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THE

COUNTERFEIT SEAL:

A TALE OF

OTAGO'S FIRST SETTLERS.

BY

R. N. ADAMS.

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO

THE MEMORY

OF

MY PARENTS,

WHO WERE MEMBERS OF THAT BRAVE PIONEER BAND,

WHOSE ENERGY AND INTEGRITY GAVE TO THE SETTLEMENT

THAT STABILITY OF CHARACTER WHICH DISTINGUISHED

ITS EARLY DAYS.

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THE COUNTERFEIT SEAL:

A TALE OF OTAGO'S PIONEERS

CHAPTER I.

THE COBBLER'S APPRENTICE.

His spirit craved for bolder, nobler trusts.

It was on Saturday night in the month of —— 1847, that Eric Thomson, after having been a week away from home, returned to the house of his parents to spend the Sabbath, to get a change of clothing, and start out again on Monday morning, in an opposite direction, for a succeeding week of toil. He was a strong young man of twenty-one, tall and broad of frame, very slightly bent forward, doubtless the result of years spent over the last and the leather seam, having almost completed an apprenticeship of seven years to an itinerant, lively, and energetic master of St. Crispin.

Eric Thomson was fond of his home, and those at home were equally fond of him; he had a pleasant obliging disposition, and by his genial manners he had won a roomy corner in the hearts of all who sat around the same hearthstone, though for those seven years he had never spent more than one day in seven among them. Summer and winter; in the beauties of spring, or during the dreariness

of winter's cold and stormy weather, he had followed his employer from house to house, from town to town, seldom knowing to-day where he should work to-morrow; but with a fidelity worthy of a nobler vocation, he left his fate implicitly in the hands of Archie Rabb, who for well nigh half a century, had been known as a trusty cobbler, for many miles round the ancient city of Edinburgh, and was sure of work, where such skill as his was wanted.

This member of the Independent and Ununited Order of Waxends and Awls, had throughout his life dwelt in the famous city of Scottish kings and seat of learning—not that Archie had personally profited much by the special glories of the noted city's fame, but, the fact of being a native of the royal centre was to the humble cobbler, as well as to all others born within the walls which enclose the grand old town, a source of pride. Even a cobbler born in Edinburgh was entitled to some respect, superior to men of other towns of the country. And Archie, in his modest way, strove to live an honest, and consequently a respectable life, while making and mending shoes in the villages and small towns surrounding the proud capital of Scotland.

Many a weary mile had Archie Rabb been followed by Eric Thomson during those seven years—yes, followed—for Rabb knew how a hired lad should be kept in his place. He was not the man to make a companion of his boy, whose duty was to carry the little bag containing the necessary tools and other adjuncts of the trade, and keeping a few paces in the rear, walk in the path of his master.

On the Saturday with which our story commences Eric was not in his usual humour; he had come home without a smile on his face, his greeting to his mother was

heartless, and when his sister Betty threw her arms round his neck to kiss him in her enthusiastic way, his response was so mechanical as to make her feel he was either ill or angry. She drew back and looked at him ; many strange thoughts passing through her mind while she turned away to resume her domestic duties ; and he threw himself down in an old arm chair, always his father's seat when he was at home, but claimed by Eric in his absence.

Little was said by any during the half hour in which Mrs. Thomson and her daughter were preparing the evening meal, the only one on a week night at which all the family met. By the time the repast was ready all were present. The father, who held the position of under gardener to Provost McAlister, and had two younger sons working with him, arrived about ten minutes after Eric, Mary and Jane, who were respectively learning the dressmaking and millinery, had just come in, and all gathered round the table. The fond matron sat at her end of the family board, and with an expression of pleasure and pride, glanced from one to another of her fine-looking family of three sons and three daughters, who all were in the full enjoyment of energetic health.

At such times Eric generally had a free tongue, and told strange and humorous tales of his experiences during his week's perigrinations. He was always expected, on account of this, to lead off with something new immediately after the "blessing was asked," but to-night he sat silently, and in consequence all were silent, until his mother, looking at her firstborn remarked :

"Have you nothing to tell us to-night, Eric ?"

"No, nothing to-night, mother," he replied in a heavy, far-away sort of voice and manner, and after a short pause continued—"Let somebody else do the talking."

"Mercy! me," exclaimed his mother, "what's the matter with you Eric?"

"Oh, nothing, Mother, only I have nothing to say." This time he showed some crossness in his speech, and she remained quiet for a while considering what this strange turn could mean.

"Come, Eric," said Jane, his youngest sister, whose coaxing voice seldom failed in effecting its purpose, "come, Eric, we haven't seen you for a week, and we're all wanting to hear you, it seems strange for you to be here and yet not to say something to make us laugh, has old Rabb had bad luck, or has he broken his leg?"

"Oh no, Archie Rabb's well enough," was the only reply she got this time.

"It's not Rabb he's troubled about," said Mary, looking mischievously about, "all that's wrong with him is that he missed having a word with Kirsty Knox as he came in. If Kirsty had got his first words there would have been fun for us," and she giggled freely at her own pertness.

This was more than he counted on, but did not tend much to sweeten his humour. His answer was a retort:

"How long is it since ye saw braw James Carmichael with his buckled shoes, Mary?"

Mary flushed, but quietly replied, "Jimmy was in seeing mother last night, lad, but you need not be troubled, Kirsty's well, Eric, I said good-bye to her down the street a bit, she said she was late in getting home to-night, and gave an anxious look up this way when she turned the corner."

"Thank you," said Eric, "for giving what was not asked from you. I am glad to know your pretty friend is well, be careful to do her no ill by what you say."

This gave the conversation a start, and even Eric thawed from his icy condition slowly, and joined in a laugh subsequently over a joke perpetrated on his worthy master by James; still it was clear that some uncommon burthen oppressed his mind, while he hugged it selfishly to his own bosom."

When they rose from table Eric lost no time in dressing himself in his best Sunday clothes, and without saying a word to one in the house, he bent his footsteps to the home of Kirsty Knox.

"Come away in," said Mrs. Knox, who opened the door in answer to his signal, "you've managed to get across fine and early to-night, Eric, Kirsty will not be long;" with that she led him into a neat parlour, with a lamp already lit although daylight had not yet passed away. The furniture of the room bespoke more thrift than luxury, indeed, the inmates, although slightly above the grade of Eric's family, were still depending on work for their daily bread. Mrs. Knox did fancy sewing for good houses, her daughter had a situation behind a counter in a linen draper's shop, and Mr. Knox was clerk in a writer's office; while there were seven children to be fed, clothed, and educated.

Nobody seemed to think of Eric as a mere cobbler's lad. When dressed in his best suit, he had a good manly appearance, and had the manner of one who could not be a member of the "Waxend and Awl" order all his life. His countenance and his conversation both seemed to class him

in quite another sphere, although his education was of an inferior standard, except for his love of reading and his faculty of observation; these enabled him to pass for what he really was not among strangers, while among friends he created the impression that he was able to command success in his efforts to surmount difficulties.

He had chatted with Mrs. Knox for a few minutes when the graceful form of Kirsty glided through the doorway with a very high colour glowing upon her cheeks. The greeting was that of lovers in the presence of one honoured and respected—cordial yet slightly bashful and constrained.

About five minutes later Mrs. Knox having, she said, something to do in the kitchen, left the young pair to the freedom of their own company. They drew their seats nearer to each other, and Eric took Kirsty's hand into his, and seemed for a while as if he were at a loss for anything to say, when Kirsty came to his relief by asking—

"What is the most uncommon event in your history this week, Eric?"

"That is what I want most of all to tell you, Kirsty," was his energetic reply.

"Well, I will sit and listen, you begin at once," said she, raising her large blue eyes to meet the glance of his pair of dark and sparkling orbs.

"Can you come out for a walk for half an hour with me, Kirsty? I want to be quite alone without fear of interruption."

"Has anything befallen you, Eric?" she asked.

"Not that, but I want to tell you what I have heard, and ask your advice."

"Well, would you not rather see father and ask his opinion on the matter?" she suggested, as if supposing it to be something in which her father's legal knowledge might be of some advantage to the young man.

"I shall be glad of your father's advice once I have got yours, perhaps, but I would like yours first, so if you may, put on your bonnet and shawl, we will have a saunter round for half an hour."

After consulting her mother Kirsty appeared before her lover ready to comply with his request, and the two went out in the gloaming, he to unfold the burden of his heart, she to receive a revelation and a surprise.

Chapter II.

THE PIONEER SPIRIT AROUSED.

"The world was large, with boundless fertile plains,
Untilled, unpeopled, uncontrolled by man."

As the lovers had entered a park after a walk of about ten minutes duration, they wended their way along a path leading to a beautiful grove, Kirsty all the while expecting to hear Eric begin his important speech, and he, quite as anxious to do so, was all the time trying to commence, but his very anxiety produced a nervous hesitancy, which caused him to indulge in commonplace remarks to fill in the time.

Now, however, they were comparatively alone, and the circumstances seemed suitable for the most timerous nature to unburden itself into the heart of one who had always a sweet and sympathetic word for any trouble he had ever confided to her. His trouble was to find a soft and gentle way of broaching a great subject; while the only form in which it presented itself to his mind, was abrupt and stiff.

He was battling vigorously with this difficulty, and revolving the thought in all the ways he could command, but in the midst of his reflections he became silent, and walked on for a while as if no one were in his company. When Kirsty "nudged" his arm, and looking up into his rather perplexed face with a smile that the fading light just made visible, said—

"A penny for your thoughts, Eric."

"Will you pay in advance," he replied, his self command coming back to him with the probe of her remark.

"Well, mother's advice is 'never buy a pig in a poke,' but if you insist on my promise, I'll give you the price before I am sure of the value."

"No, I'll not hold you to that, but I was just wanting to tell you what I have to say, and was doubting how to start, but it's not easy to begin speaking on foreign things."

"Foreign things!" ejaculated Kirsty; "what foreign things are you troubled about? Are you going to 'list?"

"To 'list!" broke from Eric spontaneously. "No, indeed, I never dreamed of that. My thoughts are not away in that road, Kirsty."

Kirsty was looking anxiously at him now, for she feared there was some dark story about to be related; and tales of deserting lovers, of years of hopes and fears, and of ultimate despair flashed through her memory. These were interrupted after a short pause by Eric resuming:

"For these two years past, Kirsty, nothing has given me more joy than the hope of some day, not far hence, being able to see you the mistress of a home in which we would be happy in wedlock's sacred bands. But when I have tried to look into the future, and picture you and me as happy in each other's love as two turtle doves, I have at the same time seen a dark side to the picture, and that has made my heart sore. I am only a working cobbler, but as my name is Eric Thomson I am resolved to be something else for your sake, Kirsty. I couldna' make you a poor cobbler's wife, but I will make a home worthy of you if you are willing to wait a while for me."

He had broken the bands of his difficulty, but in doing so he had plunged poor Kirsty into amazement. She held her head down and replied:

"Eric Thomson, if I am in the way of your progress, if you have purposes of life in view, and I stand in your path, you have only to tell me so and I will free you at once from our long and often made promises to each other."

"Kirsty, Kirsty!" he burst out in a piteous tone of voice, "that's not it; far from that is the truth of my heart. For myself I could cobble away all my life, but for the lass that is the star of my nights, and the sunshine of my days, I will be something better; and if you will come over and rest on this seat, I'll tell you of a plan that came into my head the other night."

With this he led her to a comfortable seat, over which hung the branches of trees, forming a delightful shelter from the wind, and shut them from the view of any who might chance to be passing.

There he told how on the previous Monday night, after he and Archie Rabb had finished their work of mending the shoes, &c., in a big farm house, they were invited into the hall, where the Rev. Thomas Burns, who was well known to Archie as the minister of Portobello, was telling them all about a place called New Zealand. It was away on the other side of the world; but a good ship could sail to it in about four months, and that was very little more than it took them to reach the East Indies. Mr Burns said he was forming a band of emigrants to go and take possession of a most fertile country, and advised any able-bodied young man who wanted to improve his position in life, and was not afraid of hard work, to join his band and become one of the founders of a new nation.

His companion listened with patience to Eric's animated relation of what had started these new hopes and

desires in his mind, but she kept her head down, while her neat little feet were constantly, though unconsciously, pushing about into various shapes a few handfuls of fallen leaves the wind had blown into the shelter of the arbour. When at length he paused she let a little sigh escape her, and her head sank still lower on her bosom, but she remained silent.

"Kirsty," he resumed, "in other two months I'll be 'out of my time' with Mr. Archie Rabb. I shall then be free to take what course I consider best, provided you agree with me. I will do nothing that will not meet with your approval, but this seems to me to be a chance to start in life and reach comfort before old age, should providence bless us with length of days, that should not be carelessly set aside."

This little speech was more pleasing to the young woman's heart. He had put her first; she was to have the power to help or to hinder him. He had actually submitted the whole thing to her wisdom. She felt the honour, she recognised the underlying love, and she duly considered the dignity of the position her faithful lover had placed her in.

Eric's guileless confidence in the girl who held his heart strings had won for him a victory, and Kirsty's features relaxed a large portion of their stiffness; but now the shades of evening were too dull for him to observe the change. Her head, however, rose, and she turned her face partly to his and said:

"Other folk have lived in peace and happiness on the earnings of a cobbler, Eric; could we not also?"

"If that's your answer, Kirsty, then so be it; but my

opinion is that the new land would be a 'better land,' and in that better land we would find a happier home than we could get together here."

"It's not my answer, Eric," she said. "The matter is too serious to be answered right off. But you know 'home is home.'"

"That's true," replied the young man on whom the "emigrating fever" had already taken a firm grasp. "But fancy the difference between me sitting all day chap-chapping with my hammer, or boring with my awl, and stitching with waxends year after year until my head turned grey; and you, as fine a lass as any man may ever hope to give a wedding ring to—you, my fresh, slim, straight, rosy, and fair Kirsty, think of you fighting year in and year out in a little bit of a house in some humble street of this great town, until those lovely golden locks are like snow, and compare it with what we may be in the new land, where 'honesty and industry,' as Mr. Burns said, are the high road to comfort and perhaps to wealth."

"You said before we came out, Eric, that you would ask my father's opinion as well as mine. Suppose we both go and consult him about this new scheme of yours. He will likely know something about the outlandish place you speak about and would like to live in until your head turns grey. Some very pretty pictures have been painted of things that never took place; many castle-plans have been drawn in the minds of enthusiastic men, but the stones are not yet cut out of the quarries to build them with."

Kirsty chose this way of trying to make Eric believe that she was still quite against his proposal to emigrate to New Zealand. She was of much less impulsive tempera-

ment than he; besides, he had been revolving the subject in his mind for days past, but to her the idea was new.

When they returned to Kirsty's house Mr. Knox was sitting in the cosy little parlour, and his two youngest children were standing before him rehearsing their lessons for Monday's school, and the young couple seated themselves on chairs at the most distant part of the room without interrupting the proceedings.

After various corrections, kind advice, and wise counsel the paternal duties in that direction came to an end, and the little ones dismissed to the kitchen, where their mother had an abundant supply of water to prepare them for a sound and refreshing Saturday-night sleep.

Mr. Knox did happen to know something about New Zealand; in fact, he could enlighten young Thomson in many points. He knew Mr McGlashan, the Edinburgh secretary of the Free Church Lay Association; indeed, he had read the draft of the Association's Constitution before it was engrossed, his employers having had something to do with its preparation. Beyond this he had been in Glasgow on some important business, and there attended a public meeting which had just been held for the purpose of laying the scheme of the Association before the people, and there he heard the Hon. Fox Maule (Lord Panmure) and the Earl of Dalhousie speak in favour of the objects for which the Association had been organised.

Since then he had seen some of the promoters, among whom were Captain William Cargill and the Rev. Mr. Burns.

It was quite a relief for young Thomson to find in his sweetheart's father a man so well versed in the topic

now absorbing all his thoughts. It sustained and increased his ardour in the effort to accomplish his plan—if so far, that could be called a plan which was little more than a strong desire prompted by the spirit of enterprise, a motive of which he was still innocently unconscious, but whose embryo force was urging him forward out of his life of dull monotony and almost irresistible cramp.

Although neither of the young people had suggested the idea of emigration, yet from the fact that they both seemed interested in the subject Mr. Knox could not avoid observing the drift of their thoughts, so he gave them little encouragement by anything he said: while with the wileness of his profession he refrained from drawing them to the point by any question proposed or implied, and would willingly have allowed the subject to pass off in a general way, as a mere reference to some important project not of personal interest, had not the impulsive and inquiring temperament of Eric Thomson forced a direct opinion.

"You have now for several months," said he, "had these facts in your mind, and you have spoken to the men who are promoting the scheme for peopling that new country, tell us, please, what is your opinion of it as an opening for young people?"

"Do you think of going, Eric?" asked Mr. Knox in feigned amazement.

"If I am convinced it is a wise thing to do, and friends I would not grieve are agreeable, I believe I would like to go," was his candid reply.

"But there will be little call in a small community for your special line of business. The people there make their own shoes, I am told, out of a plant that grows on the hills."

"If I go it will not be to set up in the making and mending of shoes, unless I see that as a good 'line of business,' I want to get a piece of land and farm it."

"But lad you were never a 'farmer's boy,'" said the old man tauntingly.

"Still I could learn."

"You never held a plough."

"My arms are strong; I am willing to try."

"Then if you are resolved to seek your fortune in a new country you may succeed, but don't suppose there are neither hardships nor dangers to be encountered. There are both. America is not so far away. It is a big world itself, with abundance of free land for willing toilers, why not consider its greater advantages?"

"I must confess," answered the young man, "that I have never thought of America. The matter of distance, however, is not so much when once one has made up his mind to move. One charm the New Zealand scheme has for me is that it is to be a Scotch settlement where church and school will be amply provided for. After people have been there a few months it will be just like living in one of our own Scotch villages, only the surrounding country will be open for anyone to select from and occupy."

"Such Scotch villages would have little charm for me, lad, and I am sure it will be no place to take delicate women. You will require to build your house before you have one to live in after leaving the ship."

"Yes, in that you are right, sir," said Eric respectfully, "but if our ancestors in Scotland had thought and spoken that way, there never would have been a race of Scotchmen."

"Very sentimental and somewhat heroic too," retorted Mr. Knox, who disliked to be opposed by a youth in such a manner, "still I object to making heroines of women who were never accustomed to anything but a quiet city life."

"Still, father," interposed Kirsty, "women are made of the same flesh and bone as men, why should they not be fit for the same endurance?"

"Now, Kirsty," answered her father, "women must be in subjection, and its ill becoming of you to interfere just now. I am arguing the women's part, and you are so silly as to put in a word against me. That is neither wise, nor respectful to your father."

Before Kirsty had recovered from this severe rebuke her mother entered, having heard just the last part of the speech, and being surprised by the tone of it she inquired the cause. Her husband related in brief, for her special benefit, the substance of the past conversation, and concluded by stating—

"And Eric wants to go to New Zealand to look for a fortune."

"Well, is he going by himself?" was her brief question.

"We have not come to that yet, but Kirsty seems to think she would not be against going. That's what vexes me. She might wait till we have all talked that part of it over."

"It's certainly not modest for her to speak so glibly about such a journey. It'll not be with my free will she'll ever go so far from home; to a country where white folk are killed and eaten by blackamores," said her mother,

evidently becoming excited over the idea of her daughter being served up at a savage gathering of wild cannibals as a savoury dish.

There was a division of interests, and a strong conflict of views. Kirsty's tongue was silenced by the stern attitude of her parents, while her ambition was to encourage Eric's wishes, yet her affection constrained her to be agreeable to her parents. She had already begun to draw the plans for one of the castles whose stones were yet in the solid fabric of the quarry. But Eric considered it prudent to say that, "having spoken of the matter, it could now rest for a while for further thought. He was not so mad on the adventure as to rush off against the good wishes of his best friends." And he rose to bid them good-night.

"Quite so, Eric," said Mrs. Knox; "there is no hurry, and we will all be the better of a night's sleep before we say yes or no. We'll see you at the church to-morrow as usual, I suppose?"

"I hope so," answered Eric in a hearty way, and took his leave, Kirsty accompanying him to the gate, where they parted after a few expressions of goodwill and ardent love.

Chapter III.

THE CALL TO GO FORTH.

"He heard the call, and, willing to obey,
Rent every tie that barred the unknown way."

That night, when Eric re-entered his own door, all the family but his father had gone to bed.

"Dear me! Eric lad, you're out late to-night; what's been the matter that you were not in by 10 o'clock? You know our rule is that all must be indoors by that time. Now, although you're risen to man's estate, you must remember that although you are twenty-one years of age and like to spend a while with other folk's daughters, while you live in my house you must observe the rules established."

"I was discussing about New Zealand with Mr. Knox, father, and I did not think of the time. I am sorry for the trespass, but it was not as you have hinted; I was conversing with the Knoxs about the settlement of Otago, in New Zealand."

And having said that, he moved away towards his own bedroom, but his father called him back.

"What did you say? Talking about Otago, in New Zealand? Why, what put that into your heads? Is Mr. Knox thinking of going out?"

"Oh, no; he has no intention to do that, but he knows a lot about what is being done to get up a band of emigrants under the Free Church Association."

"But how came you to talk on such a queer subject?" further inquired Mr Thomson.

"It came up through me telling them of what the Rev. Mr. Burns had been saying out at the big Hall, where Archie and I were last Monday night."

"And what did Mr. Burns say that made you take so much interest in that out-of-the-world place?"

Here Eric drew a chair up to the side of the hearth, on which were the remains of an expiring fire, while his father sat in the big chair with his feet on the hob.

"Yes, you may as well sit down comfortably and tell me all you can remember of what he said. I suppose you were all wanting to hear about the cannibals eating the missionaries, and the like."

"He did not say much about cannibals eating missionaries. If I mind rightly, he said the natives were very few and were all quite civilised."

"Very well, Eric, give me your story; I would like to hear what the minister had to say."

Then Eric related what he had heard in a manner that showed how deeply it had impressed him. And, judging by the style in which his son spoke, Mr Thomson concluded that he was strongly inclined to look favourably on the advice of the agent of the Association, and asked:

"And would you like to be one of the first company to sail on such a pleasure trip, Eric?"

"It has been a good deal on my mind," replied Eric, "and it does seem to have a charm about it; but I would like to know what you think."

"Well, Eric, this thing has been running through my head for a good while now. I am not young, nor am I very old—not too old yet for a hard day's work. When I was your age I was anxious to go to America, but something

prevented me. Then I soon got married, and ever since it has been never ceasing toil to find food and clothes for the family the Lord has blessed me with, and I am very thankful to Him for his merciful providence in granting me strength to keep all things together to the present time. Now you are all growing up, and that not without being able to read and write and count as well. I think for a working man's family you have no reason to be ashamed of your education; you have all had more of the school than either your father or your mother got. Now, I would like to see you all with some better prospects in life than I can think lies before you if we stay here, and if we can get away to Otago I think in my own heart that is the step we should take."

"Do you really consider Otago would be better than America?" asked Eric, remembering what Mr. Knox had said, and wishing to know his father's opinion on the point to get from it, if possible, an answer to meet the objection he had raised.

"My preference for Otago," said his father, "lies in the fact that the church and nationality of those who go will keep them still 'one people.' In America things are just as mixed as they can be, for there men of all creeds and from all countries are found, with no common ancestry, no union of interest in the past. History to them is a source of division rather than of cohesion, and so far as churches and schools are concerned, they are at variance. On the other hand, in Otago all will hail from Scotland; Scotland's history will be theirs, Scotland's heroes their heroes. Whatever has been Scotland's will be theirs; even Scotland's Free Church will be the church of Otago's sons, and

all the liberty won by those whose blood has dyed the heather of Scottish hills in the long and bitter struggle for freedom, will be the heritage of those who go from this nation, now reaping the fruit of those brave deeds of bye-gone years."

"Have you spoken of this to mother?" questioned Eric, anxious to know how far this sentiment, now realised for the first time to be common to both his father and himself, was spread through the family.

"No, not yet," said Mr. Thomson, "I have kept it all to myself, nor would I now probably have spoken, had you not awakened my hopes and feelings by telling me what you had been talking about at the Knoxs. But I think she would not be hard to persuade, if I draw a correct inference from things she has said during the last year."

"My thoughts have been for a while past," said Eric, "taking a very similar line to yours; but perhaps more selfish. I have no complaint to make about the trade I have been set to learn, but still I would not like to settle down to earn my living at it. I would like something more free, more active, and independent. My spirit rebels against it, and I could never be contented without some more bustling occupation, and when I heard Mr. Burns speak at the hall, I felt that if I could manage it without being ungenerous and unkind, I would be one of his band to start for New Zealand."

"Since you are of that mind, Eric, and if your mother will consent, I shall at once see Mr. McGlashan, and get from him all the details of what must be done; and then we will consider the possibility of joining in the scheme."

With that the two parted company for the night.

After breakfast was over next morning, and Mr. Thomson with his wife and eldest son Eric were sitting, the matron asked her husband what he had been talking about so long with Eric the night before, for she had fallen asleep while listening to their voices.

He then told her the nature of their conversation, and to their surprise, she was at once favourable to the "scheme," and so nothing now remained to be done until particulars were obtained from the office of the Free Church Association. Mary was the only one of the others who was not pleased with the prospect of a long sail in a big ship to a new country, on the other side of the world. To the young people there was something of romance in the bare idea. They had read stories of many kinds of adventure, but now had come their own turn. The two boys were naturally delighted, for to all boys changes are more or less enjoyable, and to many, enterprising ventures are the very soul of pleasure.

There were eight people in church that Sabbath who remembered very little of the sermon; two who only remembered it was tiresomely long, for they wanted to get free so that they might think, and talk together, of what they would experience and what they would perform as colonists in a new and fertile country—they were "drawing castle plans," or "building castles in the air."

They had got "the read" of a book some time before which purported to describe "life among the Maoris of New Zealand." They remembered now some of the dreadful experiences of a crew of castaways, some of whom had been cooked in a great pit, and a grand feast made over the

human joints! They called to mind the fate of some missionaries, as well as the heroic conduct of some young men who had succeeded in escaping from their captors.

Such events gave zest to the thought of actually coming to the scenes of the same, or similar circumstances. Had it not been Sabbath, James and Tom would have produced between them a mimic show of their intended valour, once they got their feet on the land of the savage perpetrators of the outrages they had read about. As it was, they got away from the notice of their elders, and went through many pantomimic antics, greatly to their own satisfaction. The romance of actually going to New Zealand took overpowering possession of their minds to such a degree that when their father discovered them performing one of their more innocent capers, performed, in their opinion, in imitation of savage customs, they narrowly escaped a sound hiding, Sabbath day as it was, and were only saved by the generous interference of Eric, who pleaded their cause so eloquently that they were pardoned, nevertheless, very reluctantly.

On their way home from the church in the afternoon, the two families met—that is, Mr. and Mrs. Thomson, Mr. and Mrs. Knox, and all their young people. The two women had known each other since they were quite young girls, and their mothers had been friends before that for many years, and the men were intimate through their common interest in the "Disruption," which was still at that time creating much commotion in religious circles in Scotland, and had four years previously divided the Presbyterian Church of Scotland into two distinct bodies. These two men had formed a close friendship while the contest was

proceeding, and after its climax they had been fellow members and officers of the same church, Mr. Thomson as a deacon, and Mr. Knox as an elder, and both were men who by consistency adorned their offices. Although like all other men in similar positions, they had their characteristic weaknesses, one of which made its appearance on this occasion.

They had not gone many paces side by side when they stepped on in advance of the women and young folk, who each had their own affairs to talk about. When there were about a dozen yards between them and their following companions, a new subject was introduced by Mr. Thomson.

"You know something about this Lay Association of the Free Church, Eric was telling me when he came home last night? You and he had been speaking about this scheme of sending emigrants to Otago, in New Zealand."

"Yes, I know 'something' about it," he answered, putting special stress of voice on the "something," so as to carry the impression that there were particulars of which he knew little, or nothing.

"Ever since it was mentioned in the papers I have been thinking, off and on, of the plan of the Association, but I never bothered myself to get a hold of the right way of things; and I thought you could perhaps give me a little information."

"The proper place to get reliable information would be from Mr. John McGlashan. I'm sure you know him well enough. You call at his office, and you will get from him everything that can be got in Scotland, so far as that subject is concerned." Mr. Knox delivered these words in a tone which seemed to tell that he was disinclined to aid

his friend in his inquiries. Not appearing to notice this state of feeling, or, at least, not paying any attention to it —perhaps because his own mind was so full of the subject— Mr. Thomson resumed:

"You see, I was inclined to go abroad when a lad, and the desire to do so has never entirely left me, but while the children were young I had other work to do than consider plans of going off to America, which was my first notion; but now things are better: all the boys are fit to work, and whether I stay here or leave for other parts of the world, they will have to work. Do you not think that for a family like mine, there might be better prospects, in a worldly sense, in a new country than can be found here?"

"Indeed Mr. Thomson," said his friend, "it is probable that your own opinion on that matter might be worth a vast deal more than mine. You have an advantage over me there, for you can look at it from your own point of view. It would never suit me to go, that I am sure of; for the man that goes to Otago will have to be competent to work at any hard job that turns up. You could do that, I could not, or if I did I should have a poor chance of being successful."

"It may be," said Mr. Thomson, "that even a man of your profession would be wanted."

"True enough, I suppose, any community would be the better of the presence of a legal adviser, still I do not feel disposed to offer my useful services, to folk who can be so easily enticed to break up comfortable homes, to sail in a ship for four or five months, and then live among savages. I'm not prepared to offer myself a sacrifice to a Maori god yet, Mr Thomson."

"Quite so, Mr. Knox," rejoined Mr. Thomson, "you perhaps have better hopes of finding good positions for your children, you have you see only one boy to care for, the lasses being well brought up and educated, will doubtless find good and happy homes, presented to them by other men's sons."

This was an unhappy statement, and Mr. Knox's brow clouded when it was spoken, and for a time he said nothing, wondering whether there underlay it a suggestion that Eric and Kirsty should break off their engagement. He had always entertained a high respect for Eric, in spite of his work, feeling confident that he had a generous, honest, and industrious spirit in him; well controlled or guided by a shrewd mind; and he was not afraid of Kirsty's well-being in his keeping. He had encouraged the courtship, for those reasons; and now he was vexed to hear, what he considered, an insinuation that Kirsty might be thrown over for this emigrating caprice.

"Mr. Thomson," said he somewhat stiffly, "what you have just said is not just so clear to my mind as I would like it to be; you must remember Eric and Kirsty have been keeping company for a while now, and I don't quite see the drift of your words, unless they mean that he might under the circumstances just go off and leave her, as some other lasses have been treated."

"My dear friend, my words may perhaps have justified you in that notion: but I had no such meaning in my head, much less in my heart. I would be very sorry to think of that taking place; but perhaps any difficulty on that score could be overcome. All I wished to be understood to

mean," continued Mr. Thomson, "was that your cares for the future of your family were lighter than mine."

"But even if they are," said Mr. Knox, "that is no reason why even you with your burden of cares should do more than your duty to your offspring: and that I am sure you have performed faithfully, as far as either Church or State, could desire. Why should you now when your best days are fast slipping from you, rush away from the midst of friends, among whom neither you nor yours, will ever want, to make a new start in life, in a strange world; where all around you will be strangers, who can have no care for you more than for men of another nation?"

"There is sense in what you say, I must confess," admitted Thomson. "But it can't be so bad as the case of Abraham."

"But I suppose you'll admit you're not Abraham," retorted Knox.

"No, I'm not Abraham, nor Jacob, either; still I feel that I have a call to go forth, Mr. Knox."

"In that case obey the call, or make shipwreck of your faith. But I doubt the existence of the call. At least as a call from the One who called the patriarch. Take my advice and be like Samuel, take counsel of some proved friends until you hear the call thrice."

"That in a certain way is just what I am doing. You see I heard the call when I was a young man: but I refused. I heard it again a year ago when there was a lot of newspaper writing about New Zealand as a scene for a Free Church or Scotch Colony, and I heard it again last night when Eric came home from talking with you. Now I am seeking to discover whether the way is open before me: and as the light leads I intend to follow."

"Then, Mr. Thomson, I have known you too long, and always had too high a respect for you, to suffer myself to be the means of casting any light on a path, that I believe will terminate in dullness, if not in darkness," said his companion who at once stood to await those following up behind him. And addressing himself to Mrs. Thomson he began with an attempt to induce her to dissuade her husband from "such a mad freak." He had not spoken many sentences before he discovered that she too was prepared to take the voyage in the confidence that it was a providential opening for the better prospects of her family.

One thing Mrs. Thomson was quite well satisfied about was, that as the whole affair was under the direction of some of the wisest men of the Free Church of Scotland, she could not be led far wrong in submitting to their guidance, for she knew well in her own mind, that it would be a moral and a godly colony, and that was a guarantee of safety and prosperity. And they would be free from all the bondage against which good men and women had striven even unto blood, since the days of the Reformation.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO ENCOUNTERS.

Some cried, "hold back; a cavern deep of dark
And hideous danger stretches o'er thy path
Where fools and reckless madmen fall and die,
In spite of warning." While some others said,
"Fear not, all ways are more or less beset
With risk. The coward faint of heart, dismayed,
Hides in his cave, when God calls 'Sieze the prize!

At six o'clock on Monday morning Eric was once more following Archie Rabb, the itinerant shoe-maker and mender. The morning was bright and warm; the sun being already well risen in the glowing east, and the fragrance escaping in rich profusion from the flowers, and wafted on the gentle zephyrs, produced a sensation of pleasure, particularly to the young man; and inspired thoughts of the time when far across the ocean, he might be able to walk through his own flower garden in the early morning, and admire the opening flowers of his own planting and care.

As he passed along the dusty road, between two hedges, his mind ceased to observe his surroundings under the spell of his ambitious views of the future. Already he had selected a cosy corner where a gurgling stream ran merrily through his piece of ground, on either side of it were native trees among which the birds sported cheerily piping their happy notes. In the midst of all stood his own neat little cottage, a pretty flower garden in front, with fruit

trees and vegetables at the back. He was contemplating the imaginary picture with a soul swelling with proud delight, when his reverie was suddenly, if not rudely, interrupted by the sharp voice of Archie Rabb, standing about a dozen steps in front or him.

"Come, Eric, walk beside me this morning, I want your company, I'm not very well, and I have something to tell you."

By the time these words were spoken Eric was at his master's side.

"Lad, Eric, you're quite a man now. How old are you?" asked Archie, as the little man looked up into the face of his tall apprentice, whom he seemed to have looked upon until that moment, as still the boy he was seven years ago when first they set out on their walks together. Eric told him, he was just come of age a few days previously.

"For nearly seven years now you and I have been going the same roads together, lad, and working in the same houses, and eating at the same table. You've been a decent honourable lad to me, and though I would be sorry to make you prouder than you should be, and none of us should be proud, except of being friends to our betters, I still say this, you've done your work well, so that I was never ashamed ot anything you put out of your hands. Now listen to me Eric, you're as well known in the houses we go to, almost as I am myself, and I'm sure you're looked on with respect for the way you have behaved yourself; my strength has failed me greatly these last two years, and I have made up my mind to stop these travels as soon as your time is out; that will be in two months from last

Thursday, Eric. I am going to take a little shop, I'm not sure yet where, and with the small bit of money I have managed to put by, I will no doubt be able to eke out my few remaining years on earth. Now what I want to come to is just this, Eric lad, I want to introduce you to all our customers as my successor, and I am sure you will be well received, and if you like, you can make a fine living by just continuing the business, as I have done this forty-nine years back."

Those were the first words of approval, or of commendation, Archie Rabb had ever spent on his apprentice: and they came upon the listener with strange astounding force. He could scarcely believe that the words he heard, had been actually spoken. Archie was to most men—his equals, or his betters—a man of free speech, but never was commander less communicative to his subordinates, than this man had been to the lad who had trudged with him over every road within twenty miles of Edinburgh. The sudden show of confidence, and the generous offer of his goodwill in such terms of esteem and commendation, made Eric stand still and look bewildered. He had occasion to know Archie as a man of his word. He had seen several remarkable instances of his unswerving honour: even at his own cost; but he never before knew him to perform any purely generous action. But when once Archie had given his word he would never withdraw from the obligations under which it placed him.

All this passed quickly through Eric's mind, and he made reply:

"Thank you Mr. Rabb, for what you have said, and the offer you have made to me. It is a kindness I never

expected, and I hope I may be able to convince you of my deep gratitude for such generosity. Had you said it to me last Monday morning, though, instead of to-day you might have changed the whole course of my life, but if you will be so good as give me a week before I decide, your friendship will be greater still."

"What! change the whole course of your life," said Archie, thrown into nearly as great a surprise as his words had put Eric, "How can that be lad?"

"It's just this way," he answered, "you remember this night last week we were called in to hear the minister, Mr. Burns, speaking about New Zealand."

"Surely, in the name of common sense, you don't mean to say you have made up your mind to go from Bonnie Scotland, the land of your ancestors and all their glorious deeds of heroism, to live in a land inhabited by savages," said Archie with much energy.

"True enough," replied the youth, "Scotland has a noble history. Our ancestors have left a glorious record, and I am proud to be one of such a race but, humble because of my unworthiness of such a noble line, still I have almost made up my mind to leave it, and seek a home under the British flag and the banner of our Free Church far across the ocean."

"A fine bit of speech, Eric," said the old man, "but many a bright lad before you has made fine speeches like that, to be regretted all their lives after. Take my advice, Eric, and be not rash in your doings in this matter. Scotland has room for you, and all such as you, and much need of you, too. You'll not find a country nor a people like Scotland and Scotchmen away in New Zealand, I'll warrant.

Be content to make your home among your friends, and find at last a grave by the side of your worthy forefathers."

"But you see, Mr. Rabb, I'm not going alone. To-day my father intends calling at the office of the Free Church Association to get all particulars about the place, and such like, and we are all going if he and mother are satisfied that its a proper course to take for the sake of their family."

"The whole of you going!" ejaculated the little man, as he stood still and looked his comrade straight in the face. "Well, I never! What next! Surely they have not taken leave of their senses. Its mad enough for young folk to think of such things, but when folk like Mr. and Mrs. Thomson with their big family entertain such notions, that beats all."

This last idea seemed quite to upset Archie's mind, and he resumed his journey in silence. For fully 10 minutes not a word was spoken, then once more he stopped and faced Eric, with a countenance displaying as much anxiety as if the thoughts that were troubling him had reference to his own affairs.

"Your father has always been looked upon as a sober-minded Christian. Why does he want to banish his wife and family away in a land of heathens? I am annoyed to think he has so far forgotten himself as to let such nonsense possess him. Could he not be stopped, think you, Eric? If you think he could I would go right back and use all my powers to keep him from falling into such a great error; aye, I should say a sin, in the sight of heaven."

"Surely, Mr. Rabb, it can be no sin to go from one part of the world to another," remonstrated Eric, "so long as in doing so the God of our fathers is not forgotten nor

forsaken. In this case if we go we will go under the banner of the grandest kirk on the face of the earth : our own Free Church of Scotland, that has but recently burst the last fetters of ages of bondage by which our religion has been held by human laws and tyranny. It is to set up a standard of freedom to worship God in accordance with conscience and Scripture in a new free land of the south, that the Church Association is making this effort to colonise a part of New Zealand. That is surely not a thing to be called madness or a sin."

"That's not my way of looking at it, lad," answered Archie, who wanted now to tone down his expression a little, as he recognised he had been too severe. "For some people it would be perhaps quite the proper thing to do, but for a man like your father to throw up a good situation that would last him as long as he was able to draw his breath, to break up all the ties of friendly relations, and drag his family into an uncivilised country of barbarians and man-eating savages, is wrong, very wrong, and what is wrong is wicked."

"Mr. Rabb," said Eric, "my father has not yet said he is going. If he had known what a kind offer you were going to make to me, he might have been more difficult to persuade to leave Scotland.'

"Then, Eric, we will just turn back and tell him what I have told you, and that may keep him from committing the biggest mistake of his life."

"Let me suggest," said Eric, "what I think would be a wiser plan. We are expected, you were saying, at Mr. Johnston's house this morning, and we would get no further to-day. If we went back home now we would be too late

to catch my father, and even if we did he would carry out his plan of going to see Mr. McGlashan. Let us finish what work there is to do at Mr. Johnston's, and then go back home, and you can have a talk with father and mother in the evening."

Eric's desire in this move was to gain time and allow his father's plans to become as far matured as possible before any influence might be brought to bear on him by the force of Archie's offer and argument. Archie, on the other hand, was reluctant to lose a day's work out of pure philanthrophy, and readily consented to Eric's proposal, and the two pushed on their way to carry out their project.

While Archie Rabb and Eric were busy that day at Mr. Johnston's patching up partially-worn boots and shoes belonging to his extensive establishment, Mr. Thomson was the honoured guest of three officers of the Association in the secretary's office in Edinburgh. When he called, Mr. McGlashan was too busily engaged to grant him an interview.

"Indeed," said a youth who occupied a desk in the more public department of the suite of rooms, "he is talking with Captain Cargill and the Rev. Mr. Burns on matters relating to New Zealand; it may be an hour before they are done with their business."

"I have come to make inquiries on the same subject," said the visitor; "perhaps you could give me something to read while I wait, for I have no other business in Edinburgh to-day, and I would rather stay than go out and come back, for I might miss him by doing that."

"Have you seen the latest number of the 'Otago Journal'?" asked the lad; "if not, you might find in it

some matters of interest, seeing your thoughts are in that direction."

"Thank you," said Thomson, and sat down to read this first newspaper advocate of the claims of Otago on the attention of the Scottish public. He had not been reading many minutes when the secretary, wishing to consult some book came into the room where he was, and recognising his fellow churchman, inquired the nature of his wishes, and immediately invited him to join them in the "Secretary's room."

"Allow me, gentlemen," said the genial officer on re-entering the room, "to introduce to you my friend Mr. Thomson, who has called to make inquiries about our settlement in Otago."

The captain, with a happy smile rose and stretched out his hand, saying, "I am glad to meet you, Mr. Thomson, and hope this is only the beginning of a long and close friendship."

Mr. Burns, who was not given to sudden demonstrations of pleasure, shook hands very cordially, saying he "would be glad to discover that Mr. Thomson was to make one of their number of pioneers."

He then related to them his circumstances, and stated his desire for their opinion of his fitness for joining their party, and whether they considered he would be prudent to undertake the journey with his family.

"On that subject," answered the captain, "there is only one answer I could possibly give. We want just such men as you, and you could not do a wiser thing in the interests of your family."

The other two confirmed that statement by saying together: "Nothing could agree better."

"You must know," resumed the captain, "it is a place without a house on it up to the present time. It is an unreclaimed country. There are surveyors there surveying the large block of land—some 400,000 acres—which the New Zealand Company has bought from the Natives, and paid for in solid cash. But that is the full extent of the civilisation, unless we take into account a few whaling stations, and one or two missionary establishments."

"The stories about savages are mere myths" here put in Mr. Burns. "Many people are making the mistake of representing Otago as the home of a sturdy race of cannibals who are ready to kill and eat any white man they find. But the truth is, all the Natives of Otago are already Christian people, and will be glad to welcome a colony of honest settlers in their country. There are only a few of them at most, occupying small villages near the sea coast. The rest of the country lies open for us to 'go in and possess it,' and that without fighting, as Joshua had to do, when he marched the Israelites into Palestine."

