

## THE EXPEDITIONS OF A HERMIT CRAB.

(BY PAGURUS, AUCKLAND.)

## INTRODUCTORY.

"To wander, wander, is such bliss  
To wander."



O sang a light-hearted maiden, gaily tripping  
over the sands one sunny morning not long ago.  
As I, a discontented old hermit crab basking on  
a rock, heard her carolling of the joys of roam-  
ing, life seemed very hard,

"For I do sometimes feel a languishment  
For skies Italian, and an inward groan  
To sit upon an Alp as on a throne."

Why, I mused, should I have the instincts and the ambition of a bird caged by the limitation of my physical powers? The question was no new one; nor was I singular in my trouble. But it was none the easier to bear that I had thousands of companions in misfortune.

That morning I think I must have been suffering from a bad attack of indigestion, for all nature and every living creature seemed to mock me. The tiny ripples breaking on the beach told of coral- and palm-fringed shores while they laughed with the wanton glee of motion. The birds hung on strong, lazy wings above my usual—not my favourite—pool, and then flew away with cries of rejoicing at the difference between their lot and mine. Fishes darted swiftly past, wagging contemptuous tails at my slow progress. The breeze which fanned the willows and the pohutakawas whispered of the pines of California, the firs of Scotland, the palm-trees of Brazil; and bore the very breath of poppy-lands, of waving tree-ferns and sturdy English oaks. A few heat drops that fell near me splashed out the news of the ocean from which they had found passage through air to sky; of the thirsty lands they had at different times refreshed, and of the diverse ways by which they had run back to the bosom of their mother. A fragile, pearly shell, which rode on the mane of a miniature white horse to my side, and there was thrown by the mischievous wave, had a wondrous tale to tell.

"Of antros vast and deserts idle  
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven."

The very plants and trees seemed stirred by the same hopeless longing to rove at will which darkened my life, and made me regard with painful intentness a half-empty box of "Rough on Rats" which lay on the beach, and which I concluded (with my usual quickness of perception) had been left by some picnic party. Seeing how the bushes on the cliff above me tugged at their roots and passionately threw themselves into the arms of the wind, as if praying him to carry them away, the verse of a sweet singer crossed my mind.

I am very fond of poetry, as you may have discovered. You may perhaps wonder at my knowing so much. My natural abilities are far above the average, but of course that would not account for my acquaintance with the English classics. But I have, in addition, an excellent memory, and when I discovered, some time ago, that a scholarly old gentleman was in the habit of reciting or reading aloud on the sands, I gladly seized the opportunity of enlarging my mind, and made a point of always being present—an attentive but unsuspected audience of one. In this way I gathered a store of quotations. But, not having recourse to a well-filled library to verify my fragmentary recollections, my readers, will, no doubt, excuse me if memory on occasion plays me false. Under the circumstances they will not, I am sure, expect the accuracy which is to be found—

"Jewels five words long,  
Which on the stretch'd fore-finger of All Time  
Sparkle for ever—"

in the letters and articles written for the *Herald*—chiefly on educational and political subjects—by a gentleman whose compositions are so profound, so full of fine language and quotation that they fill me with admiration, and with a sense of my own presumption in daring to employ the same medium of pen and ink to describe my trivial experiences in my poor homely style. However, we can't all be Shakespeares or —s; and what a blank there would be if all lesser men were utterly to desist from writing!

The lines I was speaking of before this long digression run somewhat in this fashion:

"Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight,  
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,  
And taper fingers catching at all things,  
To bind them all about with tiny rings."

Only it was not sweet peas; it was clematis. It is a sad tale, and just a year old to-day, which may account for the indigestion and the despondency. She was the loveliest of all the starchy blossoms. As the tiniest bud she showed whiter and purer and more perfect than her sisters. The others were all higher up the cliff. She was not far above me, though still out of reach. For nearly a fortnight I worshipped at her shrine. The moon shone brightly, and I could hardly sleep by night or day for love-lorn gazing on her pure, cold beauty. But my passion for her was hopeless. The wandering breeze made love to her, and my heart was wrung with agony when I saw that she yielded to his caresses, and returned his tender attentions with all her heart's devotion. When he drew near her in the first rose-flush of morn, in the tender twilight, or under the love-suggesting radiance of the moon, she thrilled with gladness, and emitted a stronger, sweeter perfume, which the favoured lover bore to me in insolent triumph.

But, alas! her love was her undoing, for on that fatal day when she yielded to his persuasions, I saw him tear her roughly from her home. For a few moments of exultant passion he teased her in his arms and waltzed madly and joyously with her; then he grew tired, and after bearing her out far over the bay, he let her fall into the cruel waves, which buffeted and drowned her, washing up her white corpse on the sand; and there was no one save the despised but faithful crab to mourn over her body or lay it to rest. When she met her doom I heard a shivering sigh from her sisters, it is true, but next day they were flirting again with her destroyer. Time after time since then have I seen one of the foolish things throw her white arms around him and leave her home to meet a like fate. Until this sad occurrence I was quite content with my home, but ever since I have been consumed with a longing to get away.

