance. “Benny’s there, of course, and Bruv and Sandy ; Flo and Bonny have been there most of the time, and . . . Hugh is helping.” Nance hesitated a little before that last name, and it seemed to me she blushed ever so slightly, too. If she did, however, Mother took no notice.

“That’s good. And how’s the ducks ?” said she.

“There, now !” replies Nance ruefully. “I do wish you hadn’t asked ; I was hoping to break it to you gently. All gone, mother ! Poor Waddle, all her babies gone ! Rats, we think ; so we’ve moved Toddle and her little lot. But oh, Mother ! what do you think ? We’ve had somebody after the place !”

“That’s good,” says Mother again, taking the translation of the little Waddles as equably as she takes everything else. “Likely, d’you think ?”

“Bruv says so,” Nance replies. “Dad *would* be pleased, wouldn’t he ? He’d have us all up at that new Bush place in a twinkling. Only—you do get fond of a place you’ve done the settling of yourself, don’t you, Mum ? It’ll seem a bit hard to move on.”

“Well, but after all that’s what we settled it *for*, isn’t it ?” returns Mother comfortably. “Bring out the sewin’, will you ? Machine still all right ?” And, while Nance and I clear away, she establishes herself in a good light with a pile of dilapidated shirts, and a half-made white muslin

blouse. "Worst first," says she, and begins upon the shirts.

The cups washed, Nance proposes that I should see the butter, and takes me over to the dairy-shed, where Eva, a second edition of Flo, though several years older, smiles merrily out at us from behind a great, pale-primrose-coloured hill. Long before breakfast, I learn, with the help of old Dobbin—harnessed to the cream-barrel, and steadily tramping round and round—the butter "came" in about ten minutes; then it was copiously washed with clear, cold spring-water; and now, well worked and salted, here it lies upon the dark wood table, a mellow, shining mass, from which Eva is deftly wedging out, and weighing, and shaping, pile upon pile of "regulation" pounds. Table and concrete floor are running with clean water; Eva has gum-boots on her feet, her skirt, of dark-blue cambric, is pinned up, her snowy apron covers her from collar to hem. Bright are her great grey eyes, and her cheeks very pink and pretty. The very air seems clean and coloured in the dairy, and we stay there a good while, chatting.

Then, after a satisfactory inspection of affairs in the cooking-shed, Nance takes me up to the oat-paddock. "For, though I am cook this week (Flo and Eva and I take it in turns)," she explains, "the dinner's all on now, and, besides, Mother's here." Watch, the old rough-coated dog, comes with us, and on the way there is yellow-haired Custard to be seen, with her six unparalleled pups. From the pigeon-cote above the cart-shed, a flock of snowy fantail pigeons comes circling round our heads, not at all timidly; and Nance says, "You can see they're

pets, too, can't you? Everything we've got is a pet. You know, we don't believe in our animals working for us for nothing."

Past the last of the many sheds, through the kitchen-garden, through the orchard, and then out, upon what a breezy hillock! High up it seems suddenly to have been lifted, and now to be held high up, all bare to the bright breezes. The view from it is all in breadths of blue and green—blue sky, blue sea, and other great green grassy knobs like itself; all the land on this side is hilly. Here and there a fire-blackened pole, or stubborn old grey stump, bears witness to the long-banished Bush; in one gully, tree-ferns spread their delicate pavilions. Up two more hillocks we climb, and chase each other down two gullies. Shouts and laughter greet our last ascent, and here we are, among the harvesters!

The crop is being carried. Benny, and Bonny, his twin-sister, whose flying fleece of yellow hair catches every sunbeam, are helping Flo to rake. Sandy is in charge of the sled, as Dobbin takes it back and forth between the rakers and the rick; while Bruv, the eldest of "the children," is pitching, with the help of Hugh Miller, a neighbour's son. As for Dad, he is everywhere, of course. All the lads are well-grown, honest-looking, and natural. Soft shirts with turned-down collars, blue dungarees, belts, and great "*gégé*" hats make up their "rig"—how they would laugh if one told them that it was picturesque! it is, though, all the same. Work is proceeding at top-speed; nevertheless, Hugh Miller, I perceive, finds time between his forkfuls for a word or two with Nancy, standing, with glowing face uplifted, close beneath the rick;

and I do my best to engage that burning eye of Dad's elsewhere. But before very long there comes to my relief a prolonged "boo-oo!" rumbling through the racy air—the unmistakable sound of a horn. "Dinner already? It can't be!" cries poor Dad in dismay—nevertheless, dinner it is. In we all scamper, and lively presently about the kitchen-door are the demands for "more soap," and "another towel."

Mother has dished up; and now she and Nance take their stand at one end of the long table, and pass down, to any one who is seated, a generous plateful of roast pork, apple-sauce, and potatoes.

"We're rough, you know," Dad says apologetically, handing me the salt.

"And ready!" chuckles Sandy, falling to with a will upon his share.

"Roughest is best at times," Mother placidly winds up.

But, in reality, there is very little that is rough about it. The cloth is clean, the set of sun-browned faces round it, shining with health and good humour, is a finer sight than any possible amount of silver on it could be, and the meal itself, though perhaps it might make a conscientious dyspeptic shudder, for the pork is followed by a hot plum-pudding, would likewise almost certainly make his mouth water, for it is excellently cooked. There is only one thing wrong, and that is, that every one of us drinks tea. Delicious, pernicious tea! when shall we of the back-blocks learn to do without you, anyway at dinner? No wonder that Nance has toothache, and patent medicines such a sale!

Dinner done, the harvest-hands take a brief "spell" upon the lounges, while the rest of us clear away, and wash the dishes. Then, back they go to the paddock, Eva this time with them, Mother resumes her mending, and Nance and I proceed to bottle "barm," Nance enlivening the task with a sketch of the family fortunes.

"At first, you know," she says, "we'd terrible luck up here. The cows *would* get milk fever, and the pigs took bad, and oh! we knew so little about it all! Then we'd a horrible scare about codlin moth (though I'm thankful to say that didn't come off); and then, for two years running, we lost all the potatoes with blight. Next, the kitchen-shed caught fire—nobody knows how; and it burnt right down, and Dad had thought he could do without insuring. Luckily, it was like this one, right away from the house, but oh! the dairy nearly went as well! The water sizzled as we threw it on the walls, and once Bruv, who was drawing up the bucket from the well close by, gasped out, 'I can't stand it any longer'—he was only sixteen. But Dad, who was really right inside the dairy, all smothered up in the smoke, shouted out to him, and said, 'We MUST!' So, he did. I can see poor old Dad's face now. Oh, I was sorry for him that time; it fair broke him up—if the place had all gone, he'd have died, I do believe. Of course, to us kiddies it didn't really matter much—we didn't know enough, for one thing, and for another, as Sandy said, it was such a change! Anyway, you can pretty well always think how much worse things might have been, can't you?

"Oh, yes, thanks, they're ever so much easier

now. We've fifty cows in milk, butter keeps up, and there's talk of building a factory four miles off. And then, if this man that's after the place now, you know, does take it, we'll be able to sell out well, and Dad can leave that hateful store.

"Neighbours? No, of course, we haven't many—nor much time, either, to go and see those that we have; but then, we're a host in ourselves, aren't we? and we can all sing, and most of us can play. That's one thing, though—I do want Eva to get away to town, and have some lessons; you ought to hear her; she *has* got a proper voice! And she's the only one of us all that doesn't like this life, and she tries to boss Bruv and Sandy sometimes, and naturally that doesn't do. Sundays? Oh, well, of course there isn't any church, and if there was, I doubt if we'd ever get, for we're mostly pretty tired, you see, by Sunday. So we just 'doss' a bit, read a bit, eat a meal when one happens along, doss again, read again, and wind up with some music in the evening. You've got to milk on Sundays, of course, just the same as weekdays."

I wondered what the reading was, and asked.

"Oh, just the papers—and a fool of a yarn sometimes. We've none of us got any brains to spare," says Nance frankly. "I can't stand reading dry stuff, anyway; can you? There! that's the last bottle; thanks! Now shall we go and pick up windfalls in the orchard? I want to make some apple-pies for tea."

There was a certain foreigner who came to New Zealand not so very long ago—a Russian, if I re-

member rightly—and saw a good deal of our workaday doings ; and at the end he broke out into this lamentable cry : “ Oh ! you live so bad, you do live so bad ! ” It was not our material existence, nor, happily, our moral, that he intended thus to rebuke ; it was the performance of our intellects and spirits. And, as I followed Nance into the orchard, his words came back to me, and I wondered whether, after all, he were not right ; whether such as Nance and her family, toiling thus, year in, year out, were not actually, that the farm, forsooth, might prosper, being starved in brain and soul ; whether, in fact, they could be said truly to *live* at all ? Unlike the Old-World workers, we in this country have no burning wrongs to awake our energies and point us to ideals—or, at any rate, if we have, there are but few of us that have caught fire. Church and chapel, the immemorial “ way-out ” from mere existence to so many of our labouring forefathers, mean (whatever the reason ; I do but state the fact) very little to our younger generation. Art comes at all times scantily to the back-blocks ; and with what hope can Literature appeal to brains exhausted already by the exhaustion of the body ? While, on the other hand, what have we in the place of these, to exercise our higher faculties, and so give us, in addition to material existence, *life* ? Oh dear ! despite our soil and our sunshine, our independence and our labour laws, don't we some of us live really rather “ bad ” ? In our ardour for “ the land ” are we not keeping our regard fixed rather too sedulously upon it ? forgetting that the wide-winged air, the lofty sky, are also facts, and unconscious that man really cannot ever live by bread alone ; no, not

even with the agreeable addition of roast mutton and butter!

Well, it may be that no new country, after the first noble excitements of pioneering have died down, ever quite escapes this peril. It may be with healthy young nations as it is with healthy little boys, that the affairs of the soul interest them a very great deal less keenly than the affairs of the stomach—and, for the time being, rightly so. Nance's next words, moreover, showed that, for her at any rate, one gateway of escape into the larger life was always open—the universal woman's way, of the heart.

For, "What makes it all so worth while, you see," she observed confidentially, as down under the leafy fruit-trees we gathered our aprons full of fallen fruit, "is, that it does make Dad so happy. When one feels dead-beat, you can't think what a stand-by that is. And then, I do love the country; don't you: the animals and flowers and things? We all do, Eva too. Besides . . . oh well!" finished up Nance rather abruptly, and as if she were taking a flying leap over a dangerous reason to a sound conclusion, "I wouldn't change with any one, not if it was the Queen herself!" I could not help giving a guess at that reason she left in the gap, and unless I am greatly mistaken, the colour of its hair strongly favoured that of Master Miller's.

When we got back with our apples, there was afternoon tea to be prepared, both for paddock and house; then we made the pies, and then it was milking-time. I never knew the hours to fly so fast as they did on that farm. Nance put on a short old skirt and a cotton overall, and led me

over to the yard. It was full of cows, creamy and mouse-coloured, brindled and red-and-white, deep chestnut, glossy black ; the slanting sun-rays brightened and grew richer as they caressed those shining hides. Benny and Bonny, Flo and Eva had come down from the oats to milk ; Mother, too, was quietly taking part with bucket and stool as a matter of course.

Much to my surprise, there was no leg-roping, and hardly any bailing-up. Silky, Mima, Jewel, Fiddle-face, and the rest, knew each her name, responded to the call of it, and stood to be milked, patient and contented, either in the open yard, or else in the paddock that led from it. It really was as though that spirit of willing good-nature which possessed the human members of the farm extended also to the animals—or rather, as Nance had said, they were obviously all pets. Fat old Pudding, the cat, waited for her evening meal in the most peaceful proximity to Watch, who, for his part, having brought in the cows from hillside and gully without any undue fuss or chasing, now lay by the yard-gate, more as a spectator than a sentinel. The very calves were tame already—far too tame, remarked Flo, as with a milk-pail in one hand and a stout stick in the other she dealt out mercy well-spiced with justice to their eager, jostling little host.