"Every family throwing in its lot with us will be able to secure an ample portion of land, one section of a quarter-acre town allotment, a 10-acre suburban allotment, and 50 acres of country land," said the secretary, whose mind was naturally on the business aspect of the question.

The full hour was devoted by the three to storing Mr. Thomson's mind with useful information specially selected to convince him that he had now the flood tide of prosperity before him, which if he should sail upon it would undoubtedly lead him on to fortune. He was willing to be convinced,

and every favourable fact found a resting place in his memory; and served as a ready argument in subsequently justifying his actions, which from the frequent objections raised by friends who could see nothing good out of Scotland, he had many occasions to use.

On leaving the office he was loaded with papers and pamphlets bearing on Otago, and the duties, as well as the privileges, of colonists, more particularly dealing with the scheme then being agitated.

As he approached his own door, on returning from this memorable interview, his wife, who had for nearly an hour past been suffering from curiosity and eagerness to know the result of his visit to the secretary of the Association, met him at the garden gate.

"Here you come," said she, looking at the parcel of papers, &c., he carried under his arm. "Here you come bringing with you the report of those sent to spy out the land." She opened the gate for him, and turned to walk beside him, as he replied:

"Yes I have enough reading here to serve us for the week. The report is like the report of Caleb and Joshua, without the other to interfere with it."

"Well," she returned, "if it is only as true as Caleb and Joshua's that will do."

"For my part," said he pleasantly, "I am going to be a bit critical, and yet I am inclined to believe there is no cause for deception."

"Then I suppose you met Mr. McGlashan."

"I met more than Mr. McGlashan, wife, I was fortunate enough to meet Captain Cargill and the Rev. Mr. Burns there as well."

"You'll know all about it then?"

"For a whole hour those three gentlemen kept talking with me, allowing me to take up their time as if I had been the Duke of Argyle." And with that Mr. Thomson threw his bundle on the table. Selecting one paper to read himself, he handed another to his wife, and they were soon deep in the lore of prospective Otago.

Chapter V.

A COMPROMISE.

With zeal and hope he claimed the envied prize ;
But fate repelled him with a compromise.
"Not yet bold youth, the prize so near thy grasp,
Demands one stronger to undo the clasp ;
With this bright casket, soothe thy waiting hours
Till time shall prove maturity of powers."

When evening came Archie and Eric had too much work before them to think of returning to Edinburgh that night. They were both fully occupied until they could see no longer by the light of day and yet had not finished the whole of the repairing set before them in the morning ; the consequence was that they would have to resume work at the first peep of day next morning, to be able to take the road again in time to keep Archie's next appointment.

Indeed, Archie had very much cooled in his opposition to Mr. Thomson's movements, he had thought over the matter while going on with his work, and came to the conclusion that after all it was a business he had little or no personal interest in, then why should he put himself about for other folk? Of course he still felt that if he had the opportunity he would do his best to reason the man out of such a mad action, and he would do so when they met, but he was not sure that he would be justified in going to any special trouble about it. So he resolved to let things take

their course until he might see his friend—perhaps next Sabbath. He would then make a point to have a talk with Mr. Thomson on the subject.

So the week went past in the usual way with Eric and his duties, though very differently in his mind. He worked as steadily as ever, but his actions were mechanical, for his thoughts were constantly on other things. He was curious to know the results of his father's inquiries, but had to exercise his patience. He was anxious on account of the Knoxs' opposition, and feared trouble might arise from that direction; and his imagination was drawing pictures of various sorts of life in the new land. Never again during the whole week did Archie mention the subject of New Zealand to him, so that he was closed in to his own cogitations; and the day-dream from which Archie's sudden announcement had roused him was often dreamed over again, until it became to him like the memory of a reality. So that while he was building up a mere fancy, he grew so accustomed to the happy picture, that the idea of going to Otago was inseparable from his romantic conception of what his future home should be.

At length Saturday came. It was the last day of the longest week he had ever lived, and that day was the longest part of it, so strong had become his desire to get home to hear the news.

About six o'clock that evening he walked into his home. He was wearied looking, but the eager expression of his face hid the marks of the six days' anxiety. As he made for the "big chair," his eye caught sight of the "Otago Journal," as he lifted it with a nervous grasp his mother came in from the kitchen, where she had been busy preparing

for the home-coming of her family. Her greeting had more than the common welcome in it. There was an additional buoyancy in her voice; a more elastic energy in her movements, which were more evident to her son than to herself.

"Father brought that home from the office last Monday along with a whole bundle of other things for us to read," she said. Before he had time to speak a word in response she continued, "And we've been reading nothing else ever since."

"Then he saw Mr. McGlashan," said Eric.

"Oh, yes, and more than him; but you just read that paper while I get things ready before they all come in. You'll find more there than I could tell you in double the time." And she returned to her maternal duties.

The first article he read was descriptive of Otago Harbour, commencing with its extrance from the ocean; of the safety of its anchorage, the beautiful natural features of the scenery from the Heads to the site chosen for the town. He was greatly interested and became, metaphorically, lost in the paper. He was now finding something he could grasp; something from which he could form a more correct opinion of the country he was so impatient to see. The description was so graphic that he was captivated with the mental picture it produced. So much was he immersed in the contents that he was unconscious of his mother's movements, as she entered and retired repeatedly from the room. Nor was it until his father's strong voice resounded from the door as he entered, that his attention was once diverted.

"You've got the 'Otago Journal' Eric," were the first words his father spoke on entering. "That's well. I've read it through and through, and through again."

Mr. Thomson was by this time too full of the subject to give Eric peace to read, but at once began to give him an interesting *resumé* of the occurrences of the week and the contents of the papers he had received from the office. Concluding with the very important and emphatically stated announcement, that he had made up his mind to go by the first ship; provided everything could be got into order in time.

Having heard that point satisfactorily decided Eric told of the offer made to him by Mr. Rabb. It was as great a surprise to his parents as it had been to himself, and they all expressed their deep sense of Archie's kindness, but the future movements were settled, and all they could do was to assure Archie of their sincere gratitude, and decline to accept his liberal offer.

Eric had now to consult once more with Kirsty. She expected him according to previous appointment, and was ready to take a walk with him—waiting in the garden for his coming. She was not personally averse to leaving the land of her mother, for she loved her lad well enough to go with him if she had been permitted to exercise her own will.

During the week her father had learned that Mr. Thomson had determined to go, and having once more talked the matter over with his wife, they together had instructed Kirsty as to her behaviour, and the answer she was to give to Eric.

She had not long to wait. Eric was a punctual lover, and reached the gate just as the clock struck the minute of his promise.

Her manner was more embarrassed than usual when they met, not from coldness of heart, but because of the restraint her recent directions had put upon her. She felt that a crisis had come. It might be that the fond hopes of more than two years' growth, and consequently now well rooted in her young heart, were that night to be torn up.

They by mutual consent turned their steps towards a pleasant avenue leading in front of some pretty villas, half hidden in the waving trees that overhung the high hedges.

"You have heard I suppose," at length said Eric, "that father has resolved to become an emigrant. That is more than ever I expected, when I spoke to you of my own desire to go to Otago."

"I have," answered Kirsty, "and I am sorry."

"I'm grieved to hear you say that," returned Eric.

"But the best of friends must part," she said in a dull mechanical sort of manner.

"What makes you say that, my love?" he asked, looking into her pretty fair face, as he spoke.

"It has been the common experience of men and women," she replied, averting her countenance from him.

"You surely don't mean that we must part! That would break my heart, lass, whatever it might do to yours." Part! No, that must never be said, much less done. Can you not manage to come with us?"

"Do you mean it, Eric?" she asked with a faint smile, as she looked at his serious features. "But that must not be."

"I do mean it," he said resolutely. "Why, my love, must it not be? My mother and three sisters are going,

and you would have companions in them. Why not come?"

"My father and my mother are both against it, and refused to allow it," she answered. "But don't you ever think of me, our courses must now be different."

"No, Kirsty," and he slipped his strong manly right arm round her waist. "That must not be taken as settled in such an off-hand fashion. I have given you my promise, and you have pledged your troth to me, and I will not give give way so easily. It was for you I first thought of seeking the new land, for you I have planned to live by hard and honest toil until I have gained what will make us comfortable in after years. With you out of my accounts, all would be worthless. I declare before Heaven, Kirsty, you are the central gem of all the setting, and it's either you and all the rest, or nothing at all."

This speech—spoken with all the vigour of an ardent young heart, breathing truth in every syllable—caused the fountain of her tears to burst.

"You must not speak like that, Eric," she murmured, almost in a whisper, for her heart was too full to allow her to articulate her words. "Mother and father say I must just let you go, if you want to, I can stay at home. You will soon forget me, and find some other one to speak your love to." And as if she already imagined him walking with another lover, as he then walked with her, she made a half involuntary effort to free herself from his encircling hold.

"Do not wrong me so grievously, Kirsty. I swear before the pure light of yon bright star shining now in the sky before us, that I never did make love to a lassie but

you, and my love will be true to you until death shall come between us."

"I believe you mean it, Eric, but if when you are far across the ocean, and know that I have set you free, and a bonnie girl comes across your path and smiles bewitchingly when you speak to her, are you sure, Eric, that then you would remember what you have said to me just now?"

"My father has the character of being a man who loves to speak the truth, Kirsty, and there is nothing my mother puts a higher value on than truthfulness. They have done their best to instil the same respect for that immortal principle in me, their son, and it is the highest ambition of my life to have others say the same of me. While you are living, and I have breath, I promise to keep my word to you. Wherever I may be, I can never forget saying that, my heart's love."

The solemn tones in which he spoke those words made an indelible impression on the young girl's memory. They were sentences to be remembered by both of them, and she could but hear them and keep silent, for only one thought was now present to her as possible for her to utter, but parental commands forbade her to speak it.

Having waited for her answer as long as his nervous and impatient state of mind would permit, he spoke again, as from the depths of a yearning heart.

"Does that not convince you of my determination to be true and faithful? What more could I say to prove it to you? Now do give me a kind answer."

"But, Eric, although I can no longer doubt your loyal heart, and your truthful words, it is impossible for me to consent to go with you to New Zealand. Father and mother both forbid it."

This was a terrible blow for Eric; for a minute or so he was stunned. She spoke now so firmly. It sounded like the resolution of despair. He knew her heart was his, and that she was fighting a battle more distressing than his own.

Without speaking they turned their faces homeward. They had each laid bare the secret burdens of their hearts; what more could they do? They were bound by the golden chains of love to each other, but cruel fate was exerting its strength to snap the links asunder. Still he was resolved not to surrender, even before the august *fiat* of her parents, if by any possible means he could overcome their prejudice. One word more he wanted from her before he should encounter their opposition.

"We have had a serious talk," he said at length. "I have spoken openly to you; now, my dear, give me a short clear answer to this question: 'Do you think you can still love and confide in me as truly as you have so often said you did in the past?"

"Eric," she said, ".I have not changed; the change is all on account of your change of prospects."

"Then you would rather have me stay here; and prefer to accept a poor cobbler for your husband, than go to become mistress of a fine house, with comfort and prosperity in New Zealand?"

"It is my duty, Eric, to obey my parents at the present time. You must not blame me for keeping the Fourth Commandment."

"I do not blame you, my love. I honour you all the more for your fidelity to their wishes, and that only makes you the dearer in my eyes, if that were possible. But I will presently have a talk with that honoured pair."

"They are very positive," she urged. "They declare solemnly that they will never consent to my going with you so long as they have a right to insist on their will being reverenced by me."

"Well," ejaculated the anxious youth, "there's one way of overcoming that difficulty, Kirsty: we might get married, and then you would be free from that filial bond of duty But I was not going to propose that just now; still, if it is the only way out of the trouble, perhaps it would be from all points the best plan after all."

"That's what they will not hear of, I'm sure," she replied, in a sad tone of voice. "If you must go, Eric, go without me; make up your mind to that and be contented."

"If I go without you, Kirsty, it will only be to come back for you, when I have made a home fit for you to live in, and that'll not be long." In speaking these words, Eric threw a grave energy into them, and Kirsty felt how resolute he was in his determination that his part of the arrangement should not fall through, and she felt constrained to answer him in words approving of his proposal, but the commands of her parents forbade her to consent to any proposal short of his remaining in Scotland. To ask him to abandon all further designs for his departure seemed to her unwise, and only likely to end in disappointment to herself and distress to him. Yet had she known, that just at that moment, he was reconsidering the offer of Archie Rabb, and had she but pressed him by one direct appeal, he would have given way. As things were he felt he had her sympathy: that in her deeper soul she approved of his emigration, and would have done her best to aid him but for the opposition of her parents: an opposition he had not

yet supposed was too firm to be overcome by a little quiet reason and a fuller explanation.

When they reached Kirsty's home they found a mutual acquaintance had called, and was then in the midst of a discussion on the folly of people leaving a country like Scotland for the purpose of living in wild, uncivilised, or uninhabited places.

David Moir was a junior clerk in the same office with Mr. Knox, to whom the latter had related the news of the Thomsons' intentions, and found in him a young man who was perfectly satisfied to remain where he was all his life, rather than risk a fate less happy. The dullness of a life cut off from city amusements and from social rank were enough to make him shudder at the thought of self-banishment among a few fanatics. He enjoyed society and all the diversification of social interchange, and what would interfere with the free realisation of these would, he considered, be as bad as death to him.

He was therefore ready to have a wordy wrestle with Eric as soon as he entered, and provided his own opportunity.

"So you are bound for New Zealand, I am very credibly informed, Eric?" he began, as soon as the first civilities of meeting were over.

"It is my intention to go provided things turn out according to my hopes," was the other's cautious reply.

"Just so. But I understand your father has made up his mind, and of course you are not going to stay behind."

"I hope not."

"Hope not! I was told the romantic idea was your own, and that you had the honour of influencing your father."

"A slight mistake, of little importance, however. My father has been contemplating such a step for years."

"Oh, then it is of older formation than I thought. Has the home of your fathers, the land of Bruce and Wallace, not room enough in it for you, Eric, that you seek to find a country better than what was good enough for them?"

"I will always love my native land, David, but there are still good reasons for what I wish to do. Bruce and Wallace and a host of others were compelled to rise in power against cruel evils prevailing in Scotland. Some they overcame, some were irresistible—even to their valour—and these continuing to live, have produced others of their brood, till Scotland, although a land of "heroes slain"—although a land where the friends of Liberty have fought many victorious battles against Oppression, is still a land of much grief, of sore labour, with little joy and less reward for the toiler."

"Well, for my part," answered Moir, "I could find more pleasure in one week in Scotland than I believe it possible to see in your cannibal islands in a lifetime, and as to reward for toil, that remains to be tested. It seems to me no better than a literal leap in the dark. Does no one advise you to think again on the matter?"

"Why, I think on nothing else, and in my meditations I think I am careful to examine all the sides of the question; and still the more I review the facts the more am I confirmed in the wisdom of going."

"In the wisdom of banishing yourself away from all friends, of throwing yourself in the companionship of wild whalers and wilder savages; of deporting yourself to a land of darkness and joyless mystery! The wisdom, depend

upon it, is very difficult for minds free from prepossession and prejudice to discover."

"That's what I say," interjected Mr. Knox; "and in addition to the folly of men going themselves, it seems to me nothing less than heartless cruelty to take women and children to such outlandish places."

"You speak wisely, Mr. Knox," said Moir. "For my part, while I think it very brave of women to accompany their friends on such wild expeditions, it would be more considerate, more noble, indeed, more Christian, for the men to go, say, twelve months or two years in advance of the women—if they will go—and when they have reclaimed the desert, and built houses, come back for their women folk, so that these weaker vessels of the race might escape the unavoidable hardships inseparable from the conditions of those who first arrive in a new country."

In speaking like this David Moir was not guiltless of having an object in view. He had for months past been anxious to win the gentle attention of Kirsty Knox, but had found in her only a polite friendliness, while she, with a scrupulous faithfulness to her affianced lover, gave no encouragement to David's advances. It now occurred to him that were Eric away in a far land, he might have some chance of gaining his purpose, that absence might weaken Kirsty's regard for Eric Thomson, and that perhaps even the conduct of his rival might be converted into arguments in his own favour.

Eric, on the other hand, who was simple and confiding in his nature, observed that the last proposal of David Moir was agreeable to Mr. and Mrs. Knox, and believing that by acknowledging the propriety of such a course he might

secure the goodwill of Kirsty's parents, or at least break down their strong opposition, he said:

"When the women folk are prepared, with a full knowledge of the circumstances, to accompany their husbands, fathers, brothers, and friends generally, then I can see no possible reason for their staying behind, but where any of them prefer to wait until things have been prepared for them, then it would be quite proper for them to be left behind for that purpose."

David's eye glanced eagerly at Kirsty to see its effect upon her, and he immediately observed a look of partial, yet wistful approval, and he determined to use his influence to secure the departure of Eric, without the object of his affection.

"Fancy," he said, "a young woman who has never known what it is to be, even for a short week, away from her comfortable home, being dragged off to endure a life only fit for hill-men or seamen. I am sure no honest man could desire such a fate for the woman he loves."

Kirsty would have spoken her mind on the subject, as she had attempted to do once before, but a glance of her father's forbidding eye fell upon her in time, and she kept enforced silence, while resenting the idea that women, in whose body coursed 'the blood of Scotland's women of historic fame, should be spoken of as unfit to face the world in the protection of those who would devote their lives to their welfare, but she knew it would be worse than useless for her to attempt to reason her parents into consenting to her accompanying the Thomsons, for the only result she could expect was a reprimand, and she was not prepared to risk such an affront in the presence of the young men.

At length, after David Moir felt certain from the nature of the conversation that there was no risk of Kirsty being allowed to leave her father's house on, what was usually called "the mad expedition," he took his leave; and Eric spoke plainly, with due respect to the wishes and prejudices of Mr. and Mrs. Knox.

He pointed out that so far as he could learn from Kirsty herself, she was not opposed to accompany his mother and sisters on the voyage. He admitted that he was not then in a position to marry, but a happy home would be made for their daughter in his father's house until he had got one of his own, if she would go with them. His father would assume the responsibility willingly, and his mother was prepared to receive Miss Knox as one of her own daughters.

This was stoutly resisted by the parents, who reminded him of the impropriety of such a plan. For the sake of both it was their duty to keep Kirsty in their own protection until he was ready to marry. If he stayed in Scotland they were quite agreeable for them to enter into that holy union as soon as they saw their way to do so, but what he had suggested was impossible.

After much consideration, Eric succeeded in obtaining a removal of their objections to his voyage provided the whole of their future were left to the sole will of Kirsty. She was to be free to hold him to his promise, or to set him free, but at present the understanding was that he was to proceed to Otago, and, if possible, make a suitable home, and either send for Kirsty, who might in the course of time find suitable companions who were emigrating thither, and go with them, to join him, or he might come himself to marry her, and take her to his colonial possession.

Chapter VI.

THE EMIGRANTS' FAREWELL.

Farewell to the land where our fathers are sleeping ;
The glens and the mountains so famous in song :
The land where our heroes set foe lands aweeping ;
Where Virtue with Justice and Peace march along.
Farewell placid lakes and fast-flowing rivers ;
Farewell, bonnie lasses, with love-lit blue eyes ;
Farewell stately homes of the bounteous givers ;
Farewell thou sweet land of the good and the wise !

The time passed quickly, while the intending emigrants were preparing for embarkation. Spring had repined into Summer, and Summer had declined into Autumn, and now through many towns of Scotland it had become known that two ships were preparing to sail for a country directly at the Antipodes of Britain, bearing with them between three and four hundred men and women who had resolved to brave all the dangers of the ocean, and inconveniences of pioneers to a new colony.

One ship was loading her cargo at Glasgow, where the passengers were to be also received, and the other was lying at London for the same purposes. Captain Cargill, the Patriarch of the Colony, was to sail in the latter ; while the Rev. Mr. Burns was to go in the former.

Eric had now completed his engagement with Mr. Archie Rabb, and was devoting his time to various details for the comfort of the voyage. He had obtained an interview with the Patriarch, and several times had had long chats

with Mr. Burns—both of whom were strongly prepossessed in his favour, and gave him good advice what to provide—both for use on board the ship and after their arrival. He made a note of all, and was diligent in attending to it. To this thoughtfulness and care, many besides his own family had cause to be thankful during the weary time spent on the sea.

Mr. Thomson, sen., thought it wise not to give up his employment until within a week of their departure, being able to consult with Eric nightly on the progress he was making. The women of the family occupied every spare hour of the last two months in sewing, knitting, and other methods of providing things necessary and useful for the immediate future.

Each member of that family gave evidence before they were on board the good ship "Philip Laing" of their special fitness for the responsibilities of pioneers; and not a family went on board better, if indeed, so well provided with all sorts of articles calculated to blunt the keen edge of trials, and to increase the joys of pleasure.

Among the names of those who were registered as "accepted" applicants for passage accommodation was James Carmichael, the young man whom Eric had taunted his sister Mary about, when she had teased him for being put out through not having met Kirsty as usual.

James was a decent lad, whose parents were of respectable stock and good character, though, like many others, struggling bravely to bring up their family in virtue and thrift. When James came to know that the Thomsons were bound for New Zealand, his heart was sore over the unhappy prospect of having to bid a sad and hopeless good-bye to his lass, Mary.

Brooding over matters, he resolved to make an effort to accompany the colonists. His only trouble was how to broach it to his parents, and not seem to be regardless of their happiness, for he knew that, little as he was able to earn, they considered his wages a help of some importance. However he managed to speak, with the ultimate result that he gained permission to seek his passage in the ship his acquaintances were to sail in.

To this there were objections raised where he did not expect to meet any. The Association was not prepared to undertake the responsibility of sending "boys" out to the settlement who were not accompanied by either parents or guardians.

Thrown back in his designs, James was for a few days in a state of hopeless despondency when he chanced to meet Eric, by whose advice he was taken under the guardianship of Mr. Thomson, and so became identified more closely with their interests, to which in after days he proved himself faithful.

Eric had abundant leisure, and naturally was more frequently in the company of his love, and their time together was mostly spent in pleasant rambles, during which they had talked over the future, and had come to understand each other perfectly in reference to what they expected of each other. No man under the circumstances could have felt more happy than he did, and no girl could have felt more contented and even satisfied with her prospects than Kirsty Knox, and she often expressed her girlish confidence in the happy days in store for them.

Not infrequently they were joined in their walks by David Moir, who, notwithstanding that Eric and Kirsty

were acknowledged as engaged to each other by all who knew them, Moir seemed to consider his presence neither imprudent nor undesired. They were all three, it is true, acquaintances since their school days ; they all went to the same church, and their parents were on the most intimate social terms, and Eric thought that nothing but generous friendship prompted David to make a trio in many of their evening rambles among the prettiest parts of Edinburgh. Just occasionally he thought that David might have been a little less attentive to Kirsty. but as everything he did was performed with grace and good manners, he could find no direct cause for offence ; and so satisfied was he of Kirsty's honest, faithful heart, that it required more than he had yet seen to awaken the spirit of jealousy within him.

Moir was not insensible of the cause he was giving Eric to feel that there might be other objects in his mind than friendship in his conduct, and to blind him to any fear of rivalry he professed deep interest in his welfare, and gave him some very acceptable presents to be kept as mementos of their long years of fellowship when they should be separated by half the circumference of the globe.

On one of these quiet walks, during which Moir had suddenly and unaccountably joined them in a place where they least of all expected to see his face, they chanced to encounter Eric's father on his way home from his daily occupation. Of course the greeting was by all most cordial. David had a genial way of making himself agreeable, and by a very few sentences could allay any aversion to his company, or make his companions feel that his conversational ability made up for any disadvantage his presence might otherwise occasion.

The more experienced eyes of Mr. Thomson observed one or two trifles which, perhaps owing to love-blindness, Eric took no notice of, and that night when he and Eric were sitting quietly together, the women folk being all engaged in the kitchen, and the other two lads out for a stroll, he said :

"How do you come to have David Moir with you when you go out with Kirsty, Eric ?"

"He just happened to meet us about half an hour before we saw you, and we were walking home together," answered Eric, apparently quite unconcerned.

"I should say it's not the first time he has just 'happened' to meet you two in the same way."

"Well, no ; but what of that, father ? you know we were lads together, at the same class in school, and the like."

"What of that ? Oh, not much so long as you are pleased, but when I was in your position, lad, an accidental meeting and a few paces together in a friendly way might have been endured, but the behaviour of yon lad would have angered me."

"Oh, father, you know how kind he has been to me ever since he knew I was going away—what nice things he has given me, as well as to Betty."

"It's your own business, Eric, not mine, still I would be sorry to see you have cause to rue his acquaintance."

"There need be little reason to fear anything of that sort. Still I would much rather not have his company, but I cannot tell him so."

"But if you do not tell him in words, show him by your actions that 'two are company, three none.' It's not

fair to Kirsty for you to indulge him as you are doing in her presence. Believe me or not, he has some design in so often encountering you two, and if you would be faithful to your promise, and save her as far as you can from the influence of a rival, you will be very plain with him should he ever cross your path like that again."

Eric's reply was interrupted by the entrance of some other members of the family, but his mind was not easy. He had a great respect for his father's penetration, and knew that he would never have suggested such a thing without very good reason for it.

It was a new view of things to him. He hoped his father might be mistaken. Could it be possible that David Moir was seeking in that way to find a passage to the affections of Miss Knox? Surely that could not be the true aspect of his actions! David Moir playing the double part of friend and traitor! True enough, he had never until within the last few months been considered Eric's friend. Not until they had met at Knox's on that night when it was decided he should proceed to New Zealand alone had Moir ever in any sense been more than a mere acquaintance. There might be something in what his father had said after all.

It was long after midnight when Eric fell asleep, but before he did so he had come to the conclusion that no matter what happened Kirsty would be true, and he would depend on her constancy in spite of all the powers of David Moir or any other to win her from him.

According to their custom, the lovers had arranged their next walk should be the Leithside, among the charming villas which stand in lovely situations in its vicinity,

as it passes on towards the historic harbour of the famous capital. Moir had heard them arrange their plan, and Eric remembered this fact, and determined to change his tactics. And instead they went in the opposite direction, and soon found themselves passing the pleasant homes of many of Edinburgh's prosperous merchants, professors, doctors, and others, who were looked upon as "Society" in the metropolis of the Scots.

It was now drawing very near the time for their separation. One week more and the "Philip Laing" would be sailing down the Clyde outward bound for New Zealand, and as Eric's heart was ill at ease from his father's warning, he determined to be plain and confidential—as indeed he should be with his betrothed.

"Is it not strange," he said, "that David Moir has met us so often lately?"

"Not very strange," she answered; "he just happened to be where we were: if he had not we would not have seen him."

"He has been very friendly with me ever since he knew I was going away."

"Yes, I have noticed that."

"He and I were never great friends before. You remember, at school we were on opposite sides."

"He has likely forgotten all that now: or, if he has not, he wants to prove his goodwill before you leave."

"Well, I would prefer he should not be so very demonstrative at inconvenient moments. When I come out with you, love, I desire no company but yours, seeing especially that there are so few days now left for us to spend a little while with each other. I want to have only you to speak to, and no one to meddle with us."

"Have you not had enough of me lately, Eric?"

"Life itself, Kirsty, will be too short to have enough of you in. I am afraid of myself for the days I must be away from you. These happy wanderings will be a sweet remembrance, and the looking for their return will be as a morning star of hope to my soul."

"Why, Eric, you will have many other things to take up your mind with when you reach your paradise in Otago. From morning until night you will be so full of work and the prospects of getting on in the world that you will just find short, odd moments to send your thoughts back across the sea to 'Scotland and me.'"

"That speech is not from your heart, Kirsty; I know it came no farther than from the teeth. When I'm away, Kirsty, will you think so little of me as those words pretend you imagine I will think of you."

"Eric, you press me hard with that question. We women are supposed to keep our thoughts to ourselves—to think and dream, to hope and pray, and at the same time hold a mantle over our minds that others may be unable to observe us, even if we grow so weary as to have sore hearts with struggling to preserve our confidence, while others suggest a loss of fidelity in those we love."

"May you ever be preserved from such a state of mind, my own sweet one; I will at least never give occasion for it. I will think of how I should feel were your conduct—but, Kirsty, forgive the bare mention of it by way of illustration—to give me the least suspicion of your loss of confidence in me. I'll not believe it, but oh! if only the fear of it were suggested, I would not be able to rest, and

yet I would never credit such a story. As I see the dismalness of the picture, God forbid that I may give the least colour of cause for it to be yours."

"It is a pity we have spoken of the mere possibility of ever doubting each other. There will be plenty time for others to make those suggestions."

"No, no, Kirsty; we have in the past avoided looking on the cloudy side of the life just before us. Now that the dismal bank of possible trouble is before our eyes, we can speak of it calmly, and if it should from any reason be thrust up before us by the doings of others, we will know that we have together arranged how it is to be baffled; for in my confidence in you I will remain happy, and strive with all the vigour I possess to hasten the day which is to end our separation, and in your confidence in my fidelity you will be able to live on until the happy sun shall rise on our united hopes."

As he spoke he stooped and plucked from the bank of the stream which gurgled past them, a beautiful blue bell and handed it to her.

She gazed at it for a moment or two, then stuck it in her bosom, and reaching down she pulled a sprig of sorrel from a shady spot, and turning to him put it in his buttonhole, and said:

"Keep that as my answer."

All the packing was completed; the boxes "not wanted on the voyage" were all labelled and sent off to the ship at Glasgow, and the family were to start in the morning. Their last night in Edinburgh had come; their house was empty, and they had invitations from various friends to spend the night with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Knox had prepared a farewell party, to which their most intimate acquaintances were asked. Among those present were Mr. Wishart, their minister, and his wife, and three elders of the church.

When they were all assembled in the largest room in Mr. Knox's house to the number of about twenty-five the host rose and delivered the following speech :—

"We are about to bid farewell to one of the staunchest members and officers of our church. Mr. Thomson has been true to our free church reform ever since it was first taken in hand. All of us here have had the honour of his personal friendship these fifteen, and some of us these twenty-five, years, and more, and for all that time we have witnessed his consistent Christian character and conversation, and I feel proud to have him under my roof the last night he is to stay in Edinburgh. But at the same time I am very sorry to see our old friend taking his departure from a country I think he should never leave. While I wish him and all his family God's blessing wherever he may be, I am constrained to say freely before his face, as I have said often where he was not present, I think he is making a great mistake to quit the country of his birth, the land of a glorious past, and destined to have a yet more glorious future. However, I hope and trust that he may do well where he is going, and if he is spared to come back again I can assure him that in me, his old friend Knox, he will ever find a warm heart."

He then signalled to the minister to say something, and the Rev. G. Wishart said :

"My dear friends it is never pleasant to say good-bye to an old and respected friend, more especially is that the

case in circumstances such as those which have brought us together to-night, when in saying farewell it means that we shall never meet those we say it to on this side of the grave. My best wishes go with him, and my prayer is God bless him and his whole family in time and eternity.

"Mr. Thomson and his good wife have been exemplary members of the church, and their family promise well to follow in their steps. I regret when such a family as this is called away from our midst. We will not only miss their faces in the church on the Sabbath, where they have been as regular in their attendance as the first day of the week has been in its return—it is many a long day since I noticed the seat of any one of the family vacant—but we will miss them in their influence in everything connected with our church and their influence on ourselves, for I am free to admit, indeed, I would be saying less than the truth if I did not assert that such a family cannot live amongst us without affecting those who know them, and that power must be for good, and I would be blind to my interest in our church if I did not recognise the gap such a removal must leave.

"Of the wisdom of their going, I am not competent to judge. If they are going at the call of Providence, then there is a Divine guidance in the matter, and the blessing of the Almighty will go with them. That the hand of God is in this movement I would fain believe, for no other power could induce so many devout men who are well known for their God-fearing character in the Free Church of Scotland, to become so deeply interested in bringing this colonising scheme to a successful issue.

"I am also satisfied that no other settlement of people under the British flag was ever projected on wiser, or even on such wise and godly lines as this one under the banner of the Free Church Association. Religious matters, and schooling for the children are well provided for, and if those who take up their dwellings under such favourable circumstances in that respect, are true to themselves there can be no doubt of the result being to the glory of God, and the welfare of man.

"And now, in saying good-bye to our friends, let me close my remarks in these words: 'Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.'"

Mr. Thomson made a suitable reply thanking them for all the kind things they had said. He was full of confidence in the wisdom of the course he was taking. He expected to have some hardships to contend against, but he was prepared to work. He had not lost all his vigour; having been used to outdoor work all his life, he was not afraid of a few years more, even in a strange land. Now that his family were all growing up, he was pleased that such a chance had opened out for them. They would yet hear from them such news as would prove the wisdom of his words. He was only sorry that some friends with families very similar to his could not be prevailed upon to join them in taking possession of a new country in the name of their church and country.

They then sang the second paraphrase, and after Mr. Wishart had offered up an earnest prayer for the protection

of Divine Providence over the friends then leaving them on a perilous journey, the company separated, with many expressions of goodwill.

The last to part that night were Eric and Kirsty. The next sunrise would be the last they should both witness in Edinburgh, the city of their birth, for many a weary day, perhaps for ever. They would then, it was true, be able to bid each other their last good-bye, but it would be necessarily in the presence of others, where the most proper behaviour would be called for. This was the last hour in which they could whisper in each other's ears love's sweet hopes and confidences, and yet, strange to say, they had little to speak of they had not said before. But the pain of parting grew more keen as the minutes flew away.

They had never until now realised what it meant to utter such a good-bye. Never before had they, for nearly three years, been more than one short week without being able to speak together for a little while. Now an indefinite period of weeks, months—perhaps years—must pass ere they should see each other's faces, and grasp each other's hands in the warmth of blissful affection. This great gulf of time was just within view ; it presented to them a gloomy vista ; it was peopled with phantoms, some hideous, some grotesque, others shapeless and monstrous ; and they must pass by them, live among them, and mayhap contend with them, all single-handed ; and as they contemplated the vague uncertainty of the future, each thought more of the other's dangers and struggles than their own.

Several times they resolved to part, and when the words of loving farewell were partly spoken they faded into silence, and their arms held them closer than before, as if to

separate were the most difficult of all operations. There was an agony of rapture in their clasp; Kirsty was a strong-hearted girl, but she never knew how thoroughly the strength of her heart had run its tendrils into the affection of her lover. She knew from what she had read of others that a lover's parting was a sore wrench; but now she was experiencing how much moral power was required to give the last kind word, the last loving glance of the eye, and submit to the last kiss of love, for a long, dull period of indefinite duration.

Nor did Eric know, when he promised to leave his love behind, until he should go out into the unknown world and make a home for her, what that promise would cost him before he had begun his journey. Now he was feeling how realistic are the lines of Burns—

Wi' monie a vow and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender,
And pledging oft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder.

Modesty and self-respect, however, demanded that Kirsty should return within her mother's door, and as far as possible assume an air of unconcern. Eric led her to the step, and there putting a little "keepsake" in her hand, he said:

"You are cold, my love, and your mother is wondering where we have gone; many a time we have parted here, but never before as we must part now. Take this little remembrancer; it is only a locket, in which I have placed our miniature pictures, and, if you will, wear it for my sake. Now, I must go. Try, my dear, to feel that my heart is true, and my love for you as unchangeable as the

granite rocks in the mountains. I shall write to you by every opportunity, and trust I may expect you to do the same to me."

"I have also a little thing for you here, Eric. It is a little pebble seal, with a rose engraved in it; hang it to your watch chain for me, and when you write to me seal your letters with it so long as your love is as warm as it is to-night; when you cease to use it I will know the meaning."

"But if by some cruel fate I should lose it? If I meet with a misfortune which deprives me of it you must temper your judgment accordingly."

"Eric, while you are away I shall wear your locket with our pictures; I shall preserve it as I would preserve my heart. I expect you will never lose that little seal, unless your heart ceases to value it."

"Then let us close our bargain; but, remember, yours is voluntary, mine is imposed. If I lose this keepsake I lose you—is that what you mean?"

"Oh, Eric, no—not that! But as you would not lose me, so would I that you lose not that little gift."

"You do not mean, then, that if by some cause over which I cannot exercise control I should lose this carved pebble I need no longer look for your love."

"Your care over that piece of cut stone, Eric, will be merely a representation of your care of her who gave it. I should have cause to fear if you carelessly lost the last little gift from me."

"Life, then, my love, shall not be preserved with more solicitude, unless it is removed from me by fraud."

"Let me tell you, Eric, before you get possession of it, that I have a private mark upon it, which will be seen

on every impression it makes, yet no one but myself and the one who cut it would recognise it; so that if you should use another I will know it." And with those words she slipped it into his hand. As she did so he grasped her hand gracefully, and, bending over it, imprinted upon it a gentle kiss in token of his acceptance of the conditions.

Then raising his head, their young arms encircled each other for the last time for unknown months, and, with hearts too full to permit of speech, they held themselves together a minute, then relaxed, parted—she to return to the shelter and security of her home, he to retire to face the world and battle for fortune, each one of them to enjoy and suffer: as only those who love, but cannot commune, can experience those sensations of exquisite pleasure or pain.

Thus closed the 25th of November, 1847; and on the 27th the gallant ship "Philip Laing" was ready at Greenock, having received her precious freight of 236 pioneers, to start upon her voyage, so fraught with importance, not only to those on board, but to future history and generations for centuries to follow.

How characteristic of the people was the last event which took place on the deck of that ship just before her "lines were let go," and she moved away from the land of heroic adherence to the God of their "national covenant."

It was before the days when everything was done by hurry-skurry, push, and passion. Fifty years ago men had time even outside their own homes, or of the church, to think of the omniscience and omnipresence of One who rules over all, and even ships were constrained to wait for Him. Men and women, youths and children, were

assembled on the broad expanse of the vessel's deck, and there several ministers of the church they loved so well spoke to them words of generous sympathy and good advice, reminding them in stirring language of their duty to one another, their country, and their God ; and, lastly, in sincere and devout prayer, some of those men, who so recently had proved by an enormous personal sacrifice how thorough was their confidence in the power of Divine Providence, commended the pioneer settlers of Otago to Him who rules over sea and land. Then, wishing them all an affectionate farewell, they stepped ashore, and the ship was released from her moorings, while handkerchiefs waved and fond good-byes were called amid tears and the strange feelings of such a parting.

The same day the "John Wickliffe" sailed from London with 90 English emigrants for the same port.

CHAPTER VII.

VISIONS OF THE NIGHT.

"Dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off our waking toils,
They do divide our being."

—BYRON.

"Good evening, Miss Knox; I am walking your way, and, with your permission, will be obliged for the privilege of your company as far as your own gate."

The speaker was David Moir, who had overtaken Kirsty Knox on her way home a week or so after the "Philip Laing" had sailed from Glasgow.

"How are you, Mr. Moir?" she replied; "I shall be pleased for your company along the street. How are all at home?"

"Thanks for your kind inquiries and cordial consent; we are all quite well. So your friends the Thomsons are fairly off at last; I was sorry I did not get along to bid them good-bye at the station the morning they left.

"There was quite a crowd present; I never before thought they had so many friends."

"Well, you know, there are more who will come to say good-bye to people they never expect to see again than would gather to welcome the same people back."

"Do you think, Mr. Moir, that people are better pleased to part with friends than to meet them?"

"Of course circumstances must be taken into consideration, Miss Knox; you observe I said 'to say good-bye to people they expect never to meet again.' That qualifying sentence was required."

"Then supposing they had only been going for, say two or three years, you suppose very few would have been there to wish them a safe and pleasant voyage?"

"My opinion is just about this, Miss Knox," he said hastily, "that no person saying good-bye to anyone sailing for a country like New Zealand could ever reasonably expect to meet again."

Kirsty could not for a moment suppress evidence of the shock of his reckless speech, and he resumed:

"You see, in the first place, it is such a fearfully long voyage, over such a wide expanse of a little known ocean, there are ten chances to one if ever the ship will reach its port; and, second, even if the ship overcomes all the dangers of the sea—as, of course, we hope it may in this case particularly,—then there is the nature of the country to be remembered. If I were going there I should regard myself as for ever dead to the friends left behind, for it is a land overrun with savage cannibals."

These were thoughts that Kirsty had already been brooding over more constantly than wisely, since her lover had gone, and now that she heard them presented in this plain manner, she saw two pictures flash across her imagination with vivid force, that made her face to grow pale and her heart to palpitate. She, however, made a strong effort to control herself, and succeeded enough to be able to speak.

"But they were told that there was nothing unusually dangerous in the sea voyage, and that all the natives were now Christian people. If that is true they cannot be cannibals."

"Well, I shall be very glad for one to learn that they are not cannibals, and that navigation of those seas is quite safe; but I have read in a recent copy of the *Scotsman* of some terrible doings by New Zealand natives. Their treachery is there described as of the lowest and most cunning nature. While they pretend to be friends of the missionaries and of whalers who have gone to live among them, they do so merely from policy, and when it suits themselves they fall on them in cold blood in the most ferocious manner, and massacre men, women, and children, and then eat their bodies after roasting them in a great oven dug out of the earth.

"Then, as to navigation, the coast is wild and rocky, where in time of storms the waves of the great Pacific Ocean roll in with tremendous force, dashing on the shore with a roar like continual thunder; and there are no lighthouses or beacons to warn ships off at night."

"I hope it is not so bad as that. I will try to believe you have been reading some made-up story," she said; but it cost her a strong effort to do so.

"I would be pleased to believe with you, for the sake of our friends who have gone to brave all those dangers; but what I read was from the report of a British officer, who had been sent to punish some of those natives who have eaten three or four families of English people. I feel very sorry, indeed, that so many respectable Scotch people have been deluded into going to such a country."

"It is fearfully cruel, as you say—fearfully cruel! to induce people in the name of the Free Church to lead their families into what seems to be nothing less than certain destruction. May the Lord have mercy on them."

"I am sorry, now, I spoke to you about it, but I have been thinking of our friends every day since I saw it. However, we must hope for the best. It may indeed fare better with a company of about 400, if they form a settlement, keep close together, and watch the actions of the natives carefully, which I have no doubt they will do."

"Let us hope they will adopt the wisest plans for their safety when they get there, if they ever do. Oh, what a terrible thing it would be if the ship went down in a storm, or was driven in the night on that wild coast with all those people in it!" uttered Miss Knox in a voice little louder than a whisper, and at the same time a slight shudder ran through her as if she had a premonition of such a fate awaiting them.

"It would be dreadful, but you know such things have happened before, and when people go down to the sea in ships they of course take that risk. At best a ship is only a plank between what it carries and a watery grave."

"But ships are built very strongly, are they not, Mr. Moir?"

"Certainly they are built as strongly as the shipwright's art can make them, but that is merely bolting one plank to another plank through transverse beams. The strongest of ships is not much better than a bandbox when once it is thrown on the rocks with the waves beating on it."

Again Miss Knox shuddered at the thought of the fate of her lover, and all that were with him, should they come

to grief on an angry shore. By this time they had reached her mother's door, and bidding Mr. Moir good-bye, she went in trying to appear as hearty as usual.

Her mother, as was her custom at that time of the evening, was fully engaged preparing for the return of her family after their day's employment at their various occupations, and merely said, "Is that you, Kirsty?" who replied in the monosyllable "Yes," and at once went to her own room.

She pulled off her bonnet, and threw herself into a chair, burying her face in her hands, and gave away to the deep emotion of her soul.

