Kapiti Experiences

Living on Kapiti Island

By

Sylvia Lovell

Introduction –

My mother passed away on 18 February 2003 -

On the 8th December 2004, after a lengthy deliberation by Department of Conservation bureaucracy, Rennie, Steve and I scattered her ashes on the highest point of Kapiti Island.

Mum had always made it clear that Kapiti was to be her final resting place, so that her spirits could wander free amidst the places she loved and cherished.

She had written a book outlining her experiences on Kapiti Island. The book was written during the late 1970's and despite being critically reviewed was never actually published.

Ironically – a draft of her book was seen by Wellington author Chris MacLean while researching the history of Kapiti Island and several segments of text and drawings were presented in his book "KAPITI" published by The Whitcombe Press in 1999. This book gave mum a tremendous boost, as she felt in part that her story had finally been told. I was to read to her the chapters on the Wilkinson years again and again as her eye sight had failed her completely.

Finally after a period of 40 years we are able to "publish" her book, complete with her unique illustrations, photographs and art work. My thanks to Steve, and his staff at rainbow digital for making it happen.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my mother Sylvia. We hope you enjoy it.

Ray Lovell
December 2005

Foreword

During the winter of 1978 Sylvia Lovell spent a week on Kapiti. As the ranger on Kapiti, I was eager to make Sylvia's acquaintance as I had read extensively of her family's past connections with the Island.

Her father A.S. Wilkinson, arrived on the Island to be caretaker on November 24, 1924. Sylvia was 12 years old at the time, and her mother supervised her correspondence lessons for six months until she went as a boarder to Wellington Girls' College. Some years were spent on the Island, until she left to work on the mainland as a shorthand-typist in the Public Service. She later went to Wellington Teachers' Training College and was teaching when her parents left the Island. Sylvia maintained a close contact with the Island, spending most of her holidays there.

The eighteen years that Mr and Mrs Wilkinson spent there was the longest term of any caretaker. I believe that they made the greatest contribution to Kapiti of any of its' caretakers. Sylvia's parents were hard working, sensitive and knowledgeable. These attributes were passed on to Sylvia. She has retained the freshness of youth, which is admirably communicated to us through this delightful book.

While reading her story and enjoying the illustrations, you will understand why Sylvia's reputation as an artist is so well known. I am thrilled that she has made the effort of recording these early events on Kapiti Island which have now become an important part of the Island's history.

I envy her living on the Island during those early times, but thank goodness, through reading her book we can re-live some of those experiences with her.

Finally, I would like to thank Sylvia for giving me the opportunity of writing this foreword for her book, and for the privilege of having her, her sister Nora Stidolph and brother Ray Wilkinson, here on Kapiti during Easter 1981.

Peter Daniel.
Ranger, Kapiti Island

Kapiti Island

Rushing air
Swirling waters
No plains
But rocks.

Great cliffs rose on the western side
When earth-quake shocks
Severed the island
Grinding its rocks and substance.

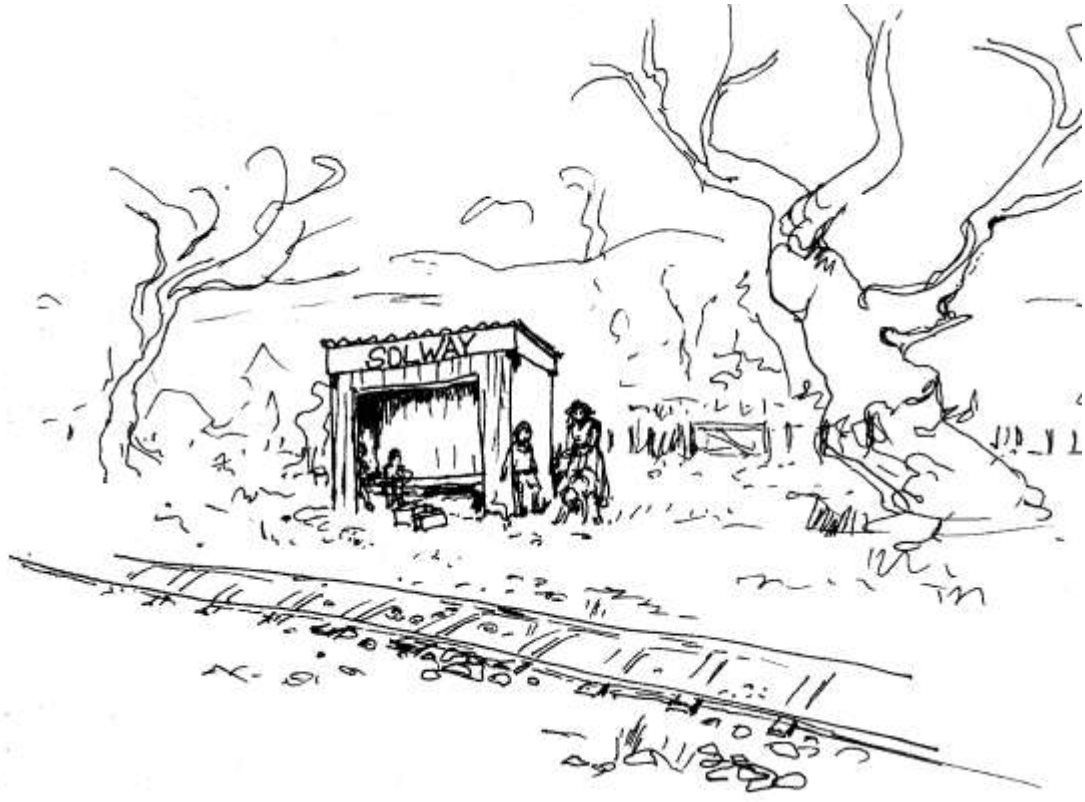
Great landslides
With deafening roar
Of elemental music
Crashed into foaming seas
And tidal waves
Rose from the rest
To cover half the island.

Meanwhile the eastern side
Lifted to show the mysteries of the deep
Cave and cliff faces
Dangerously steep
And monoliths
Environmental sculpture
Continuing
As thousands of millenniums pass by
And here for one moment
Sit I.

ver the Rimutakas

Leaving the plains of the Wairarapa to live on Kapiti Island, impossible to imagine what it will be like, never having been on the west coast before, never having been on a launch even … only on the old "cobra" which crosses Wellington harbour in summer holidays. A 13 year old can only wildly surmise.

Solway Station is merely a little shed to shelter in whilst waiting for unpunctual trains. It is surrounded by uncrushed pebbles in which wild sweet peas and shivery grass are growing. It is also a place to hide in when a train comes thundering past. "Hide - or you will be sucked under!" my brothers always warn me.



But this train slows to a stop. It is necessary to be quick to throw one's self and luggage on to the little platform of the carriage before the guard blows his whistle and slams the black wrought iron gates, because the

train will be off again almost before it has stopped. Then away we go between the rows of birches and oaks where we have so often played. Spring saw them bursting into delicate green. In autumn the acorns are lovely to feel, the smooth egg shaped nuts contrasting with the rough textured cups which have so many uses. A momentary sad feeling as with a hollow sound the train crosses the bridge over the Waingawa River where we so often played and had picnics.

However the excitement drives away any regretful feelings as we scorch over the wide plains. Telephone poles fly past, punctuating (like bars on a stave) the fine music of iron and steel, whilst paddocks, houses and people pass like objects on a revolving stage. They are in another world for they are not on a train that is saying "Kapiti, Kapiti, Kapiti," very quickly as it hurtles along the iron rails across the flat open country where I was born.

Now the tempo changes again as we near Featherston. The Rimatakas loom darkly ahead. Kihikateas give way to manukas; manukas give way to totaras, and then at last comes the rain forest, mile after mile of it.

The train is labouring, until it comes to a stop at Cross Creek. As always, rain is falling, but it cannot wash away the black soot that even covers the bush. It is an exciting place, for dramatic black smoke is constantly belching from the funnels of the big "Fell" engines waiting to take the trains up the famous incline, there are a few dismal looking railway houses for those who live here to tend the engines, keeping up steam ready for their really important task of pulling the trains up the hill.

"Poor women, living here," says my mother. My brothers think it is a paradise. They both know all about engines, even their insides, and actually know how to drive them.

Now there is a long wait while the engines take water into their tanks, steaming furiously. Then each engine, after fussily shunting up and down the tracks for some time, attaches itself with explosive force to the train, the couplings clanging like cracked bells. One by one they fall into place. A disjointed chord sets up a long jangling echo which reverberates through the desolate gully as though its soul were being torn out. At last the train and engines all linked up on the three steel tracks – "The third is for the Western house Brakes," my brothers inform me knowledgeably.

Now the great "Fells", like black war horses ready for battle, wait until an Inspector has tapped all the wheels to make sure that none are cracked and will not fail on the long haul up the Rimutakas.

Soon the iron horses are toiling up the mountainside shooting out steam in all directions, whilst volumes of smoke mushroom up into the heavy air. Rain runs down the tracks. It grows darker. Now the whistle warns people to close the windows to keep out the smoke as the train is coming to a tunnel. The muffled compression of the powerful engines drum in

the ears and each great puff of smoke exhaled by the engines enters the carriages in puffs through every crack.

In the first class carriages with the black oil seats, the smoke is not so thick for most of the windows shut, but in the second class ones where there are long slippery wooden seats, some of the windows will not open and some will not shut. The white light from the fascinating gas lamps can scarcely penetrate the thick atmosphere to illuminate the ghostly faces of the passengers who try to rub smuts out of their eyes, or make masks out of their handkerchiefs. When out of the tunnels, the passengers force open the windows to let the smoke out and the fresh air in. It smells of damp roots and earth – delicious.

Through cuttings and tunnels the cavalcade of iron toils on, until at last the summit is reached and the train is in the longest tunnel of all. Bells mysteriously clang inside the tunnel, each toll seeming to mark out the individual cadence of each engine's particular style of musical expression. Then changing tempos once again and quickening pace, the train reaches the flat summit triumphantly and stops with a tremendous jerk which sets the couplings jangling again. The engines puff impatiently whilst the wheels are tested once more.

It is sad to say farewell to the engines which have become like friends. One by one they shunt into a siding, jauntily running backwards, with cheerful goodbye whistles to await the next train going to Cross Creek, for their strength is needed just as much to hold back the trains running downhill as it is to pull them up.

Our lonely engine sighs and breathing heavily goes to sleep for a long time. The passengers settle down for a long wait and some of them go to sleep also. The wooden seats are very hard. Children while away the time sliding along the seats or drawing faces on the fogged over windows, getting themselves blacker and blacker.

When everyone has given up hope of ever moving again, the engine suddenly lets out a fearful shriek and gives such a jerk that people go sprawling in all directions, luggage falling on top of their heads. No sooner have they sorted themselves out when the train stops again just as abruptly as before with the same chaos resulting. This time the train seems to be settling down for a long stay, so the battered passengers resign themselves to whiling away the time by reading the notices once more. One says that there is a 20 pound reward for catching someone damaging the train. We can do with some money, 20 pounds is a fortune these days, so my brothers set off to see if they can catch somebody at it. "You can't come, you are only a girl," say the infuriating chauvinists.

They return saying they have seen nobody doing anything but they themselves have been questioned by the guard as they crept about stealthily peering this way and that. There is another notice which

threatens a 20 pound fine for using this lever except in an emergency. I am still waiting for someone to use it. On the little door at the end of the carriage a notice reads "Ladies Only". When you open the door and go in, the smell is worse than the Waingawa Freezing Works when the wind is blowing from the south. Another notice says "Do not use except when the train is in motion." But who would use it then, with the ground rushing away below? What if the train should go into a tunnel and there is no light, or there should be an accident? Or it should go over a bridge when someone is underneath, or if the train were to stop at your station and the door is jammed? I decide not to take any of these risks.
Another train comes in. Surely we will be going now. Yes we are sliding along smoothly, too smoothly, for it is the other train that is going and not us at all. "That is not fair," my brothers say. "We were here first!"

But at long last we are off. When we reach Kaitoke there is a stampede for tea which is poured into the lovely smooth shining white cups with "N.Z.R." on them in blue, and on the saucers thick ham sandwiches with so much mustard it burns the tongue. Everyone stampeded into the tearooms. Brave ones drink their tea there, leaping back on the train as it begins to move. But we bring ours back into the carriage so as to make sure we will not be left behind. Tea spills into saucers as the train starts up before we have finished. Now a man is coming through the carriages with a large basket, calling out "cups please," I wonder who has to do the washing up.

After a long run downhill, we are in the Hutt Valley.

Soon, to our excitement, the sea comes into view and we are running along beside the shore sniffing thankfully the tang of the briny coming through the open windows blowing away the sooty air.

The next thrill is the sight of a Thordon Tram on the other side away from the sea. "I saw it first," and it's time to get our luggage down from the rack, for we are arriving at Lambton Station, and hustling to catch a tram.

ellington to Paraparaumu

The journey from the old Thordon Station in Wellington to Paraparaumu is not as dramatic as that over the Rimutakas, but between Wellington and Johnsonville darts in and out of the short tunnels cut through the hills which are clothed in lovely pinks and whites of the wild ragged robin in a vivid contrast to the darker Rimutakas.

At last from the steep slopes that sweep down to the Kapiti Coast, my excitement could not have been less than that which filled Cortez "When with eagle eyes he stared at the Pacific." For there is our future home in the sparkling sea linked to the heavens by a billowing cloud.

Arriving at Paraparaumu the train stops briefly and soon I am in Buckley's bus bumping down the sandy road. Sweet smelling lupin dusts the sides of the bus. Passing a few farms en route we soon reach the Post Office Beach Store and clamber down.

"Who takes care of the caretaker's daughter, - when the caretaker's busy taking care." sings the store-keeper's son, much to my embarrassment. It is the latest pop song of the day.

There are a few beach houses nestling behind the dunes which roll down to the clean sands where no concrete walls mar the view. I run over the dunes, and there my father, in high gumboots, home spun jersey and tamoshanter, is standing beside his boat, his beloved island back-dropped behind him. That is how I am so often to see him in the next eighteen years during which time he devotes himself to making Kapiti a real sanctuary. Like Robinson Crusoe, he is "Monarch of all he surveys!"

Standing on the soft sand I experience for the first time that delightful feeling of being sucked down into an ever-widening puddle of water, like a toheroa! How glad they must be for the suction which keeps them safe from all but human predators. I keep pulling my feet out before I too disappear.

We pile in luggage, stores and mail into the dinghy. I step in and Dad pushes the boat out till it is afloat, jumps in himself and with practised ease picks up the oars and rows out to the little launch. Holding it alongside, "Jump in," he says. In goes the luggage, then he jumps in, makes the dinghy fast, weighs anchor, the engine coughs, and away we go. "Take the tiller, Sylvia." He shows me how and I steer towards that exciting bulk which is to be my next home.

The launch in which I cross to the Island for the first time goes by the well earned name of "Slug." Although she looks pure and innocent in immaculate white paint, she has a treacherous soul. Whenever she feels like it she will just stop, leaving the crew at the mercies of wind and tide.

This is what my sister Nora had to say about "Slug."

> "Our only communication with the mainland (at that time) was by flashing with a mirror, or just by putting up a smoke. This was only used in dire emergencies such as when our mother broke her leg, or Dick (the possum trapper) his back, or the men ran out of tobacco.

> The only way to reach the mainland under our own steam was by launch, "The Slug." The normal half hour to three quarters of an hour was an all day job with her. Dad or one of the boys would "start her up." A couple of hours were usually sufficient for this. When a mile or so out to sea, the engine would pass out with a cough and "The Slug" would begin to drift southwards. In a short time, she would be out of sight of the house – somewhere in the region of Paekakariki, with "the rip" carrying her faster south than the engine could north. Two furious men cajoled, swore and kicked at the engine, and hours after she had taken to the water we would see her laboriously making her way up the mainland coast to the beach where she bobbed up and down in the breakers like a gull."

