

CHAPTER VII THE MAORI WAR

GLENARVAN would have liked to start without an hour's delay, and follow the coast to Auckland. But since the morning heavy clouds had been gathering, and toward eleven o'clock, after the landing was effected, the vapors condensed into violent rain, so that instead of starting they had to look for shelter.

Wilson was fortunate enough to discover what just suited their wants: a grotto hollowed out by the sea in the basaltic rocks.

Here the travelers took shelter with their arms and provisions.

In the cave they found a ready-garnered store of dried sea-weed, which formed a convenient couch; for fire, they lighted some wood near the mouth of the cavern, and dried themselves as well as they could.

John hoped that the duration of this deluge of rain would be in an inverse ratio to its violence, but he was doomed to disappointment.

Hours passed without any abatement of its fury. Toward noon the wind freshened, and increased the force of the storm.

The most patient of men would have rebelled at such an untoward incident; but what could be done; without any vehicle, they could not brave such a tempest; and, after all, unless the natives appeared on the scene, a delay of twelve hours was not so much consequence, as the journey to Auckland was only a matter of a few days.

During this involuntary halt, the conversation turned on the incidents of the New Zealand war. But to understand and appreciate the critical position into which these MACQUARIE passengers were thrown, something ought to be known of the history of the struggle which had deluged the island of Ika-na-Mani with blood.

Since the arrival of Abel Tasman in Cook's Strait, on the 16th of December, 1642, though the New Zealanders had often been visited by European vessels, they had maintained their liberty in their several islands. No European power had thought of taking possession of this archipelago, which commands the whole Pacific Ocean. The missionaries stationed at various points were the sole channels of Christian civilization.

Some of them, especially the Anglicans, prepared the minds of the New Zealand chiefs for submitting to the English yoke. It was cleverly managed, and these chiefs were influenced to sign a letter addressed to Queen Victoria to ask her protection. But the most clear-sighted of them saw the folly of this step; and one of them, after having affixed his tattoo-mark to the letter by way of signature, uttered these prophetic words: "We have lost our country! henceforth it is not ours; soon the stranger will come and take it, and we shall be his slaves."

And so it was; on January 29, 1840, the English corvette HERALD arrived to claim possession.

From the year 1840, till the day the DUNCAN left the Clyde, nothing had happened here that Paganel did not know and he was ready to impart his information to his companions.

"Madam," said he, in answer to Lady Helena's questions, "I must repeat what I had occasion to remark before, that the New Zealanders are a courageous people, who yielded for a moment, but afterward fought foot to foot against the English invaders. The Maori tribes are organized like the old clans of Scotland. They are so many great families owning a chief, who is very jealous of his prerogative. The men of this race are proud and brave, one tribe tall, with straight hair, like the Maltese, or the Jews of Bagdad; the other smaller, thickset like mulattoes, but robust, haughty, and warlike. They had a famous chief, named Hihi, a real Vercingetorix, so that you need not be astonished that the war with the English has become chronic in the Northern Island, for in it is the famous tribe of the Waikatos, who defend their lands under the leadership of William Thompson."

"But," said John Mangles, "are not the English in possession of the principal points in New Zealand?"

"Certainly, dear John," replied Paganel. "After Captain Hobson took formal possession, and became governor, nine colonies were founded at

various times between 1840 and 1862, in the most favorable situations. These formed the nucleus of nine provinces, four in the North Island and five in the southern island, with a total population of 184,346 inhabitants on the 30th of June, 1864."

"But what about this interminable war?" asked John Mangles.

"Well," said Paganel, "six long months have gone by since we left Europe, and I cannot say what may have happened during that time, with the exception of a few facts which I gathered from the newspapers of Maryborough and Seymour during our Australian journey. At that time the fighting was very lively in the Northern Island."

"And when did the war commence?" asked Mary Grant.