Tears seemed to bring a partial relief, but the fears formerly existing only in the vaguest form, were now confirmed by words she could not forget. The fears of which she was before scarcely conscious, now assumed the shape and importance of stern realities to her sympathetic mind, and when subsequently she thought of Eric, it was either in peril by sea, or danger from the savage hands of dark skinned natives of New Zealand. But she thought not unkindly of David Moir for having conjured up this ghastly nightmare.

When all the family had gathered round the table, and Mrs. Knox was contemplating the objects of her maternal love and pride, after having served out to each one an evening portion of wholesome food, she exclaimed:

"Are you ill, Kirsty?"

"What makes you ask that, mother?" answered Kirsty, assuming a smile, which she found it difficult to preserve for more than three or four seconds.

"Your face is pale, as white as a sheet, lassie; is your head sore?"

"No, mother, my head is not sore, I have no pains."

"There must be something wrong with you, Kirsty. Have you had a sore day at the shop?" asked her father, looking steadily in his daughter's face.

"No, nothing uncommon, father. I have felt a little weary; it will soon pass off, I suppose."

"You must lie down after tea and rest you; perhaps it is rest and quiet you want."

"Better," said her mother, "to go into the air in the garden for half an hour; she has been too much confined indoors. She and Annie can go out for a while, and then a sleep will do all the rest for her."

Next morning her cheeks were less white, but her manner was devoid of its usual vivacity, yet she prepared for, and went to her employment, where the excitement of attending to orders, waiting upon customers, and other duties largely contributed to drive the melancholy thoughts from her mind. But during any moments of freedom mental views of shipwrecks and cannibal feasts were ever passing before her.

A week passed away, and Miss Knox showed no signs of returning strength and liveliness, but still kept going about attending to her duties in a brave and resolute manner, and doing her best to look happy. She felt her weakness, but attributed it to anything but the real cause. Her mother's eye saw it, and at once divined that something in reference to her absent lover was at the root of it all.

One evening, when Kirsty was looking at the flowers in their pretty garden, Mrs. Knox joined her, and, after talking of various items of interest, and discussing the progress of the plants, and pointing out some new ones she had

recently purchased in the hope of having a richer supply of early spring flowers, &c., she said :

"The winter is hard on some of these, and I must shelter them from the frost and snow until they begin to sprout again. I am beginning to be afraid that I will have more than flower plants to nurse this winter."

"What do you mean, mother?" asked Kirsty.

"I mean that if things do not improve soon you will be my chief care in the cold weather of the next two months, my lassie."

"Nonsense, mother; but really I do not feel strong lately, still it is nothing, I'll soon get over that."

"If you take my advice, I believe you will."

"What is that good advice, mother; I generally obey you, do I not?"

"You are brooding on some matter," said the cautious mother, evading the question, and coming to the point, "and that brooding is upsetting your health."

Kirsty remained silent.

"You miss Eric, Kirsty. I am not going to blame you. I sympathise more than I blame, for it's natural, but if you would talk to me about the thoughts that trouble you, I think we could confide in each other."

The young heart was not quite prepared to burst out just then in girlish gratitude for the kind speech and assurance of sympathy. Under such circumstances, unless a mother has previously by her common conduct secured her daughter's affections, it is impossible for one little speech to open the spring of the casket which holds the heart.

"I know what it is to be in love, lass; I learned that as young as you, and, although you never heard me say it

before, I learned the pain of doubt in love ; and now, when I see you with the bonnie bloom faded from your rosy cheeks and the glittering sparkle vanished from your eyes, I just ask myself, Can the poor lassie be in the same trouble that made my young days so dark ? and I think I must be nearly right."

When this speech was ended Kirsty's cheeks were wet with tears. Her mother had never showed such a gentle sympathetic nature to her before. To find one so dear to her who could appear to enter right into the same state of mind with herself broke up all the stiffness of her nature, and she was now a little girl in her mother's hands. They walked together in silence to a neatly-trimmed arbour, and there sat down, and for a while each merely toyed with the twigs of the clematis and the rose as they intertwined beside them and over their heads.

"Tell me what your trouble was, mother," at last said Kirsty, as she took her mother's hand in hers, and, raising it to her lips, gave it a sweet, loving kiss.

The mother saw her point was almost gained, and, to complete her conquest, she told a story of her youth.

"Your father was not my first lover, Kirsty. He was a tall, fair lad, with big strong shoulders. I met him in the house of my Auntie Ramsay, over in Ayr, where I had been sent to enjoy a holiday.

"His father had a large farm close by my aunt's place, and he was one of her favourites ; and often I have thought she sent for me, for the purpose of making a match between us.

"He was often in the house ; I grew fond of his company, and he seemed to pay me a flattering attention.

I could sing then, and he both sang and played the fiddle, and that had something to do with our youthful fancies.

"When I returned home he asked if he might write to me; I consented to that, and promised to answer his letters. My parents were agreeable, and our correspondence was continued. Next year my holiday was spent in the same place, and we often had walks together, and considered ourselves lovers. He was gentle and kind to me, and I believe he loved me. He told me so one evening as we were walking down by the burnside, and asked me if I could wait two years for him.

"I made him no promise then further than that before anything could be settled he must call on my father and mother and ask their consent.

"He followed to Edinburgh shortly after my return home, was courteously received by my parents, and our engagement was made in their presence.

"Two months afterwards he was sent on business to India, and then my fears began. I had a suspicion that he would fall in with some rich and beautiful girl on his travels, and perhaps forget me, and if I ever heard of him again it would be as some great personage, who was by marriage related to an aristocratic family.

"Night and day this fear haunted me, and I could do nothing to shake it off. I could imagine him in no other state than standing talking to some proud woman who was stealing his heart from me, or as in company with her relations, with whom I seemed to realise he had become quite a favourite.

"The worst of it was, I never received a letter from him. Months passed by, and my grief grew more acute,

and I became very ill. I had brain fever, and lay raving about him for days. At last the fever left me; I recovered, weak and feeble; but no word had come, nor did come until the time at which our marriage was to have taken place; then news came that he had been very ill, but was coming home. He came home, but I was never allowed to see him. He was too feeble, and so he faded and passed away to the everlasting rest."

"My poor dear mother!" exclaimed Kirsty, "who would ever dream that you had come through such a sea of trouble? Oh, I am so sorry for you!"

"Well, my dear girl, that is all past years ago, and now I have all you to care for and to cheer me."

"We must do more to cheer you, mother. Do you not often look back on that sad time and feel your grief return, mother?"

"The blackest storms blow over, lass; some of them leave their marks that can never be removed. I think my whole life has been marked by that event; but, still, all people have their troubles—some less, some more. It made me think more of the world to come and less of the present passing affairs, Kirsty. It was a sore storm, that nearly broke the slender thread on which my life was hung; but I survived, to have my family to love me and my God to serve for the years of my life."

"He didn't forget you, then, mother?"

"No, my dear; I have no reason to suppose that there was ever a more faithful lover, but that did not prevent my sorrow and doubt during the terrible silence of the time he was away."

"Now what advice were you going to give to me, or what lesson am I to take from this very, very sad story?"

"The lesson and the advice are the same my daughter. Despise a doubtful state of mind."

"Good mother, I'm afraid your prescription will not cure the patient. I have never had a moment of doubt about Eric since the day he left."

An incredulous smile crept over her mother's face as she looked in Kirsty's eyes, and questioned:

"Then what is it makes you so pale, my dear?"

"I have had shocking dreams, mother, and they have been repeated night after night, and have haunted me every day, until they seem to have become realities of my life."

"I never took much notice of dreams, as you very well know, my dear; but tell me something of yours, and then I may understand your state of mind better."

"You remember that first night you said I was not looking well, and sent me out for a walk in the fresh air? That was the night I had the first dream."

"Do you mean the night before I said you were ill, or that same night?"

"That same night, mother, after you spoke to me."

"Then you were ill before your dreams came on?"

"Oh, just wearied out, I suppose, but now I will tell you what it was."

"I was away somewhere. I never saw a place like it, and I did not know how I got there, but I was standing on a prominence overlooking the sea, and in front of me there were great rugged rocks standing in the water, over which the waves were breaking with tremendous fury. I looked for a long time at the terrible commotion of the water, as it

was dashed against the rocks, and rose high in the air in beautiful wreaths of spray, while all around was a sea of heaving foam. It was lovely to look at, but awful to contemplate.

"Presently I looked out beyond the breaking waves to where the great billows were coming rolling towards the shore, when I beheld a splendid ship labouring heavily, and each minute coming nearer to where I stood. I could see the men handling the sails, and it seemed to me that I could hear voices coming across the roar of the thundering breakers. As it came nearer I could see a great many persons were on it, all with their faces looking to the shore. I cried aloud as if to warn them off, and waved my hands that they might see me, but it was no use; the ship came on, and it began to grow dark, so that I could just discern the vessel as it came closer to the edge of the foam.

"Suddenly I was standing at the place where the waves came up among rough stones and gnarled rocks, and my eyes were fixed on the ship, now in the midst of the tumultuous waters, and I could see her roll from side to side as the furious breakers dashed over her. After a little while I could hear as if blows were being struck, and then a terrible scream of anguish and fear came through the noise and the ship sank out of sight. I could not move from the spot. I tried to walk, but could not lift my feet. I made hopeless efforts to come away, but my feet appeared to be glued to the stones on which I stood, and even my joints were stiff. I could not even scream.

"As I stood in this wretched condition staring at the unabated wildness of the water, I saw some objects appearing among the foam. As they approached I

recognised they were human bodies; then I became interested in their fate, and hoped I might be able to be of use, as some might be alive. As the first one was thrown up close by me my power to move returned, and I sprang to seize it. It was a woman, but stiff in death. Then came another—a little child; I dragged it out above the water; and then a third came floating in. I caught it, and was trying to drag it up also, when the moon just at the moment the face turned upward shone through a rift in the clouds. I screamed, for in that face I recognised Eric Thomson, and I knew no more."

"A terrible dream, my dear; but only a dream for all that," said her mother. "We must never be upset by a dream, especially dreams experienced during times of physical weakness."

"It was not so much the dream that upset me as the dreadful continuation of the impression it made on my mind. The last sight recurs to me at short intervals all day, and night too. I see his white face as if it were really lying before me; and I can do nothing to cover it over or banish it from me, for the more I try to do so the more persistently it clings to me." Then she buried her face in her mother's bosom as if to seek shelter there from the phantom that haunted her, while her young frame shivered as if pierced by a blast of cold wind.

"Now, my dear child," said Mrs. Knox, pressing the troubled head to her breast as she had not done since she nursed her in her infantile afflictions; "you see I know it all, and have felt nearly the same as you feel. But you must avoid the foolish state of things that I allowed myself to get into. For your own sake, you must remember you

have no cause for all this but a mere dream, and wise folk tell us dreams are nothing more than a reflex of our waking thoughts and previous experiences."

"Have you never had dreams come true, mother dear, or known others who have?" inquired Kirsty with a hopeless tone in her voice.

"But you said you had another dream, Kirsty; tell me about it before I answer your question."

Thus called to exertion, the girl raised her head from the pillow where she found a mother's love was dwelling, and with eyes now startled at the recollection of her other dream, she said, "Would you like me to tell you all, mother?"

"Certainly, my dear; it can be no worse than the other, surely."

"Oh yes, it is worse!" and she hesitated to begin.

"If it is disagreeable for you to relate it I will not press for it now, my dear; some other time when you feel that you would like to tell me I will be glad to hear it."

"I may as well tell you now; better while we are like this, to say all I have to say on such a painful subject."

She once more reclined her head on her mother's bosom and began to relate her second dream, of which a mere outline will satisfy the reader.

She was in a strange forest gathering flowers, and was at the same time listening to the songs of the birds that made the woodland vocal with their sweet music. As she travelled onward she saw beyond the edge of the forest a groupe of little houses; children were playing on the open ground between them, and women were occupying their

time—some talking with one another, others sitting by their doors sewing, or busy with other domestic duties. Everything seemed so still and peaceful. She stood for some time contemplating the scene, which seemed to fade from her sight; and when it had done so she saw in its place a large company of men and women with dark faces and feathers in their hair performing some strange ceremony. She drew nearer to them, but was unconscious of any movement. As she did so she could observe in the midst of the cannibals—for she was now sure they were savages—five men lying bound with ropes, and a great fire was burning near them. At length one of the five was lifted by three of the savages and carried to the edge of the fire. While this was being done she had moved close up among the natives, and felt sure the man they were carrying was going to be roasted, and she was anxious to see him, when, to her horror, the man called her name and made a violent struggle to free himself. It was Eric, and those with him were his father, brothers, and James Carmichael; but as soon as she had recognised them she saw them no more, for she awoke in a state of great excitement, to realise she was lying in her own bed at home.

"A mysterious dream, Kirsty," said Mrs. Knox; "but I think the one dream destroys the other. Those two certainly cannot possibly both come true, and I think they are both false alarms You have been reading, Kirsty, or you have heard of things like those, and they have just been conjured up by your own mind into those fantastic forms. Eric can't both be drowned in the sea, and killed by the cannibals. Come, we must go indoors now; it is too cold to stay here."

Kirsty at once saw the logical force of her mother's argument, and, although she was silent, her reasoning faculties had been aroused, and being set in motion in the manner they were, they continued until the hideous phantom gradually faded into oblivion under her mother's judicious guidance.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDERMINING.

"Of all the vices to which human nature is subject, treachery is the most infamous and detestable, being compounded of fraud, cowardice, and revenge."—L. M. STRETCH.

The dreary winter had mellowed into the vernal spring; the frost and snow had all gone, and the flowers in the gardens were blooming in all their lively hues, and casting forth on the softening winds the delicate perfumes which Nature awakens in its mysterious laboratory from the strange combinations that construct the annually new garment of the earth, regarding whose wondrous secrets man has been able only to gaze on the outside, and ask unanswered questions. The birds, dressed in their soft plumage, were admiring the bravery with which their neighbours were rehabilitated, and singing songs of love amid the groves and glens, rejoicing in the glory of the sky and the beauty of the earth.

Weeks had passed into months, and the months had followed one another from November to May, and while all Nature had won its gayest vestments and sang its sweetest melodies, fair, tall, slim, and erect Kirsty Knox had been without the element of happy joy, for still she had not heard one sentence regarding the friend who so long ago had passed from her sight to visit the unknown ends of the earth. She had grown less disconsolute: other wants had taken up a larger and more proportionate amount of her time and attention. Yet she desired to know the result of

that expedition in which she had been, and still was, so deeply interested. She often wondered whether Eric had kept her seal, and whether she would soon receive a letter from him, neatly closed, and fastened with that secret mark, of which he so far knew only that it existed, but which she would at a glance detect.

The visits of David Moir had been more frequent lately. He had been very kind to all, but was gentle and specially attentive to Kirsty. He had never again spoken of the dangers of the sea, or of the risks of Colonial life, but confined himself to topics generally of a pleasant nature. His visits were appreciated, and looked for, and it was evident that to Kirsty his presence was not less pleasing than to the others.

On Sabbath afternoons he had walked home with them from church, but generally he found himself walking by the side of Kirsty, while the others fell a few paces to the rear.

Occasionally, when Kirsty had been recommended by her mother to walk in the "fresh air" for an hour or so on a warm afternoon, she found David Moir's company very acceptable, and indeed now she quite unconsciously felt a degree of comfort arise from an expected meeting with this substitute for an accepted lover, but never for a moment suspected this was the prelude to more serious sentiments.

David was not slow to notice what was working in his favour, nor negligent to improve his opportunity. With his rival far away, and unheard from, he had chances of working his scheme, and without making haste too fast he was doing his best to make his position sure. To do this he considered it wisest to render his presence as agreeable

as possible, and his absence felt by the family, but more particularly by the young lady herself.

To make his scheme more effective, he took little presents to the younger sisters, gave a pocket-knife to her brother Andrew, a lad of fifteen, and one Saturday he sent a nice cake to the house for Mrs. Knox, and was there on Sabbath evening to help them to eat it. All had been recipients of some special token of his favour, except Kirsty. When he brought a bag of fruit or sweets he never gave her any, handing the little parcel to some of the rest.

Observing this, she said jocularly one day when he had put a bag of "peppermints" into her sister Susie's hand:

"Nothing ever comes my way. I wonder what I have done to be treated like a step-bairn?" As she spoke her cheeks assumed a deeper hue than had mantled them for several months.

This was the state of mind he had wished to find, and he quickly seized hold of the advantage, saying:

"I am sorry to have seemed to neglect you, but, if I am forgiven, this is not the last time I may call, and I shall then endeavour to atone for my past faults."

A few days subsequently Kirsty received a neatly addressed letter. It was lying on her table when she came in, placed there by Mrs. Knox, to whom it had been delivered. On the back it was sealed carefully with red sealing-wax, and every mark of the seal came out in clear lines. She was interested in the style of the impression, and admired the careful way it had been produced, so she looked closely into it. For a moment she looked more in thought than in examination, then she looked again. There it was! but the letter was not from across the seas. Still,

it was sealed with her private mark. It was the seal she had given to her lover, and she tore open the envelope, only to be plunged deeper into perplexity.

"How can David Moir have got possession of that seal?" she said to herself. "It must be the same. How strange he should have it, and use it on the first letter he has written to me!"

It was merely an invitation from David, in the name of his father and mother, to Kirsty and her next eldest sister to be present at a gathering of friends to celebrate his twenty-first birthday." She tore off the seal and placed it safely in the drawer of her workbox, and then took the note to her mother.

"How nice that will be! We must get your dresses sorted up. You must do your best to look braw and smart that night, Kirsty."

"Could I not get a new dress? The one I have as best is not at all fresh now, mother, and everybody has seen me in it."

"What do you think your father would say to that, lassie? Can you not manage to smarten it up with some new ribbons and a bit of lace?"

"If I am to look 'braw and smart,' something more than that must be done, for the old one is neither, and I would not feel that I was doing the respect due to the invitation unless I could appear in something nicer than a dress I have worn for more than a year."

"Well we must just see what your father will say. If he will say 'yes' you may be sure I will be pleased."

That evening after Mr Knox came home and was sitting comfortably by the fire reading a volume of the

Waverly Novels, as a recreation after the worry of a day in the Writers office, his wife, in a pleasant, coaxing way drew a chair close beside him, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said:

"How's the story getting on now, John? You keep it all to yourself, but I can see by the curves of your mouth and eyes when it's funny or when it's serious. Look here, just set down your story and read this," putting the invitation into a hand he held out for it.

He read the letter, and said, "Of course they are going, are they not?"

"We are just waiting, John, for your consent."

"I could not refuse consent to that, surely."

"I thought you would be pleased. A night's enjoyment would be good for them both. And you see they would soon have been needing new dresses anyway, for the warm weather coming in; their old ones are not bad yet for ordinary occasions, but we must spruce them up a bit for this party."

"Oh, yes, that's the point that my consent was waited for, was it? You women folk want new gowns for all special occasions; it's easy seen you have not the battle of earning the siller to buy them with."

"But you see it will only be getting it the matter of a month earlier than if they had no special occasion for them, for they must have summer gowns, and it comes all to the same thing in the end."

"Well, well, get them their dresses, and we'll have done with it."

"Ah you dear old thing! I knew you would say yes, for you were always pleased to see them smart looking."

Then she left him to continue his story in peace, and went straight ben the house to tell the girls of her success, when without more than a monosyllabic exclamation the two rushed away with dangerous haste to see which should be the first to take him uncermoniously round the neck and express her exultation in kisses, and then to wind up exclamatorily with, "Oh, you dear, good, kind father!"

The spare moments of next week were spent almost wholly in making preparations for the coming event. All sorts of little things had to be done, and the house was as lively as if they were getting a wedding *trousseau* ready.

The dresses came home on Saturday afternoon, and were declared "just splendid." Indeed Kirsty had never looked more fascinating. Had she been desirous of captivating a beau she could not have been got up with greater taste. Dress, bonnet, gloves, and boots all were in perfect harmony with the face and figure that displayed them, and as Kirsty viewed herself in the mirror she smiled a more conscious smile of self-satisfaction than had been visible upon her for many months."

The new garments were carefully put away over Sabbath. On previous occasions their new clothes had always been worn first to church, but in this case there was to be an element of surprise; no eye outside was to fall upon them until they were uncovered at Mrs Moir's party on Monday night, where all the other girls would gaze with wonder, if not with envy and vexation, at being so outdone.

As they walked into the room when most of the company had assembled, for they came late on purpose, there was an instant silence, for although there was not one there who was a stranger to them, not more than two or three

recognised them for a moment or two, then came the congratulations and expressions of surprise at not immediately recognising them, they both, especially Miss Knox, were looking so much improved since the coming in of spring.

The small share of feminine vanity resident in Kirsty's breast was that night fully gratified, for while some of the girls gave signs of annoyance, several of the lads were not reluctant to show their most appreciative attentions, and David had told her in a most graceful way how he admired her appearance, and his mother had expressed high praise of her beautiful and becoming toilet.

On one occasion when she and David were by some apparently unpremeditated arrangement sitting next to each other, she said :

"What a neat little seal that is you use on your letters. I was quite interested in it."

"I like neat things," he replied.

"The formation of the moss rosebud I thought," she continued, "was almost as perfect as it could be made in such a small device. I only remember having once seen one anything like it."

"You have seen one like it, then?" he inquired, feeling that his scheme was working.

"Yes, I think so ; at least it struck me as being like one I had seen before."

"How long ago, may I ask?"

"Oh, not very long ; within a year, I should say."

"Perhaps they may be the same," he ventured to suggest, watching her face while he spoke, and he observed a twitch in her eyes and lips, and a heightening in her colour, but both soon disappeared.

"No, I don't think that is likely," she answered.

"Of course I cannot say," he said, smiling a sort of satirical smile. "It is only about four months since I bought it, and I was told another like it could not be got."

"Then it must be a curiosity in its own way. What is it made of? may I be so bold as to ask?"

It was the very question he wished to fall from her lips.

"Certainly you may. It is made of a very pretty pebble with white streaks running through the dark. If you would like to see it I will bring it down some evening."

"Oh, thank you? You need not do that; but your description is very like the one I saw, but never mind, it is nothing of any consequence."

"Eric must have lost that seal," she said to herself that night in the quiet of her own room. It must be the same, for no engraver would ever put that mark on it without instructions," and she drew from her box the piece of paper with the wax impression of the seal, and she looked into it again.

"There can be no mistake about it. It can be no other. Then the pebble was just as David described it. It was very careless of Eric. I have not lost his locket. That is safe, and I have done faithfully what he asked me to do with it. Even at David's party to-night I have worn it. No one would steal it from him. If his love is no more trustworthy than his care, he may already have got his head full of a fever for someone else."

Then she threw herself upon her bed, in no happy state of mind, and conjured up all sorts of foolish thoughts about Eric's unfaithfulness, until she began to believe that he had deserted her.

"If you will accept a little trifle from a mere friend, Miss Knox," said David Moir the next time they met after his party, "I would be pleased to give you that pebble seal you spoke to me about the other evening."

"It is too kind of you to offer it, Mr Moir. It would be quite a shame to take it from you."

"Not in the least, Miss Knox. I shall feel gratified as the friend of one far over the sea to have given you a little article that may be useful."

"It was rude of me, Mr Moir, to speak about it, and now I am sorry I did so."

"There is no reason for you saying that. I felt flattered that you had taken any notice of it, and I now hope you will give me a little pleasure by accepting what I offer, not for its value, but as a mark of sincere respect."

"Then I can only take it and say 'Thank you;'" and grasping the silk paper which she believed contained the identical "keepsake" she had given as a parting love-token to her lover, she placed it unopened in her hand-bag.

The manner in which she took and put away the parcel told David Moir how his action had affected her; and he imagined that by a continuation of his course for a while longer he would be safe in taking another step. At present, however, he must simulate his regard for the man he was seeking to injure.

"When you have looked at it, Miss Knox," he said, "I shall be pleased to know your opinion as to whether you think it is the same one you saw once before. I have felt curious ever since you told me. There must have been something peculiar about it, and yet I have not been able

to detect anything beyond the very neat style of the engraving."

"Oh, yes," she replied, "I had forgotten that I spoke of one it so much resembled; let me see."

And she pulled it out of the bag again, and undid the paper covering. When it lay in her open palm she gave a little start, and something in her throat checked her voice; for the lines of the pebble could scarcely have borne a closer resemblance to the one she had handled so often before presenting it to him who had declared his imperishable love for her so frequently.

"It is indeed like it in every particular, so far as I can remember now, but then," she continued, "pebbles may seem to be very much alike, and yet differ greatly when you place them together."

"But then," he said, "it was from some resemblance, or I should say some special or peculiar resemblance, of the impression made by it on the wax that your curiosity was aroused."

"Yes, there was a mark which I noticed was common to both, but that may be an accidental coincidence."

Then, as if to break off the subject, he remarked:

"No news yet from the Thomson's?"

"No, I have not heard of any ships having returned from there lately, I suppose there will be one soon."

"About time now, I should think, to hear of them, but as bad news travels fast, we may suppose that if things were not well we should have heard."

"Father was saying the other day that we might perhaps not hear for more than two months yet, or it might possibly be a year from the time they left until word came back."

"Well, in spite of the high regard I have for Eric Thomson, I can't understand how he can have made up his mind to be away so long and leave behind him one of the most fascinating young ladies of Edinburgh."

"Now, Mr Moir, I am not going to allow you to talk like that," she said, at the same time speaking in a voice that told her words were merely in play.

"I am not going to blame him, but I tell you if I were in his position I could hardly expect to stand well in her esteem after such a long desertion."

"That is too bad, Mr. Moir; you don't think I could be so easily put out when I consented to what he has done?"

"I could never think anything but the most absolutely honourable of you. But were a young lady of your prepossessing appearance and your accomplishments left by me in the midst of so many eligible young men, with so few competitors of equal charms, I tell you I should feel that my conduct was not fair to either, and that if I lost cast in my lady's affections I had none but myself to blame for it."

"Do you consider me so changeable, Mr. Moir, as to be influenced by such conditions? While your words are very complimentary the suggestion behind them seems to be open to another meaning."

"Do not misunderstand me, Miss Knox. If I suggest anything I only hint at what is most natural, and in my own mind, certainly not unwise. Oh no, I do not, could not, possibly think you changeable. What I have seen of you is all to the contrary. But I cannot be blind to the fact that many another in your position—that is with such prospects, and I may say, strong inducements—would refuse to

remain bound to an absentee lover. Your resolution and constancy are of course all the more honourable to you."

After they had parted that evening Kirsty's mind was full of strange thoughts. It was quite evident Eric had parted in some way, accidental or wilful, with her keepsake. And as this thought grew upon her she once again, and yet again, examined what David Moir had given to her. "Yes," she said at last, "this is the same seal!"

She sat for some time with her head resting between her hands, and as she did so she recalled the words with which she had given it to him.

"Hang it to your watch chain for me, and when you write to me seal your letters with it, so long as your love is as warm as it is to-night. When you cease to use it I will know the meaning." And again:

"I expect you will never lose it unless your heart ceases to value it."

"Within a few hours of this injunction he must have parted with it, for in less than 12 hours he had gone from Edinburgh," she said half aloud.

Such thoughts continued to haunt her waking and sleeping throughout the night. She could not believe it possible, yet what more evidence could she have. If he had lost it, that was culpable negligence; if it had been stolen, that was weakness; but if he had given it away or sold it, that was gross treachery not to be pardoned.

Concurrent with these conclusions came rushing through her mind the complimentary remarks of David Moir. He must have meant something, and it was true that recently several fine young lads had lifted their hats to her as she passed them; and David himself, who would inherit

his uncle's property in Glasgow, had been more than usually attentive. She had no occasion to wait for one who had so shamefully treated her. Still she could not rest in such a frame of mind. Eric had always been a manly fellow, a devoted lover, and perhaps, yes, perhaps, she should not be hasty. The remembrance of the hours spent in his company, the warmth of his words, and the gentleness of his manner, cooled her passion, and she resolved to preserve herself from any rash action in the meantime.

That morning, shortly after entering his office, Mr. Knox was touched gently on the shoulder by David Moir, who was holding a copy of the *Scotsman* in his hand.

"Have you read this paragraph?" he said, placing his finger on one of the columns of the paper.

"No, I have not seen the *Scotsman* yet. What is there in it?"

"Just read it for yourself?" said David, as he pushed the paper into Mr Knox's hand.

"The ship Blue Jacket, which arrived at Liverpool last Wednesday from Mauritius with a full cargo for this port, brings news that a box containing a passenger's luggage, and marked with the letters E.T. Ship Phi.....g. Not wanted.....vge.....Gla..... Ne.....d, was cast ashore on the coast of that island shortly before her departure. The letters omitted had been worn off by the box rubbing against something: which might occur in the hold of the ship, and as nothing has been heard of the ship "Philip Laing," which left Glasgow for New Zealand last November with a large number of passengers, and the letters on the box would correspond with the name, as well as the ports of departure and destination,

it may be that some mishap has befallen her, but in the absence of further information nothing definite can be said about the matter. There was nothing in the box to indicate who it belonged to or where it came from."

"That looks bad," said Mr Knox.

"I was all along afraid of that voyage," David replied.

"What a dreadful thing if all those poor people have gone to the bottom, and none left to tell the story."

"Those who undertake such voyages should be prepared for such consequences," returned David.

"Oh, but it is a sad thought when we take the whole circumstances into view."

"What a blessing Miss Knox was not allowed to go," said Moir, with emphasis.

"Yes, indeed," answered her father; "but I hope that after all this is a false alarm. I can't believe it is true, somehow."

"Well the probability seems very high," retorted the youth, as if he were gratified rather than distressed.

"It will be time enough to give credit to the story when the certainty of the report comes," rejoined Mr. Knox, handing back the newspaper.

It was, however, another lever by which Moir determined to raise his hopes and press his suit. If he could persuade Kirsty that "E.T." stood for Eric Thomson, then he stood a good chance of occupying that young man's place in her affections as soon as the shock should be got over.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW LAND.

"Strange isle! a moment to poetic gaze
Rise in thy majesty of rocks and bays,
Gems, fountains, caves, that seem not things of earth,
But the wild shapes of some prodigious birth."

—JAMES MONTGOMERY.

The weary days of wandering over the mighty waste of water were drawing to a close. The good ship had forced her way through storm and sunshine, until now her latitude indicated that the long-sought-for harbour would soon appear before their anxious eyes. The ennui incidental to such a voyage was already wearing off, and hope, with early expectation, was providing themes for conversation, which beguiled the hours as the days grew fewer, and the distance from the desired haven gradually and surely decreased.

The prospect of soon sighting land created much more animation than had existed among them for a long period. There was also a degree of domestic activity that had been entirely absent for many weeks. Maternal industry had been a characteristic of the whole voyage, but now that land was so soon expected, many duties were found for those willing fingers; and mending, darning, washing, and generally getting things into good order made every mother, no matter how well up in years her children were, full of work, and in some cases of rivalry.

Even Mrs. Thomson, whose youngest was twelve years old and her eldest nearly twenty-two, was able to find work for her three girls several hours each day. Her ambition was to go ashore as trim and tidy as it was possible for a family to leave a ship, after being so many months cramped within her narrow bulwarks.

One thing which tended to increase her duties was that Eric and James had both found employment for the past three months, two of the seamen having been unfortunately disabled in a storm in the Atlantic. While this had enabled them to earn a little ready cash, which would be found very serviceable after their arrival, it had also soiled and worn out some of their clothing, finding work for their mother and sisters to clean and repair the damaged garments.

Coming on deck one fine morning when a smart westerly wind was blowing, Mr. Burns was accosted by the captain with the remark:

"Well, Mr. Burns, I think I may promise you a sight you have long wished to see before the sun sets to-night. If the wind holds on as we have it now, and the sky keeps clear, some time in the afternoon we shall be able to look on the mountains of New Zealand."

The rev. gentleman was not of an emotional nature, but this announcement caused an instantaneous glow of relief and thankfulness to spread over his benignant face.

"It will, indeed, be a pleasant sight, captain, to more eyes than mine," and then they fell into a talk about some affairs on the voyage.

But as the captain's information, given in a free and hearty tone of voice, was heard by a lad who was not far

off at the moment, it was soon repeated and passed on till everyone on board knew that they might now be on the look-out for land.

All day the faces of anxious watchers were to be seen in all advantageous positions, and weary eyes were peering over the undulating waves. When occasionally a piece of seaweed, which had been broken away from its rocky bed during the violence of some storm that had dashed its impetuous breakers on a desolate shore, chanced to float past the ship within view there arose a shout of joy at this evidence of the proximity of land.

But the south coast of the country they were approaching is not noted for the clearness of the sky any more than for the steadiness of its wind, so the day passed and darkness closed in around them once more without their eyes being gratified with a sight of the promised land.

The captain was nearing a strange country with no guides for the navigator such as are common in these days of progress and accomplished civilisation. There were no lights or beacons to warn him off points of danger. He was compelled to trust to his charts and his reckoning, and much uncertainty existed, until he should pick up the land, as to his exact position. He therefore, as a wise seaman, took special precaution that his "look-out" was good and his ship preserved from danger.

As the glory of the rising sun brightened the eastern sky next morning, it gradually drove away the hazy clouds that hung over the horizon, to which the experienced mariner was turning his attention in hope of catching sight of the mountain tops. The east was all ablaze with gold, crimson, and purple, in the richest harmony of Nature's

wondrous blending. The centre was like the heart of a glowing furnace, and from that vortex of light the scene shaded off as it spread in almost imperceptably deepening tints, until reaching far to north and south, the beautiful tones roused by the rejoicings of the god of day were lost in the sombre hues of cloud and sky. As this magnificent sheen was casting its indescribable lustre over the ever-changing surface of the mighty deep, as if to display around the weary immigrants to this new sphere of human industry, the grandest welcome of sea and sky; then in the midst of it all, imparting a deeper, warmer, brighter tone, the great monarch of planets threw up his fiery crown, and majestically rose from behind the ever-rolling waves of the greatest of oceans, and cast his genial beams upon the face of delighted Nature. As he did so, far away in the west were seen peering through the vanishing clouds, which still hung as a covering over the lower levels, the glittering peaks of everlasting snow, clothing the southern summits of New Zealand's mountains, now returning the glad and gay welcome to the new arrivals as first their eyes beheld the looked-for country.

The sailors were the first to recognise the scene, which was every moment increasing in its splendour as the vapoury clouds melted before the rising sun, and the snow-clad mountains grew freer, clearer, and bolder to the view. Such a sight could not long remain unnoticed by the most inexperienced persons. It required but for a seaman to indicate it, and in quick succession the word was passed from friend to friend, and then a shout was issued from the throats of the immigrants, such as they would have believed themselves incapable of uttering. But the ecstacy of their

joy was irrepressible at the sight of the hills they had so long spoken about, and of which they had sometimes even dreamed of.

In but a few minutes every man, woman, and child was on deck, although the hour was early, but the news that land was in view electrified the dullest of them, and the scantiest of clothing, within the lines of modesty, was accepted as sufficient to warrant an appearance on deck to get an early glimpse of the happy prospect. Then, when all were thus congregated on deck and had in very truth beheld the towers and turrets of the land to which they were hastening, a lusty voice called for three cheers. It was Eric, who, standing on the ratlines some feet above the bulwarks, had for about ten minutes been feasting his eyes and stimulating his imagination on the mysterious appearances of cloud, mountain, and sky, and now summoned the whole gathering to give vent to their enraptured feelings, and cap in hand he led off the cheer which was joined in vigorously by the entire number, when probably the British "Hip, hip, hurrah!" repeated three times in succession, was sent reverberating through the air of heaven, then for the first time in such far away southern regions.

On over her course sped the good ship before a favouring breeze, and the hearts of her people were light and gay. On faces that seemed never to have been able to free themselves from the traces of fear and care, now shone the smiles of hope and confidence. Tongues that had spoken little, as if afraid to speak their fears or to tell their forbodings, now were loosened and spoke happy speeches so long as the sun continued to shine, while the water went groaning and hissing from the trusty ship's bows.

The day which had opened so auspiciously upon them, and had revived the spirits of those inclined to despondency, and had fairly sent wild with delight the young and ardent among them, was not destined to bear out that character until night. The wind grew stronger, the waves became rougher, and indications of a dirty night set in. Sail was shortened, but the ship was still running fast. Having made sure of his position, the captain laid his course a safe distance from the coast, and held on his way with good cheer, and gradually drew near his destination.

It was on Saturday morning, the 15th April, 1848, that Captain Elles brought his ship round Poatiri headland (Cape Saunders) and shortly afterwards hove her to off Pukekura (Taiaroa's Head), which stands out a bold bluff on the eastern side of the harbour entrance, and sheltering it from the violence of all prevailing winds except the northerly.

The first sign of active human life observed by the living freight on board the "Philip Laing" was the appearance of the pilot boat coming off to her assistance, six stalwart Maoris rowing and the pilot, Dick Driver, steering. The large whaleboat used for this purpose was laid alongside the ship in a smart fashion that would have done credit to a first-class crew of a British man-of-war. The Maoris handled their oars with able dexterity, and their master guided his boat by the long steer oar with a precision that could not be excelled. Driver was a man of experience, who took great pride in doing things neatly and with effect. In former years he had been coxwain in a whaling crew, and there learned to steer his boat just as he desired, displaying a perfect knowledge of those wonder-

ful boats; and many a time by his skill the harpooner had been able to secure his prize, when the least misadventure would have lost it.

He now sprang out of the boat and bounded up the ladder like a cat up a tree to escape the chase of a mischievous dog, and stood before Captain Elles with all the self-possession of one who refuses to recognise any man as his superior. He was a tall, straight-up man, as thin as a cabbage tree, with light uncontrollable hair on his head and a few of still less pigmentary value scattered about his cheeks and chin, while his skin lay in deep wrinkles and was purely innocent of complexion. It would be doing his memory an injustice to speak of him as a handsome man, yet he had the appearance of one born to command. Quite as inappropriate would it be to call him either gentle or polite.

Dick Driver was in every respect a brave man and a skilful pilot, and on many an occasion he proved his ability and daring in weather that rendered his calling most perilous. He knew every good quality he possessed, and was never tired of educating others to his own standard in this branch of knowledge. He was never at ease in anyone's company until he had fully instructed him in the inestimable value of the chief pilot, and many a tall story he told to enforce the lesson. Nor was he ever at a loss for a "yarn" to fill up a vacant hour, or of an anecdote to cause a laugh or produce a wonder.

To him it was of little importance whether his yarns were facts or fictions, probable or even possible; credible or incredible, Dick was beyond the influence of common trifles. To say something wonderful—something that no

one else could parallel—was the point he aimed at, and this he usually succeeded in doing in a fearful and wonderful manner.

The ship had four hours to wait for the tide before she could take the bar. After a conference with the captain, Dick found his way among the passengers, and soon became the central figure of a large group of inquiring men and women, into whose ears he was pouring stories of the most amazing character—entertaining, perhaps, but about as nearly related to Nature as the romances of the Arabian Nights. Yet even among that group of hard-headed Scotchmen he found a few who were accepting his statements with the reverence due to a sermon. Perceiving this, he grew still more wonderful for the mere sake of increasing their wonder and dismay.

At length an elderly lady, satisfied of the spurious narratives of New Zealand life he was relating, in a very calm way said:

"Y'er no a bad story-teller, but we hae left better anes behind us. Could ye no tell us something that's mair likely to be true?"

"Whisht! Mrs. Watson," said her neighbour, "dinna be rude to the gentleman."

"Now, ladies," said Driver, "don't disagree on that subject, in case it should come to a quarrel, for in that case I have a most unpleasant duty to perform. I am under an obligation to the greatest Maori Chief of the Country to give information of any quarrelsome persons I meet with, and depend upon it, he will have his eye on the plumpest one for his next feast. He is a grim, greedy, and wily fellow, and I am compelled to keep his friendship by these

reports to prevent him from making a dinner for himself and his friends of me some day."

"Weel," replied Mrs. Watson, against whom his remark was evidently made, being the plumper of the two, without any doubt, "he'll be a weary man the day he fills himsell wi' pickin' flesh off your banes."

"He has a magnificient set of teeth," rejoined Dick.

"The best o' teeth canna tak' meat off bare banes," came glibly from his antagonist, whom Dick eyed keenly and said :

"It's time I returned to Captain Elles," and at once turned away discomfited, a rare occurrence, perhaps owing to his opponent being a woman, against whom he would not resort to his usual method of overthrow.

While lying "off and on" waiting for the tide, an event of great interest to all, and of special importance to those immediately concerned in it, took place in a cabin which had been arranged a few days before by the doctor's orders, in anticipation of coming events. It was a happy omen of the prosperity to accompany those who were contemplating the country which was in future to be their home, and bespeaking for them all that is to be found in that much loved word.

The vessel, whose living freight were to be the seed-stock of the country's subsequent population, was that afternoon the birthplace of the first fruits of the people, in the person of an infant girl, who, on the day of her appearance in the world, was safely borne into the peaceful and beautiful harbour of her country. Mrs. Hair and her husband were the most warmly congratulated persons who that evening rested quietly on the still waters of Kouputi Bay.

During this time the passengers had an opportunity to look on the face of the country, so far as it lay open to them from their position. It was a scene fitted to excite sentiments of pleasure, as in the beautiful weather of that autumn day they gazed ashore upon rocky headlands, wooded hills and glens, and far-reaching ridges, intersected with lovely valleys, picturesque in configuration, fertile in appearance, and possessing such general features as combine to make a country desirable for habitation.

On the left uprose in abrupt massive boldness the range of hills from Pukekura to Poatiri (the Heads to Cape Saunders), with their high precipitous cliffs, at whose base the black and grey rocks were covered with ever-moving seaweed, and the waves of the great Pacific with ceaseless roar broke, and, dashing high upon the impregnable barrier, fell back in foam and spray into their liquid bed.

On the right, stretching from Waitete Bay (Blueskin) to Moeraki, lay the gently rising hills and green flats and valleys, running far back among the ranges, where there mingled in a grand panorama dark gorges, grey glens, undulating hills, and mountain peaks shooting up as if to penetrate the sky.

In front of them were the magnificent bastions and spurs of the towering rock-topped summit of Mihiwaka, dividing the valley of Waitete from Otakou harbour, while all over this aspect of hill and dale the landscape was covered with a noble forest, in its never-failing green, while here and there the pine trees raised their stately heads far above their neighbours, giving a delightful variety

of shade and shape to the forest growth. Up through the broad harbour, lying between hills overgrown with forest from the edge of the water to their highest points, they were pointed to the highway from the ocean to the future scene of their lives.

It was a charming prospect, inviting to the eye, and suggestive to the imagination. Already, on the shore of Waikouaiti, could be discerned the houses of a few whalers, and the headquarters of the Wesleyan Mission ; while in the background was the residence of Mr. John Jones, who had been a successful whaling adventurer, and had purchased a large block of land from the Maoris, on which he had erected his dwelling, Then near to the water were the whares of the Maori village, also visible when the ship had stood in some distance in that direction. These gave life to the scene, to some extent removing an impression on the minds of some, that they had come to a country devoid of human beings, with the exception of a few—very few—natives recently recovered from the wildest form of barbarism.

"Put your two best men to the wheel, captain," said the pilot at last, "and we will go in."

The two of them were standing together on the poop, the pilot, Driver, now having taken command. Two strong and intelligent seamen relieved the man who had been in charge of the wheel for the past two hours, and the ship's head was turned as if to run straight upon the long, low-lying bank of sand which shuts off all view of the harbour beyond it.

"How does she answer the helm ?" asked the pilot.

'She is very free," answered the captain.

"So much the better. Those men are quick at their work, I hope."