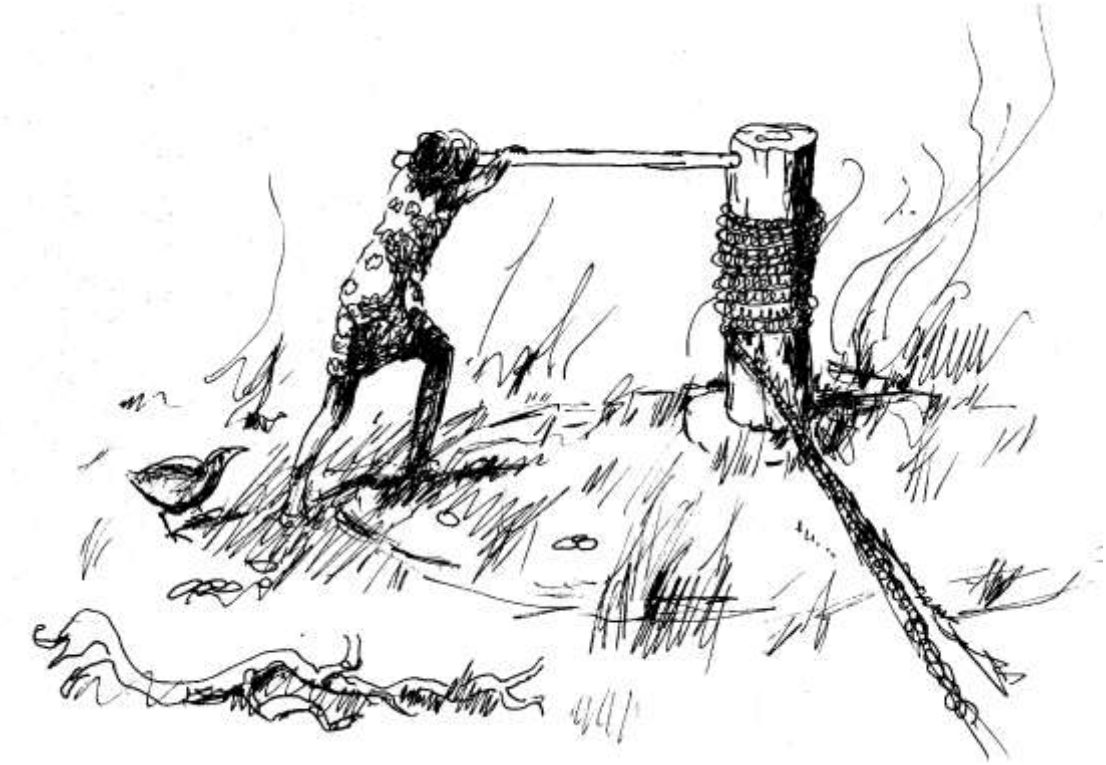
I am aboard the boat enjoying all this – much more exciting and less worrisome than peering through binoculars from the veranda of the house wondering what is happening. My mother does not enjoy the boat, and spends many an anxious hour watching and waiting for its return.

However, on this first crossing from Paraparaumu Beach to Kapiti, the sea is calm, "Slug" on her best behaviour, and to me this day she has sails of silver and gold and is heading for a magic isle. Indeed, so she is, for Kapiti casts a spell over me which will shade my thinking and feeling for ever after.

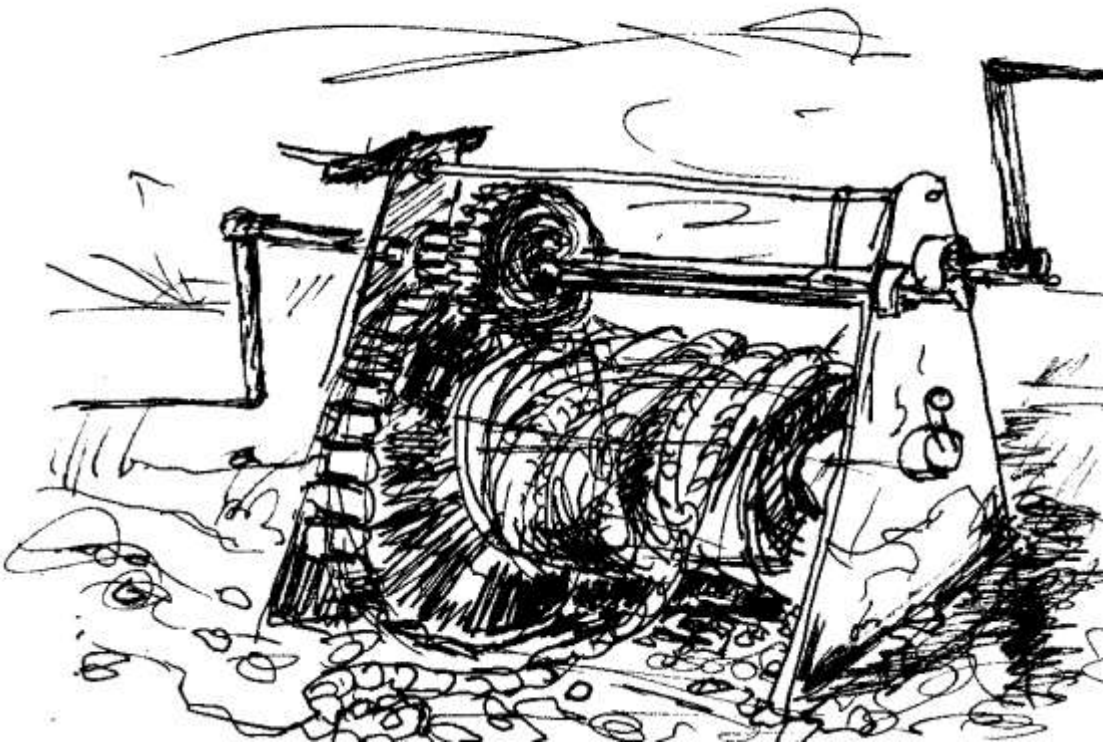
As we draw nearer the island, the steep cliffs and ridges stand out in sharp relief – a gigantic piece of living sculpture.

I step ashore as in a dream, my feet sinking into the gritty sand, and gaze up at the bulk of the island covered with dark green bush. I am sharply awakened from this magic moment by my grandmother's stern voice saying "Stop dreaming Sylvia, and get onto the winch." And I am confronted by this extraordinary piece of nautical equipment.

When my mother sees it, when she comes over later, she says it must have been left behind by the whalers, for it actually makes one think of sea shanties which sailors would have sung as they turn the capstan. "Slug" is a small boat, but like all marine creatures, very awkward on land and so heavy that it is necessary to get at the very end of the pole for most leverage to move her. Now steadily, steadily, inch by inch, "Slug" creeps out of the sea onto the land. I have no breath left for sea shanties but when my father lends his weight "Slug" is soon on dry land.



Many feet have worn a grove round the capstan and one has to be careful to leap the cable each time round. One one's own it is hard work, but in summer when there are visitors to help it is fun running around leaping the cable together, singing "Blow the man down" and laughing, laughing.



Primitive as the old windlass is, it's very simplicity makes it preferable to the "modern" iron monstrosity which the "Department" sends over later. I think they must have filched it from a collection of "Scrap iron" sculpture, galleries exhibit from time to time to needle the "establishment". It resembles something between a mangle and an old printing press and one has to work like a piston rod to turn the cog wheel. There is a cam shaft which keeps dropping down accidentally just as one is getting a smooth run, pulling up one with a wrench. Reaching up to one's full height, then bending down till the blood runs into the head, is an exercise which one would have liked to have condemned the inventor to perform, for it is a punishing machine.

At last we are on the pleasant track leading up to the little house which is to be my future home. Bellbirds and tuis sing a welcome from the Mahoe trees and the flax. I feel like a pioneer leaving my pastoral homeland and never was there a more excited pioneer.

Life on the Island

And now begins a life so different from the one that I have left behind that I am living in a dream of poems read or in a setting for "Treasure Island" or "Robinson Crusoe."

But this is Kapiti and birds I have not seen nor heard before sing strange songs, and plants and trees I do not know grow on its steep sides. There is so much to learn.

Day follows day in a haze of glittering light, for even the atmosphere is quite unlike that crackly air which blows across the inland plains of the Wairarapa. Sea breezes bring soft air which is moist with salt, refreshing by day, and laden with sleep at night. Always in the background is bird song and the never ceasing rhythm of the waves breaking on the rough beaches. The tides mark the hours and the elements rule our lives.

This first summer they are being kind, so much time is spent with the boats. These are a new found delight to me, and I discover I have "sea fever". This I should never have known had we not come to live here, so when my father says he is going to do some work on the boats, I am delighted to join him. Today he decides that "Beauty" needs a new "knee" (a triangular wooden bracket that reinforces the attachment of the seats to the sides of the dinghy). The seats must be very strong to carry the increased weight of a heavy man rowing out against raging surf, when all his strength is pitted against it. So we climb up into the bush, Dad with his axe razor sharp, to search for a knee. I come panting behind. Having with great care selected his "knee" from an ake ake, cut so as to cause the least damage to the tree, I then see a straight lancewood with a curious curve in it. "That would make Mum a walking stick wouldn't it?" I ask, as I point it out to him.

So back we go with two useful articles, a "knee" for the boat and a beautifully marked stick. Necessity is truly the "mother of invention".

One of the most valuable lessons Kapiti has taught me is to see beauty and often use in unlikely objects.

We spend the next couple of days working on the boats, Dad inserting the "knee" whilst I do the novice work, like rubbing down the boat before the "Master" applies the paint. Soon she has an immaculate pure white coat of paint applied with a rhythmic slapping of the brush.

It is a pleasant world we are in. Dressed in shirt, shorts and old tennis shoes, free as the sea air, the tranquillity is all enveloping. Bird song and the waves make music as with flashing white wings against the blue sky seagulls cry.

Now my mother makes a welcome appearance with a thermos flask of tea and some of her famous cakes, warm from the oven. She admires "beauty" and is delighted with her walking stick. We all enjoy morning tea sitting on the warm sand leaning against a log. Then off she goes towards Te Rere.

Dad tells me that I can have a lesson in rowing so we push "Mickie" into the sea. This little dinghy is ideal for one person, though he will carry two easily, and three in calm weather. Light and beautifully

proportioned, two people can carry him into the sea, or one can push him off the sand. Our boats all have mundane names, but we do not change them, for these were their names when we were first introduced to them. Place names like "Chappies Camp," "The Basin", "Fisherman's Bay" etc., should have been returned to their beautiful Maori names also, but weren't.

Now we are in "Mickie" and Dad is demonstrating the finer points of oarmanship, he on the rowing seat and I in the stern. It is so easy. He shows me how to grasp the oars, how to dip them into the water twisting them as they go under and feathering them to skim over the water so as to get the least air resistance. "Mickie" shoots forward smoothly. The only sound is the swish of the water and the rattle of the rowlocks. "Now you have a go". With excitement we change places and soon the oars are going like windmills. "Keep them low – don't waste time and energy". The water now snatches at one oar and I nearly loose it. It seems hopeless. However, some control is at last gained. "Put me ashore," says Dad. "You can practice by yourself". He pushes me out again. For a moment I panic, but after some time, to my delight "Mickie" responds to my amateurish efforts.

After this I am allowed to take "Mickie" out whenever the weather is suitable, and even permitted to row "Beauty" out to the launch. A good boat is like a spirited horse, it comes alive when on the water. When at last my father tells me I can handle the boat sufficiently well to row "Mickie" alone to Wairua to visit our neighbours, I feel like Grace Darling.

Around the Island

One of the highlights of my life on the island is going for picnics. Today, Dad wants to collect suitable timber for fence posts which may have washed ashore. For this sort of job he has built a punt, not gleaming white like "Beauty" but made water tight with tar.

We prepare our lunch of newly baked bread, fresh dairy butter, cheese and watercress, whilst Dad hunts up the old black billy, tea and sugar. "We'd better take water too," he says. "You never know whether dead sheep may be rotting upstream." Horrid thought on such a lovely day.

So down we go to the beach to get "Slug" into the water. We used well greased skids to slide the boat into the sea. We push the boat onto and off one skid and on to the next, repeating this until the vessel is afloat.

Soon my two cousins, my father and I are chugging away in “Slug” on our “maiden” voyage round the island. “Slug” is on her best behaviour.

Soon we reach “Shag Rock”, and are heading for Taepiro. The shoreline becomes more jagged and the rocks larger as we proceed south. Here and there we gaze up at cliff faces bare of vegetation except for stunted and twisted taupatas and manukas which find precarious foothold in cracks and crevices. We slow up at Taepiro, an old whaling station. This steep ravine is denuded of vegetation by grazing animals and practically inaccessible, for it is nearly all shingle scree. Later I was to come down it, scared stiff when with an ominous rumble the whole slope threatens to slide like an avalanche. “Run”, yells my father, and I manage to reach a solid patch of ground. There are a lot of these “slides” on the island, and I have now mastered the art of running lightly and swiftly over them.

The first time round the island is a revelation, with scenery straight from the romantic poets. The eastern shoreline is not as wild and steep as the western side, but with huge rocks of strange geometric shapes, their angles as yet scarcely worn by time, could have been the inspiration for a Cubist painter.

Nearing the little islands where the fishermen live, we come close to the waterfall spilling down a thirty foot cliff, dripping with ferns and moss. A chain further on, a rough track cut into the cliff leads to the dark gully where Dick, the possum trapper lives for part of the year. This track leads into the interior of the island, and a delightful plateau unimaginatively called “The Basin”.

It is all very exciting, and the impact on the eye so terrific it will always remain mirrored there. "Slug" plugs steadily on and the sun beats down turning our skin scarlet. "Who will get the brownest, I wonder?" asked Mavis. "You will regret not covering yourselves," warned Dad. But of course we knew better!

Now we are nearing the headland crags at the entrance to Wharekohu Bay. This was a famous whaling station. It is difficult to imagine that once many ships moored here and hundreds of people also lived on Kapiti. "Sylvia, for goodness sake stop dreaming or you'll have us on the rocks," exclaimed my father as he swung the rudder hard over just in time to miss by inches a submerged rock. I wonder how many ships had hit that rock.

Now we are in the bay we go ashore. We gather wood for the fire and wander around for a while, but it is not very interesting as there is only a little scrub growing there and no signs of former habitation. Whilst Dad boils the billy we go for a swim, but the water is so cold we don't stay in for long. Kapiti's shores slope steeply into the sea and cold currents swirl around the island. Sometimes we wear our togs over to Paraparaumu Beach where the water is several degrees warmer and the sand so soft. People sometimes ask if we have swum over from the island.

The billy boils and Dad drops in a handful of tea, hitting the billy on the side with a stick to make the tea leaves sink. Billy tea has a flavour of its own, and what New Zealander does not love the smell of a camp fire of driftwood. Sitting on an old log that has been washed up by the sea and bleached by the sun, we devour our lunch. Wekas of course prowl around for food. The cicadas sing their praise to the sun. We return to "Slug."

Rounding the giant rocks at the south end of the island we come into view of the western cliffs towering above us. They are awe-inspiring. How insignificant we feel as we gaze up at the rugged cliffs which are practically bare of vegetation. They are a forbidding sight indeed.

I was not to know that day, that many years later I would be flying over Kapiti on route to another lovely group of island far away in the North Pacific – Hawaii. As I gazed below at Kapiti I could see that the western cliffs were covered with large patches of green – trees planted by my father years before. How I wished he could have seen the results of his dedicated labour, and how time had aided his endeavours.

We drank in the scene. Is that a rock, a carving or is it Te Rauparaha up there on the cliff face? A cloud passes over the sun and gooseflesh stands up on my sun burn. I reach for my jacket. "Surely you are not cold?" asked Mavis. I do not tell them who could be gazing down upon us, besides my skin is getting too burnt. Sea air and sunshine can cause severe sunburn as my cousins found out later.

Six miles of precipice pass by us. Today there is a light swell, but during a storm "slug" would have been dashed to pieces and lucky any survivor, for if not drowned in the sea, who could scale those forbidding cliffs? None but the very few would know where it might be possible.