Barely were the calves fed, when down trooped all the harvesters, exultant—the oats were stacked ! Tea was the next detail, and after tea Dad agreed that there was really time for an hour's music before we need start back for town. The boys had all fallen fast asleep upon the living-room lounges,

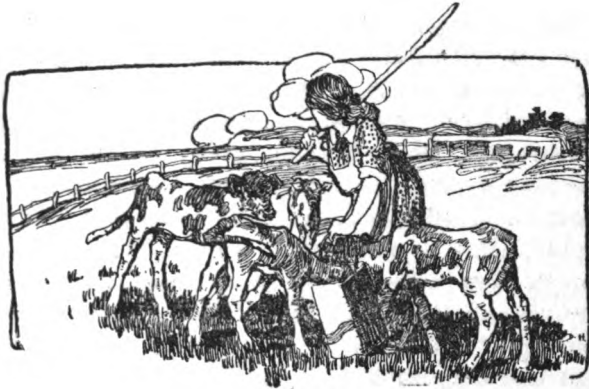
and nobody had the heart to wake them ; but when, the dish-washing quickly dispatched by our many hands, the rest of us had gathered together in the little sitting-room—furnished with a cottage piano, a few chairs, a big pile of music, and very little else—and Dad had begun to play (one of Schubert's *Moments Musicaux*, if you please !) one by one the missing members all crept in on tiptoe, rubbing their eyes, and murmuring under their breaths, "That's it!" "Go it, Dad!" or "That's good!"

The Schubert ended, he began a glee ; upon which the whole family, except mother, who sat nodding her head while she knitted, but more, I fancied, in maternal than musical appreciation, burst spontaneously into voice, taking the parts and singing them together as though they had but one soul between them. Every note rang true, round, and rich, and Eva especially really had a beautiful contralto. After the glee, Bruv brought out a violin, Benny a 'cello, and Flo took her father's place at the piano, and played their accompaniment. Real music it was ; the whole family had evidently a natural gift. Nobody spoke, every one was hanging on sweet sound. It was good to look round on all those absorbed faces ; it was fine to feel that uplifted ending to a day that, arduous with toil, had nevertheless throughout been made lively with interest and sweet with love. Perhaps they did not actually "live so bad" after all, these individual sons and daughters of the soil ?

And then it was Good-bye, said lingeringly, and with regret. One felt for Dad, going back into exile. A load of butter and some apples were packed into the back of the gig, last congratulations

were exchanged about the oats, and then we were off. An hour's downhill drive in the sweet starlight brought us back into town.

"Ay," said Dad, as we parted. "Good kids all, as you say; ne'er a scabby sheep among 'em. Won't be like some I know of, a-wantin' the State to keep their father an' mother in old age, I'll warrant. Only Hughie I s'pose'll soon be wantin' Nance, an' that girl Eva has got to have lessons. Well, we shall manage. Glad you enjoyed yourself. Good night!"





VIII

RED AND YELLOW AND RIPE

“THERE !” said Mrs. Nye with decision, as she put away the last of the breakfast things. “An’ now not another stroke o’ work do I lay hand to, until I get Ted’s tea to-night. Come then, beauty,” as a great sandy cat came sidling round her skirts, “here’s your saucer. Mice an’ milk, milk an’ mice, that’s about all you need to want, ain’t it, Buffy ? You never come out aboard ship to live in a new country about as meller as a new potater, an’ with its months all hupside down ; you don’t need to ’ave no hankerin’s. Call this Hapril !” she said with a sudden little burst of scorn. “W’en it’s as soft a September day as ever I see . . . with the wind so sleepin’, an’ the sky as blue as blue, an’ the sun that ripenin’ it do seem a sin there ain’t nothin’ ’ere for it to ripe—only this cold old Hocean, what

won't never grow sweet, come all Eternity. Now, Buffy, I'm a-goin' to fill up your saucer again, an' that's to do for dinner—hear, Puss? 'Cause autumn is a-callin' an' a-callin' o' pore missus, an' missus, she's a-goin' forth to find it."

While she had been speaking, Mrs. Nye had been putting her apron off and her boots and her bonnet on. Now she carried out both cat and saucer to the shed, locked the house-door, hung the key in the secret nook known only to her son and herself, and went down the white shell path, and out on to the road.

The cottage was one of a straggling handful built almost upon the brink of a wide estuary. There was first the sandy road, then a narrow border of sea-side plants—lemon lupin and pink convulvulus, flowerless at this season, pale bents and the weed vituperated by gardeners under the name of "fat-hen"; then came the foreshore of wan sand, littered with dry grey waterweed; and then the greenish water. The tide was at half-ebb this morning, and islets of yellow-grey mud emerged from it here and there; the sand-dunes that formed the opposite shore lay so low and so far off that they made only the narrowest of auburn lines against the steep, empty sky.

Things seen differ, as we know, with the angle from which we see them; looked down upon from the inland hills, the river-mouth shone all a lovely maze of rare curves and colours. But, here at the Point, it was incontestably a very flat world, and somewhat dull of hue. Neither did its ramshackle settlement do much to redeem it. The cottages looked as though they had been run up in some

unusually brisk fishing or bathing season, and then left to luck—which had subsided. Half of them were empty, most were untidy, and one and all were dingy, with grey tin roofs, and weatherboards that pleaded for the paint-pot in vain. The fence of one was made out of rusty kerosene-tin tops—unique but not beautiful; and none of the inhabitants seemed to have thought of planting trees or a garden. Tree-mallow was as far as they had got; there were a few mallows sprawling here and there, whose coarse growth seemed only to intensify the general dreariness.

Ted Nye had promised his mother, however, that he would make her a garden some day, and really would paint the house these very next Easter holidays; and it could not be denied that the Point was conveniently close to the cement-works where he was employed. Still, Mrs. Nye's best comfort lay in the reflection that, as soon as ever he got a rise, she would coax him to remove. There were plenty of quite pretty places not so very far away—that valley, for example, at the entrance of which the car stopped on the way to town; there were trees there!

Mrs. Nye was a woman to whom beauty—only of a certain kind, it is true: not the beauty that is in the least difficult, or shy, or wild, but beauty perfectly defined and positive—made a strong appeal; how strong, she herself had had no idea, before she came to live in this place that lacked it so completely. Not that, even now, she could perhaps have named her need; but she felt it acutely, and this gentle autumn weather, by recalling its former satisfactions, had given it a terrible edge. Those

trees in that sheltered valley, those oaks and elms and ashes would be "turning" now! It was to them that her thoughts and steps alike were hurrying her this morning. The still, shining afternoon of the previous day had determined her upon the expedition, and she had prepared for it by replacing the pink roses in her summer bonnet with a knot of orange and flame nasturtiums that she had luckily had by her.

"All the same old grey an' brown an' drab, an' green as ain't green, an' blue as ain't blue—that's all *you* are," she complained to the waterside as she went along it. "Somethink 'ot-coloured an' tasty is what I want. You're like sister-law Marthy's mutton 'ash, what never 'ad no pepper, nor no honion. Come autumn skies, my pore sight do seem to water for things red, an' yaller, an' ripe."

She boarded the car, and left it, quite successfully. It was still an achievement, for her native city had never shown her an electric car. Soon she found herself walking straight inland; on one side of her the water, become a good, tame, understandable river now, nicely held in between green banks not too far apart; and, on the other, high hills, that kept the valley safe from the sea winds. Round a corner of the hills the road went; she followed, and was at once in—ah! what a different world! A poplar-tree hung over the fence, and greeted her with the peculiar, nutty fragrance of fallen leaves. That was as it were the turning of the key in Exile's unclimbable gate to our homesick friend. "Ah-h-h! I *smell* autumn!" she said, with a sigh of intense relief.

And then she came to a hedge—a hedge of gorse, and barberry, and sweet-brier high over her head ; and the gorse was in bright yellow blossom, the barberry and brier were in bright red fruit. In loops and festoons and sprays their brilliance leapt out naked upon the full soft blue of the sky, and a great black-and-crimson butterfly hovered about them. . . . Talk of colour !

Mrs. Nye could not get past this hedge for a long time. She had brought a little lunch with her, and she sat down by the roadside and ate it with her eyes on the hedge all the while, “ so as to save time. I just want to get my heyes *soaked* in all them good warm hips an’ fuzz,” she said to herself. And when at last she did manage to walk on, it was still into fresh delight ; for in a little flat enclosure at the foot of the hills, there now appeared three peach-trees, late-bearing peach-trees of the golden-fleshed variety, and their crop had not yet been gathered. Mrs. Nye stood before them fairly transfixed. She had never seen peaches growing at all before ; she had only seen them laid on cotton-wool within shop windows.

“ Ain’t they lovely, oh, ain’t they strokeable ? ” she said. “ Talk o’ yaller-an’-red, these be rosy an’ primrosy ; an’ did ever you see any ripeness look more round ? ”

And now she came to a plantation of oaks, and the leaves were changing : next, the road skirted a paddock, and in the paddock, as well as Antipodean blue-gums, stood one or two English elms, changing too ! and the grass beneath them was all green from the rains of March—almost green enough to fit it for English grass, if one excused it

a little, as Mrs. Nye was only too glad to do. "See what a droughty summer it 'as been!" she pleaded to that depth of uncompromising truth within her which could not quite allow the "paddock" to be a "meadow."

And then, finally, she reached some cottages; and, although they were only built flimsily of wood, and had tin roofs, and could not in any way pretend to be the real thing in cottages, yet they stood each one in a garden of its own, and all the gardens were full of flowers, and all the flowers had the proper autumn gorgeoussness and glow. Dahlias there were, velvet-rich, deeply or brightly crimson; yellow sunflowers, "red-hot pokers," gaudy zinnias and gaillardias; the scarlet fires of salvia, and the sweet, clear brilliance of carnations.

The last cottage of all, too, was separated from its neighbours by a small apple-orchard. Mrs. Nye had to stop and look at that—at those balls of colour, russet-gold and ruddy, basking so cosily, with the sunshine settled on them, among the still-thick leaves. "Apples is such a friendly fruit!" she said. "That's Nonparrle, ain't you? an' you're Cox's Orange, an' there's some pearmains—I halwus did like pearmains, so pretty in their shape as well as toothsome, an' streaked like a old lady's cheek. Dear heart alive! do but look at they great yaller, yaller pears, too. . . . Pears? No, they ain't. Looks like a quince for shape, but I never see quinces grow thick as that!"

A few steps farther brought her within sight of the cottage to which the orchard belonged. It was a little cottage, very low in the roof, almost buried in tall bushes of lilac, and built—oh wonder! of

stone ; and its door was painted with that queer green-blue that, however faded, contrives somehow always to look vivid, and that you see so often at the seaside in England, and so seldom anywhere else. The garden, too, was a little different from its neighbours. Snapdragons grew in the wide borders on either side the narrow red-brick path that led from gate to door—old-fashioned, ordinary snapdragons, purplish-crimson with the sulphur mouth ; and there were tall wands of golden rod, verbenas purple and rose, and masses of ardent orange marigolds with dark eyes. A creamy-white clematis, too, full of tiny flowers that smelt strong of almonds, hung like a shower of stars against the blue lattice of the porch ; but the most noticeable thing about the garden was its abundance of Michaelmas daisies. In great clumps, almost bushes, they grew up and down each border ; they were of every possible shade of purple, from the royalest Tyrian to the palest mauve, and the clumps were all most carefully tied up.

As Mrs. Nye paused to admire them, an old woman came out of the cottage with a hank of flax in her hands, to bind one up that had begun to straggle ; a dumpy little old woman, in a dress of grey, and a sun-bonnet of washed-out purple print, very much the colour of some of the daisies, and “ just the livin’ double of Aunt Sarah Jane’s, at Minster,” Mrs. Nye said to herself. The old lady was too much absorbed in her task to notice anything beyond it, and Mrs. Nye could not resist standing still a little while to watch her. “ Ties it up just as tender as tyin’ a child in its pinny, don’t she ? ” she mused. But presently the

gardener mislaid her scissors : they had fallen into the marigolds below, and Mrs. Nye, whose instincts were strongly helpful, was compelled to call out and tell her so. It ended in her going into the garden to pick them out.

“ I’m much obliged to ye, I’m sure. Stranger, ain’t ye, dear ? I don’t remember to ha’ seen ye ’ereabout afore,” said the little old lady, looking up at her with dim blue eyes.

She was really an old lady ; she would never see eighty again, Mrs. Nye decided.

“ Yes’m,” she replied respectfully, for she belonged to a generation that had learnt enough to reverence old age. “ ’Tain’t but nine months, come next Saturday week, as I left my ’ome in Englan’.”

“ Englan’ ? Ah, an’ I come from Henglan’, too,” said the little old lady. “ But ’tis five-an’-forty year ago, so it is. My kettle’s just a-singin’, dear ; won’t ye step in, an’ set down, an’ ’ave a nice cup o’ tea wi’ me, an’ talk a bit about ’Ome ? Do, now.”