"You can depend on them to an instant."

"It's a tough piece of work to take a boat of this size over the bar, I tell you, captain, and a delay of a second may put us ashore."

"Your orders will be promptly attended to."

"Well, the wind promises to favour us. Better if it were a pound or two heavier for a sea like this, but if we do not find a white-top as we go over all will be right."

"There is little risk of her refusing her helm with this speed."

"We shall have a little more sail on, captain, set the fore-topsail, at least, the wind is rather light. It is an awkward corner, and the tide will be running in its full force now."

To all on board but the pilot, it appeared that the ship was being driven on to certain destruction, for no opening could be seen between the spit and the rugged rocks. The wind was coming from the N.E., so that nothing could be more favourable, but to timorous hearts, the sight of their good ship sailing full tilt upon a sandy beach, where the waves were breaking with great noise, was more alarming than half a gale at sea.

Now the rocks seemed to be but a boat's length from them, they were hugging close to the eastern side of the course, but still no open way was visible; and some of them could scarcely believe that they were not, after braving so successfully the dangers of the ocean, to end it in reckless disaster. It was madness to give control of the trusty ship to a stranger, who was careless

of their lives and property. But they were nevertheless in good hands. Turning to the men at the wheel, Dick called, "be ready boys, hold steady!" Not far aft was rolling after them a green-topped wave, threatening to take her under the port quarter and cant her head in towards the rocks.

"Hard a starboard?" he called.

And the men drove the wheel round until the chains were tight. As they did so her stern rose upon the wave, but she was held steady, and only forged a-head, dipping her nose as she did so.

"Port!" again called Dick.

The wheel was instantaneously released and driven round to prevent her going off as the wave passed forward. Again she was caught and held to her position, and Dick looked with a smile of self-satisfaction as he noticed how well he had succeeded, and then said:

"Steady! Starboard a little! Easy!"

Then came rolling another green-top of less threatening aspect than its forerunner; this was mastered in the same fashion, and the bar was crossed.

The ship was now in smooth water, after nearly five months battling with the waves, tossing and rolling night and day, at last she stood upright, and her passengers missed the rythme of the sea, which had by this time become so common to them.

"Port!" cried the pilot, and the ship's head was brought round from the sand spit to follow up the tortuous winding of the channel, and as she swung round the entrance was observed winding past the end of the spit, close in to the native village of Otakau, where the rugged-

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ness of the rocky precipitous wall had discontinued and given place to a rising bank of sand, with gently receding hills behind.

As they approached the little settlement the whole population gathered on the beach to look at the Pakeha ship, with her tall masts and spreading sails, winding her way up the channel that only a few years previous had never borne anything heavier than a native canoe.

Some came off in their boats, others stood on the margin of the tide, while others were on the higher sand mounds, and when the ship had turned round Hayward's Point they gave vent to native cheers :

"Ka pai!" "Ka pai!"

"Pai rawa atu!"

Which if done into English would read, "Very good!" "Well done!" How excellent!"

Then there was an amount of coroberie and much gesticulation as the noble vessel passed on, and in reply from the deck was sent a vigorous volley of greeting from tongues that could not return the Maori salute, but made the hills re-echo the sound of the "Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The natives responded with evident delight :

"Tena koe!" "Ka pai!" "Anana! Anana!"

But the vigour of the Pakeha's greeting could not be equalled by the nature of the native form of expression. There is no other shout of any nation that can be sent from the lungs and lips with such a violent percussion and sustained volume as that which is common to the British, and as it was repeated from the deck of the receding ship the Maoris listened in surprise at the wild roll of the Pakeha's voice, as it recoiled from hill and rock and died

away in the fading sounds of echo; and when again all was still their great chief spoke to his followers with consternation on his face.

"Ko wai i mahara ki tena?"

(Who would have suspected anything like that?).

This little episode caused great commotion and pleasure to the strangers, as they sailed in between the hills of the new and strange country. The greeting was a most hearty one, and produced its effect upon those who received it. It helped to drive away the inevitable feeling of the loneliness of such circumstances.

Immediately after the ship had passed the Otakou village, half-a-dozen boats hoisted their lug-sails and followed her, completing the generous welcome by the convoy over this last stage of their long journey.

Pilot Driver succeeded in guiding his charge—the most important that had ever been in his hands—safely to her anchorage off Kouputi, near where the "John Wickliffe" had been lying for nearly three weeks, having made a better passage than her neighbour; and when the splash of the anchor and the rattle of the cable had ceased, every soul on board felt the relief of a great undertaking at length completed.

CHAPTER X.

IN PORT.

Ocean's billows, raging wind,
Trackless waters left behind:
Now succeeds the harbour's rest.
Hearts are calm, and voices jest.

As Eric stood alone by the bulwark quietly contemplating the view by which he was surrounded, he felt a hand touch him on the shoulder, and at the same moment a voice said:

"Permit me to join you in your thoughts, Eric."

It was Mr Blackie, who had early in the voyage taken a fancy to young Thomson, and spent many an hour, when both had spare time, in his company, each enjoying the other's conversation, Eric gaining by far the greater advantage by the mutual intercourse.

Mr Blackie was an intellectual man, who had been selected by Mr Burns as the first schoolmaster of the settlement, and to act in the capacity of teacher to the children on the voyage out.

"No one could be more welcome," replied Eric.

"Now that we are here at last, what do you think of what you have seen so far?" queried Mr Blackie.

"As you possess the greater experience, kindly let me have your opinion, for I confess to some bewilderment."

"Not what you expected to find. Is that it?"

"My expectation was certainly not to see a place like this. It is wild and confusing."

"We must postpone conclusions until we have seen something more. I always understood the entrance to be somewhat rough. But there is something better to follow,"

"There is one thing very striking about what we have been able to look at. I mean the heavy forests that cling to the sides of these hills, and in some places seem to grow even on the face of rocks and precipices."

And as he spoke he pointed to the summit of the hill directly overlooking the few houses already built and forming the neucleus of Port Chalmers.

"Look at those splendid trees raising their great branches heavenward, and yet you can see from the rugged parts that every little space projects above the undergrowth, that the face of the hill on which they grow is little else than a bare rock."

"And on top of the hill there you can see a fine tree is growing on the top of a rock that stands higher even than the trees around it."

On looking up, Eric could see fully 600ft. above them, rising over the trees like a great fortress, the rock Mr. Blackie referred to, and growing from its surface, like a flag-staff, was a tall, but thin, tree, whose top was a thick cluster of branches resembling a gigantic broom.

During the time they were engaged surveying the boldness of their immediate surroundings, permission had been given for the fleet of Maori boats that had followed them from the Kaik to come alongside, and now appeared on deck the manly figure of the great chief Taiaroa, his face literally covered with the finest art of tattoo. He came specially to give his personal welcome to the new arrivals,

and declare to them his sincere friendship and his best wishes for their common welfare.

He was introduced by Dick Driver, the Pilot, to Mr Burns, to whom he gave a most cordial greeting, and after the European fashion shook hands, but felt much inclined to present his beautifully-marked nose that the reverend gentleman and he might confirm their friendship after the manner most significant to the Native mind, but as his new acquaintance seemed to make no advance in that direction. the old chief, a little disappointed, accepted the new manner of greeting as one of the improvements of the coming civilisation.

At a signal from the chief other men and some women soon found their way up the gangway ladder, much to the amusement of the immigrants. In the boats were abundance of fresh potatoes in flax kits, freshly-caught fish of two or three varieties, and several bundles of smoke-dried barracouta, with which the Maoris hoped to be able to do some trade. Taiaroa's boatload was almost all disposed of before the others had a chance. The women had brought a few beautiful mats of various colours made from dyed flax fibre, and a number of neat baskets made from the same material, and finished in a manner reflecting credit on the makers. So nice were they in appearance that although not many of the passengers cared to part with any of their little stock of cash, yet only the poorest samples remained unpurchased. Among those who invested in the curiosities was Eric Thomson. He secured both a mat and a pretty little basket, with the intention of sending them to Kirsty, to whom his thoughts were ever turning with a strong desire to reach the time when he could satisfy himself that he

was now ready to claim the fulfilment of her promise to join him in his new home, and aid him in prosecuting the duties of life.

Having seen and carefully examined the large gathering of pakehas, particularly the pakeha wahines and the fair pekanenis, the Maoris began to leave for their home with the ebb tide, and in the quiet that followed Eric again stood by the bulwark, but this time not in the contemplation of the surrounding scenery, but in minutely reviewing incidents of the past. The mat and bag were still in his hand, and before him, figuratively, stood the image of the dear one for whom he had bought them, and he was in his heart revisiting the scenes of their love-day rambles. The moments thus occupied, oblivious to the things that were present and passing, were sweet, happy moments; for although his countenance was solemn his soul was joyous. He was then reliving that half-hour in which their little "keepsakes" had been exchanged. Yes, she would wear her locket, and he had never been a moment without his seal, and often had he made an impression with it when by himself alone. He had again begun to build his "castles in the air," when a strong voice cried his name. His reverie was broken.

It was one of his party of young men. As is the common custom where a number of young fellows are for several months thrown into each other's company they separate into two or more parties. In this case the split took place early, and two parties were formed, each with a mutually chosen leader, and Eric was the chief man of his number.

"Eric, cried one of his companions, "come this way, the boys want to speak about something."

In a second Eric was in the midst of his chums, and was listening to the scheme which they wanted him to approve and join in.

"Yes; very good. The captain has consented! A splendid plan. I will be with you in two seconds."

He made haste to his bunk and carefully put away the novelties he had bought, made a slight change in his clothes, and rejoined his companions.

They were already, to the number of eight, in the captain's gig, and he stepped in beside them, and as first of the party he took charge, and letting go they steered for the shore.

They were made welcome by a score of people who were loitering away their Saturday evening for want of better employment.

Among them was a woman, fresh and hale, who came forward beside a man—apparently her husband; and after a few words of congratulation, and some questions as to the voyage, the weather encountered, &c., she gave a general invitation to follow her into the house, which stood with the door open just a little way back from the beach, under the shade of a giant black pine tree.

To the surprise of the young fellows the table was set with dishes, and a great kettle was hanging over a rousing wood fire, boiling furiously.

"Sit in, lads," said the husband, "and let us have the honour of giving you your first meal on New Zealand soil."

"No, thank you," said Eric, "we are not hungry."

"We takes no refusals from newcomers. They is always able to eat, just comin' off ship. Sit in, boys."

"But thanks, we had supper," Eric replied.

"Well, suppose you had; I know ye have room for another. Sit in and taste what we can have in this blessed country. It ain't nothink much how-some-ever, but we want your news. This is a joint of wild pig we caught 'tother day back in the bush—a fine young beast, as tender as a chicken. Ye never seed anythink like that aboard ship, I warrant. Our bread is Sally's own; there ain't no bakers here to get it from; but no baker ever made better duff than Sally Brooks provides. So come, boys, make yourselves at 'ome."

As he was making this speech, the lads, seeing it was all the freewill offering of generous natures, obeyed the master of the house, and in less than two minutes they were sitting before a table steaming with well-cooked food, which had been got ready in hope of someone coming ashore, that the host and hostess might have an opportunity of showing their hospitality.

As they ate they were plied with all sorts of questions, to which they gave such answers as they could. The whole population of primitive Port Chalmers had crowded into that little room, which seemed to be the public hall of the embryo town, to hear what was to be heard.

By the time the questions were nearly finished the seafaring inquisitors knew nearly all that was worth knowing of the ship's passage from Glasgow to the Heads. This was their reward for providing the "first meal" on shore for the first boat's crew that landed.

"When do you go up to the top of the harbour, I suppose to-morrow, first tide?" asked Brooks.

"No, not to-morrow," said several of them at once.

"We are going to have service on board each of the ships to-morrow, on the 'John Wickliffe' at 11 o'clock, and on our ship at 3 o'clock; you may as well come off. We expect we shall go up the harbour on Monday," answered Eric, who was regarded as general spokesman.

The invitation to come off to the services was accepted by all, not so much for the services, as for an opportunity to visit the "Philip Laing," with an eye to a possible engagement on the work of lightering the ship, Brooks being part owner of one of the largest boats on the harbour.

"Will you go up harbour by boat or overland?" asked Brooks.

"Can we get overland?" asked Peter McKechnie, as if he would prefer a walk to a sail.

"Oh yes, ye's can walk through the bush, over the hill. Far better for young 'uns like ye's to go a-foot. Tough bit of a climb, but if ye's decides to walk I'll go meself and pilot ye's over."

The idea commended itself to the boys, who were now weary of the water, and were delighted with the notion of a good ramble, and it was there resolved that Brooks should be at the ship at daybreak on Monday with his boat and fetch them ashore, where breakfast would be prepared for them by Sally, and then they should start over the hills.

This little business over, they were presented with a side of a wild pig to let their friends on board have a share, and then they made their way back to the ship, where their return was watched for by many who felt an interest in the event, and were desirous of hearing what news they might bring off. The opposite company of young men

asked for a second boat to follow the example of the fortunate first applicants, but were refused, as the captain was not satisfied that any of them could be trusted with a boat. These from envy pretended unconcern, but yet could not leave the deck until the happy fellows were alongside.

As Eric came walking up the gangway ladder with his side of fresh pork over his shoulder, he was cheered by a hundred voices as a returning hero. Everyone, however, was anxious to share in a taste of the delicate morsel, which, owing to the impossibility of such a thing, became the cause of a widespread jealousy among those who were not fortunate enough to have a friend among the noted eight who first were permitted to set foot on the "land of their adoption." Still the piece of pork was divided into as many parts as possible, and was shared with as many as could reasonably get a decent little bit.

The first united act of the passengers by the two ships now safely at anchor, after all the perils of the long voyage were behind them, was to meet on the deck of the "John Wickliffe" at 11 o'clock on Sabbath morning (they had not learned to call the first day of the week Sunday), and there mingle their voices in the return of praise and thanksgiving to Him who had so signally watched over them, and by His powerful hand delivered them from all the dangers of the deep. The men belonging to the "John Wickliffe," who had been busy on the site of the future city of Dunedin, had come to Port Chalmers to greet their comrades, the women being still living on the vessel.

For the first time the voice of sacred song, raised by a large and devout congregation of Europeans within the

Otago Harbour, was wafted through the air into illimitable space, and penetrated the mansions of Heaven. The serious and solemn voice of Mr. Burns led the hearts of the people in thoughts and expressions, which all could feel were the mature offering and desires of each one. His grateful thanks for past providence called forth a sincere, if not an audible, response from all, and his eloquent plea for divine guidance in their future actions, under circumstances so strange to them all, were admitted to be the sentiment of each devout soul then standing with head uncovered before the great Lord of all.

The sermon, too, was appropriate and forcible, containing practical lessons on the sacred obligations of every-day life, and more particularly on the duties expected from every one of them, who had been, in divine wisdom and mercy, permitted to arrive safely at the end of their weary journey; and having before them a virgin country, on the soil of which they were to plant the seed of a young nation. The sentiment of the preacher was: "Go ye in and possess the land," with wise admonition respecting the manner in which they should discharge the weighty responsibilities of their position.

After service those belonging to the "Philip Laing" returned to their quarters for dinner, and at 3 o'clock the spacious deck was thronged with men, women, and children, having brought out their Bibles with the psalms in metre, then the only songs of praise used in worship by Presbyterians, and all arranged themselves in suitable and more or less comfortable positions, to enjoy and take part in the worship of the most High, whose care is over all His works.

The several families were observable in groups, as if in

an ordinary church, the parents being the charge of their own households. Conspicuous among them sat the Thomson family, all strong and in the possession of excellent health; the father sat at the head of his sons, with James Carmichael at the farther end. Mrs. Thomson sat by her three handsome daughters, proud to be the mother of such a bonnie lot of bairns, bairnies now no longer, but muscular and well developed, well fit for the life just opening before them. In like manner were others placed, when Mr. Burns rose in patriarchal form, and in his remarkable style called upon them to "begin the public worship of God." Instantly books were opened, and the psalm announced was before them all, and there as they sat, in the sweet melody of an old-fashioned tune, they gave voice to the soul-stirring and aspiring words of the great Hebrew singer. How the same old psalm and tune, so often sung in their Scottish churches, the same old chapters from the grand old Bible, and the same sentiments of devotion, all combined to drive away the thoughts of distance from friends on the other side of the globe. And, above all, how great was the calming influence of the realisation of the Divine Presence here, as well as in their old land, upon their spirits. These two diets of worship brought into their souls all the hallowed memories of those grand names that stud the pages of Scotland's marvellous history, as the stars bedeck the southern sky. The God of Scotland's heroes was also the God of Otago's Pioneers, and they now bowed before Him in humble acknowledgment of His right to govern and power to protect.

The day had passed with beautiful sunshine and a gentle breeze from the eastward, which in the evening gave

place to a delightful calm with a cloudless sky, and friends were about on the decks of the vessels, some in happy conversation, some were pacing about in twos and threes, discussing the proceedings of the day, and in some cases reviewing the sermons. But once more Eric was alone. He had been apparently looking over the rail, watching the water flowing past the vessel for about ten minutes, when Mrs. McKechnie came up to him.

"Thinking deeply as usual, Eric?" she said jocularly.

"It is a lovely evening, Mrs. KcKechnie," he replied.

"Too fine an evening for a young man to be spending it in lonely brooding."

"You mistake me greatly. I do not brood; that is if brooding means thinking on melancholy subjects."

"I am glad to hear you say so; but I was afraid we should have to do something to cheer you up."

"Very kind of you, indeed, to even think of me."

"Think of you! why, Eric, I am surprised. I only think of you as a young man for whom I have been compelled to entertain a high opinion, and consequently wish for his well-being."

"Thank you for your flattering compliment. I hope I may never behave so as to remove your good opinion, but do not consider me melancholy."

"Won't you join our little circle? There is room for you. There are just ourselves, and we want your opinion on one or two things we have been talking about."

It would have been rude had he not consented, so he accompanied her back to her seat. But Eric felt himself under restraint when he joined the McKechnie circle. He was very fond of the eldest son, Peter, but the eldest

daughter was a good looking girl of about twenty, for whom several lads had a strong fancy, but she, strange to notice, had a brighter smile and a livelier word for the one who least of all showed a preference for her. And her mother seemed anxious to encourage her, by making frequent opportunities for her meeting with Eric.

Eric was not quick in observing this piece of manœuvring on the part of Mrs. KcKechnie, and innocently fell into the net she spread for him. In the same manner, and for the same purpose, she had laid her plans to win the good graces of his mother and sister Betty. She considered that with these two allies her object would be gained. Those in the circle to which Eric had been brought from his lonely reverie, were discussing whether the Maori woman, who on the previous evening wore the finest flax mat over her shoulders, was likely to be the wife of the chief, Taiaroa. When the question was submitted to him Eric was able to settle it.

"That lady Maori," said he, "was pointed out to me as a relation of the chief, but not his wife. Her name is Annie, and she is married to a chief whose name is quite English also—Jacky White. I suppose they have their proper Maori names, and that these have been given them by Europeans ; but I forgot to ask."

"I saw you speaking to her," said Miss McKechnie, "could you understand her ?"

"I was merely asking the price of the little bag she was offering for sale."

"She could tell you that, of course. I have been told that the names of coins are among the first things these natives pick up. What surprised me was to see you, above

all, who are so bashful as scarcely to be able to speak half-a-dozen words to a countrywoman of your own, talking so pleasantly with the Maori lass."

"Did you suppose he was likely to be captivated by her complexion," mischievously asked Peter.

"Oh, there's no knowing what notions might come into the head of some men. I have been told the pilot has a Maori wife."

"It's not uncommon for whalers to marry native women when they come to live among them, but surely you do not insinuate that any of our lads are likely to look that way?" interjected her mother.

Willing, however, to continue the fun, Eric said:

"Now that you speak of it, I did think that woman was not a bad specimen of a generous hearted, though dark skinned, human being. There was something in her manner, and in the expression of her eyes, that made me observe her carefully. But there, she is already married."

"How fearfully and wonderfully dressed! What did you think of her bonnet?" said Jennet McKechnie, a girl of about sixteen.

"Oh, that bonnet!" exclaimed Mrs. McKechnie, bringing her hands together in her lap and then extending them level with her eyes, "your sister Mary could have made three out of that one, and then have had them all distinctly different colours."

"I envied her those two blue and green ostrich feathers," said Jennet. "Not that I could have endured them stuck together as she had them, but one on each bonnet. They were fine feathers, but, oh! the poor bird. She must have trimmed that bonnet herself."

"Well, you cannot complain of the colours of her cloak as being unharmonious" put in Eric, who seemed to consider himself to some extent her proper defender.

"A straw-coloured cloak, with stripes of black running through it suited her own colour much better than green and blue feathers set among yellow and red ribbons with bows of brown and purple," returned Jennet.

"My attention was more taken up with her skirt," said Mrs. McKechnie. It was a black material with red bands running round. That would have been well enough, but when she had introduced diagonal stripes of all the colours of the rainbow, the result was simply ridiculous."

"Then her great ear-rings," interjected Miss McKechnie. "Such things! just bits of stone of a dark, dirty, green colour tied with a greasy red ribbon into holes in her ears as large as if they had been made with a penknife!"

"That greenstone is very valuable, being rare. To display two such perfect pieces as Annie wore I have no doubt will be looked upon as a sign of high rank," remarked Eric, again coming to the defence.

"Did you notice her shoes, Eric," said Peter, who felt sure that was a point on which his friend would be specially observant.

"Yes, Peter," he answered, "Annie has learned the noble art of shoemaking for private convenience. There will be little danger of pet corns or distorted toes on the feet protected by shoes of her manufacture."

"I declare!" ejaculated Isabel, "if Eric has not a good word for his heroine, no matter what you say about her."

"She is not in any sense my heroine, Miss McKechnie," Eric replied very calmly. "But we should, I think, re-

member that we are now speaking of one who has but yesterday risen from the grossness of barbarism. She is in the very early dawn of civilisation, and has only learned to imitate some of the more conspicuous habits of those from whom she is learning. Taste in colours, like peculiarities in language, take a long time to acquire."

"I must admit your philosophy carries conviction. I was only looking at the amusing side of the affair," said Isabel, and the subject was changed to the prospects of next day.

CHAPTER XI.

THE UNBUILT CITY.

Streets there are, but none are seen,
Sites for homes with grass are green ;
Bring the pick, the bar, the spade,
Clear the way for peace and trade !
Flax and fern, and rugged earth
Move ! A city comes to birth.

"Are you waken, Peter," said Eric, as he looked into the bunk of young McKechnie about 5 o'clock. "It is time to be moving. Tom, and Bill, and Jack are all on deck, and Brooks has already started to come off with his boat."

Peter started up without delay, and Eric went on to rouse the others that were to complete their party, which was recognised as "Eric Thomson's band."

By the time Brooks had got alongside they were all ready.

"Have you all got your hatchets and knives ?" asked Eric before they passed down the gangway ladder.

Just as he spoke two girls made their appearance above the entrance to the single women's compartment.

One of them, turning her head, spoke down the stairway to some who had not yet been able to appear.

"Be quick ! they are just going off."

Immediately there was a rush up the stair, and a score of girls, hastily attired, were tripping along the deck to see the boys start on their way for Dunedin, the unbuilt city.

There were fifteen fresh, strong, and vigorous youths,

between 16 and 25 years of age, all seated in the whaleboat of Ben Brooks, now waving good-bye to their sisters and the sisters of their friends, who deeply regretted that their fate was to remain behind while their male friends preceded them to prepare temporary dwellings.

Sally Brooks had a breakfast ready for them, which, in their excitement, now roused to a lively condition, they ate like hungry men preparing for a long walk and a stiff struggle in the bush.

Sally would make no charge for either her trouble in preparing or the food consumed in the breakfast.

"There," said Tom Wallace, "if you won't charge we must compel you to accept something that will jingle better than thanks after we are gone," and turning to his companions, he said :

"What shall it be, boys?" at the same time taking off his Glengary cap, and, dropping a coin into it, he held it out to the others.

"That's right, Tom," the others responded in chorus, and the contents, without being counted, were emptied into Sally's lap.

She made no attempt to refuse the gift, but, on the contrary, felt doubly proud that in showing her hospitality she had both made friends of the young men and had a better profit on her business than if she had charged for what she had done.

The order to march was given at 6 o'clock, and the pedestrians started, Ben Brooks leading the way through the bush into gullies, over creeks, up ridges, down glens, scrambling through thickets of dense undergrowth, clambering over fallen trees, occasionally being able to look up and

see the sky between the branches of the trees that towered high above them. It was slow progress, but the novelty of the experience gave zest to their efforts. Gradually they ascended the hill, cheered on by the increasing music of the birds.

The feathered tribes were apparently more curious than surprised at the disturbance so strange in their native haunts. The pigeons with their beautiful white breasts, blue-grey heads and necks, blue and slatey-coloured bodies, and soft, harmless, large eyes would fly close to them and look quietly from their perches until they could have knocked them over with a stick. The ka ka would scream his harsh note and tear the bark off the stem of a tree, or crack a twig in his beak and gaze at the intruders from a respectful distance. The tui would flit from bough to bough, whistling his musical note, and passing on in advance the notice of some unusual occurrence. Mokis, tom-tits, fantails, robins, would all visit them at close quarters, and, according to their habits, perform their part in the day's entertainment, and occasionally a woodhen could be seen darting across their path, to be lost in a thicker screen of brushwood than that from which it emerged.

After four hours of persevering struggle—no sooner having surmounted one difficulty than another was encountered—they had gained the summit of the hill, and stood for a while to gaze on the panorama of hill, forest, sea, island, and inlet that lay behind them. Lying snugly in Kouputi Bay they could see the two ships they had left in the morning. Seven miles beyond was the entrance to the harbour, and on the opposite side lay the white sandy mounds of Otakau. And, as the eye traversed the scene

upwards, and the islands and lovely bays with which the harbour beneath them was beautified, they stood taking mental photographs of the magnificent sight, which even to-day, though robbed of many natural adornments, is still of surpassing loveliness.

They soon began their descent towards the "city" that was to be, and has become; but then was only a spot of ground of charming aspect without even so much as a footpath or well-beaten track upon its surface. Still, as they came in view of the place chosen for the capital of Otago, and looking down upon it from the heights in the cloudless sunshine, they felt that not only Dunedin but the adjacent country had been well selected as a fit home for them and their dear ones. The wild boldness of the part they had come through gave place to gentle slopes and sunny vales all covered with a luxuriant growth of many sorts of plant, and consequently capable of producing in plenty the necessary plants and serials of human life.

As they wended their way downwards, they came upon the fresh rootings of wild pigs, and Ben Brooks prepared them for a hunt.

They made their way quietly under his guidance, and shortly the grunts of a full-grown boar could be heard not far off. Ben's two dogs had been out on several hunting expeditions and were already on the scent, and awaited permission to make the attack, which they were soon granted. Without barking they got beyond the animals, and then gave the signal by uttering a shrill yelp. This was the first intimation the pigs had of their enemies, and in running from the dogs they were driven in upon the men, whom Ben had placed in a semi-circle, or something like the shape

of a large V, through which it was hopeless for the pigs to attempt their way. Three of the men were provided with guns—Ben, Peter, and Eric—the rest were ready with their hatchets and knives.

There was quite a family of fine fleshy pigs. Four of them were mature sized, and six or eight were about four months old.

"Make sure of the young 'uns," cried Ben. "One of them young 'uns is worth two on the big 'uns." And with that he fired his musket, and a little pig lay bleeding. The other two shots were equally satisfactory, only that Eric had shot one of the larger, leaving the little 'uns for the men with the hatchets. Six fell victims of the fray, and under the direction of Ben they were quickly bled, disembowelled and cut up, and each man went on his way with a load of wild pig flesh slung on his back.

The rest of the journey was very little less toilsome than the past, although it was mostly down hill, for when they emerged from the forest they had to contend with a brushwood so thick in its growth that frequently their hatchets were brought into use to clear a passage through.

Tall flax and tangled fern were encountered where the brushwood was avoided; so when at last they reached the Owheo (Water of Leith) they were glad to throw down their loads and rest for half an hour.

"The boats are up before us," said Ben Brooks as he gained the summit of "Church Hill," subsequently called "Bell Hill," and looked down on the landing place—a brown, sandy beach at the mouth of the "Toitu," a creek which ran into the sea by the Water Street side of the present Post Office.

"There they are, lads, but they are stuck in the mud! They have all had to wade ashore, or be carried on the backs of others."

"I suppose they are all together somewhere about having a look round," said Peter, as he looked down on the quiet, but interesting, landscape lying before them.

"Let us stop five minutes, Ben," said Eric, "till we have a good view of the country; no hurry, is there?"

Once more their burdens were thrown down on the beautiful grass that grew on the top of the hill.

"Tell us something about the places, Ben," requested the leader of the band.

"Well, boys, I would rather sit down to a good dinner than commence now to give you a lecture on what ye's are lookin at. But as ye want the names of some of the places, it'll not take long for me to tell ye all I know on't."

He pulled his right hand over his eyes and down along his nose, across his mouth, and grasped his chin, and then held firmly by his small goatee-like beard, and shortly after commenced:

"That buildin' over there, just across the creek, is the Survey Office, and the other house there down near the creek is the surveyor's. Ye won't have no house to sleep in to-night, ye know, lads; ye might as well be on march to the wars, for if ye'v no tent with you ye'll have to sleep out under a tree. But ye won't come to no hurt if ye'v a good blanket below ye, and another over ye, unless it rains. Of course there is Johnnie's store and the shanty we calls the 'otel, but their aint no births in them for travellers.

"That there creek is called 'Toitu,' its Maori name. No English name has been give it yet, if ever it do get one. The beach where the boats is lyin' is called 'Otepoti,' and means 'you can go no farther.' Something in that name; at least, for them boats can't go no farther for the mud, and ye'll know more about it after.

"That bay over the other side is named 'Puketai,' or, I should rather say, the hill between it and the sea has that name. Then away at the other end of the long beach, where you see the ocean breakers coming ashore, the hill is called 'Whakaherekau,' and all that large flat lying between those sandhills, the hills at the back, and the harbour, is a big bog that no man can pass through."

"Thank you," said Eric, "but I am afraid those strange names will not be easily remembered,"

"Oh, they come handy enough when you hear them a few times," said Ben assuringly.

"However, we are in Dunedin," interjected Peter. "This is the place we have to turn into a town. That will take a long time to accomplish."

"Rome was not built in a day," said James Carmichael, "and even one stitch at a time gets to the end of a long seam."

"True," answered Peter, "everything must have its beginning, yet it does seem droll to speak of this place growing into a town or a city. Was ever a place so wild as this transformed into a well-built city, with good straight streets and comfortable footpaths?"

"As to streets," said Ben Brooks, "there have been men laying the whole of it off into streets and quarter-acre sections. See, there is one of the pegs, and heading away

from it you can trace the line they have cut in the scrub, right away along down the hill-side, through that gully and up the other side."

"What will that line represent?" asked Peter.

"No doubt that is the street line, and the sections run off it," answered Eric.

"Quite right," said Ben, "the street runs straight from where we are standing down there into that hole, and straight up that hill-face opposite."

"That beats Edinburgh!" cried Tom Wallace; "might as well make a street up the face of Arthur's seat!"

"Talk of country roads! why the worst I ever saw in Scotland would never be half so bad as that," resumed Peter. "With streets running through such places, we may well say our new home will never compare with a city in Scotland."

"When I was last in Princes Street, Edinburgh," said James, "I was looking at a marble statue; so beautiful and smooth, and excellently polished, was every part of that great piece of stone, that it was a delight to look at it; yet before the artist commenced to work on it, it was a coarse, irregular, unpleasing block."

"Well, what follows from that? Oblige us by drawing the conclusion, in case we should make fools of ourselves in attempting it," retorted Peter, who saw all it meant.

"The roughest block of marble, in the hands of a skilful artist, may give forth the finest specimen of statuary. So, possibly, in the hands of a capable engineer, this rough site may develop into a picturesque city," was James's philosophic reply.

"There's no tellin', no tellin'," said Ben. "Anyway, there'll be work for a sight o' labourers. But we had better be gettin' on."

They shouldered their swags and made their way down to the stream, over which a large log had been thrown to do service as a bridge. Crossing this, Ben led his comrades to the open space in front of the Survey Office, where they found about fifty who had come up the harbour in the boats.

They were in the act of partaking of their first repast, at the extreme end of their long journey in search of a new home. It was a rudely prepared meal, yet of substantial character, and the fifteen pedestrians were at once invited to join them.

The first thing they had now to consider was the erection of some kind of temporary shelter for themselves, while they constructed accommodation for their families.

The male passengers by the "John Wickliffe" had already put up a few huts of long poles covered with grass, besides some tents. To follow their example was now the duty of the newly arrived Scotchmen.

There was abundance of room, an endless supply of grass, rushes, and flax. The poles had to be brought some distance out of the bush.

They were eager for their work, and once they had selected their temporary sites, they busied themselves in removing the fern, tussock, or brushwood, and levelling down the inequalities of the ground.

While one or two of each party were doing this portion of the work, the others tried their hands in the bush, cutting

poles and pickets for a frame-work on which to tie the covering of rushes or grass.

Now the real work of civilisation had commenced. The pilgrim fathers of Otago were at last together, the men who formed the backbone of character in the province, were at length upon the face of the wilderness they had come sixteen thousand miles to transform into a garden of fertility and a centre of commerce.

Before them lay the teeming face of nature, producing nothing but a growth of useless and noxious plants, from a soil rich in possibilities for the full satisfaction of human wants. But only to be brought into service by resolute and persevering labour. Months of hard and wearying toil must be given before any return could be expected; but everything gave evidence of the soundest reason for hope. The very rankness of the most useless plants, and the coarseness of the grass, were unmistakeable signs of a certain reward for honest work.

Some of them sought out snugly sheltered spots, under the protection of overhanging trees, behind a steep bank, or in the midst of a thicket of brushwood, where the wind would have the least chance of disturbing them. Others with less animal instinct selected open spaces, because of the evenness of the surface, and the facilities for getting about, regardless of wind and weather, trusting to the efficiency of the work of their own hands to form a shelter from the cold and storm.

It was a busy scene, in which all selfishness was absent, and generous help extended as circumstances required. Every man was his neighbour's brother, and rendered a

brotherly assistance. Yet they worked in their own parties or families.

There were five active pairs of hands in the Thomson's number, and, having chosen a spot where most advantages offered, and where the requisite material could with least difficulty be procured, their hut soon took shape. Mr. Thomson was an expert with the spade and the hatchet, and his two younger sons were almost his equals, while Eric and James Carmichael were handy at many little jobs, such as carrying poles, cutting and bringing forward the rushes for thatch. So in the course of a few hours their hut was finished, the first of that day's building.

Dry fern was gathered in armfuls and spread on each side of the floor, as a substitute for beds. The fireplace was made of sods, close to a clay bank that stood almost level with the roof at the rear. The light was admitted by a piece of calico fastened above the doorway, and by the door when it could be kept open. The door itself consisted of a flour sack ripped open, and stretched on four pieces of wood nailed together at the corners and braced with a diagonal spar. It was swung on hinges made from hog's hide.

When their hut was ready for occupation they next proceeded to the boats to bring up their bedding and other necessary things. A large box served for a table, and stools were made by nailing some sticks together, and at length they were advanced far enough to feel certain that they were safe from the effects of wind or rain until something better could be procured. And they went to give a helping hand to those who had not got so well forward.

Peter McKechnie and his father had got well on, considering only the two of them were working together. Mr.

McKechnie had only the one son and four daughters. They had chosen a site adjacent to the Thomsons, and being next door neighbours, even if no other friendly relations had existed between them, they very naturally gave them the first help.

It was found that seven men were more than was necessary to complete the hut, and besides, they were to some extent in one another's way, owing to the small compass of the space cleared to work on ; and as Mr. Stewart and his son Tom had been very friendly during the voyage, and had also chosen a spot not far off, Mr. Thomson and James Carmichael went over to lend them a hand.

And so the work went on. Most of the men had stripped off all clothes but pants and undershirts, and were even in that condition perspiring freely. But none thought he had a right to rest until all his neighbours were safely housed for the night. And, to tell the truth, a few of them seemed to possess very little idea of what they had to do, and it was only after they saw how the others were proceeding they managed to make a start. It was late when these were finished, and even then they had made poor work with the first part of the framework, and no art or aid could make a good job of the finish. However, they were at last under shelter, by the time it was necessary to light candles to see by, although some had to carry their trappings from the beach after dusk, and in doing so many a nasty fall was suffered, resulting in scratches, bruises, and ugly cuts.

The worst mishap of the day occurred to Andrew Melville, who with Jack McKay was in the bush cutting some battens for a friend, who had not got on well with his

operations. Andrew was cutting the stick in an insecure position, when his foot slipped and his hatchet missed and cut a deep wound in his leg, from which the blood came freely. Jack bound up the wound as he best could, in a rough and ready manner, and the two of them made their way to where the rest were. By that time Andrew was faint from pain and loss of blood.

The doctor had remained on board the ship, and there were none who had much skill in the dressing of wounds, so far as most were aware, and there was great fear the young man would bleed to death.

"Send off a boat for the doctor," cried one.

"That will take hours; he could not arrive before midnight," responded another.

"Send up to the survey camp. The surveyor will know what to do, perhaps," cried a third; but none either sent or went for the much required aid; each seemed anxious to remain a witness of what others would do.

Just as about a dozen were standing in a circle round the unfortunate youth, Mr. Thomson and Eric came over to learn what the gathering together of the crowd could mean.

No sooner were they apprised of the nature of the accident than Eric darted off, without saying a word, and in a few minutes was back, carrying in his hand a long strip of cotton he had torn from the sheet he was to lie on, and with a scarf he first made a torniquet and stopped the bleeding, and then wound the bandage round the leg neatly as if he had been accustomed to the work. The older men stood and simply looked on, yielding place to Eric, as if he were a practical surgeon. When he had finished, Eric said:

"We had better get him on board a boat at once, and

take him back to the ship, where the doctor can see him, as soon as possible."

"There are only two Maori boats at the beach now," said Tom Stewart. "I will go and arrange for the loan of one if some of you will carry Andrew down"; and he was off without waiting for ceremony.

"I can walk now," said Andrew, making an effort to rise.

"Not to-night, Andy; you must submit to orders now," was Eric's authoritative answer

"No, no! let me walk," repeated Andrew; "I don't feel the pain much now."

"To walk a hundred yards might cost your life," and we are not going to risk that, Andy," retorted Eric.

He gave a smile, drew a deep breath, and said: "Then have your own way. I suppose I am an invalid on the first day of our arrival. Where is father?"

His father had gone down to the beach for something for a neighbour, and had not yet heard of Andrew's hurt.

"Come, Peter, you and I can carry him down to the boats; we will see his father there," said Eric, taking full control of affairs.

A strong hand-and-arm chair was at once formed, and Andrew was sitting in this friendly ambulance on his way to the beach when his father came up to them.

It was a sore shock to Mr. Melville, but being assured by Andrew that it was "more nasty than serious," and that friends were making more fuss in their kindness than he thought was called for, he went with them.

Tom Stewart had found the Maori boat just on the point of starting, and as they were going to the Kaik at

Otakau, they were generous enough to refuse any pay for their services.

A comfortable position was prepared for the wounded man on the top of some sacks spread on the bottom of the boat and Maori mats on the top of them. There he lay, and was as carefully tended as if he were a delicate woman.

His father and Eric accompanied him, and there being a fine breeze blowing from the south, they reached the "Philip Laing" in a little under an hour, and there he was soon put in good order by the skill and care of the doctor, and was left to be nursed by his mother for the next three weeks.

Chapter XII.

STRANGE EXPERIENCES.

New land, new life, new skies o'erhead,
  Strange thoughts inspire, strange joys suggest,
Strange work to which our hands are wed;
  Strangest of all, our place of rest!

The building of the last whare had become an accomplished fact; and from about a score of huts and tents might have been seen lively-looking columns of blue-white smoke, curling away like so many miniature clouds tossing themselves merrily as they rose from the newly-formed fireplaces, and went winding through the branches of the trees that were interspersed between the dwelling places of the mushroom village.

Inside those one-roomed places of abode there was much activity. The attempts at cooking were not great, but even in some instances the mere act of getting a kettle to boil was a new experience, and was not managed without strongly expressed wishes that "the guid wife" could have been there, if only for the sake of boiling the water. A few simple scalds and some dry burns bore testimony next morning to the distress occasioned by this new life in its first trials.

In relation to this part of their duties, however, much was learned in the course of a few days. How to start the fire became simple when the best burning sticks were known; and how to avoid scalds and burns was a necessary

study, to which the mind was diligently applied, and soon mastered the simple problem. There were many of these minor things, of great importance to personal convenience and serenity of temper, which, though never thought of by the immigrants in making their equipments for the new life, were found to be of much greater moment than providing for safety against the savages.

Preparing comfortable beds was accomplished with varying success by men whose wives and mothers had attended to that business for them all their lives. It is doubtful, neverthelesss, if even those mothers and wives could have done much better with the rude material available for such a purpose that night.

Among those who made their beds for the first time in their new residences there were some who possessed a natural sense of things that lead to comfort; others who seemed to be almost destitute of it, as well as of the faculty for making the best of circumstances.

The wiser had, while the sun shone early in the day, been watching for anything that might turn up suitable for any of their wants. These had cut and laid aside, that they might be well dried, bundles of tussock grass or dried ferns (bracken), and at night as soon as the sun had set behind the western hills they had put it inside, and when the time came they were able to spread out excellent mattresses between themselves and the damp earth. Others who had just done things as they reached the stage for doing them had not the same comforts or security against the risks of damp. While there were some so careless of what they were about that, throwing a sack or two on the freshly-cut earth they lay down to sleep, but also to waken

less well rested and charged with incipient colds that in some cases caused mischief to their unfortunate possessors.

On the walk from Port Chalmers, the "band" had resolved to celebrate their arrval by a grand display of fireworks, such as could be procured, let off in some prominent position.

Their leading spirit having been called away to attend to their wounded companion to some extent affected the efficiency of their staff; yet Peter McKechnie, who was always Eric's right-hand man, and next to him in popularity among the "chums," gathered his friends quietly, and they strolled away from the others after "tea" was over and dusk was closing into darkness. They had kept their intention a secret, and they believed none else knew for what purpose they had gone off in company towards the beach. They had not gone unobserved, however, for the rivalry between them and "Crawford's lot," was to grow even stronger than it had been on board the ship. Andrew Crawford had made friends with Ben Brooks, and learned from him before he returned to Port Chalmers what Eric's band were going to do, and he had made energetic preparations to have an opposition demonstration in another direction. And so the two "bands," set out to "alarm the natives" by their operations.

In about half an hour a flame of fire was seen to rise on the crown of "Bell Hill," which being energetically fed with all sorts of combustible brushwood by twelve sturdy young men; it grew into a fire of flaring character, from which the tongues of flame leaped higher and higher until their reflection was cast back from the calm waters of the sea beneath, and had attracted the notice of all the

"residents," who had come out of their "houses" to witness the great conflagration, not without some anxiety as to its origin and ultimate effects.

This had lasted but a few minutes, when on the hill somewhere in the region of High Street and Hope Street corner, was observed a second flame arising in the darkness, as if replying to the notice of the first. Crawford's "fire brigade" had selected their position well and were working with zeal to send up a flame that would not only rival but eclipse their opponents. When their leaping flames shot up into the sky, "Eric's band" was somewhat surprised, and afterwards confessed to feeling some annoyance; but this was quickly overcome, and under Peter's directions they sent up a shout of triumph and welcome that drove any spirit of ungraciousness to the four winds; it was immediately replied to as vigorously as it had been sent, and then for an hour the brigades kept piling on the fuel, and causing the heavens to resound with their shouts of pleasure and of rivalry.