When nearing the north end, the cliffs gradually become lower and broken up into great crags and rocks with grotesque shapes of driftwood thrown up between them at weird angles. We did not get any as there was too much swell to make landing possible.

Now the land flattens out in a similar way as Rangitira, but there is a larger area of flat land and a lagoon, a home for many waders. We could hear stilts barking.

Now we enter Waiorua Bay where our good neighbours, the Webber family live on their ancestral land. Good neighbours are always precious, but here doubly so. They are always ready to help in times of emergency, which here, can and do occur at any moment. Their warm friendship alleviated the intense loneliness which at times could have become unbearable. Their light hearted humour, typical of their race, soon banishes depression. Their laughter is infectious. They have a pleasant, well kept home and garden, but the most interesting feature is the "cook house." This large semi-detached room houses a "ping pong" table where many friendly battles are fought. The walls are covered with pictures from the "Auckland Weekly" and the "Free Lance." Each week new pictures are pasted up which make a very interesting, contemporary art gallery. An enormous open fireplace is used for cooking for the crowd of family and guests which are usually there in summer. Hospitality is part of their rich culture which is a new experience to me and I enter into it whole-heartedly. We are given a warm welcome and after a cup of tea, everyone sees us off at the beach with laughter and invitations to come again soon.

We arrive home just before dark. My grandmother scolds us for allowing ourselves to get so burnt, and tells us that cream is a sure cure. So we go to the diary and skim off the thick cream and plaster one another's backs with it and then our faces, arms and legs. "That is better than any stuff you buy," she says. "It will be better in the morning. You are very silly girls." "I told them," says Dad, which did not make us feel any better.

Going to the Trig

During the summer many visitors come over to the island under permit, hiring one of the fisherman's boats or Webber's "Manarki." Almost without exception, their first ambition is to go to the trig. This is a steep climb as the island rises in one and a half miles to 1700 feet and one needs to be fit to do it. Most people appear to treat it just as another height to conquer as fast as they can, then they say, "We didn't see any birds at all." "Well," says Dad, "What do you expect – crashing through the bush like a mob of soldiers?" My mother who seldom goes to the trig wanders quietly about. She usually goes no further than Chappies Camp and Te Rere and up the lower manuka slopes where she takes most of her photographs and writes up her notes. I often go with her. She knows the territories of each bird within the area. In winter, we sometimes sit amongst the grasses and bracken where on the coldest day it is warm. Blue and copper winged butterflies flutter about us. It is so peaceful, with the sea breaking down below and the birds singing. It is amazing what can be seen in such a spot. It makes me think of my childhood in Masterton. I used to spend hours hiding in the long grass or lying on my back listening to the larks singing and seeing pictures in the clouds.

But I too do enjoy the hike up to the trig, and one day I set off alone, taking the track which begins at Chappies Camp, climbing slowly up through the giant manukas. It is dry and slippery, but in tennis shoes there is good grip and I pull myself up on the odd branch, pausing now and then to examine a plant or to catch a glimpse of a bird.

Looking down, dark branches are etched against the shining sea. The sound of the waves comes softly and the pungent scent of the tea tree leaves fills the air. Now the going is less steep and the Kanukas give way to vegetation of the type typical of the area of the coast and merges into the lovely remnants of rain forest. If one wanders from the track, supplejacks and vines make the going difficult. They are like fantastic line drawings of a Picasso. Unfortunately there are not many ferns, but they and little seedlings are coming up now the sheep and goats are gone. At last the most beautiful spot of all is reached – the old fallen rata under which one can walk. As I sit and rest, the peace of the forest descends upon me. A robin comes close picking up insects I have disturbed and a tomtit trills his gentle little song. No waves can now be heard and no longer does one seem to be on an island, but in the heart of hundreds of miles of bush.

On top of the great log a number of different ferns grow as well as kie kie and other epiphytes and parasites, but loveliest of all is the delicate filmy fern.

What a magnificent sight this giant rata must have been! But in death it has given life to a beautiful forest garden which thrives on its decaying body, as though it's spirit still lives in the new growth springing forward. Further on the trees are draped with Lachipodium, a misty grey. Stillness and the beauty send me into a reverie. One needs to be alone in the bush to experience absolute oneness with nature. The Chinese painters spent

many years wandering about in forest and mountains mediating up in them, and afterwards when painting their pictures captured the essence of what they had seen. There is a story of a Zen monk who before painting a willow, mediated upon the tree so long that he became the tree mediating upon the artist. I don't remember whether the result was a tree or the monk! I tried it out on the rata and was completely immersed in my efforts when I was rudely brought back to the real world by a loud 'thump, thump' of a prowling weka.

Now I realise I am not an eastern sage, but a school girl on Te Rauparaha's strong hold. The weka is probably his reincarnation. I set off swiftly over the now flattened top of the island and burst out into the open, jumping over the fallen log at the top. The flax and toi toi are streaming in the wind at the top of the island. The sea crashes at the base of the forbidding cliffs 1700 feet below. On this cloudless day the circle of the globe is clearly visible and the mainland lies to the east like a relief map. It disappears over the horizon and only Ruapehu and Egmont are visible. To southwards the North Island melts into the South. The height is exhilarating. The sight is breathtaking.

The descent is much quicker than the ascent, especially then the steep kanaka and manukas slopes are reached. It is great fun slipping and sliding downwards, aiming for a large manukas which acts as a buffer to stop my headlong rush. Sometimes the impetus of the descent towards a tree leaning outwards enables one to run halfway up the trunk, amongst the birds.

I am now down at Chappies Camp again and within the sound of the waves. Coming down has made my legs feel they are giving way at the knees, so I sit for a while in Chappies Camp watching two robins.

 auling for  ait

Sometimes
At the end of a summer's day
Fishermen come to Fisherman's Bay
Hauling for bait.
It's a lovely sight
To see the phosphorous shine
On the sea
At night.

They only come to haul when it is dead calm. We can hear the two brothers, Jim and Bill, talking before "Ripple" come into view. The two brothers talk at the same time carrying on not so much a conversation as a duet. But they seem to understand one another perfectly, and are inseparable.

When "Ripple" comes into view round Rangitira, we wander down to the bay. Anchor is dropped and whilst they row ashore, a chorus of greetings comes over the still waters.

Talking all the while, they begin to fold the net in such a way it falls into the water from the stern of the dinghy, waiting for a while until the tide is just right.

As it grows darker, a silver gleam appears on the turn of the waves. It is phosphorous. I wander along the beach skipping stones to watch it splash where the stone touches the water and form ever widening circles. How many times can I skip a stone? Six or eight times? The stones on the beach are so flat and thin they must have been made for this very purpose! I wonder if Maori children competed in this pleasant pastime. The secret is to choose just the right stone, so it skips as fast as possible across the water before sinking.

The hill behind is growing very dark. From it comes the last sleepy notes of the evening chorus. Then whilst Bill stands on the beach with one end of the net in his hand, Jim rows the dinghy out to sea in a wide arc, the

fold of the net allowing it to play into the water as he rows round. For a while the men stop talking, and the oars twisting the rowlocks sounds unnaturally loud, whilst the phosphorous streams in the wake of the boat and drips from the oars as they are feathered. Then, shipping the oars with a clatter, Jim steps ashore, his big thigh gumboots splashing the phosphorous all about.

We lend our weight to pull up the net, now heavy with fish which are making frantic efforts to escape. The fish lie gasping on the gravel beach, shining like silver, as they helplessly flap about in the alien element, until they 'drown' as it were in the air and lie still.

How much pain can these creatures feel? How much do they comprehend of what is happening to them? Are some of these ones the same ones I had watched so quick and free in their water world below the cliffs at Paripatea this morning? What a precarious life they lead, when at any moment death can swoop down upon them from the clouds when a gannet dives, or hauled out of their element when trapped in a net and left to expire on the land. At least they have been spared a crueller death with a hook through their gills.

It is now quite dark. “Goodnight, goodnight.” The engine starts up and punctuates the duet of the two brothers as they chug back to their little island, and peace once more descends upon Kapiti.

The Nautilas

Summer has gone again and with it the last visitors. Autumn has come with no blaze of colour, for the bush shows little change with no deciduous trees with red and yellow leaves to brighten the days. One can understand the early settlers planting English trees to remind them of home so far away and as a colour contrast to the dark bush which seemed so forbidding to them in their isolation.

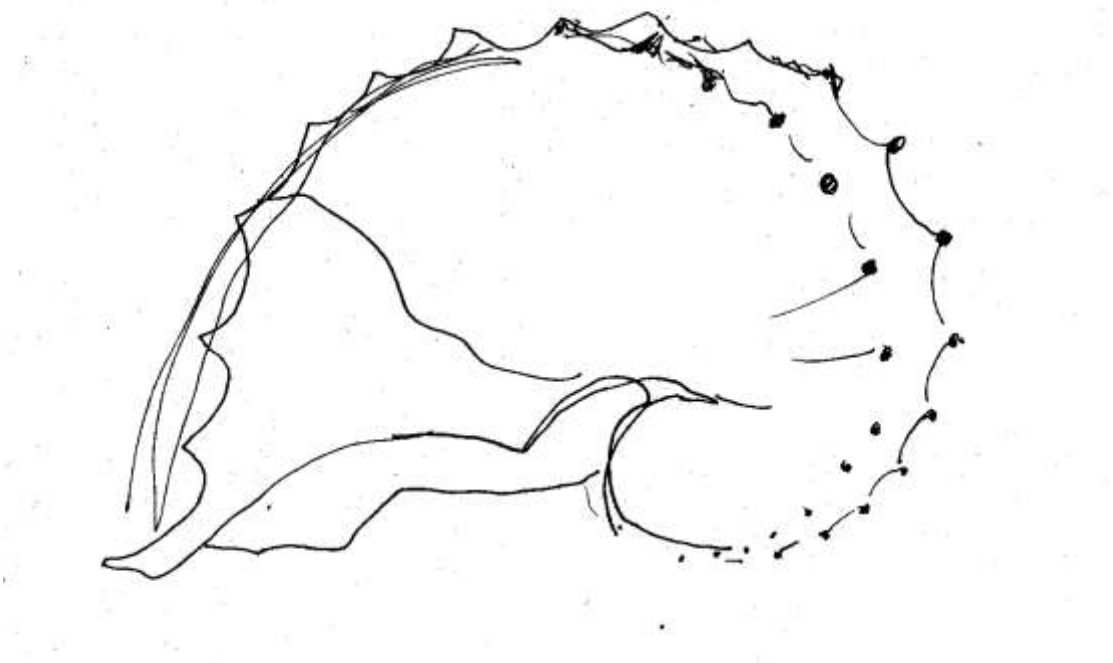
As the days shorten and the nights grow longer, the sun shines on Rangitira for only half a day. Before it sinks behind Kapiti at about one o'clock, the shadow of the island passes over the flat and measures time like a sun dial. But for days now there has been no sun at all – sky, sea and mainland hills are all the same colour, the excitement of a storm.

Alone I wander south along the beach. There is a chilling drizzle, dismal and monotonous. The waves slap on the rocks senselessly marking time. They imprison me here, and licking up the shore with malicious intent, they creep ever nearer. They would like to engulf me. The rocks are slippery and today cautious steps are necessary for it is not safe to bound

from rock to rock. Trudging along the lonely beach, the greyness seeps into my soul and I hate the dismal place. Why am I here alone whilst my friends on the mainland are dancing and having fun? Even the seagulls are complaining – but their wings, white against that grey sky, really make a lovely contrast and give a momentary lift to the spirits. For the scene is wet watercolour. Tip the paper up to get the rain, sideways for the sea leaving the white paper for the gulls – light against dark. So difficult – but then simplicity always is.

Shag rock is half covered by the sluggishly heaving water. Three shags are trying to dry their wings, grotesque, resembling vultures. A surrealistic painting here? I am sympathising with poor old Robinson Crusoe who said "Oh solitude, where are the charms that sages have seen in thy face, better to live in the midst of alarms than live in this horrible place!"

Then something catches my eye, and there lying between two jagged rocks is a beautiful object, transparent as the finest porcelain, white against dark again like the gulls but within my reach. I pick up a nautilas shell.



Depression vanishes and as I hurry back along the beach to show off my find, I notice that the clouds over the mainland are changing to delicate tones of pink and the rain has stopped.

And so the love-hate syndrome I have for Kapiti is resolved by beauty. The two faces it presents form that perfect contrast – light against dark. The nautilas shell, though so frail, is yet to me a symbol of beauty, courage and strength. The grey days of which there are so many, do not depress me so much, for on such days I have found more than one nautilas shell.

I call them nautilas days.

 akas and other Birds

Wherever one wanders in the vicinity of Rangitira, a kaka or two is sure to appear with merry chortle, his bright eyes watching for a date which he knows my mother has in her pocket. In conjunction with his powerful bill and claws, he climbs about the trees with great agility. Although his bill is strong enough to strip bark off trees, he takes the date daintily, and then balancing effortlessly on one foot, holds the date in the other. With perfect manners he enjoys his meal. Meantime, his mate and family, realising they are missing the feast, arrive for their share. When all the dates are finished they leave, flying and swooping about above the bush with happy abandon and joyful song.

My mother's rapport with birds enables her, with great gentleness and patience, to persuade the pair of robins to feed from her hand. Pipits come whenever they see her for the crumbs or rolled oats she keeps on her. During the breeding season she always answers their peeping to keep them well supplied with food to feed their hungry broods. These ground larks, although unnoticeable, are likeable little birds, running about lightly with heads and tails jerking up and down. They have not the song of the English skylark, but occasionally one will see one soaring not as high as his far away cousin, but with an unmistakable song.

The gift for gaining the confidence of birds and animals is a precious one. To be trusted by them is a great tribute. Those who betray this trust are responsible for the disappearance of our native birds. The other spoilers of our forests who released exotic predators and those grazing animals who upset the ecology.

How fortunate I am to have such parents and the experience of living on this island.

The  annet

I am sitting upon a throne of solid rock, my favourite perch, upon the cliffs of Paripatea. The first time I came around here I had to clutch at the grass to keep my balance as desperately as a drowning man will grasp at a straw. I did not dare to look down at the sea which, far below, made strange threatening noises as it licked at the cliff face, or gurgled in and out of the cave behind the hunk of cliff which had fallen off long ago when an earthquake rocked the island. On the fault line, Kapiti often shakes with little quakes to remind us how sensitive it is to the forces of nature.

But today I am not thinking of earthquakes, I am glorying in the heights. It is one of those perfect days when Kapiti is a paradise. Sky and sea are pure cerulean. A few light clouds of pure white - float in the sparkling morning air. The sound of barking dogs and trains on the mainland can be heard.

Behind me in the bush birds sing, but their melodies are almost drowned by the cicadas enjoying the morning sun. The sea below is so clear that fish can be seen exploring the seabed also shining in the sun. From my perch I command the sea, and seagulls fly about below me.

Then the gannet appears, floating effortlessly on the air. With no wing movement he sails close to me and for a second his white and red eyes stare straight into mine. In one flash of communication it seems to me we are back in time before evolution had taken us on different paths – he to command of the air, I to inhabit the lowly earth. For a brief moment in time we are one, then with an almost imperceptible movement of one wing he turns on a current of air. He is now looking down, then like a falling arrow, dives, and cleaves the air, piercing the surface of the water and coming up with a fish whose life has come to a sudden end.

We wish the gannets would nest here – my throne would be a perfect spot. Now so aloof and self-sufficient, when the breeding season comes, instinct takes him north to the nesting colony.

Storm

The southerly gale is at its height and the waves beat upon the rocky shore with such ferocity that the whole island seems to shudder with the force of the storm.

Driving rain merges with spume from the waves, obliterating the mainland, and it is as though the Island were adrift in a million miles of ocean. Wind gusts sweep across the waters and strike the land with an upward thrust causing the bush to become as agitated as the sea.