If she had suggested a nice cup of poison, with that same tempting accompaniment, I believe Mrs. Nye would almost have accepted it. She followed her hostess in through the green-blue door, to a room which was a little dark, and a little airless, as English cottage-rooms are apt to be, and none the less welcome to our friend on that account. The heavy furniture, too, was delightfully reminiscent—there was a great deal of shining darkwood about it ; there was a grandfather’s clock in one corner, and in another a cupboard with glass doors, and china gleaming through the glass ; and on the mantel-

piece there was a Toby jug, and some great sea-shells shining faintly with pink and silver.

The little old lady spread a cloth on a little round table, somewhat lopsided with age, that Mrs. Nye could fairly have kissed, it was so like one she herself had left behind ; and made the tea. It was excellent tea ; half a crown a pound at least, the visitor felt sure ; tea is apt to be your real old cottager's one indulgence. The two women, as they sat, sipping it out of their saucers, and deep in chat, made a suggestive contrast. Mrs. Nye was tall and upright still, her figure was matronly, her black hair still black, her brown eyes quick and bright ; the "hot-coloured" nasturtiums in her bonnet were very becoming ; the warm brown of her dress lent agreeable emphasis to the roses in her cheeks. The little old lady, on the other hand—Mrs. Stone, it appeared, was her name—was shrunken and shrivelled and bent, and her colouring, originally light, was faded now into colourlessness. She and her buxom companion might well have been sitting as models of early autumn and late.

Mrs. Stone spent her days alone, it appeared, in this little old house that her husband, dead these many years, had built ; but she had a married daughter near who "saw to her," and who "would a' had me there to live," she explained, "but there ! Childer ! Borne 'em I 'ave, an' buried 'em I 'ave, but now I can't seem to do wi' their clatter no more—young things is that restless an' rumbustious. Which part o' Henglan' d'you say you come from, dear ?" she inquired.

"I come from Canterbury—Canterbury in England," Mrs. Nye answered, not without a little

sigh. "Did you know Canterbury, might I ask, 'm?"

But Mrs. Stone shook her head.

"Come from the coast, I did," she said. "Nor never was one fer to gad. There was a 'treat,' once, I remember, to Canterbury, but I didn't go. No; never was one fer to gad, I wasn't."

"Oh, but what a pity!" exclaimed Mrs. Nye. "For then you could a seen the holdest church in Hengland, St. Martin's, with its roses round it—an' the Cathedral, all grey, with Bell Harry Tower in the middle a-builded up into the blue—an' the rooks in the elm-trees in the Close—an' the city walls—an' the Westgate, as the Pilgrims useter come through on their knees, 'underds o' years ago, an'——"

"Ho, but we 'ad a *castle* near *hus*," interrupted Mrs. Stone with pride. "Which that was 'underds o' years old, too. An' as fer the halms-'ouses, I've heered tell as they was more'n *three* 'underd. An' as nice warm little 'ouses as you could wish for to see, wi' gable-roofs, an' moss, an' pink 'ouse-leek on the thatch. Eh, dear me—me an' Mary Ann Joyce, we did alwus promise oursel's, so we did, when we was young things together, as when we was old, the two of us 'ud end our days in the far corner one, what 'ad the pear-tree a-climbin' up to the bedroom winder, an' the swallers a-nestin' in the heaves——"

"Ah, yes—them swallers, pretty dears! Don't one miss the swallers!" cried Mrs. Nye, eagerly catching back from her companion the ball of fond reminiscence. "Can't I see 'em, such a balmy day as this! . . . by the millbridge, say, in the

meadows, with the two elms beside, an' the tall 'ouse near with Virginny creeper all over it, red as any bonfire . . . an' them swallers a-sweepin' an' a-swoopin' about over the shiny water in the front, as would be like a glass, to show all up. Or up an' down the High Street, too, they'd be, flickerin' back an' forth them old red, ruddy 'ouses—as 'ud *glow*, come sunset, just as *rich*—! You don't see none such 'ere—seems as if the very 'ouses was ripe at 'Ome, don't it?" she said regretfully, "an' the air too—kind o' sleepy an' sunny-like, an' a little bit thick an' soft. Here, it alwus 'as a kind o' thinness, to my taste, an' the tang an' tart o' the sea's got in it."

"We 'ad a castle, an' it were by the sea," chanted Mrs. Stone, in her turn. "A round grey tower it 'ad got, with a gold bird upon it, fer to tell the wind, an' it's there as the swallers used fer to gether come the hautumn, fer to go hover the seas. Aye, I did love for to watch 'em, when I were a little 'un! My clemaytis come from the Castle garding," she added proudly. "An' all the rest o' the garding, what time them birdies was a-getherin', 'ud be all so drowsy like, an' still . . . wi' the bees a-hummin' an' the sun a-sunnin', an' the air so ca'm an' all; an' the ripe green figs on the fig-tree in the moat all a-tied up in little white musling bags, fear o' the wopses" (wasps), "an' the borders all Michaelmas daisies an' goldy-rod—an' one big lemming verbena, too, there was, wi' little lilic flowers . . . aye, I can smell it still, that smell, though tis' forty-five year old. . . . That's why I got so much daisy in my garding, dear. I didn't 'ave so much goldy-rod, 'cause purple is nat'ral hautumn colour, ain't it?"

“Oh,” protested Mrs. Nye, “purple? Nay—’tis too grave, purple is. Do but cast your mind back to the bright brambles, an’ the creeper, an’ the hips an’ haws—all red; and the beeches an’ the hoaks, all yaller, an’ the ricks a-baskin’, an’ the very stubble shinin’, an’ the happles in the orchards a-colourin’, an——”

“No, no, but them daisies at the Castle, an’ the sea-lavender Joe’d bring in from the marshes,” persisted Mrs. Stone dreamily, and with pauses, “an’ the loosun ” (lucerne), “an’ ’arebells, an’ gipsy-roses—pincushies some calls ’em—from the downs . . . an’ the downs theirsels a-greyin’, wi’ the crops all gethered an’ the sainfoin done, an’ the Channel mistifying in the sunshine . . . heverythink a-palin, an’ a-soothin’ down, an’ a-goin’ off to sleep, like. That’s hautumn, dear; very peaceful,” said the old soul simply.

There was a little pause, each woman brooding over her memories as the sun broods over the straw-ricks. Then,

“To be sure,” said Mrs. Nye, doubtfully, “my Ted will ’ave it as there’s so much old at ’Ome, it keeps the new growth back. ‘Henglan’s full of old walls’, says he, ‘for to keep the pore man in, an’ old notions,’ ’e says, ‘for to keep ’im down. Gimme room,’ ’e says, ‘to rise, if so be there’s risin’ in me,’ says ’e—an’ I aren’t denyin’ but what ’e ’ave got a better wage out ’ere, nor I don’t see no low-class lot about, neither, like them London ’op-pickers of ours, all rogues an’ rags. But I dunno! Maybe, as you get on in years, what you like best is what you know best. I remember when I was young, I used to get fair out o’ hand in spring,

it tickled me so, heverythink startin' again so fresh ; but now 'tis autumn with my years, 'tis the ripenin' season seems to be my crave, an' the ripe old ways. Queer new ones they got 'ere, some of 'em—too hindependent by 'arf, to my thinkin'. I like to look up to my betters, I do, for my own self-respeck ; betters as *is* betters, I mean ; in course they ain't alwus such—there's *some* at 'Ome I could name," she added reflectively. " An' I must say I do like the way, out 'ere, the men 'll let the women 'ave their share o' the say without a-shuttin' of 'em up an' a-puttin' of em' down as if the Lord 'ad packed all the sense there is inside the men's 'eads—which dear knows 'E ain't ! Yet they carries it altogether too far, so they do. Why, only yestiday there was a man come round—a man ! mind you !—a-wantin' me to put my name down so as I could *vote*. Vote ? Me ? Lor' bless the man ! I ain't no sufferin'gette, an' so I hups an' tells 'im. 'Ow fractious they been gettin' at 'Ome again, ain't they, them sufferin'gettes ? "

" Which kind o' jet's that, dear ? " asked Mrs. Stone. " I got a brooch real Whitby."

" No, no ! What ! ain't you never 'eard tell o' the sufferin'gettes—them women as wants to go an' vote in Parlymint, same as the men ? " explained Mrs. Nye.

" Oh ! The bold 'ussies ! The 'aughty faggits ! " said the old lady, much shocked.

" Vote, indeed ! " Mrs. Nye went on contemptuously. " ' My mother never 'ad no vote, an' she was as good a woman as hever lived,' I says to 'im, ' so what do I want one for ? ' says I."

" An' that's just what I says to the sewin' machine

gentleman, an' these 'ere patent soaps," said Mrs. Stone with approval. " 'My mother did without 'em', says I, ' an' what was good enough for 'er is good enough for me, I 'ope,' says I."

Mrs. Nye was silent. She had fought the Customs bravely over her cherished machine, and she found a certain powder invaluable on Monday mornings. The whirring of a motor-car filled up the conversational gap.

" Drat the things ! If God A'mighty had a-meant a man to go at that rate 'E'd a-give 'im twenty legs, an' so I halvus tells the doctor," said the old lady irritably.

But Canterbury-in-England is well-acquainted with motors, so, " If 'tis a doctor's, I 'spect it's all the better for 'is patients," said Mrs. Nye, leniently.

" I dunno so much about that," said the other, darkly.

" Well, come, them trams is handy, though, ain't they ? " urged Mrs. Nye.

" The trams ? I dunno, dear," said the old lady again. " I ain't never been nigh 'em. I'm too old, I am, for these 'ere new-fanglements. Maggie, she were wild for to take me, but says I, ' You take an' leave me in peace,' I says. ' Why, you'd see the sea again, mother,' says she—but lor, there ! 'tweren't no manner o' use. Not but what I'd like to git a sight o' the sea too, mind you, for I come from the coast, I did."

" Well, and I live by the sea," said Mrs. Nye, hospitably, though in secret amazement that anybody should really ever wish to have sight of it. " Just you get your daughter to put you on the tram some day—it goes as smooth as smooth—an' I'll

meet it, an' you'll come an' 'ave a nice cup o' tea along o' me. Now do, 'm !”

But Mrs. Stone shook her ancient head.

“ I never was one to gad,” said she, with pious pride. “ At Kingsdown near by Walmer were I born, an' never beyond Deal did I go, which it were but a matter o' three mile—an' quite fur enough, too, of a 'ot day.”

“ Well, but then you come out to New Zealand ? ” pleaded Mrs. Nye.

“ Aye, an' that were a matter o' twel' thousan' mile, if the tales they used fer to tell o' shipboard was true—which they wasn't, all on 'em—an' ain't that gaddin' enough fer a lifetime ? ” demanded Mrs. Stone with dignity. “ No, no, dear—thankin' you kindly all the same, I'm sure. . . . There's another thing,” she added slowly. “ Things does change to you so, an' you do change so to things. There was a friend o' mine, an' she went back 'Ome after thretty year away, an' *they'd* changed, an' *she'd* changed, an' there wasn't one soul of 'em all as knew 'er, nor yet 'er a soul, excep'—who d'ye think ? the village loony ! He hadn't changed, d'ye see, neither in his looks nor yet 'is outlooks, 'cause 'e hadn't never growed on. But my very vittles is changed to me,” she went on plaintively, “ an' so 'ow do I know as the sea itself 'ud be the old sea to me now ? Aye, dear me, 'tis all change, life is ! Only the dead as doesn't change—an' the loonies, as grows to a bit o' growth, an' then stops, an' never grows on. Changes, changes—aye, dear, aye, dear. . . .” Her voice grew so murmuring and vacant, that Mrs. Nye told herself she had tired the old lady out, and got up to go.

The westering sun, glowing low through the fathen leaves, was painting them to delectable stained-glass tints of rose and ruby and amber, as Mrs. Nye neared home that night, a basket of ripe tomatoes and golden quinces on one arm, and in the other a great sheaf of flowers—snapdragons, golden-rod, and Michaelmas daisies in all shades of purple. Ted, who had got home before her, opening the door, smiled at her decorative appearance.

“Why, mother, you reg’lar light the Point up—you look like a Harvest Thanksgiving out for the evenin’,” said he. Ted was very fond of his mother.