"We must have a thorough mountain of fire for a last effect," said Peter.

"Why, Peter, we have cleared away everything for yards round; we have to drag it a long way now," said Bill, who was now tired after his long day's work.

"Yes, yes! Bill, but just one good effort, a right good roaring blaze, and then it is over. Come, boys, let us make a sight worth remembering in the years to come!"

Then with renewed vigour their twelve hatchets were busy cutting, and their arms pulling out the brushwood, until they got quite a heap ready for the flames. It was thrown on and piled up high above their heads. It smoked,

crackled, and blazed, and flamed until it had become a veritable bonfire, and when it was at its highest they formed a ring, and in the strongest tones their voices could produce they uttered a last grand "Hip, hip, hurrah!" which was responded to from the opposite height, and the brilliant sign of their jubilation was permitted to fade away and die; while nature resumed its silence, and all the aspects of rest and darkness settled down upon the embryo city of Dunedin.

By six o'clock the next morning, the beach became vocal with the voices of young men who, no longer constrained by the conventionalities of society, had made their way to the water's edge, and there, in nature's simple attire, they were rushing into the sea to enjoy its delicious and invigorating influence. As usual, they had divided into two companies, and were now rivalling each other in their noise and frolic. Talk of savages! Had any company of absolute savages seen the conduct of our young Scotchmen now let loose and displaying their limbs, as well as exhibiting the power of their voices, they would have stared in amazement.

They revelled in the enjoyment of their freedom in the spirit of re-action from the long months of enforced confinement on board the ship. They whooped and yelled, they laughed and roared, splashed the water into clouds of spray until all around was a sheet of foam. Very few of them knew the art of swimming, but the water was shallow and the bottom was sandy, or a yielding mixture of sand and mud, so that they could wade in for a long distance and throw themselves about in perfect safety as far as depth of water ensured safety.

But there were dwellers in those parts with whom they had yet to make acquaintance. It was James Carmichael, who, having strayed some distance from the others, was the first to discover the presence of a strange creature, which seemed, from the sight he got of it, to be all legs, and many of them.

Keeping out of its way as best he could, he called on the others to come to him, which they did, forming a semi-circle on the sea side of the curiosity; and by noises and splashes they pursued it until it was driven on the beach, where its progress was almost *nil*. It crawled to the very margin of the water, but there was at bay. One of the youths, more bold than wary, took the harmless looking creature by one of its slimy but knotty-looking legs for the purpose of swinging it up on the dry ground, but as he grasped it he felt a sudden and powerful contraction of the two knot-like lumps on his hand, while immediately the tapering end of the "leg," or arm, was turned round his wrist; but when he would gladly have set the octopus free, he discovered to his dismay that its grip of him was more powerful and effective than his hold of it.

Seeing what had taken place, the group of bathers became alarmed, and were more inclined to preserve their naked bodies from contact with so subtle an adversary by remaining at a respectful distance; but their friend was every moment becoming entoiled more and more in the arms of his antagonist, that was now making strong efforts to throw its suckers on his feet, which he, with great difficulty, prevented.

It was a sight possessing both a serious and a humorous side, to see a strong man completely disabled by

a creature without a bone in its body, and standing or springing about in terrified dismay as it threw its limp and slimy arms about in the hope of fastening upon him in some other place.

At last, Peter McKechnie, having ran to where he had left his clothes, returned with his strong long-bladed pocket-knife, and by cutting off the arm of the octopus freed his companion, who never again laid rash hold on the arm of one of those ugly monsters. With this their bathing for that day was ended.

The work of erecting accommodation for the families was now to be carried on. The site had been chosen and cleared, and some of the timber was already on the ground. There were carpenters amongst them who took charge of the building operations, with numerous assistants who were more willing than proficient. A first necessity, however, was bushmen who could use both the axe and the long saw. This was a work for which none had any special training, but it was an employment that promised good remuneration to those who undertook it. There were other houses to build for which timber would be required, and those who could produce it from the native bush would be among the first to command a good price for their labour.

Already two men had begun the work of sawing timber with a pit saw, but more were wanted to commence operations at once.

As Eric and Mr. Melville returned in one of the ship's boats, which was bringing Captain Cargill and some others to Dunedin, the subject of sawing naturally arose as they were sailing up by the side of a forest in which the giant pines were standing conspicuously among less lofty

tress of other species. Eric's ears were open to catch the remarks made, and he was anxious to undertake some venture by which he might soon be able to have money at his command, and make preparations for his subsequent career.

His chum Peter was a carpenter James Carmichael was an intelligent, strong-framed youth, and had been in one of the building yards on the Clyde for two years, where he was employed mostly in the handling of large logs. If they would join him this was the very thing by which to get a good start.

Having possessed himself of all the information he could get from those in the boat with him, he, immediately on landing in Dunedin, went straight to Peter and James and explained what he had heard, and the three of them lost no time in having an interview with the venerable Captain, who gave them every encouragement to undertake the work.

That afternoon they were again on the water making their way to Sawyer's Bay with all the necessary tools to commence operations. They selected a spot where there was good depth of water right up to the shore, and abundance of fine, straight, tall red pine trees within a hundred yards of where the boat was moored. Before dark, they had constructed a rude whare, which was capable of affording them good shelter for the night, which threatened to set in wet and windy; but where they were the wind would cause them very little annoyance, for they were sheltered on every side.

Their first fire was kindled outside between two stones, with a tree at the back; and James, who was cook, had his

eyes nearly blinded with the smoke which kept curling round him; no matter where he stood, it was simply impossible to escape it, so that it was either to be endured or cooking for the night was to be abandoned. He was not the lad to give in before a difficulty if there was a possibility of overcoming it. So with eyes almost as red as the cinders in his fire, he persevered and provided the food according to desire.

By the light of a tallow candle later in the night they were seriously discussing their plans and prospects, very much after the fashion of young gold-diggers who have just pitched their tent on a newly-rushed flat, when Peter remarked that he saw something pass the door of their hut. The others were incredulous, and taunted him with fear.

"No, indeed!" he contended. "I saw some living thing pass the door, and a thought of fear has not entered my head this night."

"What could there be here at this hour of the night?" asked Eric.

"For the life of me I could not say what it was, but I am certain I saw some dark object pass," he replied.

"Would it be a wild pig?" inquired James.

"It was dark-brown, not like the colour of a pig, nor did it seem to be so large," said Peter, firmly.

"Then it's not likely to have been a man!" interjected Eric, handling his tomahawk carelessly as he spoke.

"A man!" came from Peter, with a hearty laugh. "It was only a small thing, not bigger than a man's foot, but I only got a glance of it as it darted or flew past."

"Perhaps it might be a rat!" suggested James, anxious to propose some object that it might resemble.

"I don't think it was a rat, but really I am unable to tell what it was; perhaps it may come back again if we remain quiet for a little while."

"Yes do," said Eric, grasping his hatchet firmly, in readiness to throw it at whatever should appear.

There was neither a sound nor a motion in the whare for a period of about five minutes, and each one of them became anxious to speak, but kept up the restraint, all watching the door as if they were expecting the appearance of some wild occupant of the forest, or perhaps worse, some irate savage native, who was skulking about waiting an opportunity to massacre them in their sleep.

The moments were dragging by slowly, and the other two were becoming suspicious that Peter had been playing a trick to try their nerves. Still, they were silent as the stars in the blue of heaven, and the moving of a leaf outside would have been observed by them. The longer that lasted the more sensitive they grew. Then, without warning of the least kind, a shrill screech pierced their strained ears, when simultaneously the three men sprang to their feet, looking each other in the face with a strange confusion of resolution and fear depicted on every feature. The screech mellowed into a coarse laugh, merging into tones of ironical derision, dying away in sounds of merry exultation, and then the perfect stillness of night resumed its reign.

"Oh, what a voice!" exclaimed James.

"I told you something passed the door," said Peter, in vindication of his character.

"But you said it was not a man!" retorted James.

"Do you call that a man?" he rejoined, tauntingly.

"If not a man, what do you say it is?" said James, with more than usual caustic in his tones.

"It may be a demon; no man ever uttered sounds like those," said Peter.

"Hold still again lads," broke in Eric, who had not so far spoken. "Perhaps we may hear it again, if we are silent as we were before. I have my own opinion of the mystery."

Again they sat down on their benches and listened eagerly, this time prepared for the shock, and ready for any emergency. Presently a sound broke the silence, as *whurrr! whurrr!* something sped past their open door.

"That must be the whiz of an arrow," said James in a low voice. "Should we not put the light out, or stand more out of it?"

With that he drew himself nearer the wall, as if afraid the next arrow might be shot in through the door and find a quiver in his body. Just as he did so,

Mou-poup! mou-poup! fell in not unmusical sounds upon their surprised ears.

Then from a different direction came the response: *Mou-poup! mou-poup!* and again *whurrr, whurrr!* as two objects passed the door.

"It must be owls," said Eric, in a voice which assured the others of his confidence in the truth of his statement.

"These last are very likely owls, but what of that terrible scream and hideous laugh?" interrogated James, who was not by any means satisfied they were not surrounded by a band of savages, who meant to fall on them with murderous vengeance before morning.

Eric resumed his seat and quietly laid down his hatchet.

"Before leaving Edinburgh," he said, "I read of a laughing bird that was common in the forests of New Zealand, but had forgotten all about it until the call of the owl reminded me of birds that prowl about in the night. I have no doubt now that we have heard the laughing-jackass, and we shall not forget it for many a day." Just as he said these words they were startled once more by the scream and laugh of the "whekau," whose chief mission seemed to be to make night distressing.

As the sound evidently came from above them, among the branches of the trees, they now felt satisfied that their nocturnal visitor was morally harmless, if musically grotesque, and they were able to lie down and sleep soundly until daylight.

They stood that morning, three young men, alone on the margin of the virgin forest, with no experience of bush life, and only a few words of advice as to what they should do remaining in their memories, and even those seemed scarcely intelligible in face of what seemed gigantic difficulties. They, however, possessed unconquerable resolution and a fair stock of common sense; these added to their partial knowledge of tools, such as the saw, the axe, the crowbar, and the maui, enabled them to consider and apply plans somewhat skilfully.

One piece of information Eric had picked up in conversation with Ben Brooks was the first practically applied new lesson of their operations. One of two things was necessary for them to do—erect a platform to cut up their logs on, or excavate, or find, a pit upon which a frame or platform could be constructed level with the surface of the ground, so that the logs might be rolled on to the cutting bench with comparatively little trouble.

Ben had told him that the pit was a great saving of labour, and consequently of time, and they determined to find a natural hollow, if possible. In this, after a diligent search, they were successful, and that in a spot almost in the centre of the cluster of pine trees they had selected.

Now began their work in earnest. Their first real operation was to clear a space round their "work-shop," as Peter at once named it. The mishap of young Melville warned them to be watchful to avoid accidents. In reference to this, Peter took occasion to give some practical advice on the use of the adz and the axe to his comrades, which they listened to wisely, as coming from one able to instruct in that particular line.

The small trees fell before the vigorous blows of their axes, and in a short time the sky was open to them, and a good space of very uneven ground had been freed from its encumbering vegetation. The hollow was ready for shaping. Pick and spade and crobar were now brought into use, and to their own surprsie they beheld the place taking shape and form under the guiding hand of Peter, who now was director of affairs; while he found his two companions both willing and apt pupils.

Before night came on them they had cleared out their pit and built round it a substantial platform, well dressed and pinned together with strong wooden pegs, in readiness for its first log. When the master mind of the trio declared it fit for use, they stood gazing on the result of their perseverance with every evidence of satisfaction.

They felt tired, and would then have stopped for the day, had not James said:

"How nice it would be to see the first log on the pit before we leave."

"It will not take very long to manage that," said Peter, pointing to the first tree he had decided should yield to the influence of their long saw. "That tree can be cut so as to fall just along by the side here, if we are careful."

"Can we make trees fall where we want them to?" asked James innocently.

"Not quite, yet by the manner of shaping the cuts of saw and axe we may give a certain amount of direction to the fall. I helped to fell a few trees in the Earl of Mar's plantation two years ago, and learned that from the forester."

"Let us try then to lay this one where we want it, and if we succeed we may try to satisfy Jim by getting our first log on the beams," said Eric.

"Then you two take the cross-cut saw and work from that farther side, while I will use the axe on this side and make our first experiment," returned Peter.

In about twenty minutes the axe-man said:

"Remove your saw and stand back, she is coming!" and watching the first movements of the swaying top, he gave another blow or two and sprang away to a safe distance.

The saw-cut began to gape, the uncut portion cracked, the head of the giant was moving right in the direction they desired. The sight was a pleasing one. There is always something fascinating in the appearance of an object tall and strong falling from its grand position into prostrate humilation. Man has ever found delight in conquering the mighty and in humbling the proud; and a similar feeling is

present with the woodman when he sees, as the result of his labour and skill, a strong and lofty tree part from its stump and come crashing to the earth in the spot he designed for it.

The three youths stood side by side as their first pine tree bore testimony to their power and skill; and, although there was no one to hear their exultation, they shouted a hearty "Hip, hip, hurrah!" as its ponderous stem and spreading branches crashed through the trees of smaller growth, and brought a large number with it in a terribly mangled condition and great confusion thundering to the ground.

This new excitement drove off all thought of their tiredness, and, seeing the massive trunk lie so neatly by the side of their saw-pit, they commenced to cut off the first length, and in a while had reached the height of their ambition for the day, by seeing the first great log lying in position for their saw to begin on next morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NATIVE THIEF.

Unwitting of the danger,
Unhid my treasure lay ;
With stealthy steps unnoticed,
The thief bore it away.
My heart was sore with sadness—
'Twas precious in my eyes—
I sought, resolved to find it ;
I carried back my prize.

In going out to work in the thick bush, Eric took the precaution to remove his watch chain from his watch in case it might get caught among the brushwood and be broken, and left it lying openly on his pillow. It was there when they came to the whare for dinner, and remained there when they went to work—all three of them saw it, but when they returned at the close of their first day's toil as woodsmen it had disappeared.

"There must be someone about this place," concluded James.

"I have heard," replied Eric, "that the natives are very fond of any glittering article. But surely no thief would be satisfied with merely taking that watch chain ; there are other articles he might have taken as well."

Peter looked at him with a comical sort of smile. "You would have been better pleased, perhaps, Eric, if we had all shared in this as well as in other things that are going."

"It would certainly have been a more equal distribution of his favours if he had deprived us each of some trifle, but what I meant was that, if it was really a thief, he was not greedy," said Eric, being suspicious that either a trick had been played on him, or the thief was not one who was seeking to do much mischief.

"Just as well he was not greedy," put in James, "for in such a case he might have walked off with some of our food, or some of our small and useful tools that are here lying about."

"You are right, Jim! We are to be congratulated on the fact that he has taken so little," was the manner in which Peter regarded the event.

"You two may congratulate yourselves to your fullest contentment, and perhaps I should not refuse to acknowledge your good fortune. But I would rather he had got my watch than my chain," murmured Eric.

"I had no idea it was so valuable; was it worth so much, Eric?" asked Peter, looking mischievously at Jim as he spoke.

No, in one sense, not by a long way so valuable nor so useful as my watch; but you see part of it was a "keep-sake," given to me by a friend just before leaving home, and I would not have lost it for a good deal more than the value of the watch," Eric said, partly in explanation of his annoyance at losing it.

Then he began turning things over and looking under all kinds of articles, and examining all sorts of absurd places, with the apparent hope of discovering that it was still in the whare. Jim also began to look in corners and places where he did not believe it could be, but out of pure

sympathy to his comrade's disappointment, he joined in the fruitless search.

After tea Eric was still brooding over his loss, and felt inclined for a little while of solitude. One of his old fits of meditation came on him, and he left his mates resting after their hard day's work, and scrambled through the thicket of supplejacks at the back of the whare, and made his way with a good deal of difficulty to a shady grove of tree ferns, whose straight stems rose to a height of from twelve to twenty feet, and whose heads were crowned with majestic feather-like fronds that spread out to a diameter of fifteen to eighteen feet, overlapping each other and intermingling so thickly that it was impossible to see a hole the size of a pin head through which to look up at the open sky.

The ground was strewn with dead, dry foliage, and here at the root of one of the largest fern trees Eric threw himself, and lay in absolute quiet for a considerable time, for his body was weary, and his mind was again re-living the last hour he had spent with his love by her mother's door. The little treasure at that time bequeathed to his keeping with injunctions to use it in despatching his letters was the chief trouble of his mind.

In another week a vessel would be sailing for Sydney *via* Wellington, carrying a mail which would be forwarded from that place by the first ship for Britain, and he must send a letter by it; but to send a letter without the seal would be almost as bad, if, indeed, not worse than to send none at all.

Should he postpone his letter? There might not be another opportunity for four or five months. What, then, would be the result of confessing in his first letter that the

precious item she had charged him so earnestly to keep as he would desire to retain her love, had been lost?

Would she, as her words seemed to imply, blame him with carelessness and want of continued affection? Was it in any way probable that she would consider her own love neglected, and make this an excuse for exercising the right he had granted her to terminate their engagement? Or would she accept the explanation of its mean removal from his pillow in the little rude whare in the bush?

Thoughts came rushing through his distressed mind that could not be suppressed. Queries pressed themselves upon him he could divine no answer for; and he was growing more miserable and disconsolate, when his ear caught a light rustling among the dead leaves not far from his feet. He raised his head slowly to avoid startling whatever it might be, but before he could catch sight of any living thing he again heard the sound of disturbance amongst the leaves. He rose higher, and as he did so, observed a brown, thing-legged, sharp-headed bird scratching at the foot of a tree about six or eight paces from him.

After watching its movements for a minute or two, with the object of trying to kill it he attempted to pick up a stick lying near him, but as he did so he moved the dry leaves about him and startled the bird, which immediately picked up something resembling a worm, with a heavy weight at one end. As the bird made off to an adjacent thicket, Eric distinctly heard a sound as of the contact of two metals, and at the same moment he noticed that what had seemed like a worm, glittered as a ray of light fell on it, but its possessor instantly disappeared from his view.

Could it be possible that he had seen the thief that had caused him so much vexation? He felt sure of it. The jingle and the glitter, as well as the shape of what the bird carried, convinced him he had once more seen his watch-chain. But, alas! where it had now gone it was impossible for him to follow. However, he had the strange satisfaction of feeling sure of how it had been carried off: together with the hopelessness of ever seeing it again.

His curiosity led him to examine the tree at the foot of which the bird had been scratching. It had a gnarly, thick, short trunk, with a leaf nearly round, and having a beautiful glossy surface, from an inch to two and a-half inches in diameter. Its roots were characteristic of the trunk, full of knots, and twisted about like the pictured arms of some monster in wrath, or suffering torture. Just by where the woodhen had been there was an opening in the trunk between two great roots that spread away on the surface. The root was irregular—the result of decay—and evidently the heart of the tree was hollow, just such a place as a bird of that sort might make its home.

It was becoming dark, and he felt that he should be retracing his steps to the whare, so marking the spot well, and noting all the possible land-marks for future recognition, he made his way back through the tangle of undergrowth and supplejacks. As he drew near the hut he heard Jim singing—

Come all ye jolly shepherds that whistle through the glen,
I'll tell ye of a secret that courtiers dinna ken.
What is the greatest bliss that the tongue o' man can name?
'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie when the kye comes hame,
'Tis to woo a bonnie lassie when the kye comes hame.

The love-sick Eric realised that he was not the only one there who had a "bonnie lassie" to think about, but then Jim's was no great distance off, while his was "far, far away" indeed. Eric leaned against a tree until Jim's clear tenor voice had finished his love-song, and then he entered and related his experience.

"I have heard of monkeys being thievish," said Peter, "but I think I would scarcely give birds credit for that evil spirit of covetousness and the art of pilfering."

"I am not able to swear that it was my chain that I saw dangling from its beak, but I shall believe it until I have good reason to change my mind," replied Eric.

"It will get tired of its new braws in a while," laughed Jim, "and we may be able to pick it up some day as we creep about among the bushes."

"I doubt there's not much hope of ever seeing it," was Eric's doleful reply.

The sentence was just finished, when, as if in mockery of the whole affair, the laughing owl burst out in his wild scream and grotesque laugh.

The three wearied bushmen slept well that night, and next day made their first effort at converting the trunk of a tree into timber for house-building.

Like all other men, they made mistakes, and in many ways lost time, but at every point they were learning how to do it better next time. Still, before night they had the gratification of seeing a pile of more or less well cut scantlings piled up near the scene of operation. And they knew now what they had to do, and daily they grew more cnured to work, and more skilful in the production of their timber. When they had been there four days they were

able to lay a respectable stack of timber at the edge of the water, where it was received into one of Ben Brooks' boats and conveyed to Dunedin.

On Saturday night the trio rowed the boat they had secured for their own use into Port Chalmers, and moored her to the "Philip Laing," and eagerly sprang on board, where all their women folk were living, waiting for the cutting of timber and the building of places for them to live in.

The change was a pleasant one after four days of seclusion among the trees, the owls, woodhens, and other members of the feathered race. And every one on the ship was glad to listen to the romantic stories they had to relate of what they had done, seen, heard, and enjoyed during their first week ashore.

Miss Mary Thomson and James Carmichael had a great deal to communicate to each other privately, and took as long as propriety would allow them to do it in. Peter had his mother and sister to satisfy, and after they were attended to he sought the society of a handsome dark-haired young woman, who somewhat impatiently watched for his coming her way, and they for an hour or so found abundance to tell each other. Eric seemed anxious to give his news generally to all who cared to listen, but one young lady gave signs of impatience, and kept frequently casting shy glances at the popular lad she would have been glad to monopolise.

At last, when domestic duties called Eric's mother to affairs on the 'tween decks, Miss McKechnie stood close to his elbow, and by her glib tongue plied him with a battery of questions that secured to her almost all his time, and in a few minutes they were left alone to her evident content

and undisguised delight; but, though it was flattering to Eric to be sought in this manner by the "belle of the ship," he felt it irksome, but, while reluctant to offend the sister of his best chum, and now his partner in business, he strove to maintain a mere friendly intercourse, and preserved his position in a conspicuous place, where anyone might hear their conversation.

"Eric," said Peter, who came briskly along the deck to where the two were sitting, "what do you say to the proposal just made to me by Miss Scott?"

"Upon my word," said Eric, gleefully interrupting him, "accept it Peter; allow me to congratulate you my friend!"

"Of course you are in it as well as myself, my impulsive humourist, shall I now return and tell her you are willing?"

"Certainly, if after hearing its terms I am able to approve of the principle and details."

Peter took him aside for a moment, and after a serious consultation, they went to hunt out James, and among them they concluded to hold a select pic-nic the following Saturday, at the Maori Settlement over at Otakou; provided arrangements could be made for boats to convey them and their friends.

It was not long before the matter of boats was got over, for Ben Brooks had come off with some fresh meat and a few bags of vegetables, and he undertook to manage the whole of that department for them; and his bill would be, he said, "sent to the man in the moon, as I shall just reckon myself one of the party." Then after a pause,

during which his countenance had assumed a considering expression, he said :

"No objection to my missus coming, I suppose. She'll help the girls to get the boiler heated and the like, you know."

"We will be delighted to have her company," replied Eric in a hearty voice, and the matter was settled.

"You know a good deal about the birds in the bush in these parts, Ben, I should suppose?" said Eric, taking him aside.

"More about shootin' and catin' 'em than much else," he answered, comically distorting his features.

"The reason I ask you is this: Last Wednesday my watch chain disappeared from our whare while we were away at work, and that same evening, while I lay alone at the foot of a fern tree, I saw a brown bird with very thin legs and sharp-looking head, and when it became disturbed with my presence, it picked up and ran off with something, which I think was my lost chain. Do you know whether there is a thieving bird like that about here?"

"That was a weka you saw, we calls them wood'ens. Thieves! I should say so. A watch chain! that's just what would please them. Anythink as shines them there wekas is after, first chance. There is'nt nothink to match 'em here for makin' off with what is'nt ther'n."

"Then," said Eric, "I am certain that woodhen has been the thief."

"There's a mighty relief in knowin' for certain who it is as takes anythink. But that don't fetch it back."

"Well, Ben, I would give a week's work to get back that chain. There is not another thing in my possession I would not have parted with rather than it."

"'Sheddin' tears won't gather spilt milk' was a sayin' of my good old mother. You may as well say: 'good-bye sweetheart, good-bye,' when Mrs. Wood'en walks off with what she fancies; and hold fast to all the other nice things you've got."

"You think I'll never see it again?"

"Never, sir, never!"

"I intend to have a try."

"You may make certain she's made it a present to her sweetheart, as a love-token, afore now, and he has stowed it safely away against thieves for her sake."

Eric's heart gave a few loud thuds as he heard Ben's speech, which seemed to sound like a reproach, but it was impossible for him to know anything of his secret.

"My opinion is that the bird will soon tire of its treasure and forget it, so I will clear out the whole place and turn over every stick and sod until I find it again." He spoke with the force of a fixed resolve.

"That will be a long job, believe me, and a fruitless one," returned Ben.

"Fruitless or not, Ben, I mean to do it."

"I wish you luck, sir, there's more in what you say than your regard for the chain. A chain with love-links in it! Heaven bless you, I hope you may find it."

"Thank you, Ben, for your expression of good-will; but if you have a mind to do me a good turn, may I ask you to say nothing about this among our friends until I see you again. I do not wish it spoken about. I mean what I have said about finding it."

"Here's my hand on it willingly, ye'r not the only one as has carried his love-secret in heavy weather. But you

must tell me more some day, when ye've come to know the braces of the tongue of him ye'r confiden' in."

"When I have found my chain again I will tell you why I place so much value on it."

"And when you have opened your heart to Ben Brooks you will find that he can be true to them as trusts him," said the stranded whaler, and bade good-bye over the side of the ship as he dropped down to his boat.

Sunday passed over quietly with those on board the two ships, and early on Monday morning all the men repaired to their various scenes of work.

The trio were soon in the midst of their bush life, causing the forest to ring with the sound of their axes and the occasional crash of the trees they brought to the earth. Eric's mind had one thought, which might be said to be holding him in thrall all day. He was anxious for the end of their last working hour, that he might visit the fern-tree grove, with the gnarled broadleaf and its hollow stem. In imagination he had been by it most of the day.

The longed-for hour at last arrived, and with axe in hand he was leaving the door of the whare, when Peter said :

"Have you not had enough of the axe to-day, Eric, my hands and arms are quite sore, and I am sure you did as much as I have done."

"I am going to have a look at my fern-tree grove, perhaps I may see my friend, the woodhen. I would like to catch that bird.

"May I go with you?"

"Very pleased, if you are not too tired."

And the two of them forced their way through the tangle, cutting away much of the obstructive small brushwood and supplejacks, so as to leave a less difficult means of returning.

"This is the tree the bird was scratching at," said Eric striking the old broadleaf a blow with his axe.

"Suppose we fell it," suggested Peter.

"Would it not be better just to open up his hollow trunk, and have a look inside."

This plan was adopted, and they began to break off the decayed shell that still formed a casing in front of the cavity. When that was removed it exposed a hollow in which, when all the refuse was cleared away, two persons could stand upright; so that the tree was not much more than a rim of fresh wood, while its heart had rotted away.

There was many a niche in that rough interior where Eric's chain might have been deposited, and their axes had knocked down such a large amount of dry rotten stuff that it took them a long time to feel sure they had made a careful and thorough search, but at last they had every particle drawn out, and every corner and crevice of the dusty old trunk looked into, but no chain was found. It seemed worse than labour in vain, for the disappointment to Eric was severe indeed. All day he had built his hope on finding what he had lost in that old tree, and now his heart was dull, and his spirit vexed.

His sleep that night was restless, and although many dreams that passed from his memory, one remained as vivid to his consciousness as if he had actually passed through the physical experience.

He was in Edinburgh, where he could see, but was

unable to speak to, the one who had for a long time occupied the greatest portion of his thoughts, and for whose company he now felt a deep and increasing desire. Kirsty sat before him, quite unconscious of his presence. She seemed to be speaking though he heard nothing, but from her features he knew she was unhappy. He did not recognise the room, but believed it to be one in the house of her father.

In her hand she held an envelope with a stamp on one corner, while on the back there was a seal, at which she was looking curiously. The letter was still unopened, and at this he wondered. She would look at the address, examine the stamp, and then turn over to inspect the seal, then throw the letter into her lap and look out of the window wistfully. As she did so, he saw a big tear gather in her eye and steal down her cheek, leaving behind it the red track of its course.

While in that melancholy posture the vision gradually faded from his sight, and he was in one of the pleasant walks where he and his love had so often been together, but now he was alone. As he passed slowly along reviewing the familiar sights, he observed a lady and a gentleman approaching him. When they had come near him he recognised them as Kirsty and David Moir, who were apparently very confidential in their conversation.

They were walking quickly, and he made an effort to accost them, standing so close that he almost touched her arm, but they passed on, and he could neither speak nor move, while he looked after them in an agony of mind; again the vision dissolved slowly, and he was sitting by the foot of a tall pine tree not far from the foot of his whare,

contemplating the surrounding picture of New Zealand bush scenery. One fallen monarch of the forest seemed to form the centre of his meditations. It must have lain there for years, for out of its decomposing trunk many young trees had sprouted, two or three of them being almost four inches in diameter, and rank grass and beautiful moss covered it from end to end. It was an interesting scene, and he was moralising on the practical illustration of life springing from and nourished by death and decay.

Once more a transformation took place, not in the natural features of his environment, but in the mysterious appearance of Kirsty. She was alone, standing by the upturned roots of the old tree, which first she examined, and then turning her face full upon Eric, she pointed with the forefinger of her right hand to a hollow, and instantly vanished along with all the fabric of his dream.

The dreamer awakened before the others, and as soon as dawn lit up the eastern sky with the golden beams of the rising day, he passed out of the whare, and for a little while he sat on a low, rudely-constructed bench outside, recalling his night's experiences, and then set out in the direction of his fern grove, hoping to discover the locality of the old rotting tree he had seen in his sleep.

Nothing in the dream gave him any guide to find the spot by. He had not seen any place like it, but he imagined it had some connection with "Fern Grove" and would be found not far from it. In his dream he had thought himself in its vicinity, and of course he supposed the whole had to do with his lost "keepsake."

Strong-minded though he usually was, like most of us, he could not resist the influence of love; and when he had

seen his love pointing him so earnestly to a strange place, under stranger circumstances, he was powerless in anything but obedience.

He reached the hollowed, gnarled broadleaf that Peter and he had scooped out, and then stopped to consider which direction to take. Follow the very way the bird ran, seemed to be spoken to him in almost audible tones. But the bird had dived into a thicket of brambles, or more commonly called "lawyers," which were impenetrable to man. However, he obeyed the admonition, but the brambles stopped him. In a little while he succeeded in making his way round the extensive cluster, and stood on the other side of the obstruction.

Beyond him was rising ground, from which the supplejacks grew in network abundance and clung to the trees so thickly as almost to defy a passage through. Yet the monitor seemed to say "go through," and using his hatchet freely he cleared a way slowly for himself, and got to the summit of the little ridge.

Clearer ground was now before him, and he made his way into the hollow through which a crystal stream rippled over mossy stones, among the roots of overhanging trees, and leaping down little cataracts on its way to the sea. He marked a tree where he first came upon the stream, and then followed it down for some distance, but still saw no place resembling the vision of his dream.

Retracing his steps he went up the course looking carefully for any indication of the fallen tree for which he was searching. He soon got so far from "Fern Grove," that he was sure he was beyond the locality he desired to

find, and made his way over the ridge, taking a "short-cut," for his starting point.

When he thought he must be nearing the spot where first he laid himself at the root of the great fern, he was struck with a sense of some familiarity with his surroundings, as if he had been there before. He stopped still, but was like a man in a mist; he knew the objects nearest to him, but the farther off ones were all strange.

Going on a little farther, he saw through the winding wood a more than usually rich growth of vegetation, and projecting from among it the branches of a large decayed and fallen tree. His heart bounded with hope.

He made haste to put himself in the position, in relation to the dead tree, that he had occupied in his dream, but this was only effected by a slight detour and a scramble through lawyers and thick scrub. When he emerged from his struggle he knew he had reached the place he was looking for.

There was the identical tree, moss-covered, with others growing out of its decaying body; there was its upturned roots, which had torn the earth with them as they were wrenched from their ancient bed, and there, yes, positively there, was the hollow place to which Kirsty had pointed!

In a moment he was standing where she had stood. Then he bent down to the spot she had indicated, and far up in the hollow of the old totara tree lay snugly on a mossy bed the result of the woodhen's theft.

CHAPTER XIV.

AMONG THE MAORIS.

The day was bright, the autumn sky
Bade Nature smile, with bounty crowned ;
We launched our boats, while hearts beat high,
And in our sports companions found.

Meanwhile, considering all things, good progress had been made by the folk engaged in building the barracks in Dunedin. The walls were already set up—at least the framework of the four sides—and the principal partitions had been raised, and the rafters were partly on. This was seen by the three young men as they sailed up that evening from their solitude, so far off as Black Jack's Point.

In addition to this, however, they observed that in various places lesser buildings were being commenced ; the place was even so soon assuming an appearance of life and energy.

Not far from Jones' store, on the south, a patch of ground had been cleared, and they could see as they approached the landing place that a quantity of timber was stacked upon it, and afterwards learned that it was to be the site of the Rev. Mr. Burns' house, "The Manse," the material for which had been imported, ready for erection, and a large portion of it had been landed and laid in position.

The spot chosen was a charming one for a view of the surroundings—a good evidence of the sagacity of Otago's first minister. It was near the water, yet well up on a

pretty piece of rising ground, on which one might stand and obtain a view of the harbour from the present site of the Gasworks to far below Macandrew's Bay. Yet it was right in the midst of what would shortly become the busiest part of the rising town, and has since become one of the most active parts of the city—viz., Jetty Street corner.

There was great quiet among the whares of the settlers that night. Letters by the score were being written to friends in the Old Land. There were very few who were not sitting with pen in hand, committing to paper his version of the voyage, the arrival, and the place. Some were full of hope, others were devoid of enthusiasm, while there were not wanting those who have representatives in every community, and see a dark side to every picture. They may be forgiven for any hard things they said that night, for prospects of success could only be seen through the vista of long and sore toiling; and coming off a long sea voyage the work they had been doing for more than a week past had made every bone and muscle in their bodies ache, and few minds can resist the influence of physical weariness.

Eric wrote four letters—one to old Archie Rabb, one to David Moir, and one each to Mr. Knox and Kirsty—not, however, in the order I have stated them, more probably the inverse. In the one to Kirsty he enclosed a rough pencil sketch of the site of the future city from Grant's Braes, which he had got from a young draughtsman in the Survey Office.

As there was no such thing known then as that great convenience of recent developments—the parcels post—and as many were anxious to send parcels containing little presents to "folk at Home," it was arranged by the

authorities that a box should be filled with such articles and forwarded to the office of the Lay Association of the Free Church of Scotland in Glasgow, where friends could be advised to call and get them.

In this manner some scores of parcels were sent off to bear testimony to the fact that the donors were safely landed in the far-off country for which they had sailed. It was a strange and varied collection that composed the contents of that big square box: from pieces of greenstone to small tree leaves, specimens of native art and industry and of Nature's products, selected according to the taste of the sender or the supposed fancies of the receiver. Never afterwards was the community so thoroughly represented in any one packet that left our shores; indeed, very few members of the families had not supplied some article to the total to remind friends at home of the wanderers.

The event of the next morning was the departure of the schooner "Alert," 48 tons burden, Captain Allweather, for Wellington and Sydney, carrying the first actual mail from Dunedin, and the precious case of presents.

Every man had left his work to see the vessel get under weigh, and the landing place was covered with men and boys, discussing what they had written, as well as the presents they had sent, and anticipating the effects which they would produce at Home.

The common talk was disturbed by the appearance of Captain Cargill and the Rev. Thomas Burns wending their way from the Survey Office—which did service as a Post Office as well for the occasion—to the beach, followed by a large spotted bullock drawing a sledge, on which were lashed the case of presents and the mail boxes.

There was no lack of assistants to get the packets on board the flat-bottomed punt which floated right up to the stones against which the waves were gently washing, and bore them off to the "Alert," lying at anchor about two hundred yards from the shore. The chief official accompanied the valuable first fruits of our exports, and saw them safely stowed in the hold, and then sealing down the hatches he handed some papers to the captain of the little ship, and then bade him good-bye and a prosperous voyage.

As he returned to the shore the schooner hoisted her sails, weighed anchor, and headed down the harbour, while all the interested settlers stood watching her receding figure until, in about twenty minutes, she had gone from sight round Black Jack's Point.

When the venerable patriarch of the colony returned to the shore Eric extended his hand to him to help and steady him as he sprang from the boat.

"Thank you, Eric," said the Captain in recognition of the kind action, and, as if willing to induce a conversation, continued in a dry humourous manner, "So you lads, who have left bonnie lassies in Scotland, have got letters away to them at last."

"I suppose you look upon your official despatches as of far greater importance than our simple letters to simple folk?" retorted Eric.

"All things in their due order, sir; there is nothing without its proper place in the whole universe. The tiny blade of grass is entitled to its place as much as the forest pine tree," answered the Captain seriously.

"Just so, Captain, your pines and our tiny blades of grass are all off now to exercise their influence on the folk at Home."

"We must come to recognise this as our home, Eric, and we must live such lives and produce such work as will make it worthy of being a home for our people for generations to come."

"How long, sir," said Eric, more interested over the future of his letters just then than the future of the colony, "How long, sir, do you think it will take those despatches and letters to reach Home?"

"It is difficult to say when they may get to their destination," returned the patriarch. "We have no exact advice of when they may get away from Sydney. It will probably take a month for them to get there, and even if a ship should be sailing immediately on their arrival, it will take four or five months for the main voyage."

"Do you reckon that they are likely to get there by next August, sir?"

"Perhaps some time in August or September, I should say. But I thought all your family came with you, Eric. Is that not so?"

"Oh, yes, all our family are here," said Eric; but his voice told that there was someone else who held a large share of the young man's affections who was still left behind, and whose presence was necessary before he would be able to call this place "home."

"I see," said the captain, "I was afraid some of you boys had left your hearts behind you. Have you sent for her to come straight off to join you? If you have I will admit your letter holds a more worthy position among the packets that we have sent off to-day than a blade of grass does in relation to a forest pine."

"Well, no, captain, I have not sent yet, but I will as soon as I have got on a bit, and can have a place for her."

"That's right, lad, you must lose no time in getting the place ready and bringing out your bonnie bride. And here is Mr. Burns, who, I am sure, will be pleased to do all a minister can to put you through the marriage ceremony. But you should have brought the lady with you, with the marriage certificate in her box."

"We are both young, captain," answered Eric, "and her parents thought better I should come first and get things into order, and so the matter was arranged."

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," put in Mr. Burns, knowing already Eric's story. "You have left a lot of braw lads behind you, and there have been grievous disappointments before now. You will be wise to lose as little time as possible, if you are to cage her safely."

"I am not in any doubt of her, she is a true-hearted Scotch lassie," said Eric bravely.

"Nothing surpasses confidence," returned Mr. Burns.

"It is the grandest thing in life," commented the captain."

"The want of it is the secret of all misery," moralised the minister, looking with an inquiring gaze in Eric's face.

"Yes, Mr. Burns, if I had not had confidence in your statements about New Zealand, when I heard you first, I might have had no prospect in life but the miserable career of a struggling cobbler," said Eric in a voice that betokened gratitude.

"Then you are not sorry for coming out?"

"No, Mr. Burns, I feel a different spirit in me already, and I am satisfied that I will yet have much to thank you for."

"A stout heart on a stiff brae wins the summit, lad. I have no doubt that your perseverance will be rewarded."

Eric accompanied Mr. Burns to where the latter's house was being put together, and, after being shown all the plans for the manse and the garden, he rejoined his mates, who spent the rest of the day among friends, and in the evening they returned to the scene of their bush-life.

Saturday morning dawned with all the signs of a fair day, and all the members of "Eric's band" were early astir on board the "Philip Laing."

The women folk had spent the week in a high condition of expectation, and had prepared many things for the day's outing. The fact of getting off the ship for a full day to romp about in the grass through the bush or on the beach had raised their spirits to animation; and when the fleet of five boats came alongside, under the guidance of Ben Brooks, who by this time had become a well-known and respected character among the women, because of his frequent visits and many little acts of kindness, the twenty-six maids and matrons who were to have the privilege of the sail and picnic were seen tripping round on deck as full of life as any band of women setting off to a Scottish fair.

They were received with demonstrations of hearty welcome by the Maoris who lined the beach at the Kaik, where they were to land, and as soon as the boats grounded on the shallow sand the natives, men and women alike, rushed into the water offering their services to carry the pakehas ashore.

This was a novelty of which our modest young folk were reluctant to take advantage, but nothing would satisfy the "terrible savages" but to have their way. Mrs.

Thomson was the first to submit to the persistent demands of the strong and tall Korako, who carried her to the dry sand as respectfully as any gentleman could have done. After her example other dames and damsels followed, each in the arms of a noble specimen of the male gender, while the women fancied carrying the men, and effectually prevented some of them, who were too bashful to submit to so tight a grasp and friendly a hug in the arms of the Maori beauties, attempting to go into the water themselves. The first man who put his foot over the side of the boat was fastened on by two of the dusky fair sex, and between them was borne in triumph to the shore by his captors.

There was nothing for it but to give way and be conquered in this mild and friendly fashion. One pair of fascinating eyes had watched the movements of Eric, and, although he seemed not to recognise her, she knew him and was intent only to secure his attention. She was not a big woman, but she considered herself equal to the task of taking the young man on her back to the shore. Not being able to get him to look her way she at last went close in to the side of the boat just where he was, and touched him, saying:

"*Haere mai,*"—come with me.

"The touch and the voice startled him, and on looking at her he recognised Annie Pakeha, from whom he had on the night of his arrival purchased the two specimens of Maori handiwork.

He smiled and tried to pronounce the Maori salutation as he had learned it from Ben Brooks.

"*Tena koe.*"

She repeated it in more musical tones, and again said:

"*Huere mai.*"

It would have been a cause of offence had he refused, and rising he sat on the gunwale of the boat, and was immediately taken up by his admirer and borne to the sand as if by the strength of an amazon. When he felt his feet on the firm ground he was expressing his thanks, when she put her hands on her ears, and exclaimed:

"*Ku pai, Ku pai!*" and she laughed a hearty, musical laugh as she again repeated:

"*Huere mai,*" indicating with her hands that all were to come with her; and then she led the way to where her large whare was standing back among the trees in a beautiful spot surrounded by green, glossy-leafed kaios, and sheltered from the south winds by a steep hill.

There she had a number of other *wahine* waiting to be attentive to the visitors, and as each one came along a finely-woven flax mat was spread on the grass, and signs made to sit down on it.

This part of the programme was quite unprepared for, and they being in this manner taken captive, it was quite as embarrassing as it was surprising. However, when Annie had them all seated to her hospitable satisfaction, she disappeared inside her whare, leaving her astonished friends to surmise what next might happen.

