

Jenkins, Sailor and Steeplechaser.

A CHAT WITH AN OLD-TIMER.

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Photographs by Mrs. Costello, Otaki.

A WIDE New Zealand plain threaded with pleasant country roads and softly-flowing streams, and dotted with cozy homesteads, garden encircled, a place of peace and rest after the toil and moil of the city—such is Otaki. The purple Tararuas, grandly mysterious, bar the eastern horizon, and beyond the line of golden tussocked sand-hills moans the invisible sea. Therelies Kapiti, beautiful Kapiti—dreamiest and loveliest of Islands, with the most tragic memories clustered about its shores and cliffs.

The very soil of Kapiti is blood-stained; its precipices could, had they tongues, cry aloud of slaughter. It seems passing strange that the Island which, in by-gone days, was a shambles and a charnel-house, should now be reserved as a haven of quietness and safety, where wild birds may dwell and increase unharmed. For this is the use to which the Government of New Zealand purpose to put Kapiti. And in its latter days it shall have peace.

Still on the Island can be seen the ruined strong-hold of Te Rauparaha, the Napoleon of Maori war-fare. From it, daily, the fierce chief's eagle eye swept the lovely plain of Otaki for fresh enemies to conquer. Woe betide the poor wretches whose fire smoke was descried above the manuka and flax! The great war canoes would be launched and filled with warriors, eager to hunt down the fugitives. And then the quiet air, where now only pleasant country sounds are heard, would be rent by the wails of women, the groans of dying men, the cries of little

children, and the shouts of the victors. In the sunset the conquerors would paddle across to Kapiti, that lay mystically purple against the flushed horizon. There, for hours, the great ovens had been heating, and now were ready to be gorged with the fresh meat that had been secured. Up in the dark mountain gorges would be crouching, perhaps, a few shivering men, who, not daring to light a tell-tale fire, watched from their eyrie the smoke from Kapiti against the sunset sky, the smoke of the fires that were preparing the bodies of their relatives and friends for the cannibal feast.

There are not many links existing now between those old savage times and those pleasant latter days of peace and prosperity. It was in search of one of these links we went one autumn day. His name was Jenkins, "Old Jenkins," to distinguish him from his many olive branches. He was to Otaki what a museum would be to a larger town, and any visitor might be told, as we were, to "go and call on old Jenkins! Bless you! you don't need no introduction. And be sure and ask him to tell you all about his fight with Rauparaha, or Robuller, as the whalers used to call him."

He lived in a gray-shingled cottage, that cowered down amid its encircling foliage. The creepers clambered up to the very chimneys, and lay in long trails upon the mossy roof. Across the dunes, beyond the tangle of roses and geraniums in the little garden patch, the never-silent sea was moaning, and Kapiti rose clear against the pale sky.