“Well, an’ I’m sure I feel like a thanksgivin’, too,” she returned. “I been to see the nicest little old lady, Ted, *that* like your great-aunt at Minster! an’ comes from ’Ome an’ all, too, down Walmer way. Only think, it took me two hours to get to ’er to-day, while I could a-reached Walmer in an hour from Canterbury, couldn’t I? only that it never struck me to go—seems some’ow easier to get yourself on the move out ’ere. But there! we bin a-talkin’ o’ the old places, till it do feel nearly as good as if I’d been a-seein’ of ’em all again—an’ she give me all these, an’ I’m to be sure an’ go again. A little out o’ touch with the times, to be sure,” she went on, bustling about to get tea ready. “’Fraid o’ the trams, an’ rubs her wash the old way, an’ never heered tell, even, o’ them sufferin’ettes. Ah, well, ’tis in the nature o’ things, though, I s’pose, once they’re got full ripe to get——”

“Rotten,” said Ted carelessly, piling poor Mrs. Stone’s tomatoes on to a plate. “Paint for

the roof is much of a muchness with these 'ere, mother—I brought it 'ome to-day. Next week I'll 'ave it on ; and that'll tickle the sun, I bet, when he looks along this way."

"So do, dear, so do!" said his gratified mother. "No, not rotten, dear, I didn't mean, but p'raps a bit withery, an' off the sap, like?—Dear heart! do but look at that low weed, 'ow it glories! And ain't the sun right rich? There's Buffy's coat a-glintin' like a suvrin', an' Mrs. Wicks's paraffin-fence as goldy-silvery as a kipper 'errin' skin. It do seem as if even the Point was a bit reddish an' yallery to-night," she added happily, "an' I s'pose this country, though now, to speak my honest mind, I can't but call it raw, 'll run along to ripeness, too, some day. Though 'ow a timber-an'-tin buildin' three 'underd year old, is a-goin' to look—well, that I'm sure I *can't* say!"



IX

THE MOUNTAIN TRACK

THE mountain track, as I love to call it, though probably its extremest altitude does not attain a poor two thousand feet, starts with decision. Stony as a river-bed, steep almost as a house-roof, up, straight up, it thrusts itself between two farms with their plantations, and at a height of scarce three hundred feet above the coach-road, forces us to pant, to pause, and instinctively to turn and look below. It is the first of its many favours ; for what a view is here !

Immediately at our feet, some *ngaio* bushes expand their stars of foliage, and stripe with crooked shadows the sunny steep brown of the path ; beneath them again, the tips of the blue gums, soaring high above our heads just now, glitter like a sea of silver ; farther down yet, all golden-green with sun and summer, a shoulder of lush pasture juts out—pine-trees, doubled by their own shadow, fringing it with a soft blackness very enriching

to the landscape, and its bright lawn broken by grey rocks and sprinkled with spots of smooth, shining colour by browsing cattle, "kingly-coated," to borrow Meredith's true word.

Last of all, far, far below all these brinks and descents of leaves and tree-tops and rock—Ah, this it is that gives the scene its unsurpassable attraction—nine hundred feet below, and so sheer down that it looks as if these pebbles at our feet could be kicked straight into it, there lies, like a jewel deep-set, a narrow gulf, a long inlet of water : a cool blue arm of the sea, thrust softly up into the bosom of these green and grassy hills. Smooth as satin, there it sleeps, and smiles. Its seaward extremity is three or four miles away, and cannot be seen from here ; but right below us, see, is its landward end, its hand, as it were—a rounded gully-palm, all gentle with grass, curved about a crescent of gleaming sand, and holding in its hollow a little settlement of low red roofs, cuddled down among tufts of trees, and with a single line of Lombardy poplars seeming to coax it, right down, to the water's edge. How picturesque it looks—and oh, how comfortably small and human, among all these immensities of hills and sky !

Do you see, besides, the wooden wharf that runs out into the water ? That is where the coastal steamer ties up once or twice a week, and at the same time ties the settlement to the mainland ; and it is worth a look on its own account, too. At close quarters, it is nothing but a rough and clumsy affair, none too clean, more than a little crazy ; but, from this height, and in the fresh glory of this morning, magic clothes it ! It is all

fairy-light, and fairy-bright. It might be made of marble lattice-work, or of silver, so slender and shining it looks—and built out upon clear glass, or painted on it, so airily is it advanced upon the water . . . with a twin self, see! fairer yet, gleaming up to meet it through the lovely, unwavering blue. There is a charm of Italy down there, in the vivid colouring and enchanted aspect of the bay; just as up here in the rocky pastures and crisp air there is something Alp-like and Swiss. But Switzerland has no sea, Italy no such racy sense of newness and beginning. No! we are in New Zealand, and that is best of all.

But now we have got our breath again, and must push on. Good-bye to the trees, to the bay, and the snug little settlement; for we shall see no more of them till we reach this spot again on our return. On, and up! Resolute as ever, the track goes climbing now high into the enclosing hills. They are all cleared, these lower paddocks—both of Bush and of burnt Bush. Fenced off from the track by mossy old grey posts and slackened wires, away on either side of it they spread, steep of slope, and with a surface all tossed up into hillocks and tumbled down into hollows, but richly mantled over, at this season of the year, with the emerald velvet of the grasses.

The grasses! This is the time of their full glory. The summer warmth has made them succulent and strong, the summer heat has not yet dulled their hues and dried their juices. I should like to have a festival in honour of the Grass Goddess; she is so wholesome, so bountiful, so kind to the eye, withal, so simply beautiful. No wonder that Whit-

man wished to call his poems *Leaves of Grass*; the name suggests that which in Nature is most "natural" of all—most widespread and common, at the same time most divinely healthy, friendly, and fresh. Hid as yet within the sheath are those sturdy heads of cocks-foot grass which, later in the summer, will bring into the silence of the hills gangs of grass-seeders, broad-hatted, bent of back, sickle in hand—owing to the slope and surface, machinery is worthless here—to gather in its harvest. But here are silvery "goose-grass," soft "fog," all lovely dove-colour and purple, so baneful to the purse, so profitable to the eye; bronzing rye, fescue, and others whose names I do not know, already nodding in the brisk air their delicate heads, and, by means of their companies of straight-standing stalks, sending waves of glowing greenness through the light. And oh, smell! smell *in*, to some deep and vital part of you, the sweet scent of this white clover, blooming at their roots! How honeyed it is, yet, at the same time, how uncloying! All the freshness of the fields is in it, and it dwells in what delicious recesses! Stoop a moment, and look into, look through, this low, cool palace of green—vault beyond vault of green walls, green roof, equable green air—that the grasses build every summer for the clover and sorrel, the ants and spiders—yes, and for more than these! Look! where yonder out of its deeps, up, up into "the deep blue bell of day," a lark springs, warbling. Does not some of oneself spring with him?

"Up with me, up with me, into the clouds:
For thy song, lark, is strong!
Up with me, up with me, into the clouds,
Singing, singing——"

Ay, as long as the skylark sings, there is in the world at least one bit of absolute happiness, untouched by any doubt or pain. . . . How is it that he can mount and sing at the same time, without losing breath, or turning giddy ? . . . Now down he comes, straight as a falling stone, back plump into the cool and the clover. There, deep down, must be a little home, with some brown-speckled grey eggs all warm in it, and quantities of hope. How can the lark help being happy ? And up here in the hills, this morning, with all the world so growing and fresh and glad about us, how can we ?

Yes, glad, and fresh—and free. Turn and look back a moment. Ah, I knew that would bring you to a full stop ! If from below the peep was exquisite, of green and blue, fjord and settlement, from here the prospect is one all of width and splendour. Before us now there is nothing but sea, sea, sea : one spread, vast, moving field, veined with currents, shimmering with light, and shot like an opal with varying colours—purple and peacock, turquoise and azure, silver and gold and green—an illimitable world of shine and space. Surely it is illimitable ? So free, so “out” it stretches, that it seems equally impossible to conceive that anything ever should stop it, or that it should anywhere stop of itself. As for the horizon, you feel at once how it must go flowing on beyond that. And yet, immediately, away to the west, here is its infinity promptly challenged, nay, put an end to, by old Mother Earth, standing and shaking out her apron, as it were, in flying folds—with very firm edges. Leagues and leagues from here can we see of the long peninsular coast-line. Stretched

necks and promontories of bronze, with forth-standing cliffs of deep purple, and roots of black rock, wreathed with white foam: uplands and downlands of velvet verdure: deep indents of blue: clear as a chart on paper, here they all lie, printed on the sea, and stretching so far away that in reality they add to the effect of boundlessness, rather than take from it. To the north-west, too, across that great blue arc of sea-water which is the Bay outside the bay, look! Yonder is another edge of Earth, but one that stands upright, instead of lying out, and, in place of a coat of colours, wears a robe of bright white—the snows, namely, the Alps, that other hold of space and strength. Vast sea, far-flung earth, great mountain peaks; and, as though these were not enough, all this consummate depth of blue above our heads! One looks, one apprehends, a little one comprehends—and instinctively one draws the long breath of the free.

We may as well pause here a little while, too, and make the breaths as long as we can, before we tackle this last and steepest lift of the track. There are plenty of seats to choose from. Bush grew thickly, once, in these upper hill paddocks, and now old black stumps stand everywhere mouldering among the flourishing grasses, and grey helter-skelter logs, smooth with weather, emerge above them at strange angles, and shine like satin in the sun. That great sea-mirror is too bright to be looked at for long—let us turn the other way, and rest our eyes upon this calm green heart of the hills. It is a convulsed heart, for all its calm. Seamed with gullies, burst through with rocks, encrusted

with crags, these great green heaps lie tossed in every direction, as though some earthquake had upheaved them. There is not much "as though" about it, either. Quiet though this land now lies, it was once smokingly upspued from a volcano; green to-day, it was once red-hot. What is more, they say that, after the fire, the sea down yonder took it in charge, and soaked it deep in brine, before the way of the world brought it back into the sun.

Yes, these strong, unchangeable hills have had their changes—almost, one might say, their trials. I always find that very difficult to realise, though, for there seems always something primeval, something elemental about the hills, as though, just as they are now, so they were in the childhood of the world, as though, too, they had kept something of its childishness. For all their greatness, is there not a certain sense of play about them—Titanic child's-play? Look, for example, at yonder gully-side—see the pictures forming and flying along it. The wind is their painter, the sun and the clouds are his palette, and with brushfuls of shadow and shine he is creating a moving pageant as heterogeneous as the contents of a child's fancy. Yonder goes a sheep without a tail, followed by a map of the North Island flying along as if it were a bird that Maui hauled up on his hook, instead of a fish . . . now, there goes Maui himself, striding after it, and changing his shape as he goes; with a big bottle pursuing him, and, after the bottle, a queer, lopsided house. Look, too, up at the Pass yonder, where the clouds are massing themselves into domes and ravines—making believe to be their mothers the mountains, isn't it so? just

as human children masquerade in their mothers' bonnets and shawls. . . . I wonder if little Paulie, that I am going to tell you about presently, ever did that? Ah, and one might change the simile, and remember that, as those clouds take the place of real snows, so in some human lives there is no more substantial variety than dreams and distant memories afford. You will take my meaning better presently.

To come back now to these hills. Apart from any actual frolicking, their whole atmosphere seems one of strength and gladness: frank, careless, simple, just an effect of sheer health and vitality, like a child's delight at nothing at all but the sun's shining. "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet," as Jeremiah noticed long ago; and snow-peaks aspire, and seem spiritual. But these great, grassy hills, in their lack of shade and mystery, their freedom, their independent joy and vigour, seem to me somehow always frankly pagan.

On again, and up—between green walls now. There is very little detail, and we have lost all view. Every sound, every little change in the sky or on the ground has now an extraordinary value. The cry of yonder quail fills the round world; that hare, pausing for a moment with long, dewdabbled ears at full cock, was an event; yonder purple foxglove almost a shock, among all this green. Yes, the hills have their monotony also—but here we are!

Where? At the place the mountain-track leads to. It stops here deep between the walling hills, you notice, with no view out at all, but that one peep of far-off sea—just enough to let you feel

how far-off it is, and how held-in here you are. As little hint of the friendly settlement from here as of the grandeur of the seascape ; and more burnt Bush than grass. Yes ; this is where the house used to be. Do you see that bleached grey skeleton of a tree ? That used to stand by the door—trunk, limbs, and even twigs all complete ; but no trace, no chance of a leaf—like poor Eva's life. Look, you can see the remains of the hearth still—that miserable hearth ! I warn you that my tale is not a merry one—probably you will say that it little suits these strong and sunny hills. Yet it was lived among them. Yes ; this is where Eva Symons used to live, and Joel, and pretty Paulie, brown as a nut, and ruddy as a little round apple. Poor Eva Symons ! Hers was one of those stories of which a scandalised village at Home sees the beginning, and some unconscious colony the end. She was the daughter of a clergyman, well-to-do and well connected, and she made a runaway match with her father's groom. Her family cast her off completely, and her husband and she came out to try their fortune in New Zealand. Perhaps no couple was ever less fitted for colonial life. Joel Symons hated work, Eva had never done a stroke of it. They had little money, no friends, and no " luck " ; and so they drifted helplessly about from one untenable billet to another, until chance brought them, one fine day, to the little settlement down yonder. There they might have lived tolerably enough, had Joel been willing to do a decent day's work, and Eva anything of a manager. But Joel was a skulker born, and as for her—poor thing ! At home, the housekeeper had ordered

the dinner, the cook cooked it, the butler carved it ; all she had ever had to do with it was, to eat it, and go on being plump and pretty. As to dealing with the crude necessities of life, she had no idea how to set about it. But surely, you say, she could have learned ? English ladies by the dozen learn to cook and clean and all the rest of it, before their first six months out here are up ; and that without the aid of any magic, either ; a little grit and gumption are all that is required. Grit and gumption—Alas ! that was exactly what poor Eva had not got.

