Kapitaua.

A STORY OF THE BEAN ROCK.

(By Phillip Walsh.)

CHAPTER I.

It was about four or five generations ago—a little while before the Pakehas came to the country, when, as there were no law courts or magistrates, or policemen, the Maoris had to manage their own affairs as well as they could—that a great chief lived in a pa built on a high point running out from the Orakei Peninsula. He had several wives, as was fitting for a man of his rank, and one of them had an only child, a fine boy about ten or twelve years old.

For some reason or other—or perhaps for no reason at all—the chief had an unconquerable dislike to the boy, so much so that he made up his mind to get rid of him on the first convenient opportunity. After thinking over several plans, none of which seemed suitable, an idea struck him one day when all the women were away at work on the taro patch in a gully some distance off out of sight. He told the boy that he was going fishing, as the schnapper would be coming up with the rising tide, and that if he liked he might come with him. The little fellow was, of course, only too delighted at the prospect of the excursion. So getting into the canoe they headed off towards a rocky shoal named Kapitaua, which lies in the middle of the channel, about half-way over towards Rangitoto. The spot is bare at low water, but ere the time they reached it the tide was beginning to flow over the rocks, and in a few hours they would be covered to a depth of four or five feet. Here the chief landed the boy in spite of his cries and struggles, and telling him he might remain where he was, he paddled home again as if nothing was the matter.

As the evening approached the women came straggling over the hill, when the mother soon missed her son. She asked the father if he had seen him, and he replied that he had seen him, and he replied that he had gone along the beach with the other boys. He expected they had gone for a swim, and he would no doubt turn up at supper-time, if the sharks had not eaten him. It did not matter, however, he said, as the boy was no good, and was always getting into mischief, and sooner or later he would be sure to come to a bad end.

The mother waited to hear no more. Darting down to the shore, she ran along the edge of the water, calling and calling for the child, and fancying in every piece of drifted wood and tangled seaweed seen through the fading light, that she recognised the lifeless form of her darling tamaiti (child). It was all no use. The only answers to her cries were the scream of some startled seabird, and the echoes from the hollow cliffs. So at last, sinking down in sheer bodily exhaustion, she abandoned herself to a wild delirium of grief. There she sat, her passion gradually giving way to the dullness of despair, when—hark! a sound is wafted over the water in the still night air. It is repeated, and seems like a cry of distress. As she listens, her senses strung to the acutest tension, she thinks she recognizes the voice, which appears to come from the direction of the tidal reef.

In an agony of hope and fear she runs to where a small canoe is lying on the beach. This she manages to launch, and with lightning strokes of the paddle soon reaches the spot, just in time to rescue the boy. The water was already over his waist, and he was scarcely able to keep his footing, as the swell occasionally lifted him off the bottom.

As she helped the poor little fellow into the canoe she took in the whole situation in a flash. To bring him back to Orakei would be only to give his father another opportunity. So quietly coasting along the shore, she landed at a pa near the mouth of the Tamaki river, where she had some friends; and telling the people what had occurred, she begged them to keep him in hiding until she could send him away to a brother of her own, a powerful chief in the Waikato. This was all managed without difficulty, and his uncle, who received him kindly, gave him the name of Kapitaua, in memory of his adventure on the rock.

In the meantime, the woman contrived to get home without her absence having been noticed. To avoid suspicion, she mourned for her son as dead, cutting off her hair, and scoring her arms and breast with sharp flakes of tuhua (volcanic glass), as was customary in cases of severe bereavement. But in time the hair grew again, and the scars healed over, and after a while the incident was forgotten by all but the mother herself, and perhaps by the father, though he said nothing about it. What after all was a boy more or les? Had it been a fighting man it would have been a different thing altogether.

A fighting man? But, taihoa, wait a bit!

CHAPTER II.

Young Kapitaua found a congenial home among the warlike tribe in the Waikato. He was a robust and fearless youth and soon outstripped all his companions in the various games and contests that exercised the lambs and trained the eye of the future warriors. Under the tutelage of some of the old veterans with whom he was always a favourite, he became versed in all the secrets of the bush, and learned how to handle the slender pigeon spear, to snare the kaka, and steal a march on the ever-watchful duck, and as he grew to manhood and accompanied the tauas (war parties) that went out in the fighting season to keep themselves in practice and wipe off old scores, he always acquitted himself with credit, and generally managed to bring home a trophy or two in the shape of the head of some chief he had slain with his own hand, which he dried in the smoke and put up on a pole in front of his whare.

By degrees he came to be talked about, and his name was mentioned among the neighbouring tribes as that of a coming man. On one occasion of he was given command of an expedimore than usual impor'tance, when tion against a strongly-fortified pa, he displayed such cleverness in his plan of campaign and such vigour in its execution that, henceforth, he took front rank among the leading warriors of the tribe.