Parlon the egotistical volubility of a broken-hearted crab. It has been an unpeppable relief to put my sorrow-

ful romance in writing, and its recital has brought to my mind what never occurred to me before—that while the heart-craving of many who are settled and immovable is for variety and travel, still it does not follow that these are best for them. A few weeks past I felt inclined to petition the House of Representatives to introduce a Bill doing away with houses and roots, and substituting tents and wings. There is no doubt that this would have been strictly within their powers; but I begin to see that it would not be an unmixed good, and that there may be something to be said on the other side.

While I was engrossed by painful memories and hopeless longings, two girls came along the beach and sat down near me on the rocks. With their first words my attention was arrested, for, strangely enough, their conversation was on the same theme as my thoughts.

"It's all very well to talk," said one, in a discontented tone, "but you know you would grumble just as much if you had never been out of Auckland. You have seen something of the world beyond, and may go off again any day. But as for my chance of getting away! Here I was born, and here, I suppose, I shall die. What would I not give to visit old countries with a history; to see with my own eyes the ruins of past civilisations; to stand upon the actual spots made famous centuries ago by events which sound to us here like idle tales; to see the surroundings of great men and great deeds—the setting, as it were, of the camoes of history, and the flashing single gems of biography. Then the glorious scenery. How can any one set out calmly and unexcitedly to visit the enchanted lands of tropical forests, snowy mountain tops, blue mountain lakes? Think of the beauty and romance of German rivers with their castled steepes; the peaceful quiet of English meadows, where every locality has its own traditions; the jungles of India; the harbours of Japan; the sandy wastes guarded by the Pyramids! Why should some people have it all who care nothing about it, who are only rather bored by sight-seeing; inclined to grumble at the absence of home comforts, and seriously troubled at the cookery? I would give ten years of my life—I mean my present vegetable existence—to go for a long trip and see something and meet with some adventures."

Her companion laughed softly. A pleasant laugh, with no scorn or bitterness about it.

"It is surprising how far you may travel in these days without meeting with any adventure," she said. "And once started on a voyage, the most surprising and novel situations have a trick of coming about in the most commonplace way. But I love to hear you talk. You shake up all my slumbering passion for travel, and send my memory, at least, on a tour, or rather through a picture gallery collected on many tours. You call to life a hundred sleeping ideas—national customs, national prejudices, national habits of thought. Surely travelling must give, to even the most unsympathetic of the voyagers you scorn, wider views, and a deeper interest in their fellow-creatures."

"Oh, I don't mean that. I don't want to take a deeper interest in my fellow-creatures. I want to see the world, to be interested and amused, and to be able to talk about things outside this commonplace town. I want to see the oldest and the newest, the most savage and the most civilised, the most beautiful and the grandest sights on earth. I want to live. I'm tired of being a vegetating ignoramus. Every paper I take up has the most tantalizing advertisements of excursions and special trips to India, China, and Japan, to Europe, to Africa, to Australia, to the South Sea Islands, to our own Sounds and the Hot Lakes. Any one of them would be an entrance to Paradise for me, but the shortest and cheapest is not to be hoped for. What a happy man Mr Cook must be! What a delight he must take in mapping out routes for his fortunate tourists, and revelling in the memories which each calls up! Don't you think the mere word "tourist" leaves a nice taste in your mouth?"

"And yet, as you said a minute ago, many of these travellers get little enjoyment at the time, and no permanent benefit from their wanderings. If you are to see anything you must start out provided with eyes and a heart, as well as intelligence and curiosity. There is far more pleasure and profit to be found by anybody with these qualifications in the exploration of his own neighbourhood than by one without them on the whole surface of the globe. Madge, I have an idea!"

The last sentence was uttered in a much brisker tone, and Madge promptly responded:

"Never!"

"Now, don't be rude, and don't be impatient while I unfold my scheme. Do you know your neighbourhood thoroughly?"

"Is that all? I should think I did. No, you won't drag me to the top of Rangitoto as a substitute for Tenerife, or catch me visiting Waitakaree and pretending it is Niagara."

"I am not suggesting any such comparisons. Have you been to either of those places?"

"No; don't want to. Boots are too dear," was the indifferent reply.

"Have you ever been to St. John's College, the Tamaki, St. Heller's, Wairoa, Mangere, Avondale, Helensville, Birkenhead, Northcote, or Lake Takapuna?"

"Never!" The emphasis did not convey a flattering opinion of the localities named.

"Have you ever been down the harbour to Waiheke, or Motutapu, Motuihi, Waiwera, Kawau, Tiri-Tiri, the Great Barrier, Mahurangi?"

"Waiwera, once for two days."

"Have you ever been through the charitable institutions—the Hospital, Lunatic Asylum, Costley Homes, Orphan Homes, the Home for the Blind, the Traunt School, the Kindergarten, Salvation Army Homes, or the Sailor's Rest?" pursued this relentless catechist.