The circumstances of her marriage might lead one to imagine her a girl of unconventional nature, with more than the usual share of adventurousness and self-will ; but nothing could be farther from the fact. It was upon her timidity, not her recklessness—not upon her “ spirit,” but her lack of it—that her unmanly lover had played ; and upon her tenderness. Tenderness, sweetness, grace—these were qualities that she possessed in overflowing measure ; but the pioneer woman has need, too, of some of the manlier virtues, and of these poor Eva had not a trace. She was clinging, instead of self-reliant ; she had daintiness and delicacy, but no capability ; both in frame and nature she was only slender where her need was to be sturdy. Her very gifts were her hindrances, in this new way of life. In her right setting, she would have been a creature of exquisite charm ; as a fragile flower is exquisite in a greenhouse, or a naked child in the warm arms of its mother. But a hothouse flower would soon look sadly tattered out here on the windy hills, and we bundle in thick

clothing the little ones that have to run out into the rainy cold. In the young colony, the sweet English young lady was but an incompetent drudge—not only ignorant as regards work, but seemingly without the capacity to learn. The other women of the settlement were good to her ; it is a man's mistake to think that women will not stand by each other, and Eva's sweetness and her helplessness appealed to the mother in the coarsest fibre of them. They were one and all Englishwomen, too, of the English working-class, and they understood her plight. "Poor young thing!" they said, "and she such a lady, too!" So they managed, by degrees, to teach her a little cooking, and they used to "just happen in," to help with her cleaning and washing. And Eva was very grateful to these kindly souls, despite their missing "h's" and red arms—Joel, unluckily, had had a smatter of refinement, tongue-deep—but she never made friends with them—she was too conventional for that ; she always "kept her distance," and they theirs.

It was a dark day for her, nevertheless, when Joel decided that there was "easy money in cheese," and dragged Eva away from the settlement and her good neighbours, into the hills—here, where we sit. It was lucky for her that her one child had been born some months before, and that it was a strong, healthy little thing, ready, like a true New Zealander, to make the best of whatever it could get ; for you can see for yourself what the distance was from the bay to the wretched *wharé* that Joel put up here. The one or two visitors that did get as far, too, he received so badly that no others cared to court a like experience ; Eva, entering these

hills, had entered upon an isolation that was to last till death.

With every month of ill-luck, Joel had grown more exacting and morose. He was one of those people who are headstrong without being strong in the head, and whose ill-conditioned nature the sweet uses of adversity turn sour. The cheese-making, too, chosen for its alleged profitableness, and because he knew a little about cows, turned out, as he managed it, to be an affair of little gain for unremitting toil, the brunt of which fell upon poor Eva, for Joel was no fonder than before of work. He became now a tyrannical taskmaster, she, a trembling slave ; and daily he grew more brooding and sulky, and more grudging. He grudged everybody, and he grudged everything. Eva's one remaining luxury was her daily cup of tea ; very well, she could have her tea still—but it must come off the *manuka*-bushes. The potato-crop failed, the first year, in the wretched little garden he had made—so he never set hand to spade again. Eva had to milk the cows, morning and night, but he never allowed her one drop of the milk, even for the baby ; all the milk must be made into cheese, and all the cheese, except for the veriest scrap, must be sold. What for ? Not to buy other food—they lived almost entirely upon that reserve mouthful of cheese, and the wretched loaves of poor Eva's incompetent baking. Not on household goods—old trunks and cases made their chairs and table, sacks of fern their bed, and the one easy chair of the house—sacred of course, to Joel—was a wooden stool. Still less on clothes—the bags that the flour was sent in made all Eva's drapery

store ; as best she could, she fashioned garments out of them for Paulie and herself. The child's things "always looked as if they'd been chopped out with an axe, and stitched with a skewer," a woman from the bay once told me ; but she spoke in pity rather than derision.

And other women speak still of the dress that Eva used to wear when she came down into the settlement—which, after a while, she never did, unless she was obliged. It was a gown of lavender silk, and the bonnet was to match. But it was the style of bonnet that ladies had been used to wear twenty years before ; and as for the dress, the silk of it was so rich it could have stood up of itself, but its delicate tint was all streaked and faded, and it had been made for a crinoline and fairly rioted about the emaciated figure of its wearer. They were the gown and bonnet that Eva had been married in. She wore these bitter remembrancers of her bridal because she had no other respectable covering ; and she wore them as they were because she had not the smallest ability to refashion them.

No ; what the cheese-money actually went into was—just an old stocking. Really, and without any undue play on words, the effect of misery on Joel was, to make him a miser.

Unclassed, exiled, isolated, and condemned to these circumstances of squalor, Eva had yet one great joy in life—her little girl, Pauline. The child—she had named her after her mother, that mother, whether living still or dead she did not know, who had disowned her—was sweet as a bit of white clover, happy as a sunbeam, and vigorous as a root of cocks-foot grass. Paulie seemed to thrive on

want. The bad bread and the whey her sound little economy converted somehow into round limbs and rosy cheeks—no doubt this hill air and wide light helped. The balls and dolls and other playthings that other children get given them, Paulie gave herself. She made dollies of the fox-glove ladies, boats of the green flax, golden crowns of capeweed for her mother's silver head—Eva was grey at twenty-five—and the field-mice infants, and those grotesque little pigmies that are baby larks, were her own babies, to be visited daily in their own little *wharés*—but never, never, never frightened!

It was among Eva's worst privations that the child could have no schooling. She lived too far from the settlement school-house, for one thing; and, for another, she was too useful to her father. Joel had put up no fences on his land; he grudged, of course, both the material and the work. On the one hand, Dodds, his neighbour, and therefore, from Joel's point of view, of necessity his enemy—objected to trespassing cattle, and often impounded them. So Joel made a human fence out of his little daughter. She had to be out at daybreak every morning, seeking the strayed things; and she had to spend the whole day, wet or fine, snowy or scorching hot, in looking after them.

Fortunately she was a hardy little thing; she took after her father's Border ancestors physically, although in soul she was her mother's own daughter, sweet, patient, and submissive. All that Eva could, she taught her; out upon the hillside of an afternoon, by the firelight of an evening when Joel was away, as he often was, for days together. Reading,

writing, singing—that was all the simple schooling came to ; and the reading was all out of one book—the Bible ; the singing was all of fine old hymns.

For Eva had never lost or outgrown the gentle faith of her girlhood ; or rather, perhaps, she had grown into it. Had she gone on existing under the easy conditions of home, very likely she would never have entered half so deeply into the living spirit of her religion, or that living spirit into her. The profession of her creed would probably have become merely a graceful conventionality with her, at deepest a gentle dilettante pietism. But here, amid loneliness, trial, and failure, it turned existence into life. Its difficult dogmas presented no difficulty to her, its darkest sayings raised no doubts ; for her seeking soul had penetrated far beyond these, and found a sure abiding place at its innermost springs of truth and light. To Eva, without the shadow of a doubt, one Divine Friend there was, Who understood all her troubles, Who, even, for some wise purpose, had ordained them, and Who loved her and hers with an everlasting love. If perhaps it is one of the weak points of this particular creed that its expression in words sounds so self-centred as almost to mean selfishness, on the other hand it is one of its chief bulwarks that its expression in terms of conduct is a selflessness almost perfect ; and its ineffable consolations who would have the heart to grudge so sorrowful a life ? For Eva, her Saviour shared with her the desolate hills ; He walked on yonder far-away and sundering sea ; He knew her terrors, her griefs He bore with her ; and—He had given her Paulie.

And then—He took Paulie away. There came

one winter's day so wild with storm that—Joel was absent—Eva plucked up courage to keep her child at home. She and Paulie prayed, both separately and together, that no harm might come of it, and Paulie's innocent faith made sure that a miracle would happen and an angel turn cowherd for the day. Alas ! he must have been a black one, then ; for the cows promptly exchanged their lean pasturage for one of Mr. Dodds' fat paddocks, and, being discovered by the irate Dodds (riding home belated across the hills, and already exasperated by the storm), were driven off down-hill and put in pound. Joel was furious, of course ; and, if he had to pay for it, so had the cows, and more than the cows.

It was only a day or two after, that Paulie, a long way off among the hills on duty, found a valuable beast of Mr. Dodds' badly tangled up in supple-jacks—there was plenty of Bush here then—and her childish sense of justice was delighted. Mr. Dodds had made her father lose his money, kick poor Pickle so badly as to break her leg, thrash Paulie herself, and knock her mother down. Now, Mr. Dodds would lose his beast, for every plunge tied it tighter up ; and that would pay him out !

But then, upon the heels of that very "human" thought, came instantly her mother's constant teaching, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." It was a lesson, you see, that got daily practice, and Paulie went fearlessly up to the struggling animal to set it free. But a knife was needed to cut the twists of the vine, and a knife she had not got ; while, if she went back all the way home to get one, the chances were that the poor beast would strangle

itself before she got back, and the "enemy" not be "done good to," after all. So she set to work to *gnaw* the supplejack with her strong little white teeth; and she had got it half done, too, when the terrified brute, finding one of its hoofs thus unexpectedly set free, kicked out with all its might, and struck its poor little deliverer.

It was not until evening that Eva, wandering distraught to seek her darling, found the little mangled body, still moaning. . . . The stars kept vigil with them through a night of agony. . . . Then at daybreak, little Paulie left the hills for ever. In the one sacred half hour of peace before she died, she told her mother the story. "Did I do right, mother?" she asked, and, "Quite right, my darling!" the mother answered. It was the supreme sacrifice, and it broke her heart. But you can live on with a broken heart. Eva lived on for years.

Then at last there came a day when one of the settlement women happening to ask Joel about his "missus," was told, carelessly, that she was sick, or said she was; anyway, he couldn't get the slut to stand up on her feet, and he had no time to waste looking after her, *he* hadn't. On that tacit invitation, two of Eva's old neighbours hurried up as fast as they could, though snow was threatening, and found her, as Joel had said, too ill at last to rise. She was lying on some old fern, that had broken out of its rotten sacking, and she had a ragged old skirt over her.

The women asked for blankets and linen, and something in Joel's face made them keep on asking, until at length, with a curse at their meddling, he flung them the key of an old leather trunk that

stood in the corner, and went out, swearing. They opened the box with no little curiosity ; it was one that had come with Eva from England ; and in it they found the lavender silk gown, some beautiful old embroidery, and a wreath of flowers made of feathers (" I guess she had kept 'em for Paulie to play with," the woman who told me said), one of Paulie's poor little flour-bag garments, and, underneath all the rest, some fine linen sheets and beautiful blankets. When they asked her why she had not used these, Eva faintly answered that Joel had feared they would get injured by the smoke, which indeed at that very moment, oozing forth from the defective chimney, was inflaming the eyes and hindering the breath of the dying. For Eva was dying at last. The long imprisonment, the dark discipline, among these happy hills, was done.

" And, my word, she died game ! " the neighbour told me. " Never a whimper out of her, not a single word of all that she'd gone through. Just you think what a life she'd had of it up there—cut off from everybody, with them hills an' nothin' but them hills, year in, year out . . . an' then Paulie dyin', an' that way, too, all along of her father . . . an' she herself dyin' for years, a inch at a time—cancer in the breast, it was. An' Joel ! there ! I can't stand to speak of him, the brute ! When we come to lay her out, there was marks of his givin' black an' blue on her poor body, an' we'd to bury her in that laylock gown, for he'd give us nothin' else. An' yet, with all that, she never let on, not she ! When she asked was she dyin', an' we told her yes, her poor face did kind o' shine out, an' no wonder ; but that was all. An'

then she said, to be sure an' give her love to Joel (her love ! I guess he'd killed that afore they'd been wed a year, but you bet she done her best to keep the skeleton dusted), an' she thanked us ever so grateful for our help, for she'd not lost one o' her pretty ways, poor dear—an' that was the end.

