

with myriad blossoms; up hill and down hill went the gallant bay, doing his level best to impress me with his speed, and uphold the reputation of his master. At last we turned sharp off the main highway on to a dry, smooth clay track, and entered an avenue of tall pines, through which the summer breeze came against our faces, cool and pleasant.

The bay drew up of his own accord before a big white gate. Hugh opened the gate, and we entered what seemed to me to be fairyland. Tree ferns and cabbage palms, beautiful New Zealand forest trees and flowering shrubs, backed by tall pines and belts of delicately foliaged wattle, making shelter belts for squares of orchard trees. I do not remember ever seeing such beautiful orchards. Oranges and lemons, figs and persimmons, grape vines and passion vines, apples and pears, plums and peaches, nectarines and apricots, and a multitude of other trees, some laden with ripening fruit, some still in blossom. Redhill smiled at my undisguised admiration, and the bay drew up before a low, quaint house, with wide verandahs, covered with climbing roses and purple wistaria, morning glory, honeysuckle, jessamine, and the delicate New Zealand clematis. Two women with a lusty, bare-legged boy ran across the grassy lawn, and the boy shrieked, "Dada, dada!" in frantic joy.

Both the women were young, and both in light summer attire, each so strangely alike that when Redhill said, "My wife," I scarcely knew which to bow to—slight, fair women, with masses of tawny hair.

A Maori boy came and took the horse, grinning pleasantly, as he said, "Yes, boss," to Redhill's directions.

I followed Redhill into the house, and from that moment I envied him. Yes, I envied him that simple beautiful home, with its air of comfort and its grace.

"What a contrast," I exclaimed, "to that tent at Milparinka!"

"Aye," he said; "and that is better than the big, sandy plain." He drew aside a heavy curtain, and we looked toward the west. Sloping from the house ran rich grass paddocks and more lines of trees to a broad, smooth stretch of harbour water.

"A tidal arm of the Waitemata," explained Redhill. "We'll have a swim there in the morning."

When teatime came and I saw the table decorated with flowers and laden with dainty things, I could not help thinking of that tent at Milparinka, and Redhill drinking post and rail tea out of a battered pannikin, and the monotonous fare of damper and drought-stricken mutton. I cannot remember all the good things on that table, but Mrs Redhill assured me with some pride that everything came from the farm. There were tender ducks and tenderer green peas, fruits and rich cream, wine from the vineyard, and crisp, cool cider. But the simplest meal would have been delightful in that charming room. The perfume from bowls of roses mingling strangely with the scent from the myriad white stars of jessamine nodding with the soft breeze that came in through the open casement.

There was an air of daintiness about the room such as I had not been used to for many long years. The soft, white curtains that swung lightly against the cool, green walls, the quaint drapings, the rare china, and the soft-toned pictures, the books scattered here and there, the cushioned corner nooks showed the touch of woman.

Afterwards we went out on to the verandah for our smoke, and the two ladies sat with us for awhile.

Perhaps my eyes wandered too frequently to Miss Falconer, for I could not help admiring the charming effect she made with the sunlight turning her tawny hair to gold against her soft, white dress. She left us quietly, and soon there