"Nary one," was the enigmatical reply, given in a tone of utter indifference and slight boredom.

"Have you visited any of the large warehouses, factories, banking or business establishments?"

"I have been in Milne and Choyce's, the D.I.C., and Smith and Caughy's," replied the girl gravely; "also Wildman and Lyell's."

"Which means "no" to my question. Have you visited any studios or collections of pictures besides that in the Art Gallery?"

"Not even that one."

"Oh, Madge, you to talk about travelling when you shut your eyes to everything worth seeing around you! I suppose you have been inside the Free Library."

"I am not quite a barbarian; but I must confess I know very little about what is really valuable in it. And I have

not been there very often, because it is such a puzzle to find what book you want. To save you further questioning, and the repeated shock to your nervous system, I may as well acknowledge that I hate the North Shore; that I was only once in my life in Ponsonby; that it is five years since I stood on the top of Mount Eden; and that the Museum has never excited my curiosity enough to make me enter its door. Will the Court be merciful enough to pass sentence immediately, and not keep the prisoner at the bar in suspense as to her fate?"

"The sentence is (with all legal formalities taken as ready) that once at least in every week you shall set out on pilgrimage to some locality or institution in or around this city of Auckland, until you are thoroughly acquainted with the neighbourhood."

"Oh, mercy, most grave judge. Remember,

"We do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy."

"No, Madge, I will not let you off. You will find these little expeditions delightful. What were you just reading from the "Essays of Elia," with that intonation of pleasure and sympathy? Give me the book."

The speaker turned over a few pages and then read aloud: "Do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield—holidays and all other fun are gone now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savoury cold lamb and salad, and how you would pry about at noon-tide for some decent house where we might go in and produce our store, only paying for the ale that you must call for, and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a table-cloth, and wish for such another honest hostess as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went fishing; and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us; but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savourily, scarcely grudging Piesator his Trout Hall. Now, when we go a day's pleasuring, which is seldom more-over, we ride part of the way, and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense, which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage and a precarious welcome."

"That was delightful. But what comparison can there be between it and the treadmill you propose? It would be simply a weariness to the flesh and an abomination to the spirit."

"That is another reason why you should go, Madge. Such expeditions ought to be anything but a weariness and an abomination. You have been neglecting the very faculties which would enable you properly to appreciate a wider journey. If you let your capacity for observation and interest in your surroundings lie dormant, you will lose it as surely as that miserable crab has lost his armour, his freedom, and his power of locomotion through indolence and cowardice—his own or his ancestors'."

She was actually alluding to me! I did not realise it for an instant, and then indignation rose strong within me, and I moved off towards my pool—slowly, it is true, but with dignity. However, those two rude and ill-bred girls began to make the most impertinent remarks, and to laugh loudly at me. Such a thing had never happened to me before. I had nearly gained the pool when up sprang the younger girl, Madge, and picked me up, house and all. I thought I would give her a good pinch to show that I was not to be trifled with, but on second thoughts I decided that I should not like to inflict pain on any one, even though she had injured me, so I crept as far as possible into my shell (that I might not be tempted against my better impulses) and barred up the opening with my forelegs and my one long claw.

"Do you see a bottle anywhere?" said my captor. "I am going to take this little curiosity home. I want to make a sketch of him and his home."

Really, after all, that girl was a great deal more observant than her hateful companion.

A bottle was found and filled with salt water, and I was borne off in triumph. On the way from the beach other subjects were discussed by the two girls, but not before Madge had promised to accompany her friend once or twice on the proposed jaunts.

My thoughts dwelt upon that unpleasant remark about the absence of my "armour." I wonder whether there was anything in what that girl said, or if it was pure malice on her part. My interest also was strongly excited by the proposed expeditions, and I longed to make my ardent wish to accompany them known to my owner, who, I felt sure, would gladly have gratified me, as I could see she was very much taken with me. I had certainly nothing to complain of in the treatment I received at her hands. She provided me with a most comfortable little home, constantly supplying me with food and renewing the sea-water.

About three days later I found the two girls were making preparations to start on their first journey. I determined to make an effort to join them. Fortune favoured me, and I crept unobserved into a lunch-basket. But my experiences on my first voyage deserve a chapter to themselves.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## THE WEIGHT OF THOUGHT.

PROFESSOR MOSSO, an Italian physiologist of repute, has demonstrated by experiment that thinking causes a rush of blood to the brain, which varies with the nature of the thought. This has long been believed by students and literary men, but Mossso proved it by balancing the living subject in a horizontal position so delicately that when he began to think the accession of blood to his head turned the scale. When the subject was asleep, the thoughts or visions which came to him in dreams were sufficient to sink his head below his feet; and the same thing took place when the sleeper was disturbed by a slight sound or touch. Signor Mossso's balance even allowed him to tell when his friend, the subject, was reading Italian and when Greek; the greater mental exertion required in the latter case producing a greater flow of blood to the head.