“Us help her ? I guess 'twas the other way about ; I'm sure I think of her often an' often when I've any little thing to bear. However did she stand it ? Why didn't she run away ? She'd ha' thought it wrong to leave her lawful husband, I reckon ; she was very pious, you know. Why didn't she make away with herself ? But, of course, she'd ha' thought that wrong, too. An' she could send him her *love* ! Look here—her flesh was all broke, poor thing, and I guess her heart was, too, but her spirit—my word ! that was as strong as strength. We used to think, you know, that she'd no pluck at all ; but it come to me that day that, for sheer clear grit, there wasn't one of us, man or woman, could hold a candle to that poor crushed thing.”

A sad story. Yes—only it ends, you see, better than happily ; it ends in triumph ! The helpless, dependent girl whose weakness at its beginning so marred her whole life, had gathered by the end of it a strength that left its witnesses amazed.

It was a very different kind of strength from that of these hills, certainly ; and yet I am not so sure ? Eva would have said, “The strength of the hills is His also.” Perhaps they are only two verses of the same poem. Shall we go down ?



X

THE OLD KITCHEN

OUT towards the tip of a certain bare, seaward-stretching promontory, there stands a thick, dark tuft of pines, and within the pines an old farm, painted white. Years and years ago, when Kiteroa, the scattered settlement inland, was still green virgin Bush, a young man planted the pines, which a very little child could then have jumped over, set up a *wharé* in their midst, and brought home his bride. The wind blew furiously across those open slopes upon the adventurous plantation, the driven rains beat on and through the *wharé* weatherboards, as yet so unprotected. But the young couple fetched up clay from the creekside and built double walls to their home, with a solid lining of earth between; while for their precious trees they reared a stout bulwark of planks. The planks have decayed long since, and the *wharé* has given place to a large old rambling house, which, deep within its tall and spicy green breakwind, can sleep in peace now through the wildest weather. One of

its rooms, however, is still warm with earth-lined walls, and looks out far to sea.

The young couple thrived and prospered. Children were born in the single room of the little low dwelling; played about between its walls of bare brown wood; were warmed and fed by its great open hearth with the Colonial oven, that took up nearly all one side of the place; and peeped through its one window at the great spread of sea down there beyond the garden, and at the snow-peaks over the sea. The brood all flourished; and by and by had grown so much, both in size and numbers, that the roof which sheltered them must needs grow too; the *wharé* had now to delegate some of its functions, part with some of its importance, and, instead of providing a whole home by itself, become one room, merely, among others.

But it was still the chief room, kitchen, dining-room, parlour, and family living-room. Within this little square of space that had so faithfully nursed their infant spring and outgush, the flowing, growing currents of affairs circled more vigorously than ever; until at last they overflowed it. A new kitchen was then built at the other end of the house, and the old one, separated from it by a whole chain of bedrooms, became a sitting-room. Nobody in that house, however, had much leisure to sit; and the stream of activity, though running now more briskly than ever, was quite diverted in its course from the old kitchen, and visited it only at rare intervals, and then but meagrely. The old room, often for weeks together, was left to its silent survey of sea and garden, and its memories of past days.

By and by, as the years went on, the young couple

grew old, and the children grew up, and, one by one, grew out of the old home, for all its additions. Then the father and mother died ; and one of the daughters, already a middle-aged woman, came to live at the farm with her husband. But she had no children, and did not use half the house. A room more conveniently close to the modern kitchen was made into her sitting-room, and the old kitchen, at the other end of the house, was shut up. It was as if Life had now quite done with it.

The farm, high as it stands, and bare to the air and light—for the sea stretches wide below it upon three sides, and from it you can see the sun rise out of the water of a morning, and all but sink in it at night—dwells yet in a kind of retirement of its own. There is no made road leading to it, for one thing—only a rough track across the tussock and nodding blue-bells of the cliff ; and the configuration of the slope on which it stands, swelling suddenly out into a crest of grey rock on the inland side, hides it from the coach-road, and has really the effect, in fact, as well as in appearance, of separating it from the rest of the settlement. The itinerant drapers and clockmenders, the book-agents and tea-travellers, even the old Syrian pedlar, with his trays of glittering gewgaws, were all apt to leave it unvisited on their rounds. Neighbours found it more natural to invite and welcome Mrs. Callender to their own homes than to set out towards hers, there upon the road to nowhere.

It was with the more surprise, therefore, that Mrs. Callender, one wet June morning, found herself confronted on her doorstep, among the winter violets, by a stranger, a lady ; come, of all extra-

ordinary errands, to inquire whether Mrs. Callender would not take her in to board! She was all alone, and wished for a quiet lodging. It was her intention to give music-lessons in the district.

Music! It is doubtful whether any other key would at that time have opened Mrs. Callender's independent door to a boarder; but that one did, and instantaneously. The stranger, a tall, gaunt, short-spoken woman, with hair already grey, and a stern, sad face, did not look as though she would prove, or would even attempt to prove, an otherwise congenial companion, but—if she played! If she would only play! Mrs. Callender had a passion for music, quite untrained, but genuine and deep; melody was as thoroughly a need of her nature as warmth was, or food, or air, and it was one that, away back here in the country, she had never been able to appease. So she came to terms at once; there was some throwing open of long-closed windows and doors, a little sweeping and dusting, rubbing and rearranging; and presently, a day or two after, the bullock-sledge came lumbering over the tussock with a few battered boxes and one great wooden case; and the old kitchen, with its brown walls, its great hearth, and its outlook on the far horizon, passed into the possession of Miss Kirkcaldie and her piano.

Who Miss Kirkcaldie was; where she had come from and, why; how she had happened to drift into this out-of-the-way corner of the world—these were questions that every one in Kiteroa asked, but nobody could answer. Miss Kirkcaldie herself was Scotch, so much was easily certain; and, being Scotch, she knew how to hold her tongue; in fact,

she might be said never to let go of it. She possessed, in addition, the much rarer power of disposing other people to hold theirs, at least while in her company; in general she was chilly, dignified, austere, and, upon occasion, had no difficulty in being deaf as well as dumb.

But she was "no trouble" to Mrs. Callender; her modest dues were discharged with the utmost punctuality; and, whatever uncertainty might otherwise hang mistily about her, her musical ability at least was positive as daylight itself. The fame of it spread quickly abroad through that district of scattered farms, in which pianos, acquired sometimes as a proof of "getting on," sometimes in the hope of it, were far more plentiful than players; and she had soon no lack of pupils. Many of them would gladly have come to her, but she drily discouraged all such suggested inroads on her seclusion, and chose instead, mounted upon a staid and serviceable old grey horse, to plod her way, all day long and every day, between farm and farm, from pupil to pupil.

A singular choice of life for an elderly woman, and scarcely, one would think, congenial; for nearly all the learners were the most absolute beginners, and their fingers, already past the first suppleness, were coarsened, moreover, with housework; besides which, not one of them, so far as I could discover, ever entertained any musical ambition beyond that of being able to play waltzes and lancers at the monthly socials. Whether this was altogether the fault of the pupils, though, who is to say? By all accounts, Miss Kirkcaldie would not seem to have troubled to bring with her into

those farmhouse parlours much inspiration or enthusiasm for her art.

She kept all that for the old kitchen. At dusk, after she had come in from her rounds, had asked, curtly, for her tea, eaten it, and returned the tray, she would put out her lamp and open her piano—and Mrs. Callender, eagerly on the watch, would simultaneously open all the doors between the old kitchen and the new: surreptitiously, however! For once, when the passage-door had been thrown open a little carelessly and loudly, Miss Kirkcaldie had instantly arisen, had closed it, with meaning, and had played no more that night.

With that single exception, however, the old kitchen, deserted still by day, now awoke each evening, in the mellow flush and flicker of its own firelight (even in the summer these Southern hills grow cold at sundown, and Miss Kirkcaldie was a chilly soul in more senses than one), to a new and magical existence. Its little humble sphere, heretofore the scene exclusively of practical and actual life, now enclosed experiences neither actual nor practical at all, that were yet exceedingly real. Immortal passions now possessed it, and it sheltered mighty sorrows and consummate joys. Within its homely boundary, vast forces impalpably contended; worlds invisible were born; the secrets of the soul declared themselves, and bodiless longings, formless consolations, pulsed and thrilled. Plaintively, imperatively or with despair, the old kitchen re-echoed now the everlasting questions to which there comes never any answer; and all the while was glorious as a chosen home of the undeniable, divine fact—Beauty!

The tears come still into Mrs. Callender's eyes when she speaks of Miss Kirkcaldie's music. "Never," she says, "did I hear anything like it. Right through you it went, deep down into your very marrow. Many's the time I've gone an' crept outside that door, an' stayed there shiverin' with the cold—Roger'd be safe in bed—and filled me with the listening till my heart's been fit to break for the grief or glory, or soldierin' or softness, whichever it might be. There ! stood there like a silly I have, with the tears a-runnin' down, an' yet all the while as *happy* ! Well, there ! Someway I used to seem to kind o' wake up, if you understand, when Miss Kirkcaldie made her music. Sour old lemon that she was, too, otherwise !"

It is good to think of Mrs. Callender, whose days were else little beyond butter-making, poultry-feeding, and housework, coming into her rightful kingdom of consciousness, as she sobbed and shivered out there in the passage. And it is good, too, to think of that music, like an angel entertained in secret and guarded with jealous pains from bestowing the blessing of its presence upon uninvited guests, yet, true to its heavenly nature, winging thus freely forth and ministering to this refreshed and thankful recipient. But what of the music-maker—the exclusive, haughty host ? Nay, poor, proud, solitary soul, why should we give you grudge for grudge, or bitterly estimate your bitterness ? Is it so beautiful a thing to condemn where we do not understand ? Who knows what stress—of grief, or guilt it may be, of love denied, ambition thwarted, loss sustained (pain of some sort certainly it must have been, to teach your soul such passionate expression)—had

driven you to exile and the old kitchen? Who can tell from what sad seed, and planted by what tragic agency, may have sprung that thicket of impenetrable pride that walled you from your fellows as the pine-trees wall the farm?

Nobody, at least in Kiteroa; and perhaps it is as well. It is good at times that curiosity should go ungratified. Miss Kirkcaldie succeeded in remaining a problem to the end. Three years to the very day, after she had drifted into the farm, she drifted away from it again, as suddenly and unexplainingly as she had come. Nobody ever heard where she went to, or anything more about her. The patient bullocks took the boxes and piano-case down the hill again, the cold ashes were swept up from the unrequired hearth, the music was gone, and the old kitchen was shut up once more.

Not for very long this time, however. One scorching day, the summer following Miss Kirkcaldie's departure, it so happened that a couple of young men went strolling out upon the promontory, to get a view of the great Point opposite. The heat gave way suddenly to a violent storm, and they ran for shelter to the farm, which received them hospitably—so hospitably, indeed, that they stayed on there for a week, delighted with their luck. The Callenders, too, were delighted in their turn. Their guests, it appeared, were art-students from town, spending their holiday in a sketching-trip along the coast; and very lively, companionable fellows they proved themselves. It was long since the Callenders had laughed so much—probably, indeed, they had never before found life half so

entertaining as it was made that week, by the gay, good-humoured nonsense and sprightly pranks of their guests.

Mrs. Callender often referred to them regretfully after they were gone ; and it was with the liveliest expressions of delight that one day next spring she read aloud to Roger, who was as pleased as she, a letter from one of them, Mr. Martin Mills, imploring her, as the greatest of all possible favours, to put him up during the coming summer, which he proposed to devote to the painting of a great coast scene. He came, accordingly, and was more debonair and delightful than ever. The headland itself was mainly to serve him as a studio, and, unlike Miss Kirkcaldie, he took his meals sociably with his hosts ; but the old kitchen was also placed at his disposal, and soon became a sort of miniature *salon*, its brown walls all brilliant with what looked like random bits of sea and sky blown in through the window. And the window itself, too, framed another picture, a live one, the garden in its summer glory—masses of pelargonium, rosy freaked with jet : of snapdragon, soft yellow, crimson and white : azure lupin and larkspur, golden “glory-cups” (*eschscholtzia*), and great damask and pink roses : all sprung up bright above their low, cool greenery, and heaped, yet without any crowding or garishness, upon the sapphire canvas of sea and sky. Colour both lapped and lined the little brown room, and it was gay, too, with more than colour. It had company in it now every day, blithe, numerous company, that bubbled over with vivacious chatter, and with airy projects for sports and picnics and all kinds of holiday outings. All the young folk

of the neighbourhood seemed with one accord to make for the farm upon the promontory that summer, and many of their elders, too. The Callenders had never been so popular, or had so many visitors ; all of whom must pay a visit to the old kitchen, of course, if only to inspect Martin's sketches in the inspiring company of the painter.