While she was in the whare, the men and women of the settlement kept gathering in numbers and squatted in a wide circle round the visitors, still increasing their surprise and wonder. At last they were surrounded by between two and three hundred natives, who spoke with one another, in a lively fashion, a language which the pakeha knew nothing about. This situation was anything

but pleasant to some of the women, who still retained fears that the cannibal nature of their captors might not have been overcome, or even if it had, there might still remain the old hatred of intruders, and this was merely the prelude to some terrible outbreak, and perhaps a massacre.

Miss McKechnie, who had been sitting on the same mat as her mother, rose, and coming over to Eric, said:

"Mother says she is frightened something is going to be done to us; do you know anything of what is meant?"

"I think you may assure your mother," he replied, "that nothing but a spirit of kindliness has prompted these people, and in a few minutes, if you remain respectful to them, we will see it all."

"Then what can they mean by surrounding us so completely, as if we were already made prisoners?"

"Just their way of showing us honour. Would they have given us their best mats to sit on if they were making prisoners of us?"

"Perhaps not, and perhaps it was done to allay any suspicion."

Just as she said this Annie appeared at the door of her whare, and gave a signal by the waving of her hand, and eight women followed her back into the whare; and shortly appeared, each bearing a load in her hands.

There were baskets full of boiled potatoes and smoked fish, which the bearers carried round to all the visitors, and gave them a supply, laid out on the clean mats.

Having done this, Annie made another sign, and all the natives rose to their feet and went through what was supposed by the strangers to be a Maori song, but was a

Christian hymn of thanks sung before partaking of food. When the singing was over the ring of honour was broken, and the natives dispersed, shouting :

"*Ka pai ka pia* !"—very good, very good !"

The wholesome fare was not greedily consumed, although each one partook of a portion more for the sake of avoiding offence than from relish. They had not yet become accustomed to the mode of serving up, even if they had already eaten potatoes and smoked baracouta.

Before rising Mr. Thomson, senr., suggested that they should follow the example of the Maoris, and sing a hymn of thanks after food. Then all rose and sang in the open air of that pretty spot a beautiful sacred song of four stanzas, and before they had finished they were again surrounded by almost as many natives as had been there a quarter of an hour before, all standing with heads uncovered, and charmed with the music as it was wafted on the vibrating air from the lips of the singers.

Their imprisonment was over, and they were allowed to spend the day according to their own wishes in many joyous kinds of sport ; while their friends the Maoris looked on in wonder to see the happy capers of the pakeha, as they amused themselves in no stinted manner for hours on the sand and on the grass, to the strains of a well-played violin, and occasionally to the peals of the bagpipes.

During the heat of the day a few of the young fellows, having passed the word to some of the elder gentlemen to prevent ladies going round a rocky point to the south, went off for a good free plunge in the clear sparkling salt water.

They had found a very convenient thicket in which to prepare themselves for their bath, where they undressed in

quiet and good order, and leaving their clothes to the care of the seclusion they made a rush for the water and there amused themselves in a thorough manner; suddenly there appeared emerging from the brushwood where they had left their clothing half a dozen Maori men and women, who stood between them and their "bath-house" for some minutes, when all the six coloured aborigines, throwing off their mats, came deliberately into the water beside them, with all the apparent innocence of children playing with their friends.

The lads kept close together and showed their disinclination to have company, but to no purpose. The Maoris were like fish in the water, swimming gracefully with an unconcerned grace that made the efforts of the pakeha "paddlers" seem grotesque in the extreme. Darting out past them into deep water, diving out of sight, swimming along the bottom and reappearing yards away from where they went under, they showed the young men how a human being may feel at home in the water. Wherever the pakeha group went the Maori aquatics came gliding up towards them, laughing and talking in an unknown tongue. Sometimes inviting them to strike out into the stream, and, like a school of porpoises, they would plunge head first into the briny element and glide away in a comely style with surprising fleetness; and while the young pale skins stood watching them with a hearty admiration, the Maoris would gesticulate and perform antics in the water, which seemed at length to originate in a spirit of banter and ripen into one of jeering or contempt.

If their bath had been interrupted and their sense of modesty somewhat shocked, they had at least been the

spectators of an enjoyable swimming entertainment, a second item in the day's programme on which they had not counted; which showed them at least one thing in which these natives could far surpass the sea shore natives of their own land.

As they were returning round the point to join their friends, they came near to a native woman standing on a rock about five feet above the surface of the water, where there was a depth of about ten feet. She held a short wooden spear in her hand, and beckoned to them to be still; then poising for a moment she dived almost perpendicularly, and in a couple of seconds rose to the surface with a beautiful flounder transfixed by her spear. On coming ashore she threw her mat round her, and, running after them, presented the fish to Eric; when his companions rudely, yet perhaps pardonably, gave a hearty and derisive laugh. It was Eric's patroness, Annie, who seemed to single him out for every attention. He, of course, received the proffered gift with due courtesy, and she was pleased.

Ben Brooks and his wife Sally had taken entire charge of the fires, and, as if they had been employed to cater for the party, brought with them a large quantity of food of various kinds; and Sally, having induced Ben to stow some broad boards in the boats, they had placed them on stakes driven into the ground and set out an excellent repast on this impromptu dining table, which greatly pleased the much gratified picnicers; particularly the women, whose relief from the confinement of the ship had filled them with abundance of good humour.

Their return journey was enlivened by a brilliant

sunset, that threw a band of glorious clouds from the summit of Mount Cargill to beyond the eastern peak of Rangipokiha.

From the brightest gold the curtains of the sky were shaded down through many degrees to the dull gray of slate, or lead, while ever-changing devices dissolved and recast into a thousand designs, ever fresh and ever new. Now it was the dark red glow of an angry flame that spread itself along, growing darker as it extended from the centre, presenting a resemblance to the whole side of a mighty mountain on fire, in the midst of which tall trees seemed to stand, whose wide spreading branches produced a gorgeous effect, as the gleams of red and yellow shot between their irregular openings.

Again it was some enormous temple lit up with a grandeur far surpassing the power of human art to imitate or describe. Its tall and massive rows of pillars fringed with gold and capitalled with cornices of granite set with rubies, while from roof and gables were thrown all shades of light from brightest yellow, through orange, vermillion and scarlet, crimson and blue.

These again dissolved, and in their places gradually appeared a glorious city of gold with walls of vast dimensions, and ponderous gates standing open at frequent intervals, and inside were castles and splendid villas in many fantastic styles of architecture, all being surmounted by majestic towers and gay turrets ; intermingling among them were beautiful gardens with all manner of flowers and fruit trees, and happy tribes of animals—domestic and wild.*

* A sunset presenting the chief outlines of the above attempt to describe it was witnessed from the Lower Harbour in the autumn of 1879 by the author.

All too soon the enchanting phantasmagoria faded from the view, and left the occupants of the boats to the less happy realisation of the descending shades of evening and their return to the monotonous life on board ship.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FAMILY WHARE.

"Be it ever so humble
There's no place like home."

"When do you think you will have the house ready for me and the lasses, Hugh?" inquired Mrs. Thomson when she and her husband succeeded in getting a quiet moment to themselves that night after returning from the picnic.

"The truth is, Lizzie," he replied, "we have a lot of hard work to do yet before we have that pleasure."

"Well, Hugh, I'm tired of this sort of life. The voyage was bad enough, but this dull, cribbed-up life on the ship in the quiet water of the harbour is wearisome. I feel like to jump over and swim ashore some days, just to spend a while among the trees, away from this prison-like state."

"We'll not lose a day nor an hour in getting you away from the ship. There is not one of us but works his best, but you must try to content yourself as well as you can for a while."

"But what's to prevent you making your whare—as you call it—a bit bigger, and taking us to it beside you."

"I'm thinking, Lizzie, that a sight of our whare would be enough to satisfy you that you are better here than you could be up yonder."

"What it wants, I'm sure, is the hands and head of a woman to make it what it should be."

"It would be cruel to let you try your hand on such a place, my dear wife. Let us work away at getting the house down, and then your head and hands will find abundance to do in making it homely."

"I think you should do as I suggest, Hugh. We could not be more miserable than we are here, and there are lots of ways we could all be useful."

"Patience, my dear lass, patience! Take my word for it you are fifty times better here. It won't be long. I will work late and early to get you beside me in our new home, but I could never forgive myself if I took you to our rude hut and you were to be the worse for it, and perhaps have a sore illness. Remember, Lizzie, you never were accustomed to any kind of rough exposure."

"Then you must tell me all you can about the place. I think it would have been nice if you had at least taken me to see the place before the house was built."

"Try to believe, lass, that I have chosen a bonnie place among bonnie places. The Provost used to tell me that I had a good taste, and I have not been careless this time. Now, listen, and I'll tell you all about it.

"One of the finest pieces of ground in the whole place fell to me as my allotment when the ballot was made. We had all to take what came to us, but I would not have desired any other, though I had never seen it until I went to see what it was like after I got the number of it at the balloting, and when I came to the peg with the number branded on it, and saw the trenches that gave me the lie of it, I was as proud nearly as that day Eric was born.

"The sun shines on it the first thing in the morning as it comes up over the Peninsula hills, and shines on it all day until it sets in the west."

"I was always fond of the sun, Hugh."

"I knew that, Lizzie, and that was one cause of my joy when I saw it."

"There is nothing nicer than to see the sun shining on your bedroom window when you waken in the morning, just like our cottage in Edinburgh."

"Then there is a lovely stream of bright pure water running across the end of the section, coming from amongst the trees of the glen above, and there is no chance of anyone, for years to come, occupying the places above ours, so that we will enjoy its sweetness maybe as long as we need it."

"Well, now, we have sunshine and a fine stream of water, what about a view? You have said nothing about that yet. I hope there is no big hill or unmoveable obstruction right in front of our door."

"No need for alarm there, either, lass. When first you open our door and stand to look out from it your eye will find food for a year's study, both far and near. The boats sailing up and down the harbour, the storms as they raise the water in feathery waves, and the far-away ocean, where its waves constantly beat in an undying roar on the coast, the hills and the valleys and such like things are all before you."

"And there, Hugh, while you are enjoying all that, I am compelled to stay in this miserable ship and wait for weeks while you build a house. You have made me ever so much more anxious to leave here and come up to share your lot."

"Just think of how much more happy you will be to come up when all is in good order, to take possession of our new home. It would not be safe for you to venture coming where everything about is damp and wet and cold."

"Then if you are resolute to keep us in this prison, let me know what the house is like."

"That will be a more difficult task, for we have no design drawn with architectural exactness."

"But you have some kind of plan."

"Very much as I would lay the plan of a garden: four rooms of different sizes with walls round them, or I might say, four walls resembling a fence and the space within divided into four compartments."

"Now, seriously, what sizes are the rooms, and how many windows and doors are in it?"

"The main walls are to be twenty-five feet long by twenty feet broad; there will be a front door and a back door, and each room will have a window. The walls are to be made of posts and sods, smoothed over inside with yellow clay well puddled to make it stick. The roof will be of rafters cut from the forest, with the bark left on, crossed by wattles or battens, on which rushes are to be tied as thatch. The chimney, like the walls, will be constructed of tall sticks filled in between with sods and faced with clay."

"I am sure, Hugh, we could be of great use to you in many ways. There are three great girls sitting idle here all day: they might as well be doing something to help forward such urgent work as getting our house ready. They may as well begin at once, for they must begin sometime. Come, say you will take us out of this place to help you."

"Since you are so persistent, Lizzie, I will ask the boys what they think of it."

"Dear me, Hugh! Who is master now? I never thought you had to wait for a son's advice about me and

the girls. I mean what I say, Hugh: that where you are working we should all be together; and if you put up a whare in one day to suit three or four men, you could soon either add to it or make one beside it for us four as well."

In saying this, Mrs. Thomson spoke with energy, proving how thorough was her conviction that her view of affairs was a reasonable and a just one. But just as she had finished speaking her two younger sons came forward.

"James, your mother thinks we should make our whare large enough to take her and your sisters to it."

"Capital, mother!" exclaimed James. "Splendid! it would just be delightful if you would all come up and live with us."

"You're tired of cooking, James," said his father.

"Not so much that, although it is true; but I like to be where mother is. It's home then."

"Would you like to see your mother struggling about in yon confusion and mud. How long would she be able to make our hut 'like home' without turning ill?"

"If mother will come to rough it with us, we will save her from the mud, and as to the confusion, she and the girls would soon overcome that, I am sure."

"What about room for them?"

"We can build them a two-roomed whare in a day—a bedroom for you and her and a bedroom for the girls, and our whare can do to cook and eat in."

"Quite easy," remarked Tom, emphatically.

"Then we'd all be together, you see, father, continued James, "and you would be both more comfortable and more satisfied."

"And I'm sure sisters would enjoy getting out for a

ramble in the bush with us boys," interjected the juvenile Thomas, to whom the rambling in the bush was the climax of joy.

It was therefore decided that the first thing done on Monday morning would be to enlarge the rude dwelling accommodation, and as soon as that was done to fetch the whole family up to share the roughest form of colonising life.

While all possible progress was being made in the building of the barracks, as a common home for the homeless immigrants, and its commodious apartments were the scenes of ceaseless activity, that was by no means the only work being pushed forward, for several "heads of families" had determined to bring their households straight from the ship into houses of their own.

There were consequently many little clearings where the ballot had decided the "lot" of the various colonists. So far, fencing had not been thought of. Every section was marked off at each corner by a survey peg, on which was clearly branded the number of the allotment and a T mark cut in the earth, and every man respected his "neighbour's landmark." There might daily be seen eager men and boys toiling bravely in the sweat of their brows to convert the wilderness into gardens.

Axes, picks, spades, shovels, and grubhoes were being used in all directions, removing the scrub or trees, tearing up the roots, and levelling the ground; while from each part smoke was observable ascending from the fire that consumed the rubbish.

Saw-cut timber for house-building was both difficult to get and expensive to purchase when it could be had. The

rudest materials were employed in the construction of the houses, and yet when they were well employed, they made both warm and dry homes for those who who occupied them, while those who went to the cost of saw-cut wood found, after a few months, that they got more fresh air than was desirable in cold windy weather owing to shrinking and warping, and they also not only heard the rain outside, but often saw a portion of it running down the walls.

The Maoris had given it out that the winter just before them was to be one of unusual severity, and already they had experienced the meaning of heavy rain, and everyone was anxious to get his roof on as soon as possible.

Much talk was occasioned by Thomson's constructing a new whare of larger dimensions than their first. But the expertness which they had now attained in their work enabled them to perform their work both better and quicker than in the first case, and in two days they had a fine whare erected adjoining their original one, and on the Wednesday the whole family took their leave of the ship, and were the first to take possession of their new "city of habitation,"

When Ben Brooks' boat arrived at the landing with the first four women who had come to Dunedin to stop, nearly every man was there to bid them welcome and to praise their heroism for facing the life of a whare to aid their men folk in the work of putting things in order.

Among those present were the two heads of the colony in things secular and sacred, whose patriarchal congratulations were heartily expressed, and gratefully received.

"You have taken a brave step, Mrs. Thomson," said Captain Cargill, "in coming to join your husband in this wilderness. I hope you may not be anything the worse for it."

"It was not good for man to be alone in Eden, Captain," said Mr. Burns, with a humourous expression on his face, "and you see Mrs. Thomson thinks the same must be true of Dunedin, and she has come to be a helpmeet for her husband."

"Well, but you see there is a difference between the two situations," replied the Captain. "Adam was occupying a garden already made when Eve joined him, and there was not another man to speak to him, while Thomson has abundance of company of the man sort, and has yet to prepare, set out, and plant his garden."

"If it was not good for a man to be alone in a well-furnished garden, much less can it be so in a wilderness," said Mrs. Thomson.

"And you think it will 'blossom as the rose' all the sooner from your presence and help. You are quite right, Mrs. Thomson. The point in doubt is whether it is good for a woman to expose herself to the dangers of the wilderness before man has made it suitable for her," answered the Captain.

"A woman is no longer a helpmeet for her husband if she considers herself composed of material so much finer than his that she refuses to risk the dangers he is called on to face," replied the heroic woman.

"A bit of the true spirit of our historic mothers. You are the right kind of woman, Mrs. Thomson, to accompany the new colonist," said the Captain approvingly.

"But we must not forget," remonstrated Mr. Burns, "that it would be death to some women to come ashore and take up their duties in a bush whare. All cannot boast the constitution for such a life."

"Do not imagine, Mr. Burns," said Mrs. Thomson, "that I am pretending to speak about, much less censure, my friends who have not left the ship. I speak only for myself. I would let each one answer to her own conscience."

"Generous and genuine, Mr. Burns," smiled Captain Cargill. "The best points of all only come out, you see, when put to the test. Have you any objection to our taking a walk to see the arrangement of your new home, Mrs. Thomson?"

"I have not had the pleasure of a sight of it myself yet, Captain," she replied; "but if you will do me the honour to call to-morrow afternoon you will find me at home."

According to the spirit of the invitation, the two patriarchal heads of the settlement duly presented themselves at Mrs. Thomson's, where they found her prepared in tidy order awaiting their coming.

It had rained heavily during the night, and all the ground was soft, so that walking along the rude tracks which were the embryo representatives of modern asphalt footpaths, was very difficult, and both gentlemen bore the marks of soil and water through having been compelled to sit down occasionally to adjust their equilibrium.

They both wore heavy hob-nailed boots, leather gaiters, and pilot cloth overcoats, with great buttons; Mr. Burns being surmounted by his Geneva cap, and Captain Cargill by his broad crowned Balmoral bonnet.

They had not long arrived when host Thomson made his appearance, out of respect to his expected visitors. Feeling proud of his wife, and gratified at the visit, he had left his work and come scrambling over the hill to share in the pleasures of the event.

After the ordinary civilities of the day and partaking of a cup of tea and some home-made cake which the good woman had baked on the night of her landing—her first piece of cooking in the whare was declared by all to have been a splendid evidence of her skill—she said:

"Now, gentlemen, my new home is open for your inspection, if you would like to see what Hugh has done for me."

In place of carpets the damp earthen floors were covered with mats of rushes laced together with flax; for chairs fixed benches were made by driving sticks into the floor, on top of these were placed strong rails crossed with battens, over which was again laid, as cushions, a thick layer of rushes laced down tightly to the seats.

The beds were made in the same manner, but on top of the rushes was laid a quantity of well dried fern covered with coarse sacking; upon this was laid the mattress and other bedding.

A rustic table was built out of some slabs that Eric had sent up from the saw-pit at Sawyer's Bay, and fashioned into a very serviceable, if rough, piece of furniture.

In the fireplace a bright fire was heating a large camp-oven, over the lid of which was laid a quantity of hot cinders, baking the loaf of bread within.

To prevent their feet from becoming wet, or cutting up into mud or puddle the ground adjacent to the door of the whare, large quantities of brushwood had been securely tied with split native vines into mats about three inches thick and laid all round and for some yards away from the entrance.

Rude as it was, there was an evidence of industry, cleanliness, and comparative comfort, which utterly banished the idea of privation and misery.

When they had seen it all they could only find words of commendation to use in reference to it, particularly to the industry and care manifested. Mrs Thomson naively asked :

"Now gentlemen, do you not consider I am better off here than our good friends still in the "Philip Laing ?"

"Undoubtedly you are !" answered the gallant Captain. "But there are few men who could by their ingenuity and patience have so thoroughly overcome the difficulties of the situation, and made even their hindrances contribute to comfort as your husband has done."

"I must not accept your very kind words," said Thomson, "without some explanation, for mostly all this work was done by the boys."

"Then, sir, you are blessed with boys who are a credit to you, and will yet become worthy settlers among us," said the Captain, looking round as if to see whether they were about, that he might congratulate them on their work.

"Where are your sons ?" asked the minister.

"Over at the house, sir," answered Thomson.

"And your lasses ?" inquired the Captain.

"Helping them, Captain."

"What, set to work already ?"

"Oh yes, taking their first lessons at cutting thatch."

"That beats all !" shouted the Captain, laughing heartily.

Returning into the whare, the minister, following the good old custom of his native land, took off his cap and,

taking a bible from his pocket, read a short lesson and then prayed for the Almighty's blessing on the family and all their friends far and near; then rising, they quietly bade them good-bye and departed, leaving the happy couple in the best spirit of gratification at the visit of the Captain and the minister.

When the story of the visit was told by the Captain on board the "John Wickliffe," and by the minister on board the "Philip Laing," many of the matrons felt envious of the good fortune of Mrs Thomson, whose departure from their company only a few days before they had looked upon as an act of sheer madness. And now they began to feel unhappy with their lot, and some complained that if, instead of building barracks for the whole crowd, each husband had just followed Thomson's example, they might now all have been ashore enjoying their liberty. In this they were ignorant of the part Mrs Thomson had herself played, and how far they had been from possessing her determined resolve to get out of the ship "to help her husband."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE.

"From the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell like a falling star—
Excelsior!"—LONGFELLOW.

The days of April and May had passed drearily enough to those who were fated to spend the first portion of colonial life on board the ships, but much quicker to those who were daily engaged in the rough work of pioneers.

But now in the short days of June all were finally landed and housed in their "adopted land," and the good ships, having discharged their burthens, weighed anchor and put to sea, steering first to Australia and thence for the old land. They each bore letters from the colonists to friends at Home, to whom their minds were often turning with longing thoughts; and sometimes these were mingled with fleeting regrets for ever having parted from them. The glamour of life in a new colony had now been dissipated by the stern reality of all its actual operations, and occasionally the heart was conscious of disappointment, and was not without just a little irresolution and some amount of misgiving.

In spite of this there was already a great change made in the aspect of the place, as viewed from the bay. The day chosen to bring the families from Port Chalmers was unusually fine, and the event was accomplished with considerable effect.

A fleet of boats and barges, indeed, all the available floatilla of the place was pressed into service, and early in the day on the flood tide, while a gentle breeze from the N.E. blew up the harbour, the whole of them hoisted sail and headed for the new settlement. In all, between twenty and thirty vessels, large and small, constituted a very imposing sight as they kept in good order and wended their way up the tortuous channel. There were ships' boats, boats belonging to whalers and other residents on the side of the harbour, and a few Maori whale-boats, followed by Ben Brooks' two flat-bottomed barges, built in anticipation of trade.

It was like a promiscuous regatta as the procession came up through between the islands, and thence onwards; and the happy words of joy and admiration, given expression to by the liberated immigrants as they came into view of the various points of beauty presented by the ever-changing scenery of the passage between Port Chalmers and Dunedin, as they were passed from boat to boat by the delighted voyagers, gave to the whole affair a pleasure-trip character.

The sights of the harbour in the glory of its native splendour was enough to arouse the most apathetic to a high sense of its charming nature, and none in that company could refrain from expressing words of gratification at the things which met the raptured gaze.

The bold outline of the steep hillsides, the deep intersecting glen piercing away into the heart of the solid mountain, twisting itself about as it stretched backward and upward, the water of the harbour laving the roots of the trees on the margin of the unbroken forest which spread from point to point, covering the hillside and clothing the

glens and gullies with everlasting green of endless shades. Who could fail to be captivated by them?

Red, white, and black pine trees, sometimes in groups, sometimes standing alone in their towering majesty reared their great trunks and threw out their branches over the tops of their less aspiring neighbours, who contentedly filled up the lower space and seemed to cling round the noble stems of their superiors; while deep in the dark shades of the glens the fern trees shot up their umbrella-like heads and spread their radiating fronds triumphantly over the rippling broooks, claiming their part in adding beauty to the scene, while the totara and the bokaka vied with the pines in the struggle for greatness and surpassed them in beauty of form; and high on the ridges, where the soil would not bear the pine or the totara, like sleepless sentinels faithfully keeping watch night and day over the fastnesses beneath them, stood the fine-leafed, but ever-serviceable manuka.

Over hill and dale, through glen and gully, the beauty of the forest was, so far as the eye could see on either side interminable, charged with untold wealth for years to come.

As the fleet gradually approached the landing place, the residents who had not gone to take part in the "landing of the women and children" all gathered on the shore—a sandy beach about a hundred yards from Princes Street, where Water Street joins it, and as the tide was not yet up to the flood, the boats were run up on the sand as far as possible and their living freights were carried ashore amid the hearty congratulations of the bystanders.

And in this manner the last of the first batch of immigrants reached their destination, and in a short while

found themselves housed in the commodious barracks, where the Civil Patriarch addressed them after the following manner:—

"My friends, I feel pleased to see you all at last together in the place we have selected as the centre of our future labours. We now begin in earnest the work of reclaiming this wilderness, and I am gratified to find that we see all the discomforts and dangers of the sea left in the past.

"The eyes of the English-speaking world are upon us. There is a deep interest taken in our career. We are the first of our people who have left our homes to effect the work of colonisation, on the new system which our rulers have struck out; and our small company will be watched for an answer to the question: 'How will the scheme work out?' The success, therefore, of a great national movement rests on the conduct of each individual composing this community.

"In your hearts, I have no doubt the great liberal and independent principles of the Free Church, under whose auspices we are here, will live and animate you, and the noble objects of that Church will be effected; while you will at the same time be inspired by the sentiment of our race: 'England expects every man to do his duty.'

"Our duties as pioneers will doubtless be severe; but compared with those who have not had our advantages, they will be light and passing. You stand on the soil of the new land with your implements in your hands. This is now to be your home. The plains and valleys are fertile, as you must see for yourselves, and they will repay industry and economy with comfort and abundance; so that

every man will be able to provide in time against the feebleness of declining years.

"To our noble-minded women who have ventured to accompany us, and who to-day have come to complete our possession of the land, I express my warmest commendation, and trust they will reap a reward worthy of their heroism. The land is before us awaiting to pour its abundance into our store in proportion to our own zeal and industry. Where our labour is liberally bestowed, a liberal return will be reaped, and I have confidence you will reap that reward."

"Three cheers for Captain Cargill!" called young Crawford, who swung his hat in the air and commenced the cheer, and was enthusiastically followed by all the men and lads present.

"The Rev. Mr Burns!" then called young Melville, who was again able to be about after his mishap.

And many voices responded, "Mr. Burns!"

But the minister on first hearing his name called had quietly stepped through a door close by where he was standing, and had disappeared. He had not, however, got away, for Eric was at once on his track, followed by James Carmichael, and he was prevailed on to return.

As he re-entered the large hall, accompanied by his escort, a generous shout arose, proving in what high esteem he was held by all the company. He was helped to step up on to a bench, from which he spoke in something after this fashion:

"My dear fellow-colonists,—By the goodness of Divine Providence we are at length all here on the scene of our future joys and troubles. I feel proud that we have accom-

plished so much, and I hope that before one year has passed over our heads we will have proved the wisdom of our decision to come to this country, which seems to me to be one full of good things for our use and also for our gratification. As the Lord has guided our way so far, He will continue with us so long as we live to his honour. May that be for ever. I shall have many opportunities of speaking to you, and will refrain from saying more now."

In connection with the barracks a large store had been erected in which to place the supply of provisions specially sent out for their use, until other ships might arrive and other ways of procuring food were found. For three months at least they were certain of wholesome food, independent of the stock Mr. Jones had imported in hope of doing a large and profitable trade with the new arrivals. It was very much to his disappointment that the Association had sent such a quantity, and offered it at such a small cost to the purchasers that he was unable to compete in the same articles. But his time was to come.

He had anticipated the wants of the people in some things that they had not brought, and by these he succeeded in securing an early trade, which time ripened into a business of great magnitude and profit.

The establishment of the "store" necessitated that some one should be entrusted with its management. Of course the supreme control lay in the hands of Captain Cargill, and he caused a notice to be set up on the doorway, "Wanted, a Storeman.—Apply to Mr. Blackie, the schoolmaster." The latter for the time being had accepted the responsibilities of the duties attached to the delivery of goods and the keeping of the store books.

There were ten applicants—one of them being Mr. Crawford, and another was Eric Thomson.

When the Captain saw the two names he laid their applications side by side on the table of his office, which was a room in the Survey Office. The other eight he folded in a parcel and placed in a drawer. The two before him were both businesslike in style, but Crawford's was accompanied by a certificate of past service from his recent employer in Glasgow.

He was anxious to make the best appointment for the sake of the store. What he had in view was a man of civil speech and obliging manners, who could be depended on for accuracy. The testimonial was a special consideration in Crawford's favour, but he had seen more of Eric Thomson, and, besides, he had heard some of their shipmates comparing the two young men, and he was confident the balance of favour was generally on Thomson's side.

He would like an interview with the young men before making up his mind. Indeed, perhaps, he might require some person to act as his private clerk or secretary, and if Thomson had not served as a shop assistant he might suit for the confidential post of secretary. However, he would invite them both to call, that from personal intercourse he might form some opinion of the applicants.

As he left his office he observed Mr. Burns superintending some work in the erection of the manse, and crossing over to him he related to him the result of the notice. "One situation—ten applications," he said.

"And what are you going to do?"

"Select the most approved, to be sure."

"Have you then made your choice?"

"No, not quite. I laid eight aside; held two over for further consideration."

"How do you propose to proceed?"

"I have sent for them to call upon me. I want to have a talk with them before deciding."

"Very wise! Have they any testimonials?"

"Only one. It is a very good one, too, but I have not seen much of the candidate. Perhaps you could tell me of their conduct on the voyage; they are both of your number."

"Then you will have to name them."

"They are Mr. Crawford and Mr. Eric Thomson."

"What I tell you, Captain Cargill, remember, is spoken in confidence. You throw a responsibility on me which acts two ways. I must speak faithfully to you, and fairly of them."

"I intend and desire that both of us shall keep our counsel in this matter."

"Then tell me who presents the testimonial."

"It is one given to Crawford by his last employer in Glasgow, where he had been in a warehouse for three years, giving thorough satisfaction."

"Well, that is greatly to his credit; Thomson, I know, has no experience in serving behind a counter. He is a working shoemaker."

"Yes, I remember he is so classed, but he writes a good hand and composes a neat letter; that is what I fancy. But what of their conduct on the voyage?"

"I believe they are both honourable young men; but I must confess that the behaviour of Thomson was more to my liking than Crawford's; yet both were on the whole well behaved."

"Remember, Mr. Burns, I want to do the best possible for the store, and a free utterance from you might help me very much. Say, for instance, which you would yourself select for this post from your knowledge of them personally, other things being equal?"

"That question I will avoid, by suggesting my own want of experience in business; but if I were wanting to choose one of the two as a personal friend, I would have no hesitation in preferring the shoemaker. He is by far the more intellectual and sociable of the two."

"If, for instance, you wanted a private secretary he would be your choice?"

"Yes, you may put it that way very well."

"That is enough, thank you. I shall, however, wait until I have a conversation with each of them."

Eric was in the saw-pit, with James Carmichael above, running the slabs off a large log they had just recently fixed on the scaffolding. Both men were stripped to the fewest garments possible for them to work in, and were perspiring profusely as they lifted the great saw up and pulled it down through the tree trunk they had begun to convert into weather boards, when a messenger came forward with a letter in his hand addressed to "Mr. Eric Thomson," sealed with the Captain's monogram on the back.

It was a request to be good enough, if possible, to accompany the messenger to Dunedin, to confer with Captain Cargill over his application for the post of storeman.

After a few minutes' consultation with his mates Eric went to the hut and, giving himself a good wash, dressed, and in less than half an hour he was afloat on his way to meet the Captain.

The sun was setting when the boat ran its bow up on the sand at the common landing-place, and Eric was considering whether it would be prudent to go at that time to comply with the request of the Captain or leave it until the morning, when he saw the well-known Balmoral Bonnet which invariably covered the dignified head of the community, moving along behind the brushwood that grew on either side of the road to the beach, and in the course of a minute or so they were walking back to the office. The Captain had been watching for the boat's return and had gone down to meet it; so unconventional were the ways of the time and the manners of the man.

It was a surprise to the family when Eric opened the door and walked in upon them as they sat round the table in the largest room of their new house, his countenance being more than usually happy looking.

"Unlooked for, mother, I suppose?" were his first words.

"Unlooked for, but not unwelcome, Eric," was her pleasing and prompt reply.

"Then I may hope you can spare me something to eat, as well as a seat to sit on."

"Bring that stool over to the table and have your share of what's going. Make room Tom, let Eric sit here." With that Betty and Tom drew their seats closer towards their father and left a space at their mother's right hand, into which Eric slipped and was served with a portion of the best before them.

"But how came ye to be here to-night, Eric?" questioned his mother.

"I have left the saw-pit."

"What do you mean by haverin' like that?"

"No havers at all," and he laughed quietly.

"You haven't quarrelled, have you?" asked his father with a rather reproachful look.

"Quarrelled! no, never a word of disagreement passed between us. We parted perfectly good friends."

The father's face relaxed its severity, which was changed to an expression of perplexity.

"How did you come to leave the pit, then?" he inquired of Eric, whose face evinced how much he was enjoying the mystification he had caused.

"Well, can none of you guess?"

"Guess!" echoed Betty, "How could we guess?"

"I can!" called out Mary. "I know what it is, father," and she clapped her hands, laughing while all sat waiting for her revelation of the mystery. Then pointing across the table in her brother's face, she said:

"'Wanted, a storeman'!—that's the secret; he's got the job; that's what it is."

"Not quite, Mary lass; I am not the storeman, nor do I know who is; I am not to be the storeman."

"I thought you would not get that," said his father; "you never served an hour in a store in your life, and it wants experience to be a storeman."

"You forget my apprenticeship on the voyage, father; I was more in the store there than anyone else during the first part of the voyage."

"But that was not like having charge of a store to sell out goods and keep books, Eric. But if you have not got it why are you not going back to the bush?"

"Because something better than storeman has come my way."

"Better than the storeman!" was ejaculated simultaneously by four or five of those around him.

"Do you think that impossible?" he queried with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"It may be, must be, possible, since you declare it is so, but what can it be. Have you been made a constable?" asked the puzzled parent, at which comical question the whole family burst into a hearty laugh.

"Not quite a constable—that would be too much, but I am as much surprised as any of you will be when I tell you. In fact, I can scarcely believe the truth, but Captain Cargill has engaged me as his secretary. I don't know quite what it means, but I am to begin to-morrow in his office."

The announcement had a sudden and silent effect. None spoke for a few seconds; every hand was still, and every eye fixed upon Eric.

"My son!" at length said Mrs. Thomson, "may God's blessing abide with you, and His hand be your guide; I fear this is too high for you. Thank God for His goodness and walk humbly before Him, and He will order your steps in safety."

Chapter XVII.

DISTURBING INFLUENCES.

"Answer me thou mysterious future. . . . Tell me, shall things be according to my desires."

And the mysterious future, interpreted by those desires, replied—"Soon thou shall know all. It shall be well with thee."

—Longfellow.

"If I had not promised to write by the first ship sailing for New Zealand, I am sure I would not do it. It was so very careless of him to lose that 'keepsake' I gave him; it was most ungrateful."

In such thoughts as these Kirsty Knox sat with her little desk before her one evening after she had been told that the 'Blundell' would leave in a few days for the Free Church Settlement in Otago.

"I am quite angry with him. It would be what he deserves if I were now to just write a line or two and tell him not to trouble himself about me any more. He should never have gone away if he meant to keep up our engagement, and David Moir says the same."

Then she put her elbows on the table and rested her head between her hands, her mind for some time becoming a confusion of incoherent thoughts.

"New Zealand!" at last she said, raising herself with a very bitter expression for her, "New Zealand! as father says, a wild island in the ocean, inhabited by wilder men, whose greatest pleasure is in murder and cannibalism! What a place for me to think of going to! How absurd

ever to have dreamed of it! No, I can't write! But I promised, and I must keep my promise for the sake of my own conscience, if for nothing else."

Then she composed herself a little, selected a sheet of paper, and took up her pen. The point was in bad order, so she chose a new nib and dipped it in the ink. She wrote the name of the street and the word Edinburgh, followed by the date, in a beautiful light angular hand, and then she hesitated. No, she could not address him in the stiff, formal, "Mr. Eric Thomson, Dear Sir." Her pen was for some time waved about in graceful curves over the line at the spot where the words should have begun, but a mark was avoided.

"But how can I write 'My Dear Eric' when I don't mean it? I must be honest; I must write just as I feel, and I do not feel those words would be"—here her mind would not allow her to say 'true.' "But would it be true?" she suggested to herself. "Can I really say now that I could truthfully write those words at the top of my letter?"

While in this way examining her inner consciousness she began to realise that she could not write a letter to him under any other heading. He was not plain "Mr Eric Thomson" to her. Whatever sentiments she had been permitting to possess her heart, it was still a fact that he had done nothing, actually, so disgraceful as to forfeit all right to her kind thoughts, so she almost settled that she would use the words which seemed to come welling up from her heart.

Again the pen was dipped in the ink, and once more it waved over the paper in graceful flourishes, when she

paused, and for a period returned to the conflict of doubt and resentment. "I shan't write that. I am not going to act the hypocrite. I feel hurt, and I must let him know it. If he had loved me as he pretended, he would never have lost what I gave him as a token of my love, to have it given back to me in such a manner."

At this point her heart filled and her eyes overflowed, and as she bent over her desk a big tear fell on the sheet of paper she had begun to write upon. Confusion was again supreme in her mind, but in the midst of it all there was one permanent figure. The manly frame and the genial features of Eric Thomson seemed to confront her, and she closed her eyes, pressing them with her handkerchief as if to drive his image from her. This only served to concentrate her thoughts upon him, and the scenes of the past in which he had been the chief actor.

She remained for some minutes travelling with all the speed of imagination through the many events that formed specially pleasant way-marks in her life, and in each one of them the same masculine figure was present.

At length she raised herself, and brushing away the tear-marks on her heated cheeks, she laid her pen back on the desk, remarking aloud :

"I must leave off writing for this night, anyway. I will do it to-morrow night," and she destroyed the piece of paper, then closed the desk, sponged her face, and reappeared among the other members of the family with a seam in her hands, at which she worked the rest of the night.

After tea next evening, Mrs. Knox asked, when she and Kirsty were by themselves for a moment :

"Have you written your letter yet, Kirsty?"

"No, mother, I was going to do it last night, but left it until to-night, as I did not feel very well disposed for writing then."

"Kirsty!" said her mother, "there's something the matter, or you would not put it off that way; I never thought that it would be 'Absence makes the heart grow colder' with you."

"But I'm going to do it to-night, mother."

"Would you mind telling me just the true reason why you did not write last night, Kirsty?"

"I just could not decide what to begin with, and I thought better to leave it alone, for there is plenty of time to-night."

"If he was here would you be much troubled about how to begin speaking to him?"

"No, mother; but writing's different."

"Don't be fickle, Kirsty; your own happiness depends on how you manage your own mind, my daughter. You just go and write your letter, and, if you like, you may let me see it before you close it up."

Then she told her mother the story of the seal.

"You have made two mistakes, my dear — two mistakes, Kirsty;—first, in imposing any condition about your keepsake, and, second, in concluding that he lost it carelessly. If he lost it, depend upon it he was not to blame, and his having lost it—if that be the case—is no reason why you should say his letters will be unwelcome without your seal on them. How do you know the seal you now have is the one you gave him?"

"Oh, mother, I could not be deceived in that, for the

jeweller said he would never make another with that mark on it."

"If I were you, Kirsty, I would wait to see whether his letter comes to hand in a satisfactory manner or not, and then you will be more able to make certain on the matter. You go away and write as if nothing had occurred to vex you."

And so Kirsty's first letter to her absent lover was written and posted five months after his departure. Commencing in the orthodox style of all such missives—"My own dear Eric," &c.—and its fair author felt very much more peaceful in mind after the effort was over.

The head of the firm in whose employment were both Mr. Knox and David Moir had suffered a painful family bereavement, and in consequence the office was closed for two days out of respect.

The event was taken advantage of by those two employees to have a day in the country, along with a few friends who were able to join them. They had selected a spot where there were to be found glade and grove, stream, hillsides, where pleasures of the sylvan order could be thoroughly enjoyed.

Arriving at the place a little after mid-day, no time was lost in spreading their lunch under the overhanging branches of an old oak tree, with a small tributary of the Leith running quietly over its pebbly bed a few yards off.

During the afternoon the company broke up into small detachments of two, three, four, and so on. From the outset David Moir had assumed charge of Miss Knox, not in any officious manner, but as a sort of "matter of course. He had become so familiar with the family that he seemed

more to fill the place of a brother with the young folk than anything else, sometimes with one and sometimes with another of them.

This day, however, he seemed to devote all his attentions to the elder sister, and somehow they found themselves taking a leisurly stroll with no one else near them. Miss Knox had a strong passion for plants and flowers. Nothing gave her more real pleasure than walking among them and gathering specimens of rare sorts. It was this passion that had drawn them in the direction they had wandered; she, completely enwrapped with her botanic pursuit, had thought of nothing else, and was only reminded of the circumstances by the remark of her companion:

"I declare, this is a spot fit for a poet's song."

"Then suppose," she replied, "you constitute yourself the poet and recite your song, provided your audience is august enough."

"I wish I could now in this charming place command the muse, I would indeed recite to my audience. I often think that the man who has a sympathetic company of one to address, where nature on every hand, beneath and overhead, is joyous, has more to feel satisfied with than any other orator."

"Well come, summon your muse, I will try to fulfil the conditions of the company, and I am sure nature is thoroughly encouraging."

"Then when I speak you will be sympathetic?"

"I will try to be, if your poem has the power of the genuine muse I suppose it will be irresistible."

"You will not be critical or intentionally hard to please, for I feel nervous."

"No, I will not be ill to please. Proceed, or I will become impatient and resume gathering specimens; my basket is not full yet."

He then began thus:

"When wild flowers bloom around your feet,
And perfume floats on zephyrs sweet;
While love-notes from the trees descend,
And crystal brooks through meadows wend,
The mind goes back to Eden's grove,
Where human hearts first learned to love."

"I am afraid, David, I failed to reach that due position of sympathy which your lines deserved. I went with you right up to the last line and then I felt you were too sentimental."

"You promised not to be critical, Kirsty, and that is the first thing you are. And for my part I consider the last line the cope stone of the arch."

"That is where you fall into error, young man. When you have learned to love' you will know more about that sentimental line of poetry."

"The fact is, Kirsty, I have been studying, and, indeed, practising the art of love for some time, and I thought I had struck a key-note in that line."

Kirsty was not too simple to understand that speech, and she resumed her search for specimens in silence. While he, either too obtuse or resolved to press his advances further, again spoke:

"You have never heard from New Zealand yet, Kirsty; a wonder if you ever will! The only thing I ever thought mad in the Thomsons was their flight to that

heathenish place. It will be no easy matter for them to convert a rocky hillside on that island into a happy homestead. Have you not got sick of the notion yet, Kirsty?"

"Oh, I may be lady of some large estate there yet," she replied, with a perplexing toss of the head and curving of the features.

"I think it is a great shame for a young lady of your personal attractions and accomplishments to dream of banishing yourself in such a country, when by staying where all your friends are you might be one of the most happy women of all Edinburgh."

"I think I remember hearing something very like those words being said to me once before. You might try to make a new speech, David. How do you know but if sufficient attraction were presented Edinburgh might be able to retain the special accomplishments you speak so much about."

"So far as things have gone up to the present, everyone has supposed you were resolved, at all costs, to find your way to New Zealand. Would it really be possible to put that out of your head, and to prevail on you to remain here?" As David spoke the hope of succeeding cast a beam of joy over his whole face.

"You see up to the present no person has presented sufficient attraction. I am not sure whether it is possible for anyone to do so. You know women have the privilege of changing their minds."