All around the island the waves torment the battered shoreline – rushing far up the beaches. The undertow is so fierce that the gravel is drawn towards the land and then hurled back by the next wave, with the harsh grinding sound of a giant earth moving machine at work, or a great stone crusher, which indeed it is.

The searching waves find their way through every crevice in the rocks, every dark water-line cave excavated by a thousand such storms and with a boom escape through “blow holes” spouting into the air like geysers. They beat with atomic energy against the western cliffs 1,700 feet above them, which have withstood such onslaughts for a millennium.

Sometimes the rain ceases and the inky clouds race across the sky, revealing the light behind them which illuminates the white caps of the waves. Moving over the waters it paints streaks of grey, indigo and viridian, ever changing. The mainland now is visible but veiled in the

midst of foam from the surf pounding on the sands of Paraparaumu Beach.

For a mile or so out from the beach the water is stained yellow, amber and brown by the flooded streams and rivers carrying the good earth out to sea. The streams on the island too are swollen but rush to the sea fresh from the clouds, spilling cascades of pour water into the salt sea.

Frequently the wind veers towards the west and (small whirl winds) gather speed and height and spiral across the turbulent waters, rising into the air until they disappear in wisps of spray.

The savage roaring of the wind, the breaking of the waves against rock, the lashing of the branches of the trees set up such a tumult of sound as could have been heard at the creation of the universe – a composition of a primitive symphony of the elements, when the cosmos was being formed – filling me with exaltation and dread. At the same time, it is awe-inspiring to witness genesis still in progress.

That area where sea meets earth, where millions of years ago life heaved itself out of the sea and slowly and laboriously adapted itself to living on the land, man returns again and again almost nostalgically. Above the shoreline the sentinel trees stand. They have taken the full force of such storms since a random seed took root there, sheltering the bush behind, sculptured by nature into strange and fantastic forms with gnarled and twisted trunks and branches.

Leaning away from the wind and hugging the steep terrain, Taupata, Ngaio, Mahoe, shudder in the gale, whilst flax and toi toi stream gracefully in the wind. The long grasses and tussock on Rangitira Flat ripple and flatten like waves on the ocean. The two Taupatas on

Rangitira Point must have dated back to Te Rauparaha. Legend has it that he used to tie up his prisoners there to torture them! But the trees contain their secret. Wind has sculptured them to leaning question marks, until nature, having decided that they have reached perfection, brings them down in one storm too many. It is as though an artist has, with the stroke of a brush, in a misguided and angry moment destroyed a perfect composition. The eye misses their curve rising above the horizontal land and sea.

Through the tumult of sound can be heard a high pitched shrill whine like the wind in the shrouds of an old sailing ship flying before the wind in the roaring forties. It comes from the radio aerial suspended high above – the only evidence of man's presence.

My face is covered with salty rain which drips off my sou'wester, so, turning from the shore I scramble up the steep rocky bank through the flax into the bush. It is like entering the stillness of a church with dim light coming through green stained glass windows. It is comparatively peaceful, but as I climb further into the bush, the darkness becomes more intense, the sound of the waves is muffled by the trees, but the wind can be heard above in the canopy, bringing down leaves and twigs adding to the humus on the forest floor. Large branches rubbing together seem to groan in pain, whilst smaller branches high above squeak protestingly.

The forest is gloomy on days like this, even the birds are silent. Where are they? I see myself like the knight in Keats's poem "Alone and palely loitering."

Standing, listening, I can hear the forest breathing, or is it the whispering of the original Maori inhabitants? Are their spirits lurking behind the tall Karakas and Kohekohes? I can feel brown eyes peering at me and brown arms reach out of the past from the green depths. Are they friendly or hostile? I am shuddering, and a heavy melancholy weighs upon me. It is as though spells and strange magic and ancient taboos threaten me.

The mood of the storm and the scary ghosts are too much, and I streak for Rangitira and home as though Te Rauparaha himself were after me.

Entering the little house my fears evaporate, for there is the familiar tang of burning driftwood, mingled with the appetising and homely smell of the thick pea soup my mother always has on the stove on wintry days, and the rank aroma of the pipe tobacco my father smokes.

As I come in, he lifts his head from the book he is reading, removes his pipe from his mouth, and says "By jove, Te Rauparaha was a crafty devil." He proceeds to read an account of the history of the attack on the hapless tribes, who, having with great labour constructed fortifications on artificial islands on Lake Horowhenua on which to live, thinking themselves safe, underrated the fiendish cleverness of Rauparaha. He ordered his warriors to carry their heavy war canoes up the Hokio Stream, and taking the unfortunate victims by surprise, slaughtered and captured nearly all of them.

When my father begins to read details of the fate of those victims, my mother says "Stop it, I don't want to hear any more. Come and have your soup." "He died a Christian you know," said my father.

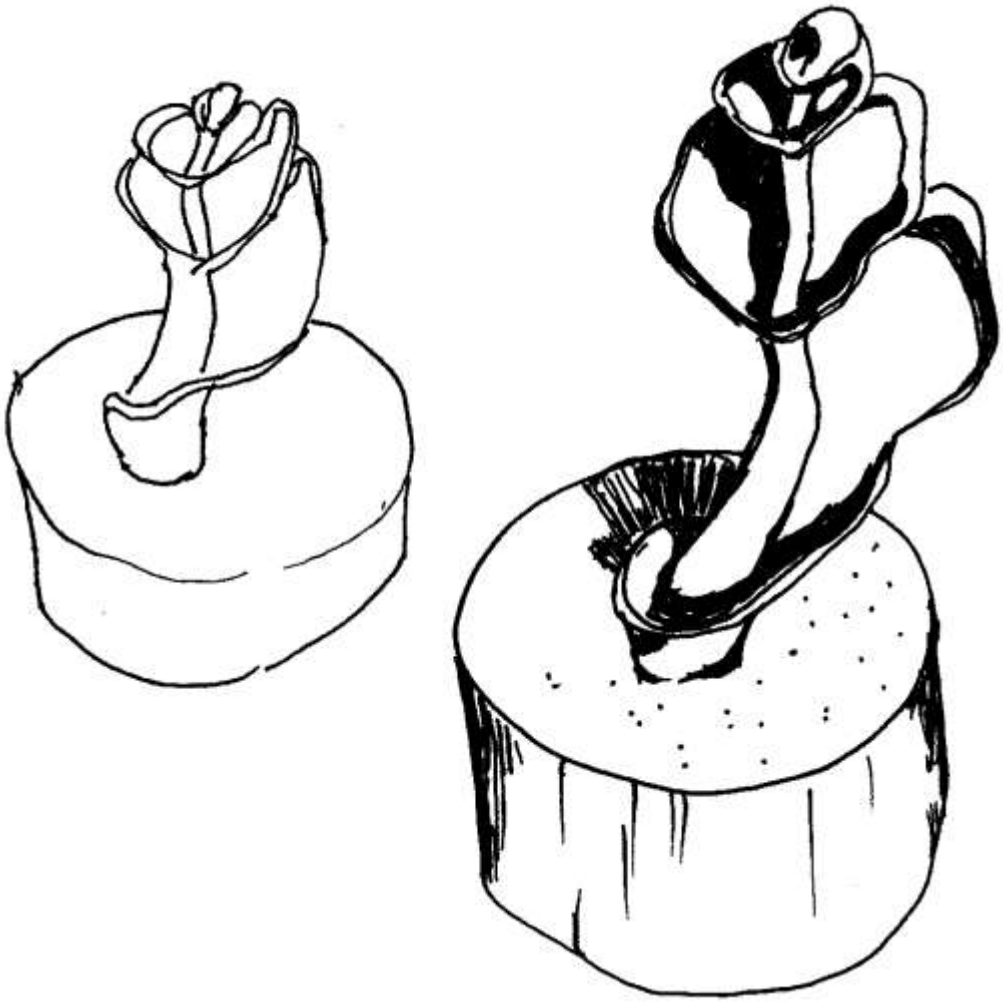
I do not tell them that Te Rauparaha is not dead – that I had heard his voice in the forest, and that his fierce spirit still haunts the island which was his home, and where his bones may rest. I do not tell them that he has chased me fiercely all the way home.

But the music of every storm is filled with strange half-hearted and half forgotten war chants, with which Kapiti will always echo.

ftermath

For three days and nights the storm raged, but now it is calm.

When I wake up the house is deserted, for to my mother and father the daylight hours are too precious to waste in bed. Indeed the early morning is the loveliest part of the day, especially on Kapiti. After the storm everything is washed clean, although salt spray frosts the windows. Crumpled newspaper will clean it off. I must go and see what the storm has washed up, so I hurriedly dress, eat some rolled oats kept warm on the side of the stove for me. Covered with thick cream (left to set in the wide pans in the small dairy built of brick in a cool spot beside the stream), liberally sprinkled with brown sugar, it is good.



Now I head for the beach. It is low tide and the shore is strewn with great rolls of kelp wrenched by the storm from underwater sea gardens. No one has been round Rangitira Point this morning – so with excitement I set off to see what treasures the storm has brought up. Lifting the kelp I disturb thousands of "sand hoppers." These and the seagulls wheeling above are devouring the unfortunate inmates of shells and dead fish. These scavengers soon clean up the beaches – no pollution here. Most of the shells have been broken when waves dashed them on the rocky beach.

And so I crunch my way over the terraced beach of Rangitira where in past days Te Rauparaha must have often stood.

A broken shell exposing a cross section of its interior catches my eye. It's pearly coating has long since gone for many tides have washed it backwards and forwards on the beach and it is bleached white by the sun, but it's inner structure reveals the spiral. What is behind the mystery of the spiral's prevalence and significance in nature – tendrils of climbing plants, fern fronds, whirlwinds, hair and waves? Then in man made things like springs, screws and staircases? In a recent book "Art and Science" by Dolf Rieser (an artist biologist), speaks of "The spiral of Life" for it has been discovered that the mysterious genetic molecules "DNA and RNA" form together a twisted spiral ladder. Underlying all nature, there is a mathematical structure. No artists were more aware of this than the Maori where the spiral predominated in their wonderful carvings. It occurs in many other cultures also.

My woven and plaited Maori kit with which we are kept supplied by our good friends and neighbours, the Webber family, is nearly filled with treasures. As well as shells I pick up some lovely, smooth pebbles higher up on the terraced beach. They have a delightful feel in the palm of the hand. I go down to the water's edge and skip some stones across the surface of the sea. After half an hour or so spent doing this, I feel conscious of a sudden chill in the air. The sun has sunk behind the steep bush clad hills and gone off Rangitira Point.

When we first came to live on the island, I enthusiastically decided to learn the names of all the shells, but after collecting, listing and making careful drawings of them I give up in disgust, for I discover that the oncologists are continually arguing about nomenclature and changing the names. Now it is enough for me to gather shells for their beauty alone. One of the most common shells, the paua (Maori names do not change), is always a delight to find, especially when the iridescent interior is still wet. The outside is dull and rough which camouflages the paua when it

clings to rocks which it so closely resembles. Those which have been wrenched from the rocks by the storm still have the fish in them and are being squabbled over by noisy seagulls. Mindless as far as we know, the helpless shell fish do not question the forces which have so cruelly wrenched them from their watery habitat into the harsh light of the burning sun and at the mercy of the scavengers. Those in which he inmates could still be alive I throw back into the sea. A few hermit crabs are widely searching for an empty shell in which to conceal themselves, looking so lively I wonder what they feel about their sudden flight through the air back into the sea. Like the cuckoo they do not make their own home, but find an empty shell to live in, discarding it for a larger one as they grow. But unlike the cuckoo they only use discarded shells. Why do shell fish so laboriously fashion such beautiful habitations – the most exquisite part concealed inside except when brutally exposed in an upheaval such as this? "Full many a gem of purest ray serene the dark unfathomed depths of ocean bare. Full many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste it's beauty on the desert air," said Grey very truly.

It is nice fantasy to think of sea creatures constructing their shells like a sculptor or an architect fashioning a work of art, but I guess the animal is no more motivated by art, nor has no more say over the matter than we do over the structure of our bones or facial features.

ecreations

When we were preparing to leave Masterton for the Island, we were able to take only the minimum of belongings with us as everything had to be transported by launch.

Having to leave my pony behind was heart breaking to me, for riding was my favourite occupation. Deciding on what books to take was difficult too, for we were each allotted only one case and told that we could only take as many books as would fit into that. We spent hours upon making the decision as to which to take and which to leave behind, to be given away or sold. We were literally in the position of having to decide which books we would take to a desert island! In my case, my tastes were changing and developing so quickly that I was growing out of my childhood books yet did not want to part with any of them.

The piano was of course too large to transport, and it was regretfully left behind. I was just beginning to enjoy learning to play the piano and dancing too. However, the excitement of knowing we were going to live on an island soon outweighed regrets.

It is on long winter evenings that we think of books left behind and can find nothing to read. Although the walls are lined with them, there is a limit to the number of times one can re-read books. There is of course, no library accessible to us.

An aunt in Wellington (a retired school teacher) always bent of tying to improve every person's mind, haunts Smith's Second Hand Book Shop. Along comes the first parcel which eagerly opened, turns out to be a complete set of Charles Dickens's novels, smelling musty, even though some of the pages have never been cut. I wonder whose book shelf they stood upon for years?

The next parcel with an even mustier smell contains Thackeray, each volume marked 3d. Following that heavy package arrive sundry classics and my least favourite poets, Scott and Edgar Allan Poe – "and I heard a rapping as of someone gently tapping, tapping at my chamber door" – was it Te Rauparaha? My aunt had no imagination. I had what she lacked.

My aunt then sends some more “cheery” books – “The Count of Monte Christo”, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” a collection of Harrison Ainsworth, a tiresome ancestor of ours who even makes Dick Turpin’s ride to York boring. Then of course comes “Wuthering Heights” and “The Hound of the Baskervilles”. The wind howling around the house, whistling in the aerial and roaring in the chimney was the perfect setting. Too realistic for me, especially when the candle spluttered out with a foul smell! Head under the blankets I do not fall asleep until “Old Girl” arrives, and then it is time to get up.

This aunt is supposed to be very clever, but her only claim to fame seems to me that she happened to go to University at the same time as Sir Ernest Rutherford.

When another aunt sees what I am reading she is horrified. “Trust her to give the child all those musty old-fashioned books! No wonder she looks so pale.” Then to my delight a parcel of a very different kind of reading matter arrives – Hollywood Film Star magazines, the latest fashion journals. What a different smell and taste they have! Newly printed magazines have a clean anaesthetic smell. Now, instead of going through the agonies of Oliver Twist, Little Dorrit, and the rest, I decide to become a film star and send for some material to make myself some beach pyjamas.

My brothers too, bring me up to the present – the gay twenties – and generously give me some of their jazz records. On the old wind-up gramophone, I play them over and over again until Dad's patience snaps. "If you want to play that stuff take it outside, I can't stand it anymore. What's the world coming to?" But when he sees me doing the Charleston, he is aghast. "Do you know where that dance came from? That is, if you can call it a dance! It was originated by the negroes pulling their feet out of the mud on the banks of the Mississippi." Then he holds me at arm's length whirling me round in an old fashioned waltz, teaching me to reverse. When my mother comes in from the bush, he spins her round too. For the first time it occurs to me that my parents are not so old after all, and that once they were even bright and gay!

Finding me reading "Grand Hotel" and "Brave New World", Dad is really shocked, and I hear him saying to Ray, "What do you mean by giving your sister books like that to read?" "Dad," says Ray, Sylvia is nearly eighteen. Reading poetry and all those old books is all very well, but she's got to keep up with the times we live in."

But Dad still thinks of me as a small child, and still introduces me as "my baby." Coming six years after my sister and two brothers, I suppose it is only natural, but I find this very embarrassing.

Bird Photography

Our parents produced many unique bird photographs with which to illustrate their "Kapiti Sanctuary" and many other scientific books and journals. They were pioneers in bird photography, without the advantage of present day technical equipment. What might they have achieved with video and a QE II Arts Council Grant!

