

mamae i au!" was sung with a long drawn-out heart-rending shrillness which was the very soul of grief. The fanciful allusions to convulsions of nature such as the crashing of thunder, earthquakes ("Ka ru te whenua"), the eclipse of the moon and the falling of the stars, are in accordance with the old beliefs of the Maori, who saw in every phenomenon of nature some fateful omen, and who associated the deaths of great ones of the tribe with the flashing of lightning and the pealing of thunder on the mountain-tops.

Compare this latter-day song of the Maori with the following fragment of a lament from Mr C. O. Davis' collection, translated nearly forty years ago, and the same trend of feeling appears:—

Let the winds sweep o'er the mount of Mangere;
He is borne away by the sea-winds;
Caught up from the great dwelling of the ruler.
I saw the lightning's glare upon the heights
Of Taupiri, where the thousands of thy
People sleep—they sleep upon the plains of Tangi-
rau.

Here is another, the sentiment in which is a touching one:—

The evening star is waning. It disappears
To rise in brighter skies,
Where thousands wait to greet it;
All that is great and beautiful
I heed not now—
Thou wert my only treasure.

* * * *

But where now? where now?
Ye tides that flow and ebb,
No longer may ye flow and ebb—
Your prop is borne away!

One of the best-known of Maori poems is a pathetic lament beginning, "Nei au ka noho, kapakapa tu ana":—

Lonely I sit, my breast is rent asunder
For you, my children.
The loved ones of my heart.
Here am I, bending to the earth
Like Tane's offspring, yonder spreading trees;
And for you, my children,
I droop as does the Mamaku fern-tree.

* * * *

The gods combine to make us desolate—
To blot us from creation as the moa.

The traditional Maori cosmogony, the legends of the creation, of the dissensions

of gods and men, the exploits of the demi-gods, Maui, Rata, Ruatapu, Wahieroa; the exploring voyages of the daring immigrants from Hawaiiiki—these and many kindred examples of the folk-lore of a dying race have been rescued from oblivion by John White, Colenso, Grey, Taylor, Shortland, and others who are no more, and to whom the present and future generations of New Zealanders will owe a lasting debt of gratitude. Only a very few are now labouring to rescue the remnants which still linger in the form of native traditions and songs—notably S. Percy Smith and Elsdon Best—but there are still unrecorded volumes of material for the future epic-writer of the land.

Domett's noble "Ranolf and Amohia" will ever stand in the foremost rank of our literature as the first idyll founded upon Maori life and legends. Domett studied the traditions and the peculiar condensed style of the Maori poet to advantage. Nothing has been written by an Australasian author to surpass Domett's version of the legend of Tawhaki the miracle-working god-man, who wrought vengeance on the Pona-turi, a race that lived "in the oozy depths of ocean—fierce, uncouth, in gloomy glory—lived where light is none nor nation," and who restored sight to the eyes of the blind and did other wondrous deeds. Nothing could be more poetical than the story of the angelic being who descended from the sky to live with the handsome mortal:—

Now, of heavenly birth to cheer him—beauteous
from those blue dominions—
Hapai came—divine—a damsel—floating down on
steady pinions.

It reminds one of the mythology of the ancient Greeks and the marriages between mere mortals and the gods and goddesses.

Tawhaki's after adventures—his search for his vanished heavenly partner, his ascent to the tenth heaven and his reunion with Hapai, end with the hero's enrolment amongst the deities:—

— And Tawhaki—breat and brow sublime in-
sufferably flashing,
Hid in lightnings, as he looks out from the
thunder-cloven portals
Of the sky—stands forth confest—a god and one
of the immortals!