"Tell me what would be a sufficient attraction," he uttered with considerable energy. "If I knew any way to prevent you going to that barbarous country I would attempt it."

"Dear me, David," she replied, feigning astonishment. "Why? For what reason would you do so much to keep me from that journey?"

He looked at her for a moment in surprise, as if he considered that by this time she could not misunderstand his meaning.

"I will be plainer with you," he said; "but if my actions have failed to interpret themselves I have reason to fear the power of spoken words will be futile to help me in this matter. However, I will own openly my reason for hoping you may be induced to give up your romantic notions: it is simply that then I might be at liberty to tell you all the deepest feelings of my heart."

"Now, David," she said, "I think we had better be stepping back to the oak tree to join our neighbours; you have grown so serious I should be afraid to keep you any longer from more lively company"; and taking up her basket, now well filled with a promiscuous collection, she illustrated her speech by her movements.

"Will you not give me any hope, Kirsty, that you will look favourably on what I have said?"

"I have listened to you, David; I have tried to be a sympathetic audience for you, and I have not resented anything you have said; how much more do you want?"

"One thing more, and I will feel satisfied," he exclaimed passionately, and grasping her disengaged hand he bent his knee to the turf and broke out:

"For months, for years, you have appeared to me as the only girl I could ever love; that feeling is now stronger than ever. Tell me may I hope to win your love in return.

Oh, Kirsty, do not resent my appeal! My life is yours if you will but grant me the privilege of devoting it to you."

Before he had finished speaking she was in a state of severe agitation. She had not the heart to be rude to him; nor had she just then the will to be firm in a refusal, but in face of her mother's recent advice she would not show any encouragement for such a violent avowal of affection.

"David Moir!" she cried, "play the man. You know what I am, and what I have promised. Come, let us step on; we have been away too long."

He rose abashed, but not defeated. He saw that she might some day yield provided means could be employed to weaken her confidence in her absent lover.

"I must apologise, Miss Knox," he said stiffly. "But now that you know what I am, and what I have declared, I will hope that the time may come when you will remember it. I can bide my time!"

"I am sorry, David," she answered in a modest and kind voice, "for what has happened. Had I known before what I now know, your feelings would have been spared. I am grateful for the regard you have shown me, but we must not be together again without some friend along with us."

"For my part, Kirsty, I am glad I have spoken. You will know that whatever may happen abroad there is at least one heart that beats more freely in your presence than out of it. And if you ever need a friend you know where there is one to be depended on to any extent in human power."

As they approached the far-spreading branches of the old oak tree they found the party assembled, and making preparation for their return home.

"See here, Mrs. Moir," said Mrs. Murray, "this looks as if New Zealand was going to be disappointed about one of the expected emigrants; what do you say?"

This raised a laugh among the young folk that were old enough to appreciate the meaning.

"Well, suppose it is!" replied Mrs. Moir. "No place has a better right to folk than their native country."

"That's what I hold," said Mr. Knox, still opposed to his daughter's emigration; "but young folk are growing up to be dissatisfied with what is better than their forebears enjoyed."

"But if their forebears had been quite contented with leaving things as they found them their descendants would not have had anything better than the old state of affairs," said Kirsty as a reply to her father's argument.

"Well spoken, Miss Knox," said Mr. Murray. "It is part of our nature to seek improvements in our surroundings. Yet I would not care about going round the world in search of them when things are improving so fast at Home."

"No one knows yet what may happen," chimed in David Moir. "As Mrs. Murray says, New Zealand may yet be cheated out of a fine young Scotch lady."

"New Zealand will more probably set its bells aringing at the arrival of the young lady so much talked about," retorted Kirsty: while the company gazed in astonishment at the speaker, and the topic was allowed to drop.

About a month later Mrs. Knox and her daughter had occasion to call at the shop of Messrs Duncan and Douglas, jewellers, where Mrs. Knox had left her gold brooch to have a new pin put in it.

"By the way, Miss Knox," said Mr. Douglas, after he had attended to the wants of the elder lady, "I hope you found the duplicate of your seal a true representation of the first. I have not had a chance to ask you about it since. What a pity you lost the other."

"I don't quite understand," said Miss Knox, showing an incomprehensible perplexity as she spoke.

"You remember the pebble seal I engraved for you some months ago."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, you lost it, and had a duplicate made."

"Did you make a second one like it?"

"Yes, but to your order, Miss Knox."

"I have never been here since I got it from you. You must be mistaken."

"There, Kirsty," said her mother, "is the mystery of the seal you have now. I see it all."

"What do you mean?" asked the jeweller.

"Some person has played a trick on her. A very unkind trick. Who brought the order to you for the second seal, please?"

"He gave no name, but said it was for Miss Knox, because she had lost the first, and I was to make it in every respect the same as the lost one."

"Then who did you give it to, and has it been paid for?"

"The same person who ordered it called for it and paid the money, saying he would deliver it."

"You did not know him?"

"No, I do not know him. He was a young man."

"Have you seen him since?"

"No; I doubt if even I would recognise him again now. It is some months past, you see. I am very sorry, but from the way it was done I had no suspicion of anything wrong."

"But, mother," said Kirsty, "nobody knew anything about my having the seal. I never told anyone, and certainly never mentioned having got it made here. When I gave it to Eric we were quite alone, and nothing was spoken about the making or buying of it."

With a few more remarks they left the shop on their way home. Neither spoke for some time; both were, however, full of very confused thoughts as to how anyone could have come to know anything whatever about the seal. At length, feeling there might be some key to the mystery, Mrs. Knox asked:

"Tell me some more of this affair, Kirsty. Where were you when you gave it to Eric?"

"It was the last night before he went away, mother; he gave me this locket, as I told you when I went in, and I gave him the seal just as we were saying good-bye. We were standing in the porch at our own door."

"Did you never speak to him about it anywhere else when it was possible for anyone else to hear?"

"He knew nothing of it until I put it into his hand that night."

"It is mysterious. Whoever got the second one knew all about the first, but what object could anyone have in getting another. And how came David Moir to get it? You say the first time you learned of it was by the seal being on David's invitation to his party. He will be able to tell us about it."

"It is strange that he should get it," said Kirsty, putting stress on the personal pronoun.

"And stranger still that he should use it as he did unless he had some purpose for doing so."

"What purpose could he have, think you, mother?"

"Well, I have been thinking for a while back he would not be sorry to hear that Eric and you had broken off."

Here Kirsty's mind went back to the event on the day of the outing, and she merely asked:

"What makes you think that, mother?"

"We will say no more about it now, but we must find out how David came by it."

"I don't mind so much now as I did. Since I know there has been a second one made I feel quite careless how it was got."

"Unwise, Kirsty, to treat it that way, I think. Someone has, it seems to me, discovered your secret, and has acted either the deceiver or the traitor, and you should find out who it is. Whoever did it has a dishonest heart as well as a cruel one. If it is an acquaintance he should be known and avoided."

Just as Mrs. Knox had finished the last sentence David Moir made his appearance, coming round a corner and meeting them. As he came up the ladies halted, and he at once saluted them and stood. After a few words common to such occasions, Mrs. Knox, determined to probe the mystery to the root, began her attack upon the unsuspecting youth.

"By the way, Mr. Moir, a while back you left a seal with my daughter, pretending she had taken a fancy to it. Now, I have become very much interested in the thing, as

I believe it has a history. You, I presume, have no objection to tell us how you came to have it in your possession."

"Oh, not the least, Mrs. Knox; I simply bought it." And while he spoke a crimson flush spread over his face, which both the women observed.

"Let me frankly tell you why I am anxious to know the history of this pebble. The fact is—and I only came by the knowledge of it all to-day—Kirsty gave either that one, or one just like it, to Eric Thomson when he went away to New Zealand. She had it made with a special mark, so that she might be able to recognise its impression. Now, either Eric lost it that night or next morning before he went to Glasgow, and it has been found and sold to you, or another the exact likeness of it has been made and has come into your possession, and from you to Kirsty. The thing is strange, for she told nobody of what she did, and its coming back to her is somewhat puzzling, you see."

"A very curious circumstance, indeed," said Moir; "very curious. It is enough to make you try to find out the story if it can be got at."

"Can you help us then, David? If you could give us the name of the person you got it from we might manage to trace it out, for we are resolved to do so if we can."

"I am hurrying back to the office, Mrs. Knox; at the moment I cannot give the name of the person, but I will ask his name from one of the clerks, and, if you will permit, come up in the evening to let you know."

With a stronger conviction than before that she was on the right line of discovery, Mrs. Knox agreed, and they parted; but just as they said good-bye Mr. Douglas came

along, and, passing Moir, he looked carefully at him, and in a few paces more he was at the side of Mrs. Knox.

"Please excuse me, madam," he said; "you were speaking to a young man I met just now. You know him, I presume, and I believe it was he who ordered the seal, but I cannot at present be certain about it. If you wish to know I will call upon you in the morning after I have refreshed my memory."

"Thank you, thank you; we also have reason for suspecting him, for it was from him my daughter got the counterfeit."

"Then it must either be that he knows all or some part of the story of this singular affair. I will call in the morning; good-bye," and, raising his hat, he passed on.

Chapter XVIII.

ARRIVAL OF THE "BLUNDELL."

Welcome ! friends from ancient Scotia,
Thrice that welcome we repeat !
Here beyond old ocean's billows,
Welcome to a safe retreat !
Share with us this bounteous land ;
Treasures wait on our command !

One serious inconvenience in connection with the common dwelling-house of the Dunedin immigrants was that it contained no fire in the kitchen. A furnace erected at the rear of the building in the open had to do service for all kinds of cooking. This became the more unpleasant since, having now left the ship, there was no trained cook on whom the duties of that department should fall, and, by arrangement, two of the women in turn daily took charge of the kitchen. This was not a happy arrangement for some of them, as may be gathered from the following dialogue between Mrs. Dalgliesh and Mrs. Anderson :—

"I would not mind cooking in my own way for my own family ; but I am sure I can never set about the work of preparing food for three hundred people, and a lot of them English into the bargain."

"Well, Mrs. Dalgliesh, I sympathise with you, for I never knew what it was to cook for strangers all my days. But now we are here we had better just try to do our best. If we fail to satisfy our friends, either Scotch or English, we will know we have tried to do it."

"But, Mrs. Anderson, it would be different if we had proper things to do it with. I am terrified to go near that great furnace, with its row of pots hanging on chains from a great beam. I am sure I will get fearfully burned."

"You remember, I should say, how, when you were a little timid lassie, your mother used to encourage you to difficult tasks by saying 'jist pit a stoot hert tae a staye brae,' and you did it and wondered at yourself."

"Yes, many a time she said that. It's just as you say, when we try we find what we are able to do."

"I would rather pay a small wage to a woman who can do the work to take my turn, but then everybody would say I was too proud to do it, so I mean just to endure and fight it through."

And so they both did. And they were not among the least successful when their days came.

It was, however, sometimes a sorry sight during the wet and cold windy days of that dreary winter to see those brave women, under the most trying circumstances, attending like heroines at the post of duty, and performing their task in an uncomplaining and assiduous fashion.

One feature much to their credit was that throughout the time of this sojourn in that uncomfortable dwelling they lived lives of modest self-restraint and neighbourly sympathy. It was a scene of generous co-operation and mutual assistance. Though not an exhibition of all things in common, it was a community where no one lacked what the other could supply. When occasional weaknesses made their appearance the spirit of forbearance, and often of forgiveness, was manifested in a dignified way that banished

scandal and enabled the whole of the inmates to "be at peace with one another."

"Mr. Thomson," said Captain Cargill as he entered his office one day, "Mr Kettle, the surveyor, has prepared plans for the part formation of Princes Street. It will be your duty to have a talk with him over them, so as to understand the work to be done, and then write a notice on a board intimating than ten men who can do road work can be employed on the street."

"Yes, sir. I suppose you will appoint one to look after the men, as overseer."

"Well, I thought that you would have no objection to see to that yourself, with the help of Mr. Kettle.

"I shall be glad to do all I can, sir, but you see I have no practical knowledge of road formation."

"You need have no apprehension on that score. You will be thoroughly coached by Mr. Kettle, and I will never be far away."

"But will you see the men, sir, and engage them?"

"No, Mr. Thomson, I shall throw that duty entirely on you. I have confidence you will manage it."

That evening before going home, Eric Thomson fixed up on the corner of the survey office a board with the words, written by a small paint brush, "Wanted ten men who can do road work, apply at the office."

"Father, I want your advice," he said, as he sat at tea that evening.

"What about, Eric?"

And then he told him about the notice.

"You will want men who can cut down scrub, men

who can use the spade and the pick, and men who can construct a bridge over the Toitu Creek."

"Do you know who would be some of the best men? You have seen more of their work than I have."

"Well, I can't, of course, say who may apply, but Melville and Hill would be good at the bridge; Robertson, Wright, Hair, and Jackson are good all-round men; while Lindsay, Johnston, Bain, and McKechnie are good, especially with the axe. If you can get these men you will have very little trouble with the work."

As a good many of the men had got their families fitted up in whares of their own by this time, they were anxious for some chance of earning a little cash to help things along, so when the morning came fifteen purpose-like men presented themselves at "the office" in application.

"Is the Captain in?" was the question put by each one as he appeared; and to each the same answer was given—

"No, he will not be down for some time yet; are you applying for the work?"

All the names were registered, and each one was asked to call back at noon when the result would be told them.

The men, however, were desirous of securing the employment, and instead of quietly going off home they hung about to see and interview Captain Cargill, to make sure, if possible.

Thomas Lindsay, who was specially anxious to make sure of this chance of earning some money, made a feint to go home, but instead of doing so he passed round by the beach track to Captain Cargill's dwelling, resolved to secure the first word with him.

The gallant Captain, having in his campaign life become accustomed to tent life, had, on his arrival, pitched his tent on a favourable spot, and lived there with his wife and family under canvas, as many a family has done in the country since, comfortable and contented until his wooden house was erected.

When Mr. Lindsay reached the precincts of the White Residence of the Patriarch he saw no one about, and the inconvenience of approaching a dwelling where it was impossible to "knock at the door" made him hesitate some paces off. What could he do to make his presence known? Had there been no Mrs. Cargill or other feminine humanity about he would have gone close up and called out, asking whether the Captain were at home; but how to proceed now puzzled him.

He drew back for a while under the screen of the bushes, which were plentiful, and stood pondering the situation, and latterly withdrew farther from the tent and resolved to await the Captain's appearance.

As he remained there two other men, Mr. Hair and Mr. Jackson, passed him and walked boldly up to the magisterial dwelling, and on coming near to it Hair gave a spasmodic cough for the purpose of calling attention to their presence. It served the purpose of a knock, for in a couple of seconds the venerable figure they were looking for emerged from the doorway.

On observing this Mr. Lindsay followed the others, and soon stood in the presence of the Patriarch along with them.

"Did you apply at the office?" inquired the Captain, when they had made known their purpose.

"Yes, we left our names, but you were not in, and we were instructed to call at noon for your decision."

"For my decision?"

"We were told you would not be there until eleven o'clock, and we thought it better to see you, so that we might answer any questions you wanted to know, and so just came round," said Mr. Hair.

"Well, gentlemen, I am sorry you have put yourselves to the trouble of coming round here, for I have left the whole of this business in Mr. Thomson's hands. He will settle the matter and superintend the work."

The men looked at each other in silence for a moment, but seemed not to appreciate the meaning of what they heard, and still hesitated.

"It will be better just to call at the time appointed by Mr. Thomson. I will not interfere in the matter. But no doubt you are most likely to be put on."

"Thank you, sir," they said in concert, and bade him good-day.

"So Eric Thomson is at the head of affairs!" said Lindsay, who was one of the opposition set. "Well I never! But what can that lad know about road-making? Surely some older man might be put into that position."

"I am not sure but the Captain has done it for the best," said Mr. Hair. "He is getting two jobs done for one wage, do you not see. Thomson is being paid already as the Captain's clerk, and will get no more for looking after the road work too."

"But how can a shoemaker lad 'superintend' the making of a road? That wants a man that has been at the work himself—a very different thing from mending shoes."

"It is all one to me," replied Mr. Hair; "if I get on the work anyone may be in charge. What I want is work and wages!"

"Well, I suppose that is the main thing," answered Mr. Lindsay, not a little disappointed, and jealous at missing the chief appointment for himself.

When the Patriarch entered the office, Eric laid the list of names before him, with a pencil mark opposite ten of them. Observing that the three who called on him were among the selected, he said to Eric:

"I have had the honour of a deputation waiting on me this morning, consisting of Messrs. Lindsay, Hair, and Jackson, but as you have ticked them off I need not speak for them."

"You approve of my selection, sir?" inquired Eric.

"I approve of those three, and for the rest, you will be held responsible for them. Doubtless they will give satisfaction."

Next morning the work of forming Princes Street, between Church Hill (the Cutting) and the sea, at the foot of Hope Street, where the two streets and the water of the harbour then met, was begun.

First of all the scrub, consisting of many varieties of plants in a rank condition, tutu, flax, moko moko, cabbage trees, veronica, and others intermingled with fern had to be cleared off; then came the cutting of a siding between Stafford Street and the Toitu Creek, which flowed down Maclaggan Street Gully, through High Street (where the Grand Hotel stands), and across Princes Street (between the Post Office and the Colonial Bank) where it joined the sea.

By the banks of this stream the tutu, flax, and fern

grew in luxuriance, where the ground was fairly solid, but on the one side, from the Maclaggan Street end of the Royal Arcade, there was a boggy marsh which was filled mostly with maori-heads, coarse grass, and some of the finest flax bushes ever seen in the Colony.

Just where it intersected Princes Street the stream had solid earthen banks, and here a strong rustic bridge was thrown across, and easy communication established between the two parts of the little settlement.

"Easy communication" is in this case certainly a mere term of comparison; for before the work of formation of the streets was finished in the rough style of those arcadian times, the clay surface had been worked into a state of excellent puddle, owing to the frequent and heavy rains of the season. In the summer time it dried up, and then travelling was truly easy, for it became hardened like the crust of an oven-fired loaf, but a summer shower made it as slippery as grease.

To every house was attached a plot of cultivated ground by the time spring had set in. The industry of the settlers was manifested in their indefatigable toil amid many adverse and trying circumstances, the worst of those being the almost incessant rains.

Care had been taken by those thoughtful men who had charge of the arrangements to see that many varieties of seeds suitable for a young colony, and also a large number of fruit trees and plants, were sent with each ship, and as much care was displayed in their wise distribution and prudent planting. So that there was every encouragement for the formation of gardens. Indeed, there was for some time more thought devoted to the reproduction of food than the

perfecting of shelter. The erecting of houses was a slow process.

In the midst of the cold winds and the dreary rains of winter, when August was still soaking with the wet and biting with the winds of a cruel season, while the creeks were all swollen, and the tracks among the bushes were puddles, pools, and bogs, and the original immigrants were just about as low in their personal barometer as could well be, Ben Brooks' big cutter was seen one afternoon coming up the harbour with a Union Jack flying at the fore peak.

Mr. John Jones, who happened to be standing at the door of his shop, as was usual with him, looking for the arrival of any vessel that might heave in sight, was the first to notice the peculiarity.

"Why, Ben has a flag hoisted!" he ejaculated. "What can that mean? Hand me the telescope."

A large glass was brought out to him, which he placed to his eye with a steady hand, and in a moment called out:

"That is the Union Jack! There is a ship at the heads! Where can she be from? None of my boats back from the cruise in distress, I hope. May be one of them got a cargo already. Well, we shall soon know."

The Rev. Mr. Burns, who also had been looking at the approaching sail, observed Mr. Jones with the telescope, and came over to the store.

"What is it, Mr. Jones?" he inquired.

"Ben Brooks, flying the Union Jack. There is a ship at the heads."

"I would not be surprised if that is the ship that was to follow us with immigrants; I hope it is, and that all is well."

"It may be, of course; but Ben will be at the landing in ten minutes," and saying so he stepped away along the uneven pathway that led to the mouth of the creek, and Mr. Burns followed.

When they got there they found quite a crowd had collected, for the sight of the "Jack" had excited curiosity. Among them, of course, were Captain Cargill, Mr. Kettle, Mr. Strode, and many more whose names were not recorded.

The tide was high flood at the time, and Ben lowered his sail and dropped his anchor about a hundred yards from where the people were standing; but in order to gratify their curiosity as quickly as possible he called in a stentorian voice:

"A ship at the heads!"

A fresh N.E. breeze was blowing, and there was a noisy break of waves, which made hearing difficult, yet the words "ship—heads" were caught.

"Where is it from?" called out a feeble voice from a little man standing near the water's edge.

"Where was that from?" questioned Mr. Jones with a comical turn in his voice, which produced a laugh at the expense of the anxious man.

Ben left his mate to furl the sail while he speedily got into the dingy and came ashore.

"What is she, Ben?" shouted Mr. Jones.

"No whales there, Mr. Jones," was the reply.

"Did you get her name?"

"Couldn't read it; glass out of repair."

"How do you know she's not a whaler, then?"

"By the cut of her."

"Getting smart in your old days, Ben!"

"Oh, I s'ppose you couldn't tell yerself, Jones."

Ben spoke with as much freedom to Mr. Jones as if they were still mates before the mast, notwithstanding that the latter was now a man of very large property both on sea and land.

"Where were you, Ben, when you saw her," inquired Mr. Jones, still hoping it might be a whaler.

"At the Kaik; and when I saw that she must be another immigrant ship, I hoisted sail and came off to give the news, as perhaps some on 'em 'ere 'as friends on board."

"Will she be up to Port to-night?" inquired Captain Cargill.

"Driver went off, and was aboard when I came away, and both wind and tide suit. I should say 'e will fetch 'er up, but she was still standing off when I came through the islands," answered Ben.

"Are you returning to Port to-night?" again asked the Captain.

"In 'alf an hour, sir, if any is going with us; we will catch the tide on the ebb, and the wind will be lighter after a while."

"I will go," said the little man with the weak voice. "I expect some one is in it for me."

"If I were sure the ship is in," said the Captain, "I would go."

"Driver could never 'ave a better chance to come in. He won't miss it without a good reason," spoke up the energetic pilot's admirer.

"Then I will be with you in half an hour," returned the Captain. Mr. Thomson I will be glad if you will go with us."

"I shall be here in time, sir."

Mr. Burns was also a passenger to meet and welcome the newcomers.

They arrived in Port Chalmers after a rough passage of four hours' beating against a stiff N.E. breeze, to find that the ship had not attempted the bar, as the N.E. sea was too rough to risk.

The public accommodation of Port Chalmers was of the most limited and crude nature, but the best that could be provided was given to the guests of Ben Brooks that night. Sally somehow managed to supply bedding to keep them warm as they lay in twos and threes together, but they were not reluctant to seek the fresh air as soon as dawn threw out its grey light.

It was about midday when from the hill-top above the east point of Koputai Bay, the ship was seen standing in for the bar, and about an hour later she had let go her anchor in the smooth water under the shelter of Port Chalmers hills.

The "Blundell" was at once boarded by the contingent which had been waiting for her all night, and who gave a warm welcome to their new friends.

The ship was in splendid order, and her passengers were in good health.

"I congratulate you, captain, on the state I find your ship in," said the Patriarch, looking most benignantly at the master of the vessel.

"Thank you, sir; it is gratifying to receive your kind words of approval; but I must say a good word for the passengers, for they have been in all things most exemplary; I have had no trouble. It has indeed been a pleasure to have charge of such an orderly lot."

"I am proud to hear your report, captain, but I expected no less. They desire to get away from you, however, as quickly as possible, I suppose, so as to set their feet on firm land."

"Indeed, some of them were vexed they were not able to get in yesterday, and most of them now have already bundled up ready to go ashore."

"There will be some difficulty about boats; we have seven miles to go still further up the harbour, and it will take a good few boats to carry all this crowd."

"They will be disappointed if they cannot get away to-night."

By this time half a dozen Maori whaleboats were alongside, and their crews were scrambling on board, and other four were following up. Ben Brooks and two other old whalers had their fleet in readiness, and all these, together with four ship's boats, were arranged with, and in the course of a short time after their arrival a fleet of eighteen boats were making their way to Dunedin full of immigrants and luggage.

The wind was light, but with a fair tide and the breeze they had they made pleasant progress until the wind died off to a calm and the process of rowing was more tedious, but at length the fleet, one after another, reached the landing.

The whole of Dunedin's population seemed to be congregated on the beach and along the adjacent bank awaiting to receive the new addition to their number.

Prominent among them were certain men whose garments had failed to stand the constant contact with "lawyers" and other clothes-destroying influences of city

life, where the streets were thickly grown over with the wild products of Nature.

One of these gentlemen—afterwards a very prominent citizen—got on to a rock jutting out into the water in order to be the first who might hail the boats as they came up. When the first one came he raised his hands to his mouth and called:

"Is there a tailor on board?"

"Not in this boat; he's coming behind," responded some one, who passed on to attend to his own affairs.

The next boat was hailed in the same way, and so on, until the sought-for tradesman was found, and he was at once engaged to commence operations for the benefit of the ragged and tattered miserables, to whom making and mending clothes was a vexing operation.

No landing stage had yet been erected, and the boats were simply run as far on the sandy beach as possible, and then commenced the process of carrying the passengers ashore. At this work the Maoris—men and women—were the most energetic. They seemed to regard it as an honour to have a pakeha clasped in their arms or astride their backs while they struggled through the water making every effort to avoid letting them get wet.

When the people were all safely landed then came the discharging of the luggage and boxes of other important cargo required for immediate use.

The hour was late, and it was impossible to wait until the tide had left the boats dry, so the work of "humping" was at once commenced. It was a busy scene; as load after load was brought ashore they were shouldered by those

waiting for them, irrespective of who the owner might be, and carried off to the barracks, and there piled up in a great stack.

For a full hour almost every man in the settlement was busy rendering help to those just arrived, actuated by the spirit of sympathy sprung from recent experiences.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PIG HUNT.

We raised the boar from his ferny lair ;
Then he showed his tusks, and bade us dare
To approach his den and risk our lives ;
And tore our dogs, and defied our knives ;
But an unseen bullet struck him down,
And loaded we bore his flesh to town.
A savoury dish, we all agreed,
Was roasted flesh of the wild-pig breed.

Among those most energetic at the landing was the little man with the shrill voice who first expressed his desire to visit the ship—Johnnie Lockie, who was known as a generous hearted fellow that could keep his own counsel. He had not been long on board the ship when the reason of his anxiety was manifested, although he had never mentioned to a living soul what he expected.

He was the first man who went up the gangway after Captain Cargill, and was soon away among the new-comers. About two minutes later he was seen to rush to the presence of a woman past middle age, and the two with only a monosyllabic ejaculation embraced each other in the comely affection of mother and son. He had come out first to make a comfortable dwelling for the woman he loved best, and who loved him as no other ever would ; and now that they had met after such a long parting their joy was full.

To have her home, as Johnnie called it, was the only

object he had, and when he had put her into possession of the little house that "Jack" had built all by his own hands he was contented, and stood by her side as proudly as if she had been a queen.

There was another anxious in mind, but he was, owing to his circumstances, prevented from taking part in the general work of landing.

Despatches had arrived; there were several boxes of a mail to look after, and these claimed the attention of the Administrator's Private Secretary. He went with it up to the office, thinking less of the important despatches from headquarters than of some little missive of still greater importance to him. Would there be a letter for him? Of course, how could he doubt?

It was his duty to act as postmaster, and everybody else must be attended to before he could steal a moment to read a letter even if he should get it. But he would be satisfied to see the outside and crush it into his breast pocket until leisure should come.

He broke open one box after another and there were scores of letters and newspapers. He began to sort them, but often found that the one thing in his mind was, "Is this mine?"

But all others seemed to come first. There were letters of all sizes, and addressed in all sorts of writing—rude and refined. There were large ones and small ones, light ones and heavy ones, but none seemed to be for him.

He was now, after nearly an hour, on the tenter hooks of hope and expectation, emptying the last box, which seemed to contain nearly all documents for "the office" and official persons. His heart began to beat heavily; he was

perspiring, but not because of the exertion called for by his work, but from the extent of his mental strain. It was fortunate for him that only two or three had called for letters, so that his excitement worked no mischief or irregularity in his duties.

There was at last but one handful of letters to be examined. His brow grew cold, and the face that two minutes ago was flushing was now growing quickly to a sheety whiteness. He lifted the last score of letters, and one by one looked at them as the little pile grew quickly smaller. At last, when not more than half a dozen remained in his hand, there turned up to his now almost incredulous eyes the address he had looked for—"Mr. Eric Thomson, Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand; per ship Blundell."

He was alone, and at once it was pressed to his lips, and in a trice the cover was removed. There were the words he was anxious to see, and the one signature that above all others brought gladness to his soul.

"Now to duty," he said to himself; "I shall be able to attend to any who call."

"Any letters for me, Eric?"

It was Mr. McKechnie, sen., who spoke.

Eric had none of the modern conveniences of lettered pigeon-holes and other facilitating furniture, but from a pile on the table, where he had arranged the various letters according to alphabetical order, he quickly handed over the letter, followed by a bundle of newspapers.

For a long time the people crowded into the open door, and almost everyone, in response to the question, "Have you anything for me?" received something to carry away

to remind them of the folk left at Home, and to give them news of the busy world they had so completely shut themselves away from.

Nine o'clock had passed that night before Eric got time to read his letter. It was unlike the letters he had sent to her. There was a formality and a stiffness, a reserve and a caution that made him uneasy. He had looked for enthusiastic expressions of endearment, but did not find them. He had expected avowals of continued and undimmed affection, but was disappointed. It was, however, couched in straighforward style, and gave him a great budget of news about many folk, and just once gave expression to the hope that everything was going on with him as well as he had expected, and then told him that she was longing to get a letter from him "with all the news from the cannibal island of Otago; about the families who had left their homes to inhabit a wild country."

That she was anxious for a letter from him gave him consolation; and when he called to mind what he had told her about his prospects, and the good fortune that he had already met with, he felt satisfied she would respond to his request. The mere possession of her letter was a comfort to him, and he resolved to proceed immediately with the preparation of a home for her, and meditating on plans to make it meet his own wishes and gratify her taste, he fell off into a pleasant sleep upon his pillow.

"We finished taking stock at the store, sir," said Eric to Captain Cargill, "and the arrival of the 'Blundell' is none to soon. Here is the list of provisions still remaining, just enough for another fortnight."

The Captain took the return, and after looking carefully through it, remarked:

"A fortnight, you say. Well, by that time we can have abundance landed from the ship to keep us going, and Mr. Jones expects a brig from Sydney shortly with a supply of general goods, so that there is no danger."

"On that score we may rest satisfied, I suppose," returned Eric, but the last bullock will be killed this morning, and owing to the bad weather and the continued fog on the hills, it has been impossible to drive a mob from Waikouaiti, and there is no sign of improvement."

"Then we shall have to manage without flesh meat," replied the Captain in a philosopic manner.

"That is a pity, sir, when so many have just arrived from a long voyage."

"But what can be done. Mr. Thomson have you any suggestion to make?"

"There are scores of wild pigs that might be caught."

"Wild pigs! Very good. Can you make up a smart foraging party?"

"Not much difficulty in that, I should say."

"I will leave it in your charge, Mr. Thomson. When will you start?"

"It would take to-day to make arrangements, and we would go out in the morning and be home in the evening loaded."

That day was spent by Eric in organising a "pig hunt." Ben Brooks' dogs were got from Port Chalmers, Ben himself coming to manage them; and next morning two companies of young fellows of seven men in each started out, one under command of Mr. Crawford, the storeman, and the other under the direction of Eric Thomson.

Crawford's party made for the Glen, and Eric's for the

Kaikorai Hill, Ben and his dogs being with the latter. They struck up through the Toitu Glen (Maclaggan Street), and in about an hour had got through its network of scrub and lawyers, having as they went startled two or three porkers, but were not able to approach them for the denseness of the thickets, but could hear them grunting and squeaking as they hastened deeper into their impenetrable hiding places; the dogs barked at but could not follow them.

On emerging from the scrub, they came upon a ferny hill-side with evidences of the recent presence of game, where they had been ploughing up the ground with their snouts to find worms and young fern roots.

They were soon on their tracks; the dogs, having picked up the scent, led the way at a quick pace, and in less than ten minutes one of the dogs gave the signal by a whiney yelp which Ben understood. Shortly after they heard the grunts of an old man pig, and Ben directed his men to various positions from which to close in upon the centre as speedly as possible.

This was done, and the dogs turned four beautiful animals from the underwood of a small gully, on the margin of which the fern stood four feet high.

This was the happy home of the porker; but a most inconvenient hunting ground for men and dogs. The men closed in, and the dogs, well trained to the commands of Ben, kept doing their best to herd the swine together. The big boar, however, smelled danger, and soon became frantic with rage. He charged the dogs furiously, tossing one of them over his back, leaving an ugly gash in the poor animal's shoulder where his great tusk had torn him; then

the boar made for his nearest opponent, whose gun missed fire, and he with difficulty sprang out of the exasperated animal's way, and went rolling over several times in the high fern before he was able to check himself.

The pig dashed forward regardless of opposition, and presently Andrew Melville, standing on a height close by his line of flight, fired at him. The beast gave an angry scream, and then shook his head fiercely, but never halted his speed. The ball had struck him, but owing to the thickness of his hide had been almost harmless, and had glided off and sunk in the earth.

James Thomson and Ben Brooks, with the unhurt dog, were co-operating in pursuit of one of the other three pigs, and after a vigorous chase of about a quarter of an hour succeeded in bringing it to earth by a ball from James, which had struck it behind the shoulder and passed through the heart. A few minutes sufficed to bleed it and mark the spot, and then they joined their mates, who had lost all trace of the remaining fugitives.

They had reached nearly the top of Kaikorai Hill (Roslyn), when they again disturbed a grunter family. The ground was more open here, but the pigs got scent of their pursuers too soon to allow the latter to get within shot of them or to place themselves in advantageous positions, and consequently it was a matter of chasing.

The pigs headed for a scrubby hollow, and showed a power of movement which surprised the hunters, and even out-distanced them on the down-hill run. In the hollow there were others of the tribe, who, taking fright at the helter-skelter arrival of their friends, squeaked and grunted, making the little place appear to be alive with their kind,

and immediately a score or so went scampering out on the opposite side, and stood on the ridge to learn the cause of all the trouble, resuming their flight when they observed the men coming full tear down the side of the gully.

The latter followed up the pursuit vigorously, and in a while came upon their prey. The dog had got in front of them by a cunning detour, and held them at bay in a ferny ravine until the men came upon them, and by selecting their shots dropped four animals that were in fine condition. But two boars enraged by the chase, as if by agreement, charged upon them as they came through the fern to secure their victims, and one of them, heading right at Tom Miller, ripped his leg, leaving a wound about four inches long and over one inch deep. His wound was carefully washed and bandaged as well as possible; and the prizes were bled and disembowelled. Then after a rest of half an hour the carcases were strapped on five stalwart backs, and faces were turned homeward, Ben Brooks being left to aid Miller and attend to his wounded dog.

Crawford's party had fought only at long distances, but had secured two fine carcases, and returned with nothing more unfortunate than a sprained ankle, which, however, prevented Crawford from attending to his duties for several days.

Such expeditions became a favourite pastime for young men, who seemed as eager for the sport and risks of a pig hunt as our modern youth are for the game of foot-ball.

Mrs. Thomson was working with a hoe in the garden in front of her house when she was startled by a voice at a little distance from her.

"Have you taken to work in the garden?" called Mrs. McKechnie, as she emerged from the scrub-lined path which led to the former's residence.

"Just putting in my spare time," answered the lady so abruptly accosted. "Is that you, Mrs. McKechnie? Come away in and sit down till ye give me yer news!"

"Its just me, Mrs. Thomson. Faith, but you'll soon make a bonnie place of this; it's beginning to look fine already. Have ye heard the latest?"

"No, I think I've heard nothing out of the way. What have ye to tell us now?"

"When I made the porridge this morning I found that I would have to send and get some salt. So an hour ago I sent Jessie round to the store for three pounds, and she came back with one and a message that there was not another half pound in the place."

"Hoots, young Crawford must be haverin' with ye! Surely there must be salt to season our food with. I'm nearly out of it myself; I'll send Jane round at once, too, for some."

"Jane!" she called, and immediately her youngest daughter answered and made her appearance from another corner of the garden, where she had been grubbing, and was hidden by a heap of unremoved brushwood.

"Here Jane, tidy yourself, and go off at once to the store for two pounds of salt, and if Mr. Crawford says he has none go on to Jones', and get six pounds there. Here is the money to pay for it."

The two women went into the house and related what bits of news were going the rounds, adding their comments as they went, and the time passed quickly as the items of

gossip were retailed. In somewhat more than half an hour Jane came in, saying:

"Mr. Crawford had sold the last pound he had an hour ago, and Dick at Jones' could only let me have three pounds, and he doesn't know when he will have more."

"What are folk to do without salt?" exclaimed Mrs. McKechnie. "It's not possible even to eat potatoes without it!"

"If it comes to the worst," replied Mrs. Thomson in a cool sensible way, "we will have to do, I suppose, what others have done. We have the salt sea near enough to our doors, and we can make salt from it in the meantime."

"Perhaps we might get some clever folk to set up a salt factory where Gallie is going to put up his 'smithy' on the beach near the creek, and then we would be saved the trouble of carrying up the sea water," said Mrs. McKechnie by way of retort.

"Not a bad plan when you think of it," answered her neighbour; but how long would the factory be in building, and what about a boiler big enough for that purpose?"

"I say it is nothing short of gross carelessness to allow such a thing to happen. Downright carelessness! It must be somebody's fault, and we should let Captain Cargill know about it," said Mrs. McKechnie, becoming hysterical to a degree.

"Better short of salt than have a flour famine," said Mrs. Thomson. The sea is full of salt, but flour has to grow."

"But are ye sure now that we will have flour to last us out between the ships. Neglect in one thing makes cause for suspicion in many."

"I have not the least fear, my good friend, that we will be allowed to want our bread and other necessaries of life, and in any case we need not meet trouble half way. Trouble may come to me, but I will never chase after it or seek for it. We must remember the sermon of last Sabbath, 'He careth for you.' I am going to be contented, to do with what I can get, and be as happy as the birds about the door."

It was six weeks before a supply of salt arrived, and during that time many a ton of salt water was reduced to vapour for the sake of its salin residue by the undaunted settlers.

The want of this important commodity did not prevent the interchange of social compliments. Mr. and Mrs. McKechnie had been content to live in a whare all through the winter, while they constructed a good, comfortable, and roomy house, and now came the time for moving into it. Having determined to do the thing with some show, they issued invitations to a large number of friends to join them in a good Scotch "house-warming."

The letters of invitation, carefully written out by Miss McKechnie in a style that showed her schooling had been no disgrace to her parents, contained these suggestive lines: "The tide will be out in the evening, so you can come round by the beach; and there will be a good moon later on to show the track when you go home."

It was a joyous gathering. Tom Miller was there with his fiddle and played for the dancing, which was kept going with very short intermissions between country dances, reels, polkas, strathspeys; and even a brave attempt was made by Roderic Duff, when the spirit of the "cordials"

had excited him beyond his usual calm state of mind, to show off in a Highland fling.

That evening Miss McKechnie had donned a dress that had been carefully preserved from the sight of strangers ever since she left Scotland, and she was the gayest as well as the liveliest of the company.

Every young man present desired to be her partner. Even Eric Thomson, who was compelled out of courtesy to request the privilege, could not refrain from showing his admiration in such a manner that the young lady quickly observed it, and by many little artifices succeeded in being very often close by him. But all her efforts failed to draw from him more than a gentlemanly polite attention, yet she was not to be turned off. If he was not in love with her she desired to entangle him if he had the heart to be wooed by a maiden, so with care she avoided any appearance of flirtation with the other young fellows, many of whom would have been delighted had she given them but an encouraging smile.

Towards midnight there was a group of half-a-dozen men with the full weight of paternal responsibility upon them together in one corner of the spacious kitchen, with Eric in their midst, to whom the subject of conversation was evidently directed.

"Just fancy to-night, for instance," said one. "The tide is up now, and all who live on the south side of the hill must struggle over that slippery track to their homes."

"Several of them will no doubt have a few involuntary seats in soft places as they try to go down the other side," said another.

"What has made it worse is the last shower of rain;

it will have made it like glass in same places, and when a good start is made sliding down that steep part, one may go to the bottom without stopping."

"Well, it is time now some efforts were being made to cut a road round the point so that we could get to the store at any time," said the first speaker.

"Besides that see the trouble the bairns have in getting along to the school. Then when the church is up, and that will not be long now, we must have means of coming and going."

"But," said Eric, who now felt himself loaded with some of the cares of the state, "that will be a heavy undertaking. It is a rocky bluff composed of solidly inset boulders."

"Still a road must be made. Those boulders can be removed, and when thrown down they will make the very best foundation for a road where the sea washes up against the breastwork," answered the leading spokesman.

"Well the thing should be represented to the Captain, and perhaps he may see his way to suit your requirements," Eric replied.

This led to a deputation waiting on the Chief Administrator, and the formation of a footpath round the base of Bell Hill to Stuart Street, which connected the north and south parts of the settlement.

CHAPTER XX.

BUILDING THE NEST.

When love has joined two hearts in one,
And hopes and joys are blooming ;
As shines the genial spring-tide sun
All shades and damps consuming,
The citadel of faith is found
Where Nature's Monarch Love is crowned.

Much uneasiness had been felt for several days owing to the non-return of an expedition consisting of ten men who had gone to "spy out the land" as far as the Clutha. Their object was to see where the best farming land was to be found, and bring back a report for the special benefit of their friends.

Ten or twelve days it was thought when they started would be all the time necessary for their journey, but now they had been twenty-one full days out, and their friends had become anxious about their safety. Their food supply was only enough for a fortnight at the most, and the fear that they had run out of provisions and were now starving and on that account unable to return was causing excitement.

It was noon on Monday, the twenty-second day since their departure, and a crowd of about forty had assembled near the barracks, where they were earnestly discussing the best means of sending help to the missing expedition. That no time should be lost was now admitted by all, but the division of opinion was concerning what shape it should take. Should they send out a small party, with instruc-

tions to make direct for the Clutha, or should they send a larger number that might break off into small companies and search a wide sweep of country as they went along.

The experience of Captain Cargill was always respected even if his advice was not always followed. So four of their number were chosen for the purpose of waiting upon that gentlemen, and were just stepping away from the crowd when a man was seen coming from the south of Princes Street waving his hat in the air frantically. He was also shouting, but at first no one could catch what he said. At last Mr. McKechnie, sen., said :

"He's calling something about the expedition !"

Then all were still for a moment.

"The expedition is safe !" was then heard distinctly, and a general rush was made in the direction of the messenger, who was still running towards them. Again he shouted :

"The expedition is coming !"

On meeting him he informed them that he had seen the men and their pack horses coming over the hills from the Taieri, and he had run in as fast as he could from Look-out Point to give the news.

This set all minds at rest, and the information was quickly passed round the whole community. So that in the space of about half an hour every one knew about it, and many gathered to witness the arrival.

The expedition consisted of "Eric's Band," which had come to be recognised as the most energetic set in the settlement. Together, they were prepared for all sorts of achievements, either of play or work, of daring or of kind-ness, and what was more, they were known to have been

individually very fortunate in their earnings, some of them had, even in the young community, been successful in speculations and had money laid by in some safe corner. Among these last Eric Thomson stood first on the list.