This gave him the opportunity of carrying out a scheme he had long cherished in his thoughts, which was nothing less than that of exacting utu for the indignity that had been put on him in his boyhood. He confided his intention to his uncle, who at once gave his approval, and furnished him with a party of three or four hundred men, all youg and active warriors, eager for adventure and burning to wipe out the insult which, according to Maori ideas, was spread over the whole tribe.

With these he set out on his journey, and for several days the party marched along in single file, winding like a monster centipede, over fern-clad ranges, through tangled forest and across broad rivers and bottomless swamps. But what are rivers and swamps to men going for utu? At length they arrived at Orakei, timing their approach so as to reach the pa shortly after dark. Halting under cover of the manuka-scrub some little distance off, they waited for a while to see whether there was any sign of alarm on behalf of the garrison. In spite of the darkness they could distinguish the lofty fortifications, rising terrace above terrace against the star-lit sky, each surrounded by a strong palisading, which protected the rows of raupo whares within. Everything seemed to be propitious. According to native custom the people had all retired to the shelter of the fort, and, doubtless, by this time most of them were fast asleep for the night. The only sign of life was a murmuring sound of voices in the direction of a dim light that shone through the entrance gate.

Bidding his followers to keep themselves concealed, yet to be ready in case of emergency, Kapitaua went on by himself to make a closer observation. As he was about to cross a little creek just below the bluff on which the pa was built, his foot struck against something which proved to be an empty calabash, and without any definite object in view, he filled it with water and carried it up the steep path towards the gate. Approaching slowly and cautiously, he managed at last to reach the shelter of the fence, where through the interstices of the palisading he got a view of the marae, or large courtyard, which formed the common meeting place of the tribe. A fire was burning on the ground, and around it were seated in concentric circles a number of men, chiefly of the rangatira class, engaged in an animated discussion of the thousand things that made up a warrior's life in those days.

After he had waited awhile he heard a chief calling for someone to fetch him a drink, and the dark figure of a young man passed out through the gate. This was his opportunity. Handing him the calabash, he contrived to slip in after him unobserved, and keeping out of the light, he seated himself amongst the outer row where his face could not be seen. The conversation flowed on in an incessant stream. One topic suggested another, and when that was threshed out something else turned up. Beginning to wonder what sort of a predicament he would find himself in, he at last heard his own name mentioned.

"Who is this Kapitaua, this wonderful toa (hero) that everybody is talking about?" "Where does he belong to? What is he like?" said one after another.

"He is like me," said a handsome young athlete, springing to his feet and shining in the light of the fire like a beautiful whakapakoko (carved figure).

"Like you!" answered a brawny giant, with a broad smile of contempt. "Like you!" he said, as he drew himself up to his full height, and squared back his masive shoulders. "Like you! Why, you are only a tamaiti; Kapitaua is a man. He must be more like me if all they tell about him is true."

The personal turn which the conversation had assumed gave promise of some lively developments. How the debate would have been settled it is hard to say, as at this juncture Kapitaua himself, who had managed to push forward towards the inner circle, suddenly rose into sight, as he exclaimed:

"Ko Kapitaua tenei!" "Here is Kapitaua himself, and he is come to claim his utu."

Before the assembly had recovered from the first shock of surprise and had time to consider whether the apparition was not the result of some practical joke, another actor appeared on the scene in the shape of the kaumatua (the head chief) himself. The old man had been reclining in the porch of the big carved whare runanga (meetinghouse) close by, whence he could easily see and hear all that was passing in the marae. Wrapped in his thoughts, he had taken little interest in the conversation so long as it had dealt with the usual commonplace matters, but on hearing the claim for utu in connection with the name of the spot in which he had committed his unnatural crime, he grasped the situation in an instant, and catching up his mere he rushed out crying:

"Where is Kapitaua that I may kill him?"

But his son was too quick for him. With a gesture of defiance he shouted:

"Tenei ahau. Patua!" "Here I am; kill me if you can!" and with a single bound he was away through the gate with the whole crowd swarming after him.

They did not get far, however, as the young Waikato warriors, who had been gradually crawling up towards the pa, made a rush when they heard the shout, and falling on them with mere and patu chopped them all down in less time than it takes to tell it. They then entered the pa, and going from terrace to terrace, and from whare to whare, they slaughtered man, woman, and child before the most of them knew that there was an enemy at their gates.

Then came the song of victory, and the dancing of the haka, when the solid rock shook with the measured stamp of the hundreds of warriors, and the sky was red with the fires in the hangis, as they were heated for the bodies of the slain to be ready for the great feast on the morrow.

Thus Kapitaua had his utu. The only individual whom he spared was his mother, and after he had cut off his father's head and stuck it on a tall spear over the entrance gate, he and the venerable old lady sat down together with their noses pressed, in a close embrace. And they mingled their tears in a long and mournful tangi as their thoughts went over all that had happened since they had been parted so many years before. And by and bye, when the ovens had been covered up and the warriors lain down to rest, the moon rose over the pa strewn with dead, and marked with a silver ripple where the tide flowed over the spot on which all the trouble had begun.