Although they had the latest equipment available at the time, mother always preferred her old "Thornton Pickard" on its tripod. With black sateen cloth to shut out the light, she focused on the spot upon which, from long observation she anticipated the bird would come, one of us holding a matchbox on that spot. I have seen the hand which held the shutter release, trembling with anticipation when the bird would appear and land on every branch but the desired one. Then it would go, sometimes a whole season, or even years might elapse before the desired picture would eventuate.

After taking the photograph comes the developing. The bathroom has been converted into a dark room by erecting screens over the windows and hanging a heavy grey blanket over the door to block out all light. Strange odours come from the chemicals and from the old kerosene safety light. Even stranger noises of pleasure or pain also emerge.

It is fascinating to go in and watch the developing process, even at the danger of being asphyxiated in the sealed up room. In the weird red light, mysterious shadowy images would appear on the negative plates as they were placed in the chemicals in the flat dishes.

But the moment of truth comes when the photographer emerges from the dark room, blinking and breathing heavily of the fresh air, face flushed with heat and excitement, holding the wet negative up to the light.

One glance at my mother's face – joy or disappointment was registered there, but my father's reaction was more vocal and active. "I've got it, I've got it!" Triumphantly, or muttering bitterly beneath his breath, he strides down the hall and flings the offending slide far out into the swamp.

Later we dug them up, soaked them in hot soda water to remove the film, and painted small pictures to go in them, and framed them with passé…. We give them to one another for Christmas gifts. No shops and no money test our ingenuity. We really enjoy one another's effort too.

My mother's father, whose many photographs we possess, are as clear as the day he printed them. He, in his day, made his own plates.

Editor's note…

A selection of Wilkinson photos appear in the appendices.

 isitors, Come and Go

Over the years many visitors come and go, some return again and again and become firm friends, others never to be seen again. V.I.P.'s, ornithologists, botanists, tourists, tramping clubs, some individuals to study, others to enjoy the novelty of an island, other to "get away from it all". As well as Government Officials, we are also visited by some cabinet ministers and members of the new Labour Government, including John A. Lee. I become very interested in politics and enjoy discussions with them, and also studying and reading political theories from all available books including Karl Marx and Adam Smith. Major Douglas is in his heyday.

But a never-to-forgotten visitor is Bobby Jones who first came with his parents as a small child. Bobby is an exceptionally delightful child. We enjoy the regular visits of this devoted family who always stay at Chappies Camp. His father and mine talk Maori and also constantly discuss and search for ferns and classify them. What horrible and forgettable names have these delicate ferns.

Now, many years later, those who pass through Chappies Camp may rest on the stone seat built by his grief stricken parents, for, before he even reached the full flower of manhood, the plane he was flying crashed carrying him to an unknown grave in the vast Himalayas – a victim to a wicked and savage war.

 cting Caretakers

Our parents are away on holiday and have left Ray and me in charge of the island. They made only one stipulation, that we must not use "Ngatea."

People who visit the island often say "What on earth do you do with yourselves over here all the time?" The days are not nearly long enough for us to do all the things we have to do, and other things which interest us.

Now, left to ourselves, we experience that sense of freedom that all young people feel when their elders are not there. Not that we planned mischief – after all, what could we do on the island? Our occupations are very innocent.

Ray sets about assembling and dissembling radios – every flat surface in the house is covered with coils, screws, knobs, etc., which when put together (in the right places) keep us in touch with the world.

I set about remodelling a hat for my next visit to town. According to the fashion books they hug the head and come down as far as it is difficult to see beneath the brim. How can I make a shallow hat deeper? After considerable searching amongst a box of odds and ends I find another hat in a blending colour, and get the desired height and depth by placing one over the other. From time to time Ray calls me to help by holding a piece of copper wire whilst he wields the old soldering iron.

The evenings are spent playing chess. As we are fairly evenly matched players, the battle wages back and forth, first one winning then the other. Both of us had learnt at a very early age through watching our parents play. I think the game fascinated me so much because it had horses in it, and also because we were fortunate in being read to by our parents. "Alice in Wonderland" was, and still is, one of my favourite stories with its connection with chess. Also "Alice Through the Looking Glass" intrigued me because of my fascination with mirrors. They are mysterious objects to me – almost magical. There is a restaurant in Wellington with mirrors along each side of a straight corridor leading into the dining room. They reflect an infinite number of everyone who walks through it, and I find it frightening to see myself disappearing into the

distance. Why, I don't know. We enjoy the forbidden luxury of lying later in bed.

After breakfast whilst I do the minimum of housework, Ray milks the cow. Then Ray sets to work on his radios, and I begin altering a dress to make it look like one of my favourite film stars, or so I fondly believe. Deeply engrossed, the peace is suddenly broken by Ray jumping up exclaiming "The batteries are flat! I'll have to go over and have them charged." "You can't," I say, "it's too rough." "It would be – now I can't do any more." Then, "Let's play chess." "But I want to finish this dress." But in truth I am glad to put it aside as it doesn't look like a film star's after all. So the board is set up and with a short break for tea and milking, continue playing till midnight.

Getting up earlier today to look at the weather, Ray decides it is favourable, but I am not very happy about it. "I think you ought to wait

till tomorrow," I said. "Don't take any risks, besides I want to finish my sewing." "Well, there's no need for you to come," says Ray. "I may have quite a wait over there." "Oh well, if that's okay, I won't come."

So he takes the batteries down to the beach in the wheel barrow whilst I bring the mailbag, and help him push Beauty into the sea. Gathering some driftwood for the fire I return to the house to wrestle with the dress, but something is wrong with it. I peer through the glasses and see that Ray has landed on the beach, but I notice also that quite a breeze is blowing from the north, and that the sea is rising. Taking a look at the barometer I notice that it is falling. How quickly the weather can change here! It needs only a drop of water on the spark plugs to stop the outboard Elto engine. I wish he would come home before the sea gets any rougher. The waves on the beach are rising too, and still he does not come, had I gone with him, I would have known what was happening.

I watch the beach constantly, and at last I see the surf boat coming through the breakers, sometimes so high that they obscure the boat. But knowing Ray's skill with the oars in Beauty I do not worry too much as yet. Continuing to peer through the powerful binoculars, I can see that the engine must have started as the white speck is clear of the breakers and heading towards home. However when she reaches the "Rip" she must have taken a wave over the engine for I can see her beginning to roll and then drifting towards the south.

Well, I can do nothing by staring and worrying, so I begin to prepare the meal. When next I look out Beauty is nowhere to be seen. Grabbing the glasses I run down to the beach once more and am greatly relieved to see that although Beauty has drifted down well south, she is now in the shelter of the island.

It is growing dark, but I can see the spray flying over her. As she comes nearer still it appears that Ray has taken off his oilskin and wrapped it round the engine to keep it dry. He is also shielding it with his body as if it were a delicate baby. He waves to me and points ahead, indicating that he has decided to land in the North Bay. South of the point the waves twist diagonally on to the shore, and although the full force of the northerly sweeps the waves far up the beach in the bay, the boat can ride straight on to the shore. It is fatal to let a boat broadside in the surf as it is liable to capsize. So whilst Ray is battling against the northerly round the point, I am scrambling as fast as I can through the tangled piles of driftwood that the repeated storms have thrown up.

I arrive in time to see Ray tip up the "Elto", pick up the oars and head for the shore, bow first and using the oars as a brake. She rides ashore on a huge wave, and before the following one arrives, Ray is out of the boat and I am up to my waist in water. "Pull!" he says, and as the wave comes we manage to keep her on a straight keel and hold her against the under tow. She is already half full of water. "You steady her whilst I get the batteries out." "How can I?" "I'll hitch the painter round that big rock. Try and bail her out." He takes out the batteries and puts them above the high water mark. "The tarpaulin has kept them dry." "Well," I say, "that is more than I am. Never mind the batteries, come and help me." I am not only trying to bail out the water, but rescuing the mail and stores which are floating about in the boat.

Then the seagulls spot them and one bird is flying off with our dinner – a string of sausages, with others in hot pursuit. Wekas not to be outdone are getting down on a sodden loaf of bread.

At last Beauty is safe ashore. Batteries and what is left of the stores are taken up to the house. After a hot bath and a change of clothes, we have the soup and the vegetables I had prepared. In front of a driftwood fire, now sending out sweet scented warmth, we settle down to enjoy our mail, kept dry in the trusty canvas bag. "Here is one from Mum." I slit open the envelope. "Ray, they are coming home tomorrow. Look at the house! This was posted a week ago."

We stay up nearly all night, not playing chess, but clearing up the mess.

The  ount and the Fish

My mother cannot tolerate the smell of fish, and, when my father or a visitor comes up from the sea with one, she simply puts on her old green linen hat (which doubles as a cushion), picks up her lancewood walking stick, her notebook and pencil and off she goes into the bush.

She makes no exception – being devoid of any class consciousness, and when a foreign Count who is staying with us comes up from an early morning fishing expedition and proudly, with a bow shows her his catch, she just says "Sylvia will cook it," and vanishes into the bush.

Taken aback at her sudden disappearance, he looks at me doubtfully (I am thirteen years old), bows low and says, "You cook the fish, Sylvia?" "Yes," I say. "You mind if I see how the New Zealander cooks the fish?"

Actually, I do mind an audience when I am cooking. However, I do not wish to offend him (for I feel I must make up for my mother's defection), so I say to him, "Yes, certainly you may watch, but I am not a very good cook, nor do I know if there is a special New Zealand way or not. I cook all the fish because Mother doesn't like the smell. It gives her a headache".

Before my father set to work on it, the cooking arrangements on the island were as inconvenient as possible, the wood stove being in one room, the sink in another and elsewhere a pantry for the storage of food.

In bad weather any visitors pull their chairs as close to the stove as possible, so that when cooking one has to negotiate legs and bodies to manipulate the pots and pans. The stove, an old brute which chews up wood like a starving man consuming his first meal for weeks, requires constant stoking. Used to electric stoves, no-one ever thinks of putting more wood on. Cutlery and china is kept in the cupboard recesses on either side of the fireplace, behind more chairs.

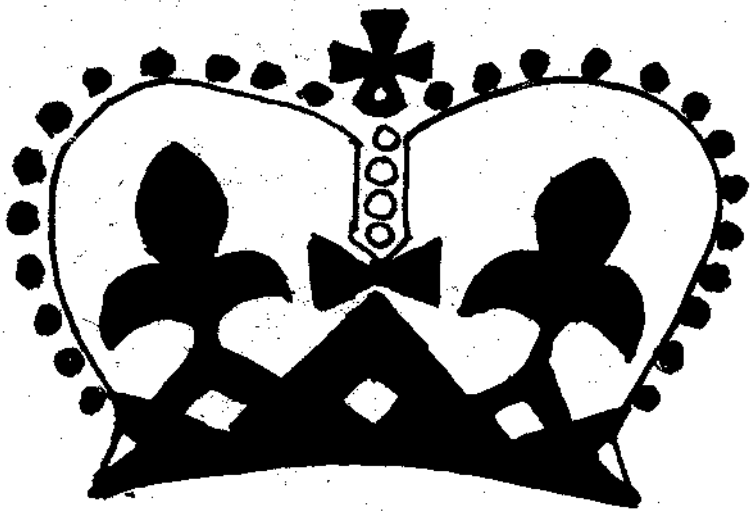
However, there are no other visitors present this time. My father is outside doing some chores so I have the Count to myself, demonstrating my very dubious culinary skills. He watches his precious fish with the eye of a lover gazing at his beloved. "What if I burn it?" I wonder, "I am sure he will commit suicide!"

As I am at this time a Georgette Heyer fan, I am familiar with the impeccable manners of those of noble birth, although I had never expected to be cooking fish for one on the island. With great gallantry, I am handed the fish slice, the butter, the flour, and last of all the most noble fish. Meanwhile of course, the stove has begun to go black and needs restoking, much to the Count's astonishment. He insists upon taking the wood out of my hands, although I have to show him where to put it. Such is blue blood, that before I can tell him to use the oven cloth to open the firebox door, he does not even utter a foreign oath when he burns his fingers!

At last the fish is in the sizzling butter turning golden brown, for by great good luck my chancy cooking has come off. The table is set, the fish on the plates. I am hot and untidy. The Count with courtly grace, places my chair under me, seats himself, and after attending to my wants even before I express them, proceeds to enjoy his catch.

Even after battling with the stove and demonstrating my amateurish cooking, I now relax and enjoy being treated like the Queen at banquet. I only wish my brothers were here to observe the courtly manners being bestowed upon their "little" sister.

ice Regal



One day the mail brings a memo from the department advising (Government Departments always ‘advised’ in those days) that Kapiti would be visited on a certain day by the Vice-Regal Party and to vacate the house for her Excellency and Lady in Waiting, and clean up the “Whare” for the entourage.

My mother does not take kindly to this “advice”, especially as the house is soon filled with a number of government officials examining the amenities, measuring this and that, and deciding what is needed for such important visitors.

Their measurements could not have been very accurate, because amongst other useless objects, they send over a baking dish which will not go in the oven, and a frying pan which we find useful for frying fish in when we have about twenty visitors staying for Christmas, and the baking dish is an ideal size for a pond for the ducklings to swim in and to soften the bread which we throw out to them. It did not dawn on the Departmental Heads to ask my mother what she would suggest was most needed.

Then Her Ladyship arrives with her Lady-in-Waiting, who doubtless has never seen such objects in her life before, and a retinue of men who do

not know how to peel a potato. Lady Alice probably did all the cooking for she is a practical person. No-one thinks of sending a cook.

When Her Excellency learns that my mother had been told to vacate the house for her, she is very upset, so next time she comes she asks if she can have a room in the house which she will share with her retainer.

After they have gone, Nora goes in to clear up the room and finds a diary under the Countess's pillow. She is just settling in to have a good read when my mother comes in, takes it from her and gives her a lecture on the privacy of other people's letters and diaries. I can't imagine another person in the world who could have refrained from having a little peep at the diary of a Countess! It was closed firmly and posted back to Government House.

All this happened whilst I was away at College, so I missed this exciting visit. I do however, receive some added mana, for the Vice Regal visit is well publicised.

Dawn on Kapiti

This morning I wake before daylight, before even my mother and father have stirred, and whilst the stars are still sparkling. I dress silently and go out into the fresh morning air. Spring has come – leaving the dull winter behind.

On the beach at Fisherman's Bay I sit and wait for the day to dawn, huddling behind the octagonal rock for the morning breeze has a chill in it still. Penguins are calling out at sea. Perhaps I shall see them come ashore. There is a feeling of peace and yet of the Island's teaming life is turning over in its sleep before waking at the dawn of day. The rhythm of nature, the gentle heave of the sea, is almost hypnotic. All the senses are finely tuned to nature and the mood of the island grips one's inner-being and never lets go. But who would want to be freed from the image of the birth of a new day on Kapiti?

It is as though waiting in excited anticipation for the orchestra to strike up and the curtain to rise upon the glittering setting of a stage in a famous theatre. But here the pleasure of anticipation is gloriously prolonged, to be savoured at leisure, and is not anticipation part of the event?

Then it begins - the leaders of the morning chorus tune up. Instead of a rich brocade curtain swinging aside to reveal a luxurious stage setting, the dark transparent veil of the night slowly vanishes from the eastern sky, synchronising with the swelling of the morning chorus.

As the sun send out searching rays of light, the chorus reaches a crescendo and as it rises above the mainland hills, it takes on a brilliance greater than any artificial light can produce nor the eye tolerate, neither can the mind penetrate the mystery of it all.

Impossible to catch that light on paper – only Turner could get near it. It is best to treasure it in the recesses of the mind where such sights and sounds and feelings are stored, like precious jewels.

Mine is filled with such gems from Kapiti, which have helped to sustain me throughout my life.