It is doubtful, to be sure, whether the sketches themselves were so very highly thought of. The visitors privately agreed that the young man had a puzzlingly free hand with the facts. That picture of Dicky Jell's house, now—he gave it a gable which it had not got, yet left out altogether the tastiest thing about the whole place ; that new verandah-roof painted in stripes of yellow and red, that the Jells were so proud of, and no wonder—it was the latest thing out. But it might still have been in, for all Mr. Mills made of it ; and though no one, to be sure, could more handsomely have admitted the oversight when it was pointed out to him, still, nobody, either, could have taken less haste to put it right. All the time the picture hung in the old kitchen it was never altered ; and Mrs. Jell had reason to suspect that it went forth into the world still thus deficient—and could never feel again quite so cordial to the painter in consequence. Mrs. Lyon's place, too ;—was there really that pool of water before the blue-gums ? Of course not ! never had been, either. Mrs. Lyon herself only wished there was : it would have been so handy for the cows, though perhaps a little rheumaticky, so close to the house, in winter. And there Mr. Mills had not only put it in, but actually put *her* in, too, coming down from the door to fetch water !

It was almost making the poor old lady act a lie—and, in fact, the chief effect of Martin's art upon his neighbours was to make them realise the far higher veracity of photographs ; which came so much cheaper, too.

But whatever might be thought of the paintings, with the painter himself nobody had any fault to find. Before long, Martin was easily the most popular person in Kiteroa, and quite naturally so. To begin with, he was a pleasure merely to look at, with his tall, muscular figure, all ease and buoyancy, his ready, irresistible smile, and happy, kind blue eyes. Then, in addition to good-nature, good humour, good spirits, and a power of enjoyment that was infectious, he possessed an indefinable charm of temperament, "fluid and attaching," that coaxed criticism into indulgence and persuaded suspicion to a smile. He was a delightful person ; more, he was a delightful person to be with, and that in reality was his chief attraction. Wherever Martin came, a certain sparkle, a peculiarly grateful liveliness, awoke in the company—emanating from him in the first place, certainly, but by no means confined to him. People in his society began to be enchanted with their own, discovering, with a pleasure which in turn naturally helped things on, how bright, how quick, how brilliant they could really be. Martin, in short, was a human effervescent. He was like a spoonful of sherbet, which you have but to slip into a glass of water, and—Presto ! how that quiet water does begin to dance ! Or, to vary the simile, he was a human sunbeam, not only bringing its own brightness with it, but evoking also a shining answer out of shady places thought

hitherto to be all shade. Yes, he certainly was a charming fellow, Martin ; and as far removed from his dim, gaunt, dreary predecessor in the old kitchen as the tropics from the pole.

What with the various merrymakings and frolics to which this popularity committed him, the great picture, to be sure, made scant advance beyond the sketches and studies already referred to. But there was plenty of time ; for, when autumn came, it appeared that there was an opening for one drawing-class in the little town of Appleby, seven miles away, and another at Hakawai, five miles off in the opposite direction. Kiteroa would make capital headquarters—the roads were good ; he would be able easily to ride to and fro—and, to Mrs. Callender's great delight (she had already begun to love him like a son), he decided to stay on through the winter.

That was the winter they had the Dramatic Society at Kiteroa. It was in the old kitchen that a merry company of lads, gathered about the great hearth one frosty evening, with Martin as their host, hit upon the captivating idea ; it was there that before the eyes of many hilarious and suggesting critics he dashed off those famous flaming sheets of stage scenery ; there, too, that he devised costumes, coached the actors in their parts, and conducted rehearsals. The responsible old family *wharé* that had taken part in so much life, played at life in those days. At the transmuting touch of Martin, that universal elixir, it became, now a dungeon (with the hanging lamp turned low): now (with the help of Mrs. Callender's rocker and two chair-backs) a London drawing-room : now, by mere force of imagination, a ship or a forest, a castle or a street. It is a wonder

that its timbers stood the strain. In the course of all this dramatic business, by the way, Martin came to know Avis le Beau.

What with painting, teaching, and the drama, not to mention a whole host of lesser activities, Martin had quite a strenuous life of it at Kiteroa; but all work seemed to come light as a holiday to his buoyant nature. About mid-winter, indeed, he did "take a week off," running up (the expression seemed just to fit such an agile temperament) to see his friends in town. But Mrs. Callender exclaimed with concern at the white and haggard face with which he returned. He laughed it off, of course: country air and cookery always suited him best, he explained, Kiteroa air for choice and Callender cookery; and he soon picked up again. Mrs. Callender feared, however, that there was some hidden delicacy, perhaps of the lungs, about him, and was more than ever fearful of it after he had taken another trip in spring, with the like result; and very glad indeed that he made no plans for leaving Kiteroa, and her unobtrusive cosseting; although it was just then that, for the first time, he fell behind in his payments, which seemed the more singular, since he had taken the sketch with the Jells' house in it, and other pictures, up to town to sell.

And then, alas! soon after his return, a terrible calamity occurred, and a great grief overwhelmed good Mrs. Callender. One night Martin did not return from his class at Appleby. He did not come back the next day, either; it was not until the third afternoon that Dicky Jell drove him home in his gig, very dirty and dilapidated, very morose and

sick, the saddest possible contrast to the airy, engaging master of the Kiteroa revels. Dicky, it appeared, had found him at the hotel in Appleby, with his credit exhausted, and had brought him away by main force. Alas for merry Martin! The real superiority of Kiteroa air for him over that of town depended, it was obvious, upon its greater distance from a bar.

Poor Martin! And the poor Callenders! They nursed and tended him unreproachfully till he was fully himself again, and then Roger talked to him like a man, and Mrs. Callender like a mother. And Martin, true to his lightly hung, easily moved nature, responded to this generous treatment with the utmost readiness. The vituperations that they spared him he heaped on his own head. He swore that he should never forgive himself for having so disgraced, so hurt, such friends. He confessed, with a shame-faced sincerity, that took half the ugliness out of the confession, and disposed its hearers rather to sympathy than blame, that he could not honestly say this was the first time he had so fallen; but he could, and he did, most vehemently vow that it should be the last. It was not, however—neither was the next time, nor the next. Poor Mrs. Callender was a woman much to be pitied in those dark days. She was at her wits' end, when Avis le Beau came to the rescue. She married him.

Avis was a practical, capable, resolute girl, her own mistress since the death of her father, and in possession of her own farm. If, as was whispered round Kiteroa, it was really she who proposed the match, that only showed that she had enough sense to see what Martin needed, and enough love

and courage to act on what she saw. The neighbourhood, no slower than the average community to throw down its idol from his pedestal, once the feet of clay stood revealed, expressed itself as more than a little aghast at Avis's own prospects. But that was of no moment whatever to Avis ; once her mind was made up, she was of the kind that would "stand to be shot." So she made Martin marry her with the least possible delay ; and, contrary to all precedent in such cases, she saved him. The fact was, that there was as yet no actual vicious craving in the lad ; nothing worse than weakness and a strain of lavish self-indulgence, which is bad enough, Heaven knows, but yet is shared by many a man who never actually "goes wrong." In Martin's case, it was that very characteristic and charming bonhomie of his that had unhappily played the part of traitor in the garrison ; and Avis took him just in time, before tendency had slidden easily and fatally over the brink into habit.

She made him an admirable wife. The firmness of her nature was a staff to his ; her courage shamed him, her generosity set his eagerly afire. His responsiveness helped him well with Avis ; his ardour and facile-heartedness could be exercised in ever-fresh worship of the wife who had saved him, and his imaginativeness was able to invest her with the glamorous quality she lacked. For Avis, from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, was purely matter-of-fact ; she cared little for beauty, nothing at all for Art. Paint, especially, she considered to be much more usefully and properly bestowed upon gates and weather-boarding

than on canvas ; it was also contrary to her excellent judgment that any wife should keep her husband. Accordingly, she sold out, and took a farm in quite another neighbourhood, a Prohibition one ; and there Martin, who had been brought up in the country, took to farming, made, with her help, quite a success of it, and entirely lived down whatever was amiss in his Kiteroa reputation.

He became, of course, extremely popular in the new neighbourhood, for that he would be bound to do wherever he went ; but whisky never got the upper hand of him again, save once, and that was during the horror of despair—when the first baby came and Avis was pronounced dying. They say it was to a whisper of his condition that she really owed her marvellous recovery ; she was so resolved he should be kept straight. Certainly, by her understanding of the needs of Martin the man, she made of him a clear gain for humanity : although whether, at the same time, by her lack of sympathy with Martin the artist, she did not also inflict a certain loss upon it, who shall say ? Decidedly, his sketches (there are several of them in the old kitchen still) possessed plenty of breadth and spirit. Martin is happy enough, by all accounts, and at all events his neighbourhood is saved from at least one pied verandah ; but I always feel a little rueful and regretful about beauty-loving, beauty-bringing Martin. Avis saved so much, one wishes she could have saved more.

And so the old kitchen lost its transitory brightness, and lapsed into solitude and silence once more. It was scarcely less silent for its next occupant. A certain “ Mr. Miller,” a foreigner, had,

it appears, in years long since gone by, performed some great service for Mrs. Callender's father and mother—that identical young couple who had begun their housekeeping in the old kitchen. Precisely the nature of it, Mrs. Callender had never clearly understood ; but it had been of the very first importance, and had decisively influenced a supreme crisis in the family fortunes, which had gone on steadily, if modestly, improving ever since. The benefactor's own fortunes, unhappily, had just as steadily pursued the opposite direction ; until now, in his friendless old age, he was reduced to a most forlorn " bachelorising " existence in a one-roomed hut near Hakawai. It was in vain that, time after time, Mrs. Callender had entreated him to take up his quarters on the farm, and let her, in tardy return for that essential succour long ago, make his declining days as comfortable as she could. No ! he always refused, gratefully, but with decision ; he had work to do, he said, for which absolute solitude was a necessity.

But when, at length, he and his *wharé* grew infirm together ; when sinister mention began to be made of the Old Men's Refuge ; then, Mrs. Callender could stand on ceremony no longer. If Mr. Miller himself did not know what was due to the saviour of her father and mother, she did ; and accordingly, one fresh and beautiful October morning, when the headland was all soft greens and purples with springing grass and sailing cloud-shadows, she harnessed steady Twinkle into the buggy, and drove off ; returning, that same afternoon, with a small, spare, bespectacled man upon the seat beside her, and a quantity of well-packed butter-boxes and

flour-bags in the rear. Poor Twinkle seemed to have found his load no light one ; and this was not surprising, for the butter-boxes proved to be full of weighty books, and the sacks, all but one, whose leanness hid a few old clothes, were crammed with papers.

Roger, humorously growling, brought them all round by degrees into the old kitchen, now homelike and hospitable once more with a good fire of black-pine, for the sweet spring breeze was keen. But it was not upon the fire that the newcomer's deep-set old eyes fastened themselves with eagerness and brightened as they gazed ; it was upon a certain innovation in the room, introduced no later than that very day—some shelves, namely, of plain wood, running along a couple of the walls. He rubbed his veiny, knotted hands together as he looked at them, and before he would so much as glance at the good hot meal Mrs. Callender made haste to bring in, he insisted upon unpacking and bestowing on these shelves his beloved books—his “family,” as he called them with a whimsical smile.

It was a family extremely unlike that other which the old kitchen had known, with fresh, rosy faces and quick limbs ; considered, too, as decoration, it could hardly vie with Martin's pictures ; for a sorrier, a more blighted collection of volumes can seldom surely have been seen. The backs of many were broken, others could boast of no richer wrapping than was afforded by a bit of brown paper ; and the very handsomest members of all faced the world, or rather the old kitchen, in mouldy coats of dull brown leather, sorely scratched and

worn. It was possible, of course, that the very sprightliest elegances, the nimblest and most lively creations of wit and fancy, might dwell behind these dingy exteriors and be gloomily concealed by them, like comedy behind the curtain ; but, if so, the concealment was perfect—the entire library looked to promise nothing lighter than a sermon. There could never be anything in the least fantastic, or light-minded, or gay about the aspect of the old kitchen while it should retain these tenants ; but, rather, an air of equable responsibility, an atmosphere of grave and even twilight, sobered and somewhat scented, too, by the company of so much unspacious brown leather ; and promising, in whatever form of activity should there be pursued, a kind of passionless neutrality, a judicial stability and calm.

