

Tama soon returned ; for no native loves to roam in the dark. Peti was kind and caressing as ever.

Tama smiled, but doubtfully ; for he knew.

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Afternoon was wearing towards evening, when two women, one twenty, one perhaps eighteen, sat in the mahau, or verandah, of Tama's whare. The elder, Peti, was pounding fern-root.

"Lo, I thought to have made me an enemy," said Waimarie, "but find a friend."

"Wait till thy friends have come and have left thee," said Peti, smiling, "then may'st thou be in need at least of one."

This she said, for the relatives of Waimarie would soon appear, and in a party seek to carry her to her hapu again, Tama in duty resisting.

This was the custom, and this Waimarie dreaded.

But Tama sat close by, his eyes glistening : he awaited their coming ; and the greater their number, the greater his honor.

"Hearest thou aught, Peti?" at length he asked.

"As yet, nothing ; but the curs are barking as at the coming of many."

Quietly he sat, but alert with expectation. In the manuka scrub close by were hidden friends, ready to answer his call for aid, if need were.

Peti and Waimarie prattled together ; Waimarie as a child, and afraid, Peti as a child in words only, and unafraid.

"Hearest thou aught, Peti?" again Tama enquired, his head bent forward, and eyes on the ground, but all his muscles a-quake.

"A tramp of many feet, Tama," said she ; and Waimarie was still : "yea, a score of braves," she continued, as she peered round to right of the whare ; "great and mighty men of war. I go," she said, rising, "farewell awhile, Waimarie, and remember thy friend."

So saying, she placed her pounded

fern-root in a corner, and slowly sauntered to the thicket of manuka, joining the men there lying hidden.

Waimarie commenced to whimper, and wring her hands. A score ; mighty men of war, with hearts untamed and hands untender : perhaps they would remember their little rata-bloom and be merciful.

"It is well," thought Tama, and arose. "Get thee within, Waima," said he, softly touching her on the shoulder. His mere hung at his waist, but no weapon was in his hand, for there was to be no bloodshed—if possible.

He stood before his whare and turned toward the visitors ; and seeing them near, he cried, "Haere mai ! Haere mai ! Welcome ! whom seek ye ?"

"Is it Tamaiti ?"

"Know ye not his arm ?"

"He hath stolen a woman."

"And what he stealeth he keepeth."

"If he prove he can hold." Therewith six of their number rushed on him to force a way into his whare, where Waimarie cowered on her couch of fern, her face hidden in her arms. But Tamaiti stood firm, and ere long the front was torn apart, and Waimarie seized on.

Then Tamaiti cried to his fellows, and they broke from their covert and also seized on Waimarie, part of them standing by to close with those of the party not now in the struggle. The maid was dragged this way and that, helpless, naked, and crying for pity.

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At even, as the korimakos, or bell birds, were uttering their incessant calls of te te te te, Tamaiti lay amid the ruins of his whare, panting, but exultant ; Waimarie lay beside him, catching her breath and moaning. Her friends had departed, and Tamaiti had won his wife. Presently Peti returned, equable and smiling. She touched Waimarie here and there, each time causing her to shrink and moan with pain.

"Sore need hast thou of a friend.