As the sun ascends into the sky, and watchers from the mainland see Kapiti seemingly suspended at each end above the sparkling water. But they cannot hear the birds, for they are too distant. Kapiti is a cage without bars – for they are free. The birds sing of Kapiti as it was before man came spilling blood and despoiling its beauty which only now is beginning to return. The beauty of the day lures me to my mediation seat high above the rocks, between Te Rere and Paripatea.

Then leaping down I bound from rock to rock as fast as I can go, feeling almost airborne. At this rate I soon near my destination, slowing down when I reach the steep cliff face with scant foothold.

e Rere and the Poet

One of the loveliest spots on the Island is Te Rere, where a stream runs down from the top of the Island through a deep ravine spilling on to water worn rocks which contrast with sharp angles of the rocks which overhang the countless waterfalls rushing down to the sea. Ferns and moss grow thickly, watered by the stream and the spray, which, where the downward falling water is diverted sideways, moistens the sides of the steep gully. Where the humidity and the spray do not reach, the light grey rock faces are draped with climbing plants. On the steep ridge on the seaward side is a delightful open area where one can look north beyond Paripatea to a view of the mainland. On it grows libertia and rata. In this idyllic spot nature reigns supreme. Keats could have composed his "Ode to a Nightingale" here.

Johannes Anderson, a very learned person and Librarian of the Turnbull Library, visits the Island each Christmas. Te Rere is his favourite haunt. Early morning sees him with towel over his shoulder heading for Te Rere for his daily shower and communion with nature. There his poems germinate. I have a small volume of them, highly romantic and filled with illusions to classic gods and Goddesses. With a reed pipe he imitates the birds – a veritable pan of the forest. He studies Maori lore and teaches us how to play Maori string games. A very good chess player, he has a generosity which makes him exclaim with pleasure when I occasionally beat him. He is indeed a colourful personality with eyes that glitter with interest in living, hooked nose and long hair brushed back and reaching his shoulders. He comes back from his bath and meditations telling of the delightful sights he has seen – flowers of the Ngaio floating in the water like stars and a fantail taking a shower by flitting in and out under the spray. All these things delight his poet's mind.

In the times of stress, religion helps some people, but images of Kapiti help to sustain me. During very severe treatment following a serious operation in which I am in a hospital room with a terrifying electronic machine bearing down on me, I can hear running water. Suddenly I am not in this antiseptic room with this monster which threatens to crush me and a black coated attendant peeping through a window at me. I am at Te Rere listening to the water rushing down to the sea. Ferns and moss heal my wound, the rocks give me strength and the fantail bathing in the spray

from the waterfall lifts my spirits. Did the doctor cure me, the nurses, the monster, or memories of Te Rere?

The Captain

Our father's capacity for work and his knowledge and enthusiasm are inexhaustible and he rightly decides that the bush will never regenerate whilst sheep and goats are destroying it. With the backing of Captain Sanderson, the Department employs a shepherd to muster as many sheep and goats as possible, the rest to be shot. Dad undertakes this unpleasant task with the help of my brothers Ray and Stan when they are home. Some Island visitors consider it "sport" – but whatever the motive, help is appreciated and the sheep and goats are eradicated. The last survivors become very clever as keeping beyond gunshot, fleeing to promontories half down the western cliffs. But Dad pursues them to their last stand, feeling pity for them as each shot finds its mark, and they crash into the sea below.

Captain Sanderson turns up from time to time to see how things are going, bringing with him a large setter, Mack. Dad disapproves of the dog being brought on to the sanctuary, but what can one say to the President of the Bird Protection Society? The Captain was not pleased when told he can't have Mack inside the house, but that he must be kept

tied up outside. This causes a certain coolness. However, I save the day by offering to walk Mack. It turns out to be Mack who takes me for – not a walk, but a gallop, and in his joy, he leaps up on me using his tongue on my face like a man using a shaving brush. Setting off at breakneck speed, barking loudly, he pursues an indignant weka. I cling to the chain taking giant strides like the Million Dollar Man. At last, when the quarry is within reach of the drooling jaws, and the Weka has nearly recovered his lost powers of flight, I manage to wrap the chain round a handy tauhinu bush which brings Mack up with a terrible jerk whilst I land on top of him. Meantime the Captain is whistling and shouting to Mack who takes not the slightest notice. Dad arrives looking thunderous and my mother searches for the weka. "Now she will leave the nest," she says, "and just when the eggs are due to be hatched. I won't get a photograph after all." Mack keeps us all awake that night barking and howling and rattling his chain. The Captain and Mack go home the next day.

My mother never finds that weka. It has probably decided to live up at the trig after that episode.

Christmas

The manuka is beginning to whiten. The small flowers of the tall kanuka and the large flowered manuka foretell the coming of the Christmas season. The lovely white flowers beautify the lower slopes of the island until they meet and mingle with the bush. The kanuka bears its flowers so high in the canopy they are scarcely noticed until they fall onto the

spongy carpet of aromatic leaves. The ragged bark and the dead brush on the lower branches are of the brown that verges into a hazy purple. The larger flowered manuka which is common on the island cling to the most windblown spots – on cliffs and other places wherever it can poke in a root. The more stunted the tree, the more flowers it seems to have,

and sometimes a bush only a few inches high will be covered with large white blossom.

In season, drifts of tiny green orchids march up the hill beneath the kanuka. In their season also, strange fungi appear – the red toadstool and the basket fungi. Weirdest of all is the "stink" fungus – not unlike a sea anemone that has decided to creep up the hill from the sea to join this strange company. Nature's infinite variety of designs, form and colour is endless. It is as though to prevent the scene from becoming dull, in an after thought and with a touch of humour, she decides to throw these unbelievable fantasies upon the forest floor.

But I must hurry. I am not here for a nature study lesson, but to gather brush for fire lighting. Hurriedly I gather up fallen twigs, taking care not to pick up a weta by mistake. Dad says they are harmless grass hoppers. If one is found inside, to the consternation of my mother and me, he carefully picks it up with thumb and forefinger and places it outside in a bush. At our cries of alarm, he says "Anyone would think it was a lion or a tiger!" "Well it shouldn't look so awful," says mother. There are none about today, thank goodness.

A robin appears from nowhere to eat a grub my footsteps have disturbed. He flies up onto a twig with it, swallows it, wipes his beak on the side of the branch and rewards me with a glorious burst of song. A weka appears to see what he is missing.

With Christmas Day fast approaching we busy ourselves making gifts and with no shops at hand we have to devise our own. I have spent weeks laboriously printing carefully and profusely illustrating one of my mother's favourite and oft quoted poems – "The Glory of the Garden." For Dad, a picture framed in Passepatout. Everyone receives hand painted cards and various sewn articles, probably quite useless.

As Christmas draws nearer, our excitement grows, but about a fortnight beforehand the weather turns 'dog', as my mother expresses it, and the prospects of going over to the mainland for our Christmas supplies are shattered.

The southerly continues unabated for four days before easing slightly. Suddenly, after tapping on the barometer and going down to the bay and back, Dad says, "Are you ready then?" as he begins to pull on his gumboots and oilskins. "The list isn't finished!" "I have to wrap up this parcel." "Well hurry," says my father impatiently. "You've had days to

have everything ready." He picks up the mailbag and heads for the boat shed. "I wish he'd given us some warning. I can't remember what I want now!" says my mother. But we would no more thank of keeping Dad waiting than the King of England. "I was going to wear my new beach pyjamas too." But there is no time to change, and in jumper and shorts I tear down to the beach. Dad has the dinghy half way down into the water. Then on the well greased skids we push and heave the reluctant "Slug" into the sea which is still quite choppy. "It's coming up again," says Dad. Nevertheless we are soon bobbing up and down whilst my father is grappling with the mysteries of the engine and I try to steer her away from the point past which we are beginning to drift.

At last when we are nearly opposite the cave through which the track does around Paripatea, she reluctantly lets out a few snorts. Frightful smelling smoke belches out of the exhaust and away we go. Dad emerges from the cabin for air, wiping oil and grease off his hands and face with cotton waste.

Looking south again, I can see by his expression that the weather is deteriorating and I expect him to say "head for home", then he pulls out his pipe and empties the last grains of tobacco out of his pouch into it. I know now why we are going out in such weather. However, "Slug" is making sweet music, as well timed as a metronome. I relax and enjoy my place at the tiller. The choppy sea makes it more enjoyable. The tang of salt on my face tastes good and blows through my hair until it is a tangled mop.

The white caps are rising out of the grey water. Looking back at the island I can see a figure lumbering along the rough beach waving frantically. "There's Dick - Struth!" says Dad. "Why couldn't he have been here sooner." "Well, how could he have known we were going?" How illogical men can be sometimes!

I swing the tiller round and we are soon back at our starting point. Puffing and panting Dick is aboard, good natured as ever. "Keep her out of the ruts, Sylvia," he says. This is his standard greeting. Then, after a long silence, to Dad in a conversational manner, he says, "The old slug is going well." At these fatal words, Slug lets out a few gasps and snorts, then stops.

"It's the carburettor," says Dick. They both dive into the cabin. And there we are floundering about again in the rip. I try to keep her upwind, glad I am not responsible for the engine. Then I hear my father say to

Dick, "Take this out and clean it." Dick emerges with the carburettor in one hand and a piece of cotton waste in the other. Holding it over the side he blows with all the force he can muster. Slug gives a sudden lurch and Dick is thrown against the bulwarks. The carburettor flies out of his hand and 'sinks with a gurgling sound, the bubbles arise and burst around'. I misquote to myself, the "Inchcape Rock" coming to mind again. Dad looks out to see it happen. Without a word he pulls up the dinghy, steps into it attaching the anchor rope to the bow of Slug and begins to row back to the island, refusing Dick's offer to help. Dick's rowing is all it should not be – in fact his rowing was more like a windmill at work. He never learnt to feather the oars. With all Dad's strength and skill, our progress is slow.

Then around Rangitira Point cutting elegantly through a cloud of white foam, comes Monarki with Mr Webber and Kap aboard. As she comes alongside, Mr Webber calls out cheerfully, "Put that old tub away and come on a real boat." I jump aboard Monarki. We circle around Slug like a horse in the show ring, plunging and prancing, spray flying everywhere. When Dad and Dick have parked Slug, Kap leaps into the dinghy and picks them up. Soon we are all aboard Monarki, starting off once more.

It does not take long for us to reach Paraparaumu. Monarki slips through the water like a graceful yacht. The surf is fairly high, but with Dad and Kap at the oars, we are soon ashore and on the soft sand.

As quickly as possible we collect our mail and stores, cover them with a tarpaulin and begin the strenuous pull through the surf back to Monarki which is anchored well out. Seated in the prow I feel like the figurehead of a Maori canoe as we surmount each wave. This is strenuous work but soon we are all back on the Monarki and due to the expert seamanship of both Dad and Kap have shipped very little water.

A few days later when the family comes home for Christmas, the sea is calm and Slug, with her new carburettor, is on her best behaviour.

What a joy it is to have everyone at home! Each Christmas when the manuka is in bloom, it is the time of the year when we are all together again, and as the family continues to grow, so much more the pleasure. Erecting tents for the overflow from the house, it is a happy time. There is plenty of cooking and washing to be done, and Stanley and Ray help Dad with many jobs, but we enjoy ourselves in the boats or climbing about the island.

It is lonely when they all go back to the mainland but the Manuka in bloom brings back happy memories of those days and the eighteen Christmases we had on the island.

The  ounger Generation

My older brother Stanley, tragically died in his early thirties, so I have asked my niece, Valda Cronin (his oldest daughter), to write of her early experiences of the island.

She writes:-

> "I first came to Kapiti as a baby a few weeks old, securely wrapped up in a clothes basket, carefully carried by my mother and father (Stanley and Beattie Wilkinson). They had shifted from Wellington to live on Paraparaumu Beach. Most holidays were spent on the island where, encouraged by my grand parents, I learnt to appreciate and identify the wild life so abundant on Kapiti."
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> "Christmas was the highlight of the year when all the family got together. As the house would not accommodate us all, we erected tents. My sister and I never ran short of things to do. After

bringing in the cow morning and night, we would be rewarded by a glass of warm milk right from the cow's udder. Then there were the chooks to be fed and eggs collected. Any food left over we fed to the ducks. We tried to catch lizards but seldom succeeded."

"So long as our father was there to bait the hook and remove the catch, we used to enjoy fishing. Schnapper could be caught on a line thrown out a few yards off Rangitira Point. These we would have for breakfast."

"Our grandmother led a busy life. There was cream to skim from the milk pans and butter to churn. We used to enjoy creating beautiful pats of home-made butter. Then there was bread to make in the old coal range. We loved the smell of wood burning mingled with that of bread being baked. There is nothing so good to eat as home-made bread fresh from the oven. Dozens of trays of Basham Buns (or Aunt Daisy's Cakes) were also turned out."

"I was delighted if I could go with my grandmother on walks into the bush to photograph a pair of robins nesting, a shining cuckoo in a whitehead's nest, tuis or wood pigeons. She seemed to be able to entice the birds out of the bush with tidbits from her pocket and sweet talk. This is how she took many photographs."
"My sister Margaret and I loved going on our grand father's big launch Ngatea, and the rougher it was the better we liked it."

"Those days on Kapiti will never be forgotten as long as I live."

We were always pleased when grandchildren and nieces and nephews came over. One rough journey to the mainland when the spray was blowing over the boat we noticed Margaret (about four or five years at the time) holding her hand over my mothers cheap past brooch she had put on to secure her scarf. "Why are you doing that, Margaret?" asks my mother. "To keep your diamonds dry Grandma." She replied very solemnly.

Boarding S  chool

My first carefree year on Kapiti Island is at an end, for in spite of all my entreaties, it is decreed I must go to boarding school.

Arriving at the ugly old house in Thordon which serves as a hostel for Wellington Girl's College, my heart sinks. "Mum, do I have to stay? I want to go home." "I'm sure you will like it when you get used to it," she says doubtfully. "Would you like it?" "Stop complaining Sylvia," says my father. "You are lucky to be coming here. I wish I had had the chance of going to Secondary School". "But you learnt more by not going to College."

But we are at the door, then in a grey room talking to a grey-haired woman. As my parents kiss me goodbye, my heart turns to a block of ice. All nights the trains whistle and shunt up and down. The beds are separated from one another by a small cupboard, so close together that a movement at one end of the row can be felt at the other end. It is strange sleeping in a dormitory.

At six in the morning, three separate pianos at different tempos torture Czerny, according to the ability of the players. At last, one more advanced student breaks into "English Country Gardens." The scent that comes up the stairs is not of an English Country Garden, but of burnt porridge! How glad I am I'm not one of the girls taking piano lessons after all. Now we are ordered to get up and take a cold bath. I put one toe in the bath and shake it about with a big splash, then wash in warm water in the basin. Another bell rings and we go down to consume the lumpy porridge.

Can this possibly be me? This place is like a barracks. The rules and regulations, bells and uniforms cast us all into the same mould. At least outwardly. Inwardly I resent it all. It is so ugly. Instead of pure sea breezes, thick smoke blows over Thordon in black clouds and paints everything grey. And so is my mood.

The first day at college is a never ending nightmare as we march from one room to another doing tests. Everyone seems to know everyone else, but me. The loneliness that can only come to anyone in a large crowd of

unknown people is worse than the isolation of the Island. I see a group of girls looking at me, and one says in a loud whisper, "She comes from Kapiti Island. She must be a descendant of Te Rauparaha." For the first time since arriving here I feel myself relax. The thought of Te Rauparaha at College! In spite of my misery I can't help laughing loudly. "Look out, I shall eat you!" Then they ask me to join their group and something warms up inside me. Living on the Island I soon found gave me a certain amount of prestige! Good friends were made, some of whom I take home for the holidays.

The days are counted until that time comes. Will the weather be fine? Often it is not, which means sitting on the beach all day and maybe having to return to Wellington at night. The joy of seeing that white speck (the boat) coming towards me over the water is intense.