About half-past two o'clock the expedition was observed coming past Hillside, and a little later it had actually arrived, bearing many evidences of the toil and fatigues of their tramp. The three horses that had carried their tent and provisions seemed to have suffered less than the men. Still all were in good health and spirits, and all the marks of weariness were removed after a day's rest at home.

They had been detained four days by rains and swollen creeks, besides having spent three days in making some private surveys and selections for themselves and friends.

Eric had chosen one block at the Taieri and another at the Clutha. Peter McKechnie had also fixed on the Taieri. Tom Wallace had been anxious not to go far from Dunedin for his rural land, and made choice of a section at Green Island. James Carmichael had settled on the Tokomairiro Plain as his locality ; Andrew Melville at the N. Taieri, and so on. They managed to scatter themselves well over the face of the available country ; at least to select sections far apart from one another.

"But you do not intend to build a house at the Clutha, Mr. Thomson," said Captain Cargill, when Eric told him of his choice.

"Not until there is some more convenient way of getting there, but the ground will not suffer from waiting a few years.

"Then you will begin on the Taieri farm ?"

"Most probably; but I have not decided yet. I will have a house built in Dunedin first."

"Oh, yes, I forgot, a young lady is expected. Is that it?"

"Expected, certainly; but to tell the truth that is all I can say about that business."

"But, of course, you have received letters?"

"Oh yes, I got a letter; but our first letters sent from here have not been answered yet."

"Well, let us hope we shall get replies before long; we should be having another ship in soon now, I think. Then we shall know how things are moving. By the way, where is your town section, Mr. Thomson?"

Eric pointed it out on a large map of the town that hung over the Captain's desk.

"Yes," said the latter, "I thought that was it. You can sell it to good advantage if you wish."

"Some one has been inquiring after it?"

"Yes, I am authorised to offer you fifty pounds for it."

"I shall let you know in the morning, Captain; but unless I can find another to please me I think I will not part with it."

"It is a large price."

"Indeed, the price is tempting; but it is one of the first situations in the whole town. Just my ideal of a snug corner. If the price is tempting the section is satisfactory."

"Then you will give me an answer to-morrow?"

But when to-morrow came Eric was not prepared to sell; because he had not been able to make sure of another he considered as good as his own.

"If I make it sixty, will you take it?" asked the Captain, anxious to complete the transaction.

"Can you wait until two o'clock?" asked Eric, in answer; "I must satisfy myself about being able to get another before I sell this one."

"There are plenty others to be had for twelve pounds ten shillings," replied the Captain.

"Yes, but it is not simply a question of so much ground within the town belt. Locality is a special consideration. There is one I know of, and if I can get it I will sell my own."

At two o'clock Eric closed with the Captain, and pocketed forty pounds by the transaction; having purchased the site of his future home for twenty.

In the course of a few more days another ship was announced from the heads, and another contingent of immigrants was piloted up to Dunedin and lodged in the barracks until they could find more suitable places to live in.

To Eric the most important part of that ship's cargo lay in one of the mail boxes.

Kirsty had received his letters, and was greatly pleased with his presents, but most of all she congratulated him on his splendid appointment, and among many other things of a pleasing sort were these lines: "Father and mother wonder when you are likely to come Home now, or whether you will be able to spare the time." All he wanted to know might be read between those lines.

Not only was she still true, but her parents were evidently now prepared to concede all they had formerly refused.

There was, however, a second letter. It was from the respected father of his affianced.

It told how glad he was to learn of his speedy promotion to such an honourable position, and expressed confidence in his future good fortune. "In reference to your coming back to Scotland, we have been thinking," the letter went on, "what a great loss of time and money it would be to you. It would be equal to about a year in which you could earn nothing, and in addition to that there would be your own expenses both ways. If you have not already made up your mind to come back—which, of course, we would all like most, only for the great expense it would put you to—we think that you might be saved all that through some friends who might be found going out who would take care of Kirsty on the voyage. But do just as you think will be most advantageous for your prospects."

That was practical good sense, and gave great relief to Eric. It gave him the opportunity to continue in his employment, and to take advantage of whatever other chances came in his way, and in the end consummate his plans much quicker than he calculated upon.

He was much encouraged by the shape things had taken, and now his first care was to get his house built. It was not now possible for him to do the work himself. He certainly had his evenings and mornings in which to do anything he desired, but it paid him better to employ others to do any work of such an extensive character as the erection of his house. Besides he was not a carpenter. His friends Peter and James had a good stock of timber which had already been standing in loose stacks to dry. This he purchased, or at least as much of it as he required.

Mr. Hill gave a tender for the building, and Mr. Hair

was employed to clear the ground, while Mr. Thomson, sen., laid off the garden.

Passing home one evening round by where the church was being erected—facing High Street where it ran into the water, at its junction with Rattray Street—Eric overtook Mrs. McKechnie, whom he relieved of some of her parcels, and walked round the beach with her.

"So you have started to build a fine house, Eric. What a lovely spot you have chosen! When is the wedding? But I have not heard yet who the bride is to be. You keep things very quiet, lad!"

"Do you not think I might do well if I were to sell it after the house is finished?" said he, avoiding an answer to her speech.

"You are not likely to sell that fine place."

"Well, what could a bachelor do with such a house? He would be lost there."

"Do just what I said—put a bride in it!" was her quick reply.

"I believe I could make some money out of that property, only there are few buyers."

"Isabel was just saying only yesterday what a pretty spot it is; she had been over to look at it," said she, ignoring his remarks.

"Oh, indeed, has Miss McKechnie taken a fancy to it already. I will sell it to her if she wishes; I am always open to trade."

"She would like fine to be mistress of such a place, but when that occurs she must get it as a gift. You have not been to spend an evening with us for a while back. Come across any night you like and give us your news!"

"I shall come along with Betty some night, soon, when the moon is a little stronger."

"Come yourself, lad, and bring your lantern! Can you not spare to-night? Come right on with me, and have tea with us! Isabel will have it ready.

"Thank you, Mrs. McKechnie; I am sorry to refuse your kindness, but I require to write some letters to-night. We must keep up our correspondence with the folk in the Old Land, you know, and the schooner leaves for Wellington with the mail to-morrow."

"Then say Friday night; come to tea."

"Thank you. If Betty can come we will not disappoint you."

"But you don't need her to see you home safely. Come yourself whether she can or no; and if you need a lassie to see you through the bush, I'll send Isabel to keep you company. At this she laughed heartily, and Eric, laughing also, bade her good-night where their ways diverged, and as he turned away he said to himself:

"I have no desire for the company of the dark Isabel. To-night I have to send my messages to Kirsty in answer to hers. She has both modesty and affection. With her to live will be bliss; but misery would lurk under the clouds of Isabel. Then stepping homeward he sung in a suppressed undertone:

Oh Aileen, dear Aileen, thine image doth rest
  Like a star in the gloom of my destiny here;
And the moment when last you reclined on my breast,
  As the unclouded hour of our meeting is dear:
And ever while life in my bosom is swelling,
  Let suff'rings assail me, or dangers beset,
Thy love, dearest Aileen, all sadness dispelling,
  The heart of your lover shall never forget.

The children of the neighbourhood of school age had gathered round the new schoolhouse, which by the way, was the church as well, and were spending in noisy play the few remaining minutes before schooltime, and Eric and Mr. Blackie were inside discussing some matter of common interest, the latter having his supplejack cane in his hand ready to give the signal for the children to assemble for lessons, which signal he made usually by rattling vigorously with the cane on the wall for a second or two. As the two conversed, loud shouting of men and the fierce cracking of whips gave all too sudden warning of some approaching danger.

The bellowing of angry cattle and the barking of dogs not far off caused the little folk to fly for shelter to the school door. Only about half of them had got safely in, before an infuriated brute chased by two dogs came dashing across their playground, and the children, in despair of getting into the building, scattered about in all directions, screaming with fright and falling with terror. One little girl, in the struggle to follow her brother, tripped and fell with a frantic scream not more than half-a-dozen paces in front of the wild bullock. Nothing could be done to help her. The two men had been unable to get out of the building because of the number of children rushing in ; and those who saw what had happened looked for the worst as the inevitable climax of the confusion.

But with barking, biting dogs at his heels the bullock was more intent on saving himself or punishing his pursuers than on other deeds of mischief, and when he reached the child, probably from sheer fright, instead of transfixing her with his spear-like horns, he gave a loud roar and

sprang high over the prostrate form and tore onward. Eric had the child in his arms almost as the dogs had passed her, but nothing worse had happened than the shock of terror, from which the little girl soon recovered, and with the rest very shortly afterwards was in her seat in class.

The occasion of this commotion arose from the unwise site which had been chosen for the city slaughter yards. This important adjunct of civilised life was erected on a part of the ground now covered by the Colonial Bank buildings, and all the cattle destined for the table had to be driven through among the houses to reach it. This particular drove had been irritated from some cause, hence the trouble at the schoolhouse. It should, however, in justice, be noted that the slaughter yard was placed in that central position from a high sense of sanitary conditions entertained by the authorities; for as each tide rose to within a few inches of the floor level, and the spring tides washed over it, the place was twice daily cleared of any offensive matter that might have gathered.

"Mr. Blackie, will you kindly consent to become the first president of our cricket club?" asked Andrew Melville one afternoon as the former gentleman was coming away from his daily duties. The questioner and Eric Thomson had been appointed a deputation to wait on the popular dominie for that purpose.

"My dear sir," answered Mr. Blackie, smiling "I have not played a game of cricket for years past; someone else would suit you better."

"The fact that you have not played recently need not stand in the way," returned Andrew, "although we would

be delighted if you felt inclined to join us as a playing member."

"Well, besides that, you see I never had any great practical knowledge of cricket, and were I ever called on to take part in a discussion over a dispute you might probably find the schoolmaster abroad, and it would be fatal for him to show ignorance on any point where accurate knowledge should be displayed."

We are prepared," said Eric, "to save you from any such inconvenience. All disputes will be decided by a committee appointed for the purpose."

"That, then, breaks the point off that objection. Then what would be expected of me if I accepted your flattering offer of honour."

"The honour would be mutual, Mr. Blackie. If you regard it an honour to be asked to preside over our club, we think you will confer an honour on us by accepting the position. You would of course give us the honour of your name, and control us in our meetings," replied Andrew.

"We shall also expect you to see us in the field as frequently as you can spare the time to come along, and of course you will open the season for us," added Eric.

"How many members have you been able to enrol," he furthered questioned, beginning to show that his interest in the club was increasing.

"We have a membership of fifteen," answered Andrew.

"And are you likely to have any opponent club?"

"I believe Mr. Crawford is trying to organise another team, but I cannot tell how far he has succeeded," replied Eric.

"That may help to put more life in the play. By the way, with whom did the idea of your club originate?"

"Oh, a few of us got talking about getting up some sort of recreation, and we decided on cricket," answered Eric, again avoiding an acknowledgment of the fact that he had been personally working it up for several weeks.

"Then probably I may assume that it is mainly composed of the old band of chums."

"Very nearly," replied Andrew. "We hang together pretty well still, but one or two recent arrivals have also joined us."

"You will be the better for a little rivalry," suggested the schoolmaster. "Occasional contests are the life of sports. I hope Mr. Crawford may succeed in getting a good club together, if for no other reason than the spirit of emulation the existence of two clubs will create."

"I presume," said Eric a little later, "that you will honour us by an acceptance of our presidentship?"

This was answered in the affirmative, accompanied with some remarks of scruples and expressions of thanks for the honour they had conferred.

One Saturday afternoon shortly after this conversation was fixed for the opening day, when a match was arranged between the two rival teams. The Southern Greys won the toss, and were under the orders of Captain Melville, whose knowledge of the game in the Old Country was understood to be creditable. The field was in the keeping of the True Blues, with Captain Crawford in command.

The ceremony of opening the wicket, however, lay between the two presidents—Mr. Strode representing the True Blues, had the ball, and Mr. Blackie the bat. The first ball came up slowly, but wide, and was not struck. It was bowled in again at a good speed, dead on the wicket,

but was received on the bat with a beautiful stroke, and lifted clean over the boundary, amid the vociferous cheers of a crowd of bystanders, and the presidents, walking forward, met in the centre of the pitch, and there they shook hands and declared the wicket open.

Tom Wallace was the first batsman at the wicket and George Grahame the first bowler, who both dealt gently for a few minutes. Grahame was a powerful young man, who knew the art of bowling, and Wallace being warned, stood on his defence, at first merely saving his wicket. The first over was a maiden. Then Frank Lang had to defend himself against the bowling of Crawford, who from the first gave evidence of his skill, but Lang took one run out of the over, thus putting the first mark on the score, and then he had to face Grahame, who drove in hard, but only to put the score up two more.

Wallace now was attacked by Crawford. The first ball was simply stopped, but the second was hit for four, the third was a bye, and the fourth ran the score up two, while the fifth raised the ball well over the heads of the fielders and landed in the scrub beyond the boundary.

When the score stood at twenty-five Wallace was caught by Young, and his bat was taken by Peter McKechnie. Lang went out at thirty-three, his wicket being taken by Grahame, and Melville went in. These two played a steady, even game, until McKechnie was stumped at fifty-three, when Eric took the bat. Melville and he raised the score by twos, threes, and fours until it reached eighty-two, and the bowlers were changed, Proudfoot and Anderson being sent to replace them. Then came a little bye-play, but at length the balls came in in a manner

dangerous to the wickets, and the bats were on their mettle. Melville sent three to boundary in succession, and Eric, who was not confident in his position, played for safety rather than show, taking advantage of small scores only, but the playing of Andrew roused the enthusiasm of the spectators to an intense degree, until at last his wicket was struck, and he went off the field amid resounding cheers.

Carmichael next took his stand, and he and Eric playing with caution, were gradually increasing the score, when, to the surprise of all, he lifted a ball from Proudfoot just over the boundary, and then followed gentle touches, then again giving the strength of his arms he succeeded in drawing forth cheer after cheer for his masterly strokes, until at last he was caught by Grahame, and retired in the midst of echoing applause.

The game grew quickly to a close as J. Thomson, Miller, Stewart, Hair, and Robertson lost their wickets in quick succession, leaving Eric to walk from the field "not out" when the score stood at 187.

All the ladies of the settlement had taken an interest in the event, and the friends of the rival clubs had vied with one another in the provision of tea and cake, but the whole was manifested in the best of form; in fact, it was a matter of zealous co-operation and good will in the spreading of a generous lunch at which the respective members of the club were seen in happy intercourse discussing the relative merits of the players.

After lunch the True Blues went to the wickets, Russell and Lindsay batting first, to the bowling of Carmichael and McKechnie. Russell failed to hit a straight ball and was bowled. Massey took his place, and was

caught for five. Lindsay played carefully, and occasionally made a good stroke, getting three to boundary before his wickets fell. Lowe played a rash game, and went out for two, when Fraser succeeded, and did fair work, putting on twenty before he found he had allowed his wickets to go. Lindsay's fell for twelve, and a slow game followed between Garvie and Hill, who were both retired for small numbers.

Proudfoot and Crawford were together at the wickets when the score stood at eighty-eight—four wickets to fall for ninety-nine runs. Melville now sent Eric Thomson to relieve Carmichael. Proudfoot struck well and was running up his score when he was caught by Wallace, and Grahame replaced him. The two individual rivals now stood facing each other. Crawford, resolved to take spinners off Eric, prepared for fight, and all spectators who knew the men were showing their sympathy with the one or the other. For some time Crawford was satisfied to hold his ground. Eric tempted him into freer play by easy balls bowled straight, and Crawford drove two of them for fours, but then came a swift one with a break, before which the stumps went flying, and Crawford was forced to leave the field.

Anderson carried in the last bat for the Blues, and with Grahame played a determined game, until the latter was caught by Melville; the score standing at 187—149. There was great excitement when the result was announced. Men and women hastened to the tent used as a pavilion to congratulate, or otherwise, as friends chanced to be on the winning or losing side.

Among the first who spoke to Eric Thomson on his coming in from the wicket was Miss McKechnie, who, of course, was waiting to meet her brother Peter, who also deserved a word of congratulation.

"I am so pleased to be able to congratulate you, Mr. Thomson," she said, extending her hand to him, while her face beamed with smiles of pleasure. "Your last ball was so splendid. Who would have believed you were such a cricketer. I have enjoyed the afternoon greatly.

"I am glad to hear the game has been worth coming out to witness, and that it has been a pleasant pastime," he replied.

"Oh, pleasant, yes; I hope we shall have more of such afternoons, and at frequent intervals. I do so much like to see cricket, especially when it is so good as to-day's playing."

"You are very complimentary, Miss McKechnie, but here is your big brother looking for me; I must go into the tent."

And he disappeared beneath the canvas roof to join his comrades. Turning away from the tent, she met her mother, who had followed her from the other end of the ground at a much slower pace.

"You spoke to him, Isabel?"

"Yes, but he is always so coldly polite."

"Did you congratulate him on his bowling?"

"That was the first thing I did."

"Well?"

"He simply said I was very complimentary, and was glad I had enjoyed looking on."

"He won't forget it; men are vain enough to think over generous compliments."

"Men are vain enough to be provoking."

"Take my advice, Isabel, and refuse to be provoked. Time works great changes. Patience brings its own reward.

We must wait for him, for I want to see Peter, and perhaps we may all walk home together."

"I feel more inclined to rush away home alone."

"Nonsense, Isabel! He wasn't rude to you. You must remember he was in the height of his excitement, and his comrades were all about him."

"He never has any enthusiasm when I speak to him. I can't understand how the boys all seem to like him so much."

"Now, Isabel, your enthusiasm has just received a little unintended repulse, and you feel vexed. You are not brave enough."

"I thought myself quite brave to run up and say what I did. He wasn't kind, and I have a right to feel it."

"But you would not be wise to show you resent it. A good salmon is worth angling for, Isabel."

"It takes a barbed spear to catch an eel, however."

"Isabel," said the elder lady seriously, "I never saw you in a mood like this before. Be-think yourself; yon fine new house is not going up for nothing. He has been more friendly with you than with any other lass, and there is no lad he is more or so much with than your brother. You may be sure you will get a surprise some of these days.

"There is Mrs. Thomson with Betty and Mary. They are coming over here."

Looking in the direction indicated by Isabel, Mrs. McKechnie waved her hand in a familiar manner, which was immediately returned.

"Oh, mother, why did you wave to them? We shall have to speak now, and I wanted to get away."

"Speak, to be sure we will speak, my dear; I am surprised to hear you talk so. It is a good opportunity, and we must not be so foolish as to lose it."

In a second or two more they were exchanging civilities, and Isabel had driven off her disappointed looks and was smiling as if nothing had crossed her.

"How have you enjoyed the match?" said Mrs. Thomson, without waiting to ask for her neighbour's state of health.

"I have enjoyed it better than anything else since we sailed from Glasgow. I did rejoice to see Crawford's wicket go flying before Eric's ball."

"But Peter did well too," replied Mrs. Thomson.

"Perhaps he did; but I was delighted to see the storeman brought down by his adversary. I thought more of Eric doing it than of anyone else. Crawford has always been against him, and has kept up the spite."

"They were never bad friends, Mrs. McKechnie. They never had a fall out."

"Thanks to your son's good judgment then, Mrs. Thomson. No one falls out with him. That's just what Crawford dislikes him for. If he could manage to pick a quarrel he could have his revenge."

"I fear you are too severe on Mr. Crawford. I never heard Eric speak of him as bearing him any ill-will. But let that be; I have something else to speak about that will be more pleasant for us all." And then she paused for a moment, when Mrs. McKechnie, impatient, excited, and curious, exclaimed:

"Its seldom we hear things like that; go on, Mrs. Thomson, and give us the news."

"Well, I was just going to say, as you had a party a while since in your house, we are thinking about having one too, but for a different purpose; and we're hoping to see you all with us to spend the night."

"To spend the night!" cried Isabel, in a voice much louder than she intended, suspecting something that might prove even a greater disappointment than her recent one.

"Yes, we shall expect you to stay to the dancing, and that will not be over till three or four; we are going to have a wedding, you know!"

"A wedding!" cried Isabel, turning pale and laying her hand on her mother's shoulder to steady herself. Then rallying her fortitude she quickly continued, "Oh, how nice; tell us all about it Mrs. Thomson, but let us sit down over on that seat while we listen."

Then the five women stepped to a stout form and sat in a row.

"Well, you see," resumed Mrs. Thomson, "Mary here and James Carmichael were going together before we left Edinburgh, and since he has got enough to put up a bit of a house, the two of them are just going to put their heads together and set up a home of their own."

"Let me wish you joy, Mary," said Isabel, to whom the news was indeed pleasant and a relief, which again remantled her cheeks with the hue of young and vigorous life.

"Let me do the same, Mary; you may be a proud lassie to get such an industrious, steady, and sensible lad. And is that fine big house folk have all been saying is Eric's the one you are going to live in?"

"Oh, no," answered her mother, "James has taken a house from Mr. Pain, who is coming to live in the shop he has put up in Princes Street; and he intends to build his own next Summer."

"Then I suppose we may expect to hear of Eric's wedding coming off next," said Mrs. McKechnie, just to try what she might learn on this point.

"As to Eric," answered Mrs. Thomson, "we cannot say much about him, but I suppose his day is coming."

"Well, when birds begin to build their nests it is not usually difficult to detect which are mates, if they are carefully watched. And the nest is never built to remain empty."

"That must be left for time to tell, Mrs. McKechnie, in Eric's case. He tells very little on that point lately."

"Here are the lads coming, mother," said Betty.

And they rose, joined the young men, and turned themselves homeward.

CHAPTER XXI.

DIVERTED COURSES.

How frail is finate man, To-day he boasts
His path straighforward, and his end due north:
To-morrow, 'ere the evening sun has set,
He turns right angles, and his goal is east.

"Here is another letter from New Zealand for you, Kirsty. I have got one too, so that I know most of what's in yours. Run off and read it by yourself while your mother reads this one. Then you can tell us anything there is in it for us to know," said Mr. Knox, as he threw two letters down on the table one evening on his return from business, and seated himself in his big comfortable chair in the corner.

Kirsty picked up the letter eagerly and disappeared that she might peruse it in quietness alone.

"So he's not going to come for her!" exclaimed Mrs. Knox, after reading the letter. "That is mean. I always thought he would be glad to come back and take her out with him; and I am sure she is worth it."

"But would it really be the wisest course?" interjected her husband. In the first place, you see, he would lose about a year in coming and going, then he would have to give up his appointment, and in addition to this there would be the expense of his passage both ways; that means a large loss to young people who are just beginning life."

"But you know I said before how much I was against

Kirsty going by herself, a single lassie among hundreds o strangers. It's not right; I'm sure it's not."

"None of us would ever dream of sending her alone among strangers. For my part I would rather have her stay at home; but we have already suggested that she should go out to meet him, and she is ready for the venture whenever we find a suitable family for her to go with, and that, strange to say, has just come to my knowledge to-day."

"What family is this you have so suddenly approved of?" asked Mrs. Knox, a little annoyed at the way in which her husband made the announcement.

"No other, dear wife, than your old friend Mrs. Campbell Collins!"

"You must be daft. The Collins' going out to New Zealand! Why we might as well think of going ourselves."

"Well, since you suggest it, lass, we might think of it, and if you are really in earnest we might do worse."

"Do you really tell me that the Collins' are going?"

"It is a simple fact. I saw Mr. Collins this very day; he asked if I had heard lately from Mr. Thomson, who went away last year to Otago, and I replied by telling him how well they had got on, and what Eric was doing, and then he said he had taken out his passage, and was going to sail in about three months."

"What does he mean to do there? I'm sure he was never able to do hard work like the Thomson's have been compelled to do."

"He means to take a farm, and grow crops and raise sheep for their wool, and cattle for sale."

Whilst he was saying this, Kirsty opened the door and entered the room.

"Who do you think is going out to Otago, Kirsty," said Mrs. Knox, with more than usual excitement.

"Not you, mother, is it?" inquired she.

"Well, after Mrs. Campbell Collins it might as well be me, I am sure," was her strange answer.

"Mrs. Collins! I am so glad; and then why not you, all of us, mother? What does father say?"

The result of this piece of excitement was a decision of the two women to call on Mrs. Collins to talk the matter over. This they did the next afternoon, when it was arranged that if Mr. Knox did not decide to go, Miss Knox would have the benefit of Mrs. Collins' companionship, together with that of her young daughters, on the voyage.

As a mail for New Zealand was to leave by direct sailing ship in a few days, letters were written to announce to Eric Thomson that Kirsty would follow by the next ship, to leave in about three months. The letters mentioned that other friends would likely accompany her, and in any case she was sure of being in the care of a very old friend of her mother during the voyage.

About a month later Mr. Knox informed his employers of his resolve to emigrate to the new Scotch colony in New Zealand, and gave notice that he would consequently leave their service at the end of six weeks.

"Have you decided as to your occupation when you arrive there, Mr. Knox?" asked the senior partner.

"Not exactly, but no doubt I shall find some opening in a new community."

"Rather like a leap in the dark, is it not?"

"I know some who are already there, and it is in consequence of their success I have decided to go."

"Would you not be the better of having some sort of business to begin with—some agency, or the like."

"To be sure; I should be glad to undertake an agency for any respectable house if I knew where to get it; but I have no idea what would be a good line to look for."

"Well, Mr. Knox, I will see you again about this matter; I think I know of something likely to suit you."

Three days subsequently Mr. Knox was called into Mr. Aikman's room, when he was introduced to a gentleman who was anxious to make investments in the colony, and all things being satisfactory, Mr. Knox was appointed to manage the business for him on most advantageous terms, and had everything made out in documentary form, so that there was no possibility of mistakes occurring concerning Mr. Knox's position in the affair.

Besides this, Mr Aikman, out of the high respect he entertained for his employee of twenty-five years, had so arranged matters that the latter had his passage paid by his principal, as if he had been induced to take the voyage entirely in the interests of the man who had entrusted so much to him.

When David Moir heard that Mr. Knox was going to emigrate he sought an opportunity for an interview. Of late there had been an absence of friendliness between them, owing to the mystery of the seal.

As the elder gentleman was leaving the office one evening shortly after the above occurrence, he was followed by Moir, who, overtaking him, said:

"Mr. Knox, if you are not otherwise engaged, I should be glad to walk up the street with you a little way."

"I am not engaged, David, and will be pleased to hear any good news you can impart."

"What I want to say is not good news, yet I want to speak about a matter that has caused me some pain of late."

"Nothing to put me off my tea, David, I hope."

"No, you may blame me, you may despise me, as I now do myself, but personally you will be glad, I believe, to know what I have to tell you."

"Then go on; I am curious now."

"I have been foolish. I sometimes think I was mad," he resumed. "You know I was accused of procuring a duplicate seal of one Miss Knox had got and given to Mr. Eric Thomson.

"Yes, I certainly do, and you denied it."

"I did not admit it. And now I wish to tell you the whole history of the affair."

"Then it has a history to be revealed."

"It has, sir. You remember that night when you invited us to say good-bye to Mr. Thomson and his family. I was the last to leave your house. When I had said good-bye to you at the door and turned toward the gate, I saw Miss Knox and Eric approaching, and out of pure mischief, I hid behind the large rose tree near the end of the house until they should pass in. Instead of going into the house they stopped in the porch, and I could not then get away unseen by them, and so remained in the concealment."

"While there I heard all that was said about the seal, and something suggested to me that I could use this knowledge to my own advantage; and a few days afterwards I went and ordered the seal that I subsequently gave to Miss Knox. My object being to make her believe Thomson had

unfaithfully parted with or carelessly lost what she had given to him with the strongest of injunctions to preserve it."

"I am glad, David, that you have confessed to your fault; but I must say I never would have thought you capable of such a mean action."

"I have confessed, Mr. Knox, for the purpose of letting you know the truth, to relieve myself of the pain it has been causing me, and to ask you to forgive me for the contemptible conduct of which I have been guilty."

"While I hope you may never be able to forget this acknowledgement, and that it may remain before you as a beacon to direct you to better ways, at the same time I can freely grant your request; but the wrong was not against me, and you must do to those whom you sought to injure what you have done to me, before you can expect to have a clear conscience."

"That will be more difficult to manage."

"Having made a beginning, you have, I should say, cleared the way for the conclusion of what you have to do. Come up to the house to-morrow night and I will prepare the way for you."

"I will, but I am ashamed."

"We have often to walk the plain of humiliation before we can ascend the mount of triumph."

"You will tell the object of my coming?"

"I shall."

"Thank you! good night, Mr. Knox"; and without looking his friend in the face David turned off into another street, feeling relieved by his effort to put matters right.

At length the day arrived when all the passengers had

to take their places on board the ship destined to be their floating dwelling for the following four months.

Among those who had gathered on deck was a group bidding good-bye to a much larger gathering of friends, and among them was David Moir, who, being reinstated in the good will of the Knox's, had resolved to accompany them to the new world of adventure and enterprise.

Beside him stood a lady and gentleman of middle age; the lady rested her hand on his shoulder, and showed by the moisture of her eyes the solicitude of a mother taking a long if not a last farewell of her first-born son, while he upon whose arm she leaned looked grave, with the anxiety of a father whose son is striking out into the wide world, far from the influences of home and the associations of his youth, to battle with adverse powers, and in the contest either rise a conqueror over them, or fall unequal to their forces.

Beside them was standing a gentleman upon whose head the power of years was triumphing over what once was a crown of golden locks, among which the fingers of a fond mother had many a time been drawn as she praised her bonnie bairnie. But now the gold has faded from the crown, which had become bleached as white as cleanest wool. While his purse had drawn to it the golden abundance of many years of diligence and toil.

David addressed him as "Uncle Malcolm." In Glasgow he was known as the head of the firm carrying on an extensive business as Malcolm Anstruthers and Co.

In parting from the young man he said:

"Now, David, your training in Edinburgh should by this time have given you a good knowledge of the legal side

of business life, in which you must have observed that honour in its noblest sense is the first principle. You have now to enter into the actual practice of dealing with men, and my experience is that the same inflexible devotion to integrity, as well as to industry, is necessary to a prosperous career. The mail of the ship to follow this one will carry with it a draught on the New Zealand Company for you of a sum sufficient to give you a fair start in life. And when I have no more need of the money I have acquired, a portion of it will be left to you, provided the accounts I receive of your conduct are of a satisfactory nature. If, however, you prefer to return to your native land, Uncle Malcolm's business will be open to you, if then you feel disposed to enter into it. Good-bye, and may providence guide your footsteps."

With a firm "shake hands," he looked kindly in the young man's face and then with a nimble step made for the gangway, and thence to his carriage a little distance off, in which he drove away.

Chapter XXII.

HOW IT ALL ENDED.

> The purer love, more sore the parting;
> More keen the pain when hope grows faint.
> But all the brighter is the greeting,
> When love no longer knows restraint.

Many and diverse were the opinions expressed among the people of young Dunedin when it was observed that Eric Thomson's new house was not only finished, but that it was being furnished by him; as Mrs. McKechnie said to her husband, when he told her of some of the articles he had seen being carried in as he passed:

"It's not for a lone bachelor things like that are being put in there. You may be sure he means to get married, and that very soon, for he's not the lad to spend his money on things he has no use for.

"But I have been thinking," interjected he, "that perhaps Eric may see his plans for 'letting' the house furnished to some new arrival; you see he would get a fine rent that way."

"He has always his eye open to catch a penny," replied the scheming and puzzled matron; "but I think you are wrong in that. Something tells me he means to catch some lass."

"Your head—like all the women—is ever thinking on folk getting married; but I'm sure you never came across a lad that gave you less reason to think that about him. For

all the time we have known him we never saw or heard of him setting his cap to any lassie. His mind, it seems to me, is taken up with other things than love-making."

"Why, man, you know very well some men are up to their ears in love and are too bashful to tell it, and dread even to show it in case they might be laughed at. These men go on doing everything but the one thing to indicate their state of mind, and unless some happy chance or wisely laid plan forces them to propose they fail and become miserable old bachelors."

"That may be true of some, but I am mistaken if it is of Eric Thomson. He is not a coward, he is not bashful, and he has great ease in expressing his mind. He is never afraid to say what he means. But what if he left a lass behind him?"

"Nonsense, we would have heard of that from his mother or his sisters; but they have never said a whisper about it."

Notwithstanding this opinion, Mrs. McKechnie in her heart thought that might be the solution of the whole thing; and that afternoon she put on her bonnet and Paisley shawl and, leaving instructions with Isabel to have the tea ready at the usual hour, she walked away through the bush to see Mrs. Thomson, just to repay a friendly visit, owing for nearly a month.

"Come away in, Mrs. McKechnie, 'a sight of you is good for sore eyes' these days; come away in and have a cup of tea."

"Indeed Mrs. Thomson, I am quite ashamed for not coming sooner, but between hoeing potatoes and weeding turnips, and other little jobs in the garden in addition to

our housework, Isabel and I find the days slip by so quickly that the weeks are gone before we know it."

"Never mind that since you're here at last, and I'm glad to see you; the kettle's just boiling, and we'll have a drink of tea in a minute."

"Oh, you must not make tea for me. It's not long since I had dinner. How fine those cabbages are growing. Your garden reflects credit on somebody. One might think it was ten years old; you have it looking so beautiful."

"Come away in and throw off your things and rest while we have a talk together," said Mrs. Thomson, pretending to ignore the compliment.

Over the tea cups, all the small affairs of the neighbours, male and female, were carefully rehearsed, and some hearty laughing was enjoyed over certain characteristic eccentricities; for Mrs. McKechnie possessed considerable power of mimicry, the exhibition of which gave to herself more pleasure than anyone else derived from it. She had, however, got Mrs. Thomson worked into a mood nearly as humorous as her own, when she raised the question of Eric's new house, and what was going to be done with it.

"Oh, Eric always says he might sell it at a good profit some day, or even let it if he has no better use for it," said his mother, careful to avoid anything definite.

"No doubt it would be worth a sum of money to any man who wanted such a place, but not many come here who have money to spare that would buy it. But I have heard that there is a little bird whistling among the trees about 'The girl I left behind me.'"

Mrs. Thomson only looked at her friend and gave an innocent sort of smile, which the latter chose to interpret as a sign that she had not been understood, and resumed:

"I suppose it could scarcely be possible for fifty or sixty young lads to leave their homes to cross the seas and none of them leave their first loves behind them."

"Perhaps not," was all the answer given.

"Now, among all the lads that came out with us, or that I have met since we came here, Eric stands highest in my opinion; but what has always puzzled me has been his reluctance to be seen alone with any lassie but his sisters. And when I was told that his love was still in the old land, I thought that might make it all quite reasonable."

"It is surely not unreasonable, Mrs. McKechnie, for a young man to avoid the risk of being called a flirt, or of raising hopes in any lassie's mind that he does not mean should come to more," said Mrs. Thomson, with a very kindly smile, and in an earnest tone of voice.

As, however, Mrs. Thomson had not denied the suggestion, Mrs. McKechnie went home more convinced than she went that Eric was already engaged, and was expecting the young lady to arrive by some early vessel; but in case she might be wrong, and as she had pretended to disbelieve when her husband suggested it, she said nothing about it to anyone, except by way of inuendo, until one day when Isabel mentioned having met and spoken to Eric, she said:

"I am sure Eric will be married before long, but I fear the lassie is not in the country that will become his bride."

"What makes you think that, mother?"

"His manner and his preparations," she simply answered.

Isabel's head ached badly that night, and she retired immediately after tea.

Just before sunset, some boys who were playing on the

ridge above Bell Hill (Dowling Street) had their attention attracted to the unusual sight of a ship in full sail off "The Cliffs" above St. Clair. It was a pretty sight as the sun was shining against her sails, which shone as white as snow.

The boys spread the news quickly, and as the vessel approached Lawyer's Head more than a score of men had climbed the summit of the hill to see her passing along. Among them were Mr. McKechnie and Eric Thomson.

"It must be a Home ship," said Mr. McKechnie to Eric.

"I expect it is," he replied. "According to last advices one must be due about now."

"Did you hear the name?"

"Well, no, I did not. "You see it was to be three months after the last one, and the name would not likely be known."

With that Eric darted away from the company, and in less than half-an-hour he was sailing before a gentle breeze towards Port Chalmers.

The first thing next morning he and Ben Brooks started for the Pilot Station, where they arrived before the ship had put in an appearance, and he arranged with the pilot to take him off with him.

The three hours he had to wait before the sail was descried standing in from the east were to Eric the most tardy hours of his life. And when at length she was sighted, his impatience for the boat to start was almost as painful as the suspense of watching had been.

At last the boat was manned and launched, and under the pressure of six strong rowers she was sending the foamy water from the bows as wave after wave came

against her. But Eric took little notice of his immediate affairs.

In spirit he was already on board the ship, and his eyes were fixed upon the approaching vessel too intently to give more than monosyllabic replys to the frequent remarks of Dick Driver, near whom he sat in the whaleboat.

They had gone about two miles out, when the ship stood up in the wind, and Driver neatly laid his boat alongside the ship and passed up the ladder in a truly seamanlike fashion, closely followed by Eric, who formally saluted the captain, and was stepping forward to address him, when he felt a hand laid on his shoulder and heard the words :

"Eric Thomson !"

Turning hastily, he stood as if confounded for an instant before he could believe the reality of what stood before him. He had come with only one human face of his acquaintance in prospect, but this one was unexpected. At last he exclaimed :

"Mr. Knox ! Have you come too ?"

"I have, Eric, and I am right pleased to see you. Here are the others."

Just close by, but somewhat mingled with the crowd of eager persons who were pressing round the stranger, glad to rest their eyes on such an uncommon sight, were all the members of Mr. Knox's family.

What followed is better left to the reader's imagination. The pen is incapable of justly portraying the scene which convinced David Moir that the love of those young hearts had not waned by their two years' separation, and he felt glad now that his conduct had resulted in failure, his better being assuring him that he had been tampering with

a thing too sacred for such interference. And yet he felt pained because his had not been the good fortune to be the first who sought the affection of such a heart as Kirsty Knox evidently possessed.

"And so, Mr. Moir," said Eric, when he had leisure enough to be civil to other people, "you have really made up your mind to banish yourself from the social joys of Edinburgh in this land of heathen savages."

"Here I am, Eric, none more surprised than myself; but by this time you must have civilised the country."

"If I were to speak my mind it would be very like this," replied Eric. "The uncivilised in New Zealand are less barbarous than thousands in our Scottish cities. As for savages, I have seen none here. I do not think, honestly speaking, we could say we left none behind us."

"You must have discovered the land of Eden!" answered David, with a satirical contortion of his features.

"Indeed, so far as the innocence of the natives met with in my experience is concerned, they are less unworthy of being spoken of as descendants of those who lived on that happy spot than any I have ever seen. Still, they are benighted, ignorant, and perhaps dirty; but not criminal."

"Then our tomahawks will be useless; what a pity we spent money on purchasing them."

"You will find a much more civilised use for your tomahawks than what you indicate they were intended for," retorted Eric. "The country is full of obstacles which must be cut away, and tomahawks come in handy for that kind of work. I can assure you this is no place for soldiers, social magnates, or idlers; but you will soon know all this from experience. I am glad you have got over your very

pronounced scruples, and pleased to welcome you to our new home."

"I expect to have a charming life in this land of innocense and peace; and, really, after so many monotonous months on board this ship, almost any kind of life on land will be enjoyable."

"You will find the conditions of life here utterly unlike anything at home," said Eric; yet there seems to be so much to fill up the time, as well as to keep both mind and muscle busy, that on the whole life is thoroughly enjoyable; for one ceases to think about mere enjoyments, there seems to be so little to intercept the stream of pleasure which flows from virtuous company and congenial occupation."

Here their conversation was suddenly interrupted by the ship standing in for the entrance; and every mind was from that time engaged in watching the numerous interesting sights as they passed into the harbour. Their experiences of "crossing the bar," sailing past the Maori Kaik, and winding their way to the anchorage off Port Chalmers, were very similar to what had occurred to others.

As the ship swung round to her anchor, Ben Brooks brought his large boat alongside according to arrangements with Eric, who had prepared his friends for an immediate transfer from the ship to Dunedin, and ere long they had got a large quantity of their luggage into Ben's barge, and then they took farewell of the ship.

The tide was high when they reached the landing place, already full of Maori boats, which, being drawn up on the sand, almost covered the beach, where, turned keel uppermost, they served as sleeping places for their owners,

who spread their mats beneath them ; and men and women, married and single, slept the sleep of those who know nothing of the refined modesty which their European neighbours were careful to observe.

When, however, the boat with its load of passengers was run up on the beach as far as possible, several of the kind hearted copper-skinned natives at once came to their assistance, volunteering to carry the pakehas ashore.

The women, however, objected to be handled in that manner, and even Mr. Knox shrank from trusting his valuable body to the tender mercies of a Maori. A feeling of horror crept over them all as they looked on the faces, which were made more strange by the fantastic tatooed figures than by the mere brownness of the skin, for the old notion of Savage cruelty had not disappeared from the minds of the new arrivals.

"We have got accustomed to being carried ashore from the boats by the Maoris, although at first we were quite as reluctant as any of you. They don't mind wetting their legs to serve their pakeha friends, and, indeed, look on it as an honour to be permitted to perform such a service," said Eric.

"Is there no small boat?" asked Mr. Knox.

"Oh, we never think of such a thing when there are Maoris about. I will go first and show you how it is done; and while saying so Eric got on the back of one of the Maoris, and in a minute more was standing comfortably on the sand. In the same manner he returned to encourage and help the women.

The usual large crowd had gathered to welcome whatever strangers might arrive. Among those who had come

to the beach were Mr. and Mrs. Thomson and their two girls, Betty and Jane.

"I declare, if that's not Mrs. Knox!" cried Mrs. Thomson.

"And Mr. Knox too, and the whole of them, if I can believe my eyes!" replied her husband.

"It is so!" called the two girls, and pulling out their handkerchiefs they waved them franticly as a salute.

Kirsty was the first of the family to set foot on solid ground, and as she did so she was taken possession of by the three women, whose welcome was as enthusiastic as the heart of any human being could wish. When the elder ones landed Mr. and Mrs. Thomson at once received them with every mark of friendship, and led them off to their home, leaving instructions with Ben to send the luggage round by the bullock sledge to the house, where everything arrived safely before dark.

That night was spent in unflagging talk of how things had worked round to induce Mr. Knox to come away to New Zealand, and in discussing the news regarding events of the last two years as experienced by both families.

Three months later many changes had taken place; a mere mention of which brings our story to its close. Perhaps the chief event was the wedding of our two young friends, and their happy settlement in their new home, where Christina Knox was afterwards known as Mrs. Eric Thomson, and became an important member of Dunedin society. Mr. Knox had purchased a pleasant section, and had recently entered into occupation of his new house, and was now travelling away in the north in the interests of his principal.

David Moir had soon become acquainted with Miss Isabel McKechnie, who now, as Mrs. Moir, had taken up housekeeping in a neat cottage, while David had purchased a farm in the Taieri, and was arranging for working it in a thorough manner, with the prospect of shortly building his homestead on it, where he and Isabel would personally supervise its management.

Mr. Thomson and his two sons had been very successful as working gardeners, never having been without employment, and now they too had turned their attention to the larger sphere of agriculture, in which they hoped to secure larger returns for their labour, and in a season or two add the keeping of sheep to their pursuits.

Having now, with many failings, pointed out how our Pioneers took possesson of the Province of Otago fifty years ago, the Author must take farewell of his indulgent readers in the hope that he has been of some service in pointing out to them something of the real life-character of our Early Days.

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