"Recommence, you mean, my dear young lady," replied Paganel; "for there was an insurrection so far back as 1845. The present war began toward the close of 1863; but long before that date the Maories were occupied in making preparations to shake off the English yoke. The national party among the natives carried on an active propaganda for the election of a Maori ruler. The object was to make old Potatau king, and to fix as the capital of the new kingdom his village, which lay between the Waikato and Waipa Rivers. Potatau was an old man, remarkable rather for cunning than bravery; but he had a Prime Minister who was both intelligent and energetic, a descendant of the Ngatihahuas,

who occupied the isthmus before the arrival of the strangers. This minister, William Thompson, became the soul of the War of Independence, and organized the Maori troops, with great skill. Under this guidance a Taranaki chief gathered the scattered tribes around the same flag; a Waikato chief formed a 'Land League,' intended to prevent the natives from selling their land to the English Government, and warlike feasts were held just as in civilized countries on the verge of revolution. The English newspapers began to notice these alarming symptoms, and the government became seriously disturbed at these 'Land League' proceedings. In short, the train was laid, and the mine was ready to explode. Nothing was wanted but the spark, or rather the shock of rival interests to produce the spark.

"This shock took place in 1860, in the Taranaki province on the southwest coast of Ika-na-Mani. A native had six hundred acres of land in the neighborhood of New Plymouth. He sold them to the English Government; but when the surveyor came to measure the purchased land, the chief Kingi protested, and by the month of March he had made the six hundred acres in question into a fortified camp, surrounded with high palisades. Some days after Colonel Gold carried this fortress at the head of his troops, and that day heard the first shot fired of the native war."

"Have the rebels been successful up to this time?"

"Yes, Madam, and the English themselves have often been

compelled to admire the courage and bravery of the New Zealanders. Their mode of warfare is of the guerilla type; they form skirmishing parties, come down in small detachments, and pillage the colonists' homes. General Cameron had no easy time in the campaigns, during which every bush had to be searched. In 1863, after a long and sanguinary struggle, the Maories were entrenched in strong and fortified position on the Upper Waikato, at the end of a chain of steep hills, and covered by three miles of forts. The native prophets called on all the Maori population to defend the soil, and promised the extermination of the pakekas, or white men. General Cameron had three thousand volunteers at his disposal, and they gave no quarter to the Maories after the barbarous murder of Captain Sprent. Several bloody engagements took place; in some instances the fighting lasted twelve hours before the Maories yielded to the English cannonade. The heart of the army was the fierce Waikato tribe under William Thompson. This native general commanded at the outset 2,500 warriors, afterward increased to 8,000. The men of Shongi and Heki, two powerful chiefs, came to his assistance. The women took their part in the most trying labors of this patriotic war. But right has not always might. After severe struggles General Cameron succeeded in subduing the Waikato district, but empty and depopulated, for the Maories escaped in all directions. Some wonderful exploits were related. Four hundred Maories who were shut up in the fortress of Orakau,

besieged by 1,000 English, under Brigadier-General Carey, without water or provisions, refused to surrender, but one day at noon cut their way through the then decimated 40th Regiment, and escaped to the marshes."

"But," asked John Mangles, "did the submission of the Waikato district put an end to this sanguinary war?"

"No, my friend," replied Paganel. "The English resolved to march on Taranaki province and besiege Mataitawa, William Thompson's fortress. But they did not carry it without great loss.

Just as I was leaving Paris, I heard that the Governor and the General had accepted the submission of the Tauranga tribes, and left them in possession of three-fourths of their lands.

It was also rumored that the principal chief of the rebellion, William Thompson, was inclined to surrender, but the Australian papers have not confirmed this, but rather the contrary, and I should not be surprised to find that at this moment the war is going on with renewed vigor."

"Then, according to you, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "this struggle is still going on in the provinces of Auckland and Taranaki?"

"I think so."

"This very province where the MACQUARIE'S wreck has deposited us."

"Exactly. We have landed a few miles above Kawhia harbor, where the Maori flag is probably still floating."

"Then our most prudent course would be to keep toward the north," remarked Glenarvan.

"By far the most prudent," said Paganel. "The New Zealanders are incensed against Europeans, and especially against the English. Therefore let us avoid falling into their hands."

"We might have the good fortune to fall in with a detachment of European troops," said Lady Helena.

"We may, Madam," replied the geographer; "but I do not expect it. Detached parties do not like to go far into the country, where the smallest tussock, the thinnest brushwood, may conceal an accomplished marksman. I don't fancy we shall pick up an escort of the 40th Regiment. But there are mission-stations on this west coast, and we shall be able to make them our halting-places till we get to Auckland."