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INVERCARGILL.

DESTINY.

Continued from Page Two.)

also a third figure—a blackcoated figure who had been thrown by Fate against this very raft to scramble upon it in the darkness of the night.

For fate is wont to play grim jokes at times—though we try to pretend that the workings of Destiny are mere accidents by calling them coincidence.

And so it was that Pastor MacKenzie found himself on a raft in mid-ocean with Nellie Shannon and Dick Fenton for company.

When the light of dawn had come, the clergyman had recovered from his pocket his inevitable smoked glasses, and had donned them to protect his eyes from the tropical sun.

Presently the girl stirred slightly, and opened her eyes.

But her consciousness was slow awakening, and a long while passed before she realised where she was and what had happened.

An hour passed.

In the afternoon both Nellie and Dick were awake. The raft contained a small water-keg, and from this the two drank greedily.

MacKenzie looked on with anxious eyes. "We must take care of the water," he ventured mildly. "That's all we've got."

"We shall be picked up soon," said Dick.

"We're bound to be."

"I hope so."

"Is there any doubt about it?" asked Nellie.

The clergyman shook his head dubiously.

"I was only advising caution," he said. "In case the storm had blown us off the usual shipping route."

"I see," said Dick. "In that case we'd better ration the water straightaway. How much do you estimate we've got?"

MacKenzie inspected the keg.

"Two days' supply at the outside—"

He paused. "For two people, that is."

"Well, there are three of us," said Nellie, her pale, drawn features relaxing momentarily into the ghost of a smile.

"Yes," said MacKenzie thoughtfully. "If there were only two it would last a day longer."

The evening passed slowly. Taking watches in turn, the three survivors scanned the horizon about them for signs of a ship.

Then with tropical suddenness day gave way to night.

With the darkness came lowered spirits and depression. Dick and Nellie sat close together on the raft, talking in low earnest tones with his protecting arm about her shoulders. MacKenzie kept somewhat aloof.

"If we're not picked up by the day after to-morrow," said Dick presently, "we—" He left the sentence unfinished.

"Never mind, Dick," said Nellie bravely.

Dick squeezed her small hand reassuringly.

"You two are very fond of each other," came the voice of MacKenzie from the darkness.

"We were to be married when we landed in India," said Dick.

dearly, Miss Shannon?"

"And you love this young man very much?"

"Dick is the only man I have ever loved—or ever could love," replied Nellie softly.

"Do you realise," said MacKenzie, "that I am a clergyman? I could marry you even here if you wished it. So that if anything were to happen, you can go to meet your Maker with the comfort of knowing you are man and wife."

Thus it came about in the darkness, on a raft in mid-ocean, the marriage was solemnised between Dick Fenton and Nellie Shannon.

Around them the sea glowed phosphorescent; above them the sky gleamed with a million jewels.

The night drew on, and presently Nellie and Dick fell into a dreamless sleep.

But the hunchback clergyman did not sleep. He sat crouched up with his face between his hands.

Then he took a small note-book from his pocket, extracted a pencil, and with slow, laborious care commenced to write.

For a long while he wrote steadily till at last he had finished.

Then, tearing the pages from the book, he carefully folded them, and after a moment's thought, slipped them underneath the raft-strap that was buckled about Nellie's waist.

He gazed for a few minutes at the stars then very quietly dived into the water.

He swam some distance from the raft with swift, vigorous strokes, never looking back.

And thus he swam on and on, until at last exhaustion overcame him.

Then he ceased his efforts and sank, never to rise to the surface again.

Soon after daybreak Dick awoke. Over-

coming the stiffness of his limbs, he rose to his feet. At once he missed the clergyman.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "He must have fallen overboard in the night."

But before Dick had time to realise the full meaning of his discovery, the smoke of a steamer on the horizon caught his eye.

Excitedly he seized a stray piece of sailcloth from the raft, and began to wave it.

"Nellie!" he cried, "we're saved. There's a ship in sight."

At the sound of Dick's voice, Nellie opened her eyes. She unbuckled the strap about her waist. As she did so, her hand encountered a few folded sheets of paper.

Wonderingly, she unfolded them.

"Dearest Nellie," the note ran, "I am scrawling this little message of good luck to you before I take my long farewell."

"My one thought through life has been of your welfare and happiness. That is why I realised you from an engagement which I realised was the outcome of family pressure, and not from the true dictates of your heart."

"I realised that you never really cared for me, but for Fenton. I realised that youth attracts youth, and that you looked on me as a friend and not as a lover."

"I thank Heaven I took that step, for the next day I was hit."

"I lay for twenty-four hours before I was picked up, and was reported 'missing'—believed killed."

"I expect you read this in the casualty lists."

"After eighteen months in hospital, I was released—the broken man I now am."

"My spine is permanently injured, and my sight affected. My hair has turned quite white—I am but a shadow of what I formerly was."

"Of course, in my profession I was a finished man. Fortunately the Church was open to me, and I became a missionary."

"I will not weary you with the depressing details of my broken, shattered life. Suffice it to say that I have never ceased to love you with all my heart."

"I have little more to say. What worldly belongings I possess, dear, have long been assigned to you in my will. I pray Heaven that you will be picked up safely by a passing vessel, that you may live to enjoy the life of happiness I wish you."

"God bless you, dear. When I have finished writing this, I am going to give my useless, broken body to the sea for good."