"This," said the Maori who told the tale, "is the story of Kapitaua, and that is the name of the rock where the Pakehas have built the 'lighthouse on legs' (the Bean Rock Light) to show the ships the way into Auckland at night."

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The main facts of this story are a matter of history. Kapitaua and his companions retained possession of the pa, and became the ancestors of the present inhabitants of Orakei.

"THE SCAMP."

A RACING RHYME.

(By "Tuarangi," Thames.)

We bought him from a drover who was passing thro' the camp,
Out of Mischief by Traducer, we christened him The Scamp.
For a month or two Ned schooled him over fairly stiffish jumps;
Then said 'twas his opinion that The Scamp would turn up trumps.

When we finished up our contract, we were fencing Graball's run.
We took him down to Napier, where we meant to have some fun
At a Napier Winter Meeting, which was fixed that year for June.
We guesser The Scamp would make 'em play a pretty lively tune.

We entered for the Maiden and Open Hurdle Races,
Ned said he thought we'd better not attempt the Steeplechases.
I backed our horse, I tell you, for a rather biggish sum,
For Ned was going to ride him, and I knew he'd make things hum.

Well, I knocked about the stables, and I got a tip or two,
And heard some marvellous stories of what "The Ghost" could do.
A big upstanding chestnut, by The Spectre out of Spook,
Owned by a good old sport—I heard his name was Charlie Brooke.

Another one worth watching was a mare they called The Nun.
Ned thought he held her safe, although we'd never seen her run.
The only other starters were a pair of Maori weeds;
You know the kind of cattle that the Maori mostly breeds.

The Scamp, I should have told you, was a brilliant golden bay,
And he shone like burnished metal when he stripped to run that day.
A long, low horse, deep chested, with no end of power behind,
A handsome head, wide nostrils, with fiery eyes, yet kind.

But the public didn't back him, The horse they fancied most
Was the son of Spook and Spectre, Charlie Brooke's big chestnut, Ghost.
The bookies looked upon us as a pair of country mugs,
We could tell that by their knowing nods, sly winks, and shoulder shrugs.

This made me feel so savage that I plunged on poor old Scamp
Till I knew if he was beaten I should be a bust-up tramp.
When the starter set 'em going, The Nun shot out ahead;
Next came the two outsiders; then The Scamp, hard held by Ned.

The Ghost just took things easy with his long and sweeping stride,
And the plucky jock who steered him, I could see knew how to ride.
The Nun was pulling double when they swept before the stand,
And the way she took the hurdles—at a fly—was simply grand.

On they went, till near the cutting, where the two outsiders fell;
But they didn't smash the hurdle, which I thought was just as well.
Then The Ghost passed Ned, and collared the fiery little Nun.
And, to hear his backers shouting, you'd have thought the brute had won.

The Scamp crept up behind them; Ned had him well in hand.
As they neared another hurdle, the second from the stand—
The leaders rose together, but The Nun struck hard and fell;
How our horse just cleared her rider, you should hear Ned Malcolm tell.

The pace had been a caution for the last half-mile or so,
And The Ghost, by six lengths leading, with a furlong still to go.
How the people roared and shouted when The Scamp set sail in chase,
Though no one ever doubted but The Ghost would win the race.

But I, myself, felt certain that he hadn't won it yet,
How that glorious struggle thrilled me is a thing I can't forget.
Our horse, still full of running, was gaining every stride,
And I knew that Ned meant business when he settled down to ride.

The Ghost was falt'ring slightly, and when his rider tried
To lift him at the hurdle, he baulked, refused, and shied.
The Scamp just cleared it nicely, and I thought the race was won,
When a shepherd's long-haired collie right between his legs must run.

The Scamp came down a cropper, and I reckoned we were grass'd,
When Smith pulled The Ghost together, cleared the jump, and galloped past.
But Ned was up like lightning, and, leaping on his back,
Set The Scamp once more a-going close behind the Napier crack.

Then The Nun dashed up behind him, and they galloped side by side,
But our horse soon shook her off when he had got into his stride.
I tried to cheer, but couldn't—excitement struck me dumb,
And my blessed heart was beating like a blooming "army" drum.

Scamp was travelling like a rocket when he passed the paddock gate,
Where he caught and passed the chestnut about half-way up the straight.
Lord; how the public cheered him when he passed the winning post;
That's how we took the bookies down and beat the blooming Ghost.

Mr. Grouty (triumphantly).—That rheumatism cure Aunt Fanny recommended didn't do me a bit of good, and I knew it wouldn't!

Mrs. Grouty.—What did you take it for, then?

Mr. Grouty.—Just to show Aunt Fanny that she doesn't know everything!