In spite of the misery of homesickness, friendships formed made it worthwhile and I learn about the subjects which interest me, dreaming through the others. English is my favourite subject. We have very little art – it is only for the "lower streams" – for people who are only good with their hands. It seems little has changed, in the minds of those who lay down the syllabus. Attending Shakespearean plays put on by Allan Wilkie, and Gilbert and Sullivan operas were highlights, as were Saturday picnics at Day's Bay.

I never look at College House, but I think of Stevenson's words –

"A naked house, a naked moor
A shivering pool before the door,
A garden bare of flowers and fruit
And poplars at the garden foot …

Such is the house that I live in
Bleak without and cold within."

"Yet shall that ragged moor receive
The incomparable pomp of eve……"

The last line describes Kapiti – no "pomp of eve", nor dawn, nor birdsong, can penetrate Thordon's grime.

Those interminable four years are at last over and I am on the island once more – free.

 gatea To The Rescue

This is an account of a daring rescue of a ship in distress written by my brother Ray, who, with my father, participated in this dangerous operation. (I was not on the Island at the time). Ray was as proficient in handling our launch as Dad himself. He writes:-

"As the boats were our only means of contact with the mainland, we became very familiar with the four miles of ocean which separated us, a short description of our boats would not be amiss.

"The Ngatea was a study launch of 33 and a half feet, not very beautiful with her ugly square stern, but she proved to be an excellent sea boat. She was, in those days, powered by a very reliable standard marine engine with what was called "A make and break ignition" system. Slow but sure. We also had a 16 foot surf boat called "Beauty" and with her many a time I pitted my strength against the elements, in all conditions, mostly rough, and she was really a beautiful boat to handle.

"All this is leading up to some of my experiences in battling with the surf at Paraparaumu Beach. Sometimes it would take 45 minutes of total commitment to the limit of endurance to get out to the launch anchored outside the surf, sometimes one-third of a mile off shore.

"In those days the launch was moored in the bay north of Rangitira. So the procedure of going over to the beach meant that we had to row out to the launch in "Beauty and tow her over to the beach, anchor outside the surf, and go ashore in the "Beauty". All this on a calm day would take about an hour.

"The flow of the tides had an influence on us. When the tide was rising the current flowed north at about 8 miles an hour. When the tide was running out it flowed south at the same speed, so it doesn't need a Rhodes Scholar to realise that if the wind was blowing from the south against a falling tide, the sea became very rough and the surf on the beach highly treacherous. Sitting in the dinghy the rollers seemed mountainous and I used to get a sinking feeling in my stomach quite often at the sight. I had great respect for those waves and that is probably one of the reasons I am alive today…

"Another thing about living on Kapiti was the complete isolation. We only had two means of communication with the Mainland. When the day was sunny we used to flash with a mirror, but if overcast (usual), we had to put up a smoke, which wasn't always as easy as it sounds.

"There was another means of communication which we found out by sheer chance and that was the radio. We happened, one stormy evening, to turn it on to listen to the news and couldn't believe our ears – 2YA was calling the caretaker of Kapiti Island to tell him there was a fishing boat in distress up near the Manawatu River mouth, near Foxton, and would he go up and investigate and render assistance. This was a pretty tall order as the southerly was increasing, and it was nearly nightfall. But my father did not hesitate. He said "Come on, we will have to give it a go." Mother hastily prepared some sandwiches and filled thermos flasks of tea in case they might be needed. We did not know how many there might be.

"By the time it was ready it was quite dark, but as we did not have time to tow the surf boat we made good time of it with the following gale. Although this all happened 45 years ago, I can distinctly remember being scared when I looked astern and could see in the gloom the white crests of the huge waves chasing us and threatening to engulf us, and I am quite sure if it hadn't been for my father's magnificent seamanship this would have happened. But apart from taking a little water over the stern at times, the old "Ngatea" made it. I couldn't help wondering what would happen when we had to turn around and head into the storm.

"When we arrived at Foxton and tried to locate the missing boat, we heard voices calling from the surf of the river mouth. After much trouble we managed to get alongside the lost boat, and none too soon as the waves were washing right over her. There were two men aboard, but a third person had been washed away and lost.

"We wasted no time in making the tow rope fast and hauling her out to sea where we took the men aboard. Poor devils, they were in a bad way and had given up hope of being rescued, but with the aid of Mother's provisions, they soon rallied. The owner of the boat was a very brave man and didn't hesitate when Dad told him that if he wanted to save his boat he would have to bail her out and then stay with her and steer whilst we towed her back to Kapiti. His mate wanted to cut the boat loose, as he had enough of it. Dad told him to go into Ngatea's engine room and stay there.

“After a long struggle we beat the southerly, and I for one was very happy when we saw my mother’s light in the distance pinpointing our home.

“Hers had been a lonely vigil…….”

The ave

As I sit on my favourite rock perch on the cliffs and gaze at the waves as they try to gain the shore, Kapiti to me is timeless.

I am wishing the waves would be still. But I am not King Canute. And the waves and tide are powerless against the magnet of the moon.

Just now they are gentle, but somewhere in the world on a distant shore they break ships apart, or drown a wandering child.

They will not stop to let me see their form, but continually roll over, splash, break; drawing back to meet the oncoming tide.

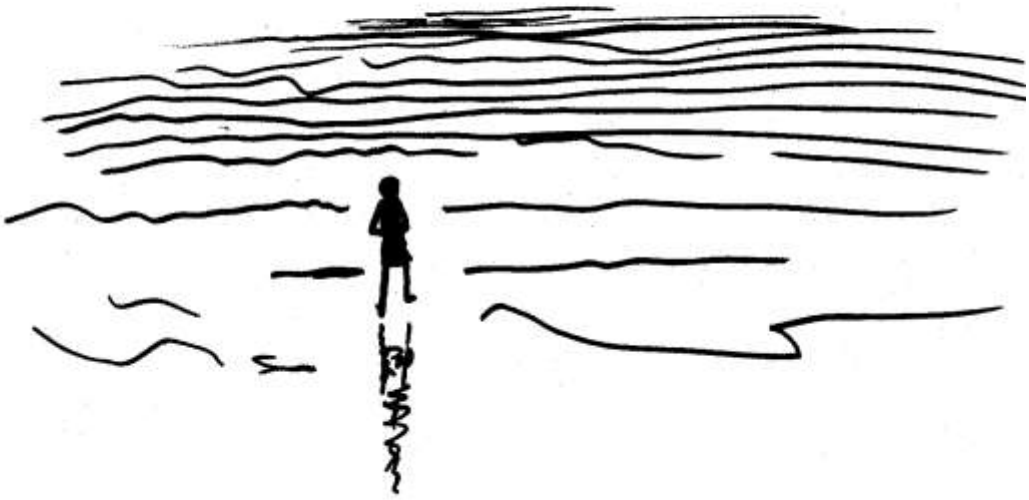
With a sigh the tide turns –

Brush poised above damp paper – eye, heart and brush make thrust – a wave stands still in time.

THE WAVES ARE PURSUING ME

AS IF THE ISLAND WERE DRAWING IN A BREATH
THE TIDE TURNS

AND NEVER CEASING
THE WAVES BEAT TIME
ON THE SHORE.



Wekas and Hens

All over the island the wild call of the weka can be heard. Intelligent creatures and very bold, one or two will be sure to follow one through the bush looking for tidbits.

Sitting on a fallen log in the bush examining a fern leaf and wondering how to draw it, turning it this way and that to note how the pattern if affected, and how to simplify it, I am aroused from these artistic meditations by the drum like "thump, thump," of a weka calling to his mate and chick to come for a morsel of food.

Now I am in the privileged position of observing the private life of the close knit little family as they search for food, carrying on a conversation in weka language. I wish I could understand it. Keeping a close eye on their precious baby, they seem oblivious to the fact he is really a comical looking child – a ball of brown fluff running about on two long legs, and a beak which is almost as formidable as his parents.

This I discover when with difficulty I catch him for my mother to photograph. His mum and dad fiercely defend their off spring and keep up a commotion until the photograph is taken and the indignant one returned to his parents. The family hurries away, no doubt saying rude things about the giants they had hitherto regarded as a source of food.

Everyone who foes to Kapiti soon finds out that the weka is a comedian, but what many do not know is that he is also a villain. He will prowl round near a nest, hoping that a young bird will fall out into his waiting bill. What a blessing his wings disappeared long ago – maybe a punishment from Tane! Wekas are courageous birds as they have been known to attack rats which unfortunately frequent the island.

Sometimes to amuse visitors, we lean a mirror against a tree. Like most birds and animals, the weka has strong feelings for territorial rights, and when he catches sight of what he takes to be a trespasser, he puffs up his feathers and scraggy apologies for wings and tail twice the normal size, and rushes full tilt at his image – meeting it head on, beak to beak, eye to eye. Standing back he can see that his opponent, instead of retreating, is also standing back glaring threateningly at him, so, although somewhat taken aback by this unyielding response, he launches another rapier –like attack. Then standing still with a puzzled look, he no doubt is thinking "Something strange here!" Then suddenly peering behind the mirror, he stalks away with great dignity, no doubt feeling inwardly very foolish.

The hens we keep on the island have a neat hen house, but they prefer to roost in the mahoes on the edge of the bush. They live as happily as the wild birds, concealing their nests under tussocks or tauhinu bushes. How different from poor battery hens!

The weka, however, has a taste for hen eggs, and when a hen cackles, there is a race between the weka and us to reach the nest first.

Even my mother cannot outwit the weka. Thinking to teach the thief a lesson, she places a china egg in the nest. Concealing ourselves behind some taupata bushes we wait for the hen to lay her egg. This done, the silly thing begins to tell the world of her accomplishment by loud cackles. Weka very quickly appears for his nice warm feast, and as usual attempts to break the shell. When nothing happens he stabs furiously at the unyielding china again and again. It is so comical a sight we cannot contain our mirth. When the weka realises he has been duped, he thinks hard for a moment and then decides that if he can't have the egg, neither can we. He opens his bill until it is nearly splitting at the corners, picks it

up and disappears into the bush. We have not seen the egg since, so we still continue our sprints every time a hen cackles.

Another instance when the weka's bill proves inadequate is when my brothers try their hand at making bread, the yeast pronouncing it's readiness with a loud pop. The bread turns out to be like solid concrete, so that the tins have to be beaten to get the bread out of them. They ever after resemble pewter. The boys throw the results of their labour onto the flat for the wekas. Again and again they stab at it, but it is not until there is a good downpour of rain that they are able to penetrate the hard crusts.

 utton Birds

My cousin, on a week's visit, had a mind to sleep on top of the island to watch the sunrise. Innocent thought. So armed with a ground sheet and blanket apiece, we start out at about four in the afternoon. We eat our tea and dig ourselves in on the very brink of the cliffs 1700 feet above the pounding surf! No sooner settle, it begins to rain and blow. We put the ground sheet over us and spend the night in a Turkish bath. Then the rain clears. The wind drops and the stars come out. Heaven is very close. There are strange whistling and small squeaks coming from the bush nearby, a morepork calling, a kiwi whistling. And then it happens. Bedlam breaks out. Unearthly noises from the dark out to sea, even nearer and louder, and things we knew not what, landed with gurgles and thuds in the bracken all around us. The air is alive with strange sounds, unearthly sounds. Heaven is far away. We spend terrifying minutes wondering whether the banshee is in fact a reality and if this is it. Then something drops close beside us and in the dim light we can see it is a bird and the noise is coming from it, and hundreds like it. We realise we are hearing the homecoming of the mutton birds to their burrows. Nevertheless we are so unnerved we sleep only fitfully and when we finally awake, cold, hungry and stiff, it is to find ourselves in dense fog. So much for the sunrise.

We have to find our way from our precarious perch, to the bush and we decide the safest way is to crawl away from the sound of the sea towards the calls of the bush. Once there we are comparatively clear of fog.

Half an hour later when we are well down, Dad suddenly appears. Though he would scoff at the idea, we know jolly well he has seen the clouds at the top and has come to look for us. He casually asks what sort of night we have had and passes on. When we reach home he is already there, having taken a short cut.

Penguins

One night soon after we came to the island, Nora and I are suddenly awakened by the most bloodcurdling sound. It seems to come from under our beds. With trembling hands, Nora opens a match box and lights her candle, her eyes twice as large as usual, staring out of her white face. "What is it?" she whispers. I am speechless like in a nightmare. The sound comes again rising and falling like a soul in anguish. A last I find my voice. "Dad! Dad! Come quickly!"

Dad arrives in his pyjamas, my mother following. "What's the matter with you?" "That sound. Didn't you hear it?" "What sound?" "Listen." Dead silence. "Well, I can't hear anything. You've been dreaming. Go to sleep. Waking up the household like this!"

Then it comes again, that dreaded sound. "Listen!" "That," said our father. "That is a couple of blue penguins, that's all – go to sleep." "But what's the matter with them?" He replies "That is their love song." Some love song!

After that Dad blocks up the hole under the house and now the pair have to go elsewhere to do their courting. We feel quite guilty as we hear them wailing in the distance.

We often hear the blue penguins far out to sea. But we have grown to enjoy that wild, monstrous cry – it is part of the dark stormy night, part of Kapiti.

The  orepork

The birds of the day are still sleeping in the green shadows of the forest, but that night owl, the Morepork, is still calling plaintively, for the night has not been good for hunting. In the bright moonlight, he could not see so clearly, and a kaka had spotted him lurking near and had set up such a screeching that all the birds were alerted. He had, therefore, flown silently into his neighbour's territory to do some poaching, but the indignant neighbour spotted him and in silent fury drove him back home.

Hauntingly beautiful, his melancholy "Morepork" penetrates fearfully the dreams of smaller avian creatures.

But the day is beginning to illuminate the dark mysterious forest. The sea breeze breathes upon the leaves. The island seems to utter a sigh, (or is it a yawn?) and begins to awaken as dawn approaches.

The hungry Morepork finds his accustomed perch, but decides on a more secluded spot nearby. Yesterday, he has been woken from sound sleep by a tui, who had called up the other birds who, emboldened by the presence of the mob and his near blindness, pursued him with a vengeful shrieks till in his terror he blundered and half stunned himself against a tree trunk. Almost helpless, taunted by his pursuers, he managed to find refuge in a hole of a rotten rata trunk and thus escaped gang violence.

The prey becomes hunter, but at last in the blessed darkness of a once glorious rata, he forgets his hunger. He tucks his head under his wing to sleep away the day.

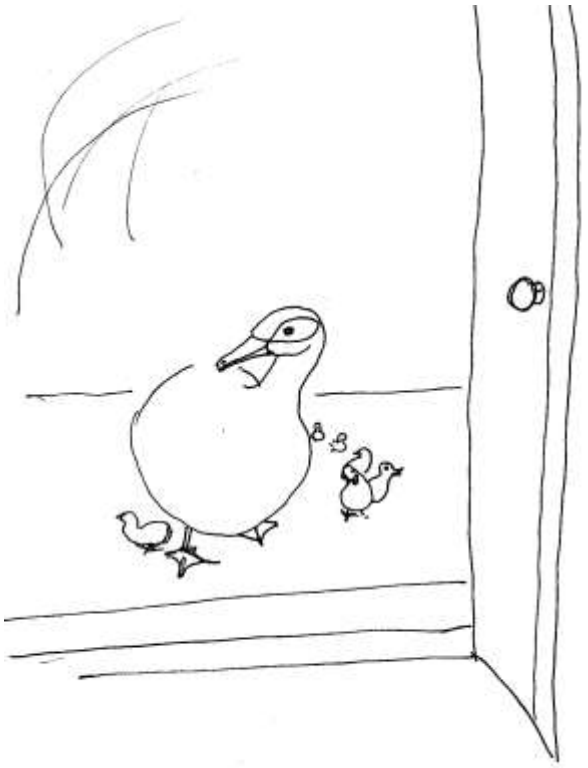
The dawn chorus now penetrates his repose.

ucks

Our house visitors are not confined to human beings. One early morning visitor is a grey duck. At crack of dawn each morning, when my father opens the front door, he calls "Come on, Old Girl, come on," and with a flap of wings, a grey duck lands loudly calling for her breakfast.

