

Then she began to wail, and her tears to fall. Now and then her words reached him :

"Why did I not fall and die? Now I am afraid to leap. . . This river is terrible; it boils as though a taniwha were lying below. . . I cannot! I cannot!"

Suddenly her weeping stopped. She rose in a moment and stepped to the edge of the precipice, and covered her face.

Then the young man sprang up too, and shouted aloud :

"Stop, girl! What are you doing? Go back! Go back!"

At the sound she snatched her hands from her face, and stared round her, silent with a new fear.

Then he stepped out on the branches of the towai, and parted the leaves so that she could see his face and his broad shoulders.

So narrow is the gorge that two men can talk across it in low tones. He called to her again :

"What would you do, girl? This is no place for a woman to die. And why do you wish to die? You are young and beautiful, and there is no sorrow that will not pass."

Staring at him in amazement, she answered :

"Who are you? Why do you say I may not die in this place, if I wish?"

Then he said sternly :

"Beware of giving offence to those who dwell under these waters. I, who warn you, am a *tohunga*. I come here to talk with the spirits of the dead, and I command you not to leap from that cliff."

But the girl recovered from her fear and said :

"It matters not to me. The dead can treat me no worse than the living. Your magic cannot stop me, *tohunga*. I will die here and end it." She closed her eyes as if she would leap again.

His heart thrilled, and he shouted fiercely :

"Wait! You may leap, but you shall not die. I tell you, you will be drawn down alive into the black caves, and there you will long for death in vain. Hark! I hear the voices of the dead. They call to me that

no man or woman shall lightly enter their dwelling."

He held up his hand, and listened to the sullen ripple of the waters. His heart went out to the girl, and also he was jealous because she talked slightingly of his magic. And so he seemed to hear as his heart desired.

She, across the stream, sank down and began to wail, because she feared to leap.

Then he spoke kindly.

"Be comforted, maiden. Your sorrow will pass like the cloud across the sun yonder, or that whirlpool coming down the current. Tell me the story, and I will help you with my wisdom."

She looked up, hearing that his voice was soft, and saw through the branches that he was a noble man, so she stopped weeping and said :

"Mata is my name. I was a chief's daughter in the South, but the Ngaiterangi came down and destroyed us, and Tarawhai, their chief, took me for his slave and made me his wife. But how can a girl love an old man? He is jealous, and when he finds me weeping for my home and people, he is cruel to me. I can never again be happy."

The *tohunga's* face grew dark.

"Listen," he said, "Tarawhai is my enemy also. I am Haroa, and my father was a chief, but Tarawhai treacherously murdered him, and threw his body into the river pool. I was a boy, and I escaped from the house, and ran to a *hupu* beyond those hills. There I became a *tohunga*. Now I come down to the place where my father lies, and here I sit and listen to him talking under the stream. The place is very sacred, and no man but myself dares to come here. A taniwha lies in the pool above the gorge, who guards the cave of the dead. When their voices trouble him he turns in the depths of the river and hisses, and the water heaves and the whirlpool passes down through the gorge, and the hissing of the waters drowns their talk."

Even as he was speaking, they saw the surface heave, and the whirlpool wheel past,