"With every good wish for your lasting happiness, I am taking this last goodbye. From your devoted friend, John Grant."

As Nellie was reading the last words of the letter, Dick called her excitedly.

"Look, Nellie! They've seen us! We're saved—saved!"

But Nellie's eyes were brimming with tears, and a dull pain tore her heart, for she knew she had lost something as precious as life itself—the love of a gallant gentleman.

The End.

BATTLEFIELD MEMORIALS.**NEW ZEALAND'S MONUMENTS.**

A correspondent recently wrote to the Wellington "Evening Post" pointing out that while Australia was at work erecting war memorials at Poirer, Polygon Wood, Mont St. Quentin, and elsewhere, the New Zealand Government apparently was doing nothing. The writer wanted to know what ground had been secured on the battlefields where New Zealanders fell, and what steps had been taken towards erecting Memorials.

This enquiry drew a reply, from which it is learned that New Zealand has been allotted four sites in France and Belgium, by a Military Advisory Committee acting under the Imperial War Graves Committee. These sites are: At the Somme (Factory Corner), Messines (The Square), at the Gravenstafel Cross-roads, and at Le Quesnoy. Other nominated places were Anzac and Palestine, though it is not known what transpired in this latter respect. The Belgian Government has generously undertaken that certain places shall be reserved for this purpose without restriction. The French Government has not undertaken to acquire the sites but will approve what is requested, and pass a decree giving them the status of public memorials, but leaving it to the committee to acquire the actual properties.

No mention is made of a Memorial in Ypres, but all must agree that there should be a memorial erected in that ruined city, besides one at Gravenstafel, to commemorate the New Zealanders who fell at Passchendaele and who gave their lives in holding the trenches at Glencorse and Polygon Woods.

The Nature Column.

(BY "STUDENT.")

Mr Jules Tapper who is a keen nature student, has lately returned from a trip to the Titi or mutton-bird islands. He supplies us with some welcome and interesting notes in regard to some of the native birds which are becoming rare.

On the islands to the South of Stewart Island he found that rare bird the Saddleback quite common. The bird is so tame that it may be caught in the hand without great difficulty. It seems to be more or less of a ground bird and feeds either on the grass or small insects in the grass. Mr Tapper says the maroon coloured saddle was very prominent on all the birds noticed by him.

The friendly little robin, once so plentiful around Invercargill and now found in only a few isolated localities in Southland, is also in numbers on the islands. The Parakeets are numerous and sometimes quite a pest to the mutton-birders, as they settle on the lines where the mutton birds are drying and eat the fat. Is this bird trying to emulate its distant relation the Kea?

In connection with the Parakeets Mr Tapper mentioned that on the islands to the South of Stewart Island the Parakeets were all yellow heads and those on the islands off Half Moon Bay were all red-headed.

Apparently these islands—landing on which is forbidden without leave—have become miniature sanctuaries, and every effort should be made to induce the native owners to respect the bird-life found on them.

The land birds apparently have an enemy in one of the sea birds which is described as a fierce hungry brute.

The Saddleback was reported from Stewart Island some years ago but nothing has been heard of it since. "Student" would be pleased to hear from anybody who has seen this or any other rare bird there of late years.

A few weeks ago the writer had the privilege of an afternoon round Invercargill with one of the Dominion's foremost geologists. A visit to the heap of gravel from the bores at the Water Tower elicited some facts which should prove of interest to those taking an interest in the record of the rocks. This gravel which extends to something like 120ft in depth, is practically all quartz. Many years ago when people were more serious, and a branch of the N.Z. Institute flourished in Invercargill, the origin of this gravel was discussed. There are no mountains round the Southland plain with any quantity of quartz in them, and local scientists were unable to explain where the large masses of quartz gravel came from. A Mr Hamilton put forward the ingenious theory that the quartz came from gilded lignite, the carbon having changed places with silica. He tabled several specimens partly lignite partly silica. This theory however has not been generally accepted.

The geologist on examining the gravel, stated, that in his opinion the quartz had been in masses and had come from a schist district. The only country around here that is schistose is Stewart Island. In all probability therefore, the rivers in ancient days flowed from the direction of Stewart Island towards Invercargill, which is opposite to the direction now maintained. This reversal of the direction of flow is not uncommon. The geologist instancing South Australia where the rivers of present day flow in a contrary direction to the old watercourses. At a point 80ft in the bore is found a stratum of pure milky white gravel. This is probably the same as the outcrop in Bluff Harbour, and which forms one of Southland's rather unique exports. This white gravel would make a fitting facing for our soldiers' memorial.

On the same afternoon a visit was paid to the outcrop of rock which occurs at the junction of the Makarewa and Oreti rivers. This outcrop which is not very widely known is not marked on any geological map. Examination of the rock showed that it was in a state of decomposition, this being shown by the little green crystals appearing in it. It was very difficult to decide whether the rock was sedimentary or igneous in composition. Specimens were taken and in due time microscopic sections will reveal the origin. It is probably an igneous rock for from the Bluff to the Lakes District rocks of this character outcrop.

The Ruapeke granite of which mention has been made lately in the newspaper is somewhat similar to the Bluff Hill granite—which is a plutonic rock, i.e., an igneous rock which has cooled at a great depth. The proper name for the Bluff rock is novite. At some future time I may give a few notes on the Bluff hill, and the interesting rocks adjoining it at Greenhills.

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