As for the human occupant, the father, so to speak, of this unglittering tribe, he was a gentle and tranquil old man of long past seventy, with a high, shining forehead, and a lofty dome-shaped head, white as a snow-peak in July. He had a mild, absorbed expression ; he rarely spoke and even more rarely heard. Mrs. Callender had always understood that he was a doctor—*Dr. Miller*, her father had always called him—and, the morning after his arrival, before she knew his habits, she coaxed him into the stable to see a poor cow that was down with milk-fever. The old man accompanied her with the most perfect complaisance, gazed at the suffering creature with an air of profound consideration, and lent, or appeared to lend, the most desirable attention to Mrs. Callender's painstaking enumeration of its symptoms. But when, at the

end, she asked for his opinion, she got a shock ; for, slowly shaking that great white head of his, he answered, with a gentle smile, that he had hitherto made it the habit of his life seldom to formulate an opinion, and never to express one—a habit which appeared to Mrs. Callender most peculiar in any one, and in a doctor, actively inhuman.

All of a sudden, however, a new idea flashed into her mind—were there not other doctors, as well as doctors of medicine ? Of course ! and, swiftly seized with a wild and palpitating hope, “ Oh, Dr. Miller,” she cried, “ do you—oh, *are* you a musicianer ? ” at the same time revolving, with the customary quickness of her woman’s mind, all sorts of plans for giving a commission to the very next piano agent who should call. But his answer not only crushed that infant hope past remedy, it also raised a fear ; for, “ God forbid ! ” he said, with an earnestness so devout that Mrs. Callender felt her heart almost stop its beating. Could he—oh—could he possibly be a Doctor of—Divinity ? Of the habits of such folk she had no experience, it is true, but awful visions beset her—of gentle but persistent admonishings, of sermons on weekdays as well as Sundays. Worst of all, of Roger, at no time an admirer of “ parsons,” and already good-naturedly contemptuous of this poor man who had “ made such a mess of his life,” waxing “ rampageous,” and kicking against the bodily presence of so spiritually minded a guest. The idea was, indeed, so alarming, that she dared not put it to the proof. The old man had concealed the fact, if fact it were, for so many years, that perhaps, if he were not goaded into declaring

it now by ill-judged questions, it might be kept dark still ; and she therefore pursued her inquiries no further. She loyally called him " Doctor," to the end, however. Failure that he had been, puzzle that he was, mine of danger that he might eventually prove to be, the former bulwark of her father's fortunes should lack nothing she could give him, least of all a title of respect.

Old Mr. Miller was very happy at the farm. His original scruples once routed by Mrs. Callender's abduction of his person, he never recurred to them—indeed he probably forgot all about them—and accepted her ministrations as naturally, and with as little question as a child. The seclusion of the place suited him well ; and in the old kitchen he could enjoy his stipulated solitude without stint. As in its earliest days of all, the old room was now again both bed-chamber and living-room. Once more it enclosed and guarded all the material activities of an entire human life, and provided, with what seemed a peculiar fitness, for the helplessness of him by whose help it had been conserved to the use of its original inmates. The old man became very fond of it ; he quitted it, indeed, only for the garden ; for he was very shy. The farm itself he never went outside from the day he came to it, and he could never be induced to face any of Mrs. Callender's once more infrequent visitors. People, he once explained to her, were like noises, and " broke his thoughts."

Of another kind of society, however, presumably less destructive, he was extremely fond—the society, namely, of all the lesser creation, feathered or four-legged, provided only that it was not too big and

strong. Perhaps this trait was a mark of that same mercifulness of nature that had sent him to the prompt rescue of the struggling young couple ; perhaps it was his portion of the almost universal craving for companionship ; or again, perhaps it was what Roger called it, just childishness. Whatever its reason, certainly he treated the smaller and gentler of the creatures about the farm (cows and horses were too big for him, puppies he found too boisterous) after a fashion that their master considered " clean ridic'ulous," and even loyal Mrs. Callender in secret thought most trying. For, like the majority of farm folk, these two looked upon animals as nothing at all but bodies, and bodies designed, moreover, for nothing else than to be of use to human owners ; while the old doctor went to the other extreme, and gravely regarded them as real personalities, with lives and claims and interests of their own. Understanding, at any rate of the heart, they did undoubtedly possess, he pointed out to Mrs. Callender, when Lady, the cattle-dog, deposited one day a still-blind pup between his trusted feet ; and he scandalised her severely, on another occasion, by asserting that, in his opinion, the claim of Mab the cat to a soul was as undeniable as her own. Mrs. Callender never feared that he was a Doctor of Divinity after that !

But in return, the animals adored their champion ; it certainly seemed that there was some real bond between him and them. Mab, before long, had quite deserted the new kitchen of an evening for the old, and Lady, when off duty, would sit quiet by the hour with her nose against the old man's knee, and shared his meals with a regularity that was a further

discipline to poor Mrs. Callender, who considered, and not perhaps without reason, that her providing was much too good for a dog. The ducks and turkeys, too, would come boldly round the doorstep to eat from his hand; and as for the little fan-tails in the garden, it was really pretty to see them with the old doctor. They would come flickering and flirting about his great white head without the smallest fear, and settle on his knee or his finger; cocking their little heads questioningly on one side, and looking up at him out of their bright black eyes with the most knowing expression. When autumn came, they fairly took up their quarters for a time in the old kitchen, creating with their mid-air antics a perfect whirlpool of movement within its quiet atmosphere, breaking the solemn silence with brisk monosyllables of bird chat, and making no scruple whatever, if they wanted a perch, of alighting upon the very most portentous of all the brown leather tomes.

“The lesser brethren,” the old man used to call them; and when Mrs. Callender once, humouring him as she would have done a child, asked him what they talked so much to him about, “Oh, we share a secret,” he answered, with a smile and laying a mysterious finger to his lip. “Consciousness, men call it, but they know only one word of it. Perhaps the little birds know another.” And good Mrs. Callender went sadly away, feeling that Roger was quite right—the poor old dear *was* getting very childish.

As regards his daily life, it was his custom to rise late, and of a bright morning to sit with a closed book on his knee—either out on the clean,

flagged garden-path between the flower-borders, or else in the streak of sunshine beside his open window. The bees would be humming, the thrushes melodiously busy, and with the fragrance of his morning-pipe (he was a tremendous smoker) would be mingled the freshness of the sea-air and the sweet garden-breath. Suppose the day were chill or wet, he would then seat himself beside the hearth, which Mrs. Callender was careful to keep well-supplied with logs; still with a book, and still with that book unopened. It was as though the mere presence of the printed page sufficed him, just as the day's work often goes the better for the mere knowledge that So-and-So is about; or perhaps the contents lived in his memory, and needed no reviving; or, again, perhaps he had another unprinted library in his brain, that it took him all his time to decipher, and the holding of a book in his hand was but a habit, or acted as a suggestion. At all events, he seldom seemed to read.

If the afternoon were fine he would spend some time in pacing up and down among the pines that surrounded it on three sides; by and by he had worn quite a track among them, as Wordsworth's sailor-brother did, home from the quarter-deck. And, after that, he would return to his room, and there sit with his white head sunk on his breast, and his beloved pipe out at last, apparently asleep. Finally, when it was quite dusk, and Mrs. Callender had brought in and lit his lamp, "Doctor Morepork," as Roger called him to tease his wife, would sit down to the table in the company of pens, papers, and ink, and begin, at length, his day's work. What that work was, constituted yet another puzzle. It was

writing, certainly, that was plain enough ; but of what kind ? what about ? Mrs. Callender never could discover. Once, in the hope of having wherewithal to glorify him in the eye of Kiteroa, and, if possible, render him a little respectable in Roger's, she ventured to inquire whether he wrote for the papers ? "For the papers !" He repeated the words after her with a scorn, gentle, yet absolute, which, however incomprehensible, proved, at any rate, that he did *not* !

Whatever his mysterious task, however, he worked hard at it. His consumption of kerosene was enormous—although, as Mrs. Callender said, she never should be the one to grudge him that, seeing that except for tobacco, which he found himself in, kerosene was about the only thing he did consume ; and the sight of his cheerfully streaming window must have heartened many a midnight helmsman off that unlit coast. The old *wharé*, that had once presided through the darkness over dreamless slumbers, now kept vigil many a night with this old scholar. Once, in fact, during the summer, Mrs. Callender and the sunrise together surprised him in the middle of a sentence—which Mrs. Callender stole a look at, by the way, over his shoulder ; but, so far from its enlightening her as to the real meaning of all this midnight toil, not one word of it could she so much as decipher. It was all written in some incomprehensible character.

One night, during the winter that followed, she was suddenly awakened—by some kind of cry, she thought, but could not be sure. For a minute or two she lay listening ; then, an irresistible impulse drove her to the old kitchen. She found the

doctor still sitting at his table, although the clock upon the wall had just struck three ; but, for once, he was not writing. All his papers were packed up into one great pile, and this he was holding in his hands, which quivered and trembled about it, and fondled it as though it were one of the little live creatures so dear to him. "It is done ! it is done !" he was exclaiming, almost chanting, as Mrs. Callender entered ; and she recognised the sound as that which had awaked her.

"What is done ?" she asked him ; but he did not answer. She could not even be certain that he was aware of her presence, for he had a singular expression, "as if he was glorying," and, unwilling to disturb him, she made up the fire softly, and went away. She could not sleep, however ; a queer restlessness, a vague feeling of uneasiness, had taken possession of her ; and she got up again after awhile, and stole back to the old kitchen. The lamp seemed to have burned low ; she turned it up. There sat the old doctor still, and still he clasped his papers. But they were now made up into a parcel, and his head had fallen forward on them. He was dead.

Whether it was legal or not, Mrs. Callender never knew, neither did she care ; but when she found that the manuscript whose existence had been so vitally bound up with the old doctor's, was directed to some queer address in far-off Germany, she insisted on Roger's sending it there at once, before the constable came to take over the dead man's affairs. He might refuse to forward it—one never knew ; and forwarded at all costs it had got to be, since that was evidently the doctor's last wish. Forwarded accordingly it was, though the postage

made Roger whistle and slyly lament to his wife that moreporks were expensive pets. Then Hennessey, the constable, came and cleared away the old brown books, and all the rest of the manuscripts. And, once again, the old kitchen was empty.

No longer ago than last November, I was down myself at the farm on the promontory-tip; and I found Mrs. Callender all in a flutter still at the extraordinary event of the week before. Two men had arrived at the farm, two strangers, two foreigners—come all the way from Germany, it appeared, to visit the place where the celebrated Dr. Müller (it really was a *ü* in the middle of his name—did I know?) had lived and died and written his so-famous volume upon . . . what, Mrs. Callender could not for the life of her make out—that had revolutionised . . . something, concerning which she had been able to gather no idea; except the joyful one that it was so exceedingly important that her father's friend had now become a greatly revered man in his own country. She was very triumphant over Roger about it; but Roger, good, substantial man, stuck sturdily to his guns. Where was the good of a dinner after you were dead? If the poor old duffer couldn't succeed in getting famous in time enough to know it, didn't that show he was a failure, right enough? And, anyway, what the dickens did anybody care for what they thought in Germany about anything?

I went for a minute or two into the old kitchen. It was cool, and still, and shady, although, outside, the garden was blazing-bright already with its early summer bloom; and a great group of Christmas-

lilies held up before the window their tall wands of blossomed silver, delicately detached upon the background of immense blue sea. Two or three brown volumes that had been overlooked by the constable—there had been a couple more, but those Mrs. Callender had bestowed in gratitude upon the appreciative strangers—stood yet upon the shelves ; a study of the Point done in Martin's most dashing manner, hung over the capacious old hearth ; and the tingling silence, as, standing still, I held my own breath in the little breathless space—it was a calm day, and there was no murmur from either pines or sea—felt as though it were holding back some lovely secret of its own, which must presently break forth and tell itself in noble harmonies.

What various lives had been lived in the old kitchen ! The young husband and wife and the babies, first, normal as could be ; after them, Miss Kirkcaldie the musician, mysterious, aloof, as yonder far horizon ; next, Martin the painter, as radiant, as endearing, as evanescent as the summer flowers ; and, last of all, the old philosopher with his august white head, sublimely illumined by the flush of posthumous fame as yonder snow-peaks would be soon by the afterglow.

It was strange how the old kitchen seemed to have been chosen from among its compeers in humility, here among the paddocks and the sheep, as a sanctuary for the life that springs, certainly, from the good sound soil of material existence, but wings its way above it ; the life that leaves unconcernedly on one side all that is actual, practical, and personal ; the detached life of the intellect and of Art.



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1870-1958.

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