"Old Girl" makes her nest on the edge of the Raupo swamp at Rangitira. When the eggs hatch she comes up with her delightful brood waddling single file behind her. It is a long and perilous journey for the tiny balls of fluff, for wekas on the lookout for their breakfast are not adverse to young duck. "Old Girl" is a solo mother, father taking no part in rearing his family, shamefully being off after other females.

We throw out bread for the ducklings. This they dabble in Lady Alice's baking dish which they use as a bath as well. It is a delightful sight to see each morning.



We watch as the ducklings grow. By the time their fluff is half turned to feathers they become as it were, teenagers, with the psychological problems associated with that awkward age. They sometimes defy "Old

Girl's" warnings of the wicked world and fare forth alone and visit us several times a day.

It is on one of these days that Nora (who is home for Christmas) and I decide to do some cleaning. When we have been through the front of the house we attack the pantry, which is simply a large cupboard with a few shelves.

No bins or drawers are provided for the storage of flour and sugar which are leaning in sacks against the wall. After a through cleaning everything has been replaced, we stand admiring our handiwork. As is usual after such a tidy-up, we marvel that there is so much more space than before.

Upon looking about to see what we might have overlooked, we find the small kerosene lamp which hangs on a nail on the wall – a real antique. It has a circular piece of shiny tin behind the glass funnel which reflects the small flame well. After cleaning and filling it with kerosene, calamity strikes. In hanging it on the nail it slips from my hand and falls upside down in the open sack of flour, turning it quickly into kerosene dough. For a moment we stand aghast – then Nora says "Quickly, get a bucket or something before it soaks through!" Frantically, we scoop the wet flour into the bowl in which we make the bread, throwing out all the rest.

After this episode we feel in need of fresh air, so picking up our Maori kits to gather driftwood, we spend a very pleasant hour or two beach combing and skipping stones, meeting our mother who comes out of the bush at Te Rere, with her camera and notebook.

When we tell her what has happened, she is not exactly pleased about the wasted flour, but says, "It's no use crying over spilt kerosene," and as we climb up towards the house we look forward to a "brew" – a cup of tea. The kettle will soon boil and we stoke up the stove with the lovely dry wood we have gathered from the beach.

Our front door is always open during the day time, and, standing looking anxiously down the hall, is "Old Girl". The ducklings are nowhere to be seen. "It's those wekas," my mother says, "Poor Old Girl. Poor Old Girl, where are your babies?" She enquires.

Nora, who has gone to the back door, suddenly lets out a yell. "You little devils, get out!" A duckling comes squawking up the hall slipping on the newly polished linoleum, its sketchy little wings flapping and scattering flour everywhere, followed by its brothers and sisters. Seeing us standing

at the front door blocking their path to safety, they scatter and flounder into each room seeking escape.

Never having heard a rough word in their lives, when violently shrieked at and pursued by three irate females whom they have regarded as loving foster parents, their panic loosens their bowels, the result of which, mixed with flour, leaves our house like a farmyard instead of the gleaming cottage we had left behind.

“From the troubles of the world, I turn to Ducks….”

Radio or Wireless

One holiday Ray comes home with a crystal set. We marvel at this wonder of modern science, for we now have contact (one way) with the mainland. Ray tries to explain it's principles to me, but they are beyond my comprehension. We have no telephone of course.

Knowing nothing of what is to come in the future we are delighted with this new invention, which helps to lessen our isolation. So excellent is reception on the Island, we can hear words coming over earphones all round the room. There are few radio stations to interfere with reception.

Later we acquire a 5 valve battery set with both long and short wave so we can listen in to stations in distant countries. It is exciting when we hear New Year coming in from many world capitals. Ray is a DX-er and his wall is covered with verifications of reception from hundreds of stations in other countries, often sitting up all night to get their call signs.

When the first Labour Government is elected, Parliament is broadcast for the first time. After studying historical orations of statesmen like Abraham Lincoln, Disraeli, Gladstone, William Pitt, Shaftsbury and the

like – it is disappointing to hear the undignified squabbles of our representatives. However it is exciting to hear the Social Security Bill being pushed through the house, and the arguments of the pros and cons of Capitalism and Socialism being debated by speakers like John Lee. Our family as well as many other things had always taken an interest in politics, and this set me reading all the books I could find ranging through Adam Smith "Wealth of Nations" (with the magic hand controlling the economy) to Karl Marx and the Social Credit theories of Major Douglas. Everyone is tired of the depression and of being told to "Put our shoulders to the wheel", and of searching for the light at the end of the tunnel.

"Uncle Scrim" plays a part in cheering up the country with his "Friendly Road" sessions.

"Aunt Daisy" is in her prime and my mother, like so many women living in isolation, appreciates the sound of a woman's voice – warm and convincing, and the invitation to join her in a cup of Bushell's tea and a friendly chat.

On Saturday afternoons in winter my father piles wood on the fire and with his pipe billowing smoke into the air, he turns on the radio full blast. Out pours Winston McCarthy's voice relaying rugby from Athletic Park.

If the weather is not too daunting, my mother and I usually take to the bush or tramp the beach on these occasions.

Sometimes during a gale when the play is at it's peak, there comes a sudden crash as the aerial wire snaps and falls down on the iron roof. The dead silence which follows is like the end of the world. One feels that the players must be frozen in their tracks and suspended in time. We certainly are, for my father's silent wrath keeps us silent too, and a dark pall descends upon the household.

The aerial is suspended on insulators attached to number 8 fencing wire between poles on Rangitira Flat and a stout ake ake 200 feet up the hill behind the house. Imagine the difficulty of stretching the wire up from the poles on the flat over the bush to the ake ake. It requires at least two men to do this for it means climbing many of the trees in the dense bush to untangle the wire from the branches.

If my brothers happen to be home at the time, they speedily have it up again, and if, luckily, before the game ends there are cheers and smiles all round. If, however no men are present it means a trip down to the Waterfall to fetch Dick, too late, of course, to hear the game.

okomapua

Tokomapua captured me right from the start
So small you can encircle it in half an hour
It stands apart,
A Haven for starlings
And my heart.

The islet of Tokomapua is only about an acre in extent. There is a little rise in the centre surrounded by a flattened area thickly covered by twisted taupatas and stunted Ngaio trees. The flat spreads out to the rocky beaches and jagged promontories which jut out to the sea at each end – of which Mariners beware! On the centre of the little peak, a whale bone has been stuck, relic of the days when the whalers used the little knob as a lookout, and the sea ran red with blood of the whales they slaughtered so relentlessly. Now sadly, a whale is a rare sight in these waters. When one appears, we hail it with delight, mixed with sorrow that so few remain because of the greed and cruelty of man.

It is said that Te Rauparaha enjoyed this island. Was it a retreat from affairs of state, a get-away, or was it to survey the mainland for more theatres of war – or perhaps he came to have a feed of sea eggs and paua.

Apart from the dries of gulls and terns, no bird songs were ever heard there. But at sundown, a mysterious cloud can be seen approaching from the mainland, which, as it comes closer, breaks up into many speaks. Nearer still, the specks are seen to be thousands of birds, each singing a strange little song. The sound grows deafening as the starlings wheel over head before swooping down into the taupatas to roost for the night. It is quite a weird experience to be there when they arrive.

We sometimes wait till they come into land, then let out loud shrieks and wave our arms. The starlings rise with a loud protesting cry and encircle the island, no doubt wondering what monsters have invaded their privacy.

"We thought we were free of human pests," they must think.

We wait for them to come in again and prepare to frighten them once more, but my father's appearance puts an end to our fun (he had been looking for seabird corpses, to send to the museum) shouting "That's enough' You should have more sense. It's getting dark and they can't see, they could fly too low and drown."

What makes the starlings come to Tokomapua to roost? Do they always roost on the same spot and with the same companions? It rather seems so, for after a chattering and hopping and flying about amongst the branches, their twittering gradually dies away as they fall asleep, secure in familiar surroundings with familiar companions.

As we return over the still waters to Rangitira, I ponder over the migration of birds – if the short flight to and from the mainland to Tokomapua can be called migration. Even such a short flight entails leadership, organisation and communication. When I ask my father these questions he says, "Why do you not observe these things for yourself, instead of frightening these creatures?"

Now that I live in Levin, I find the starling very companionable, for they have discovered a nesting place under a cracked tile in the eaves of my house in one corner. Everyone keeps telling me I shouldn't allow it, so reluctantly when one of my grandsons comes to stay, I ask him if he will remove all the straw and block up the hole. Then Stephen puts a nest box, carefully placing in it some of the straw from the old nest and leaving some of it hanging out of the hole. Throughout the winter, the starlings come to examine their old nesting site, trying to peck another hole in it, completely ignoring the nesting box. When Stephen returns next holidays, and together we watch the starling striving to regain

entrance, I say “I feel guilty, don’t you Stephen?” “So do I,” says Stephen. “Stealing their home like that, shall I let them in again?” So there are the starlings again. Perhaps their prodigy will use the nest box next year. The presence of the starlings is consolation to me now that I hear no bush birds, except for an occasional visit from a fantail or warbler (Urban sprawl has seen to that).

During the day the starlings search for grubs on the lawn, sit on the house or electric wires singing their silent little songs, too high for the human ear to catch. They have lots of different calls as well.

At night, when I can hear their companionable chirpings above my head, and when storms beat against the window and through the branches of the trees and shrubs with which I have surrounded my home, I think of that little island with spray flying over it, and the starlings snug in the taupata trees.

 lotsam and  etsam

Nora writes:-

"A strange object near the north end of the island occupies my father's attention on and off one morning. It looks like a submerged log with gulls sitting on it. But as it floats nearer it is observed that although they are sitting on it, they are also feeding on it. "Barnacles." Says Dad. An hour or so later, "It's a dead whale – I hope to god it doesn't come into the bay."

"It came into the bay alright, sometime in the night. We are awakened in the morning to the clamour of hundreds of sea birds diving and swooping and fighting over – a high and dry dead cow! Dad is furious, but he is one of the most efficient men who ever walked the earth, so after letting off a little steam, he calls the boys and gets the launch out and takes her round into the little bay. A chain is fastened around the offending "body" and a rope taken to the launch which proceeds, with many hitches, to drag the creature back into the sea which had delivered it to us. They make a long circuit and tow their cargo out to mid-strait escorted by a cloud of birds screaming protest, almost shutting them from view. The line breaks twice before they decide to cast off and once more the current bears the half submerged corpse on it's route to - where? Ah! Not to the South Island and it's probable reduction to a harmless skeleton. The fickle cross currents bear it straight to the tiny Fishermen's Island and land it at their back door! It is some days before we hear about it's destination."

gatea Arrives

It is the beginning of the term holidays and I am met at the beach by the new launch, "Ngatea." I climb aboard her with excitement. What a relief to think we no longer are dependant upon the foibles of Slug. Ngatea is not a beauty like Manarki, but a solid, seaworthy vessel with a powerful engine. Dad keeps all the boats immaculate, and Ngatea has a brass wheel which is polished every time she embarks. Woe-betide anyone who does not shake the sand off shoes before setting foot in her, or drops a cigarette butt!

The Department now decides that Ngatea must have the shelter of a boatshed, but instead of erecting it south of Rangitira Point where the boulders would have made a solid base for the slipway, someone at his cosy desk in Wellington decrees that it must go in the bay north of Rangitira. Dad writes memo after memo explaining that this bay is completely unsuitable as the gravel and sand shift with every tide, and during a storm would cover the rails. But no, the shed must go where the man in the office wanted it.

So up goes the boatshed and down go the rails on the shifting sands. As Dad had endlessly explained, the first tide covers the rails. After a storm it often takes days to shovel the metal off, back breaking work indeed. I use a fire shovel. Anyone on the island at the time lends a hand.

We are sometimes visited by "heads" from Wellington, usually in the summer. Well fortified with crates of whiskey, they go out fishing. Scorning the punt which Dad has built for fishing, they demand Beauty, forbidden to lesser mortals.

When they return with scales sticking to the beautiful surf boat, "heads" or not, Dad gives them a piece of his mind. But the whiskey has mellowed officialdom, and they slap him on the back. "Not to mind, Wilkie. We'll get you another boat."

But they do not laugh in the morning when they see the wind has risen and Dads hands them each a shovel and says "come on boys. If you want to get home tomorrow, you had better get to work with these." "What are these for?" they ask. "Come on – I'll show you." And he leads them down to the bay where the rails are covered with yards of metal. "We can't do this," they protest. "You'll have to if you want to get over to the mainland. It's sometimes twice as high as this."

At last, after a day and a half shovelling, they return to their desk with sore backs and blisters on their hands. After that a buoy is sent over and Ngatea is moored to that, which is easier than shovelling gravel, but more worry, for in every storm we fear she will break loose. Even before feeding Old Girl, Dad always goes out to make sure Ngatea is there. One morning at daybreak he lets out a yell. "Come quickly. Ngatea is ashore!" We rush down to the point where she lies on the beach with her mast listing badly.

By great good fortune she has not washed down south where she would have been gored by the rocks. She is not even scratched, and at high tide we are able to lever and push her back into the sea.

The Department at long last has the boatshed shifted to where it should have been in the first place, and the rails are laid on concrete.

 hag Rock

One of the most foolish things we did when we first went to live on the island was to nearly wreck "Beauty". This brought the wrath of our father down on our heads, and a stern lecture on the sanctity of boats – their life and death role to us on the island, the dangers of the sea, and the vagaries of the weather. He ended by saying he couldn't believe daughters of his could be so foolish. "I meant when I said you could take "Beauty" out, for you to just practice rowing in the bay, not to go down to Taepiro!" he concluded.

But we have no premonition of near disaster as we decide to head for Taepiro. It is another beautiful day with very light winds from the north which helps us along, and we chat happily enjoying the scenery. In due course we arrive at Taepiro and haul "Beauty" up out of the water. "What a heavy great hulk," I said. "Give me "Mickie" any time."

Puffing and panting we sit down on the beach till we recover. We examine the remains of an old stone wall and find a comfortable spot amongst the tussock to paint a picture of the Fishermen's Islands.

Soon we become aware that the cicadas are silent and that a cloud is passing over the sun. The wind has turned to the south and the tide is ebbing. "We'd better hurry – we've got further to push the boat out." With water colours half finished we hastily gather up everything and get the boat into the water and set off back to Rangitira. We laugh at our uncoordinated rowing, and in the following wind which is increasing, we steer an erratic course, first one of us pulling too hard on the oar and then the other. "We are worse than Dick," I said. "Keep her out of the ruts!"

Now I have a brainwave. "Look, that's a sail under the front seat," I said. "Let's put it up and save ourselves all this hard work." Not knowing anything about sailing we manage to get the old canvas erected. The sail fills and "Beauty" leaps forward. "How marvellous, why didn't we think of this before?" " Do you know how to steer it?" "No." "Oh, I think you just wriggle the oar at the back – I've seen Dad do it – it's easy." It isn't easy, the oar won't work properly. "There must be something wrong with it." "I know, throw out the anchor." I heave it overboard but the water is too deep for it to touch the bottom. "Lower the sail," I yell to

Nora, but the ropes will not come undone, not being properly tied. "Look out! There's Shag Rock." "Undo the sail – quickly." "I can't." I take up both oars and with ally strength I try rowing away from the rock against the southerly and a sail full of wind! Scarcely holding my own, I feel like "Alice in Wonderland" trying to catch up with the Red Queen. It is a crazy situation. How long will my muscles hold out against the southerly? I pull and pull on the oars whilst Nora struggles to undo the sail, but "Shag Rock" is like a magnet to "Beauty". "My god, it is the Inch Cape Rock." goes through my head.

Shag Rock looms nearer whilst Nora tries desperately to untangle the ropes. "Dad will kill us if anything happens to "Beauty". "I wish he were here now."

Sure enough there he is. He has come to look for us. He waves and shouts directions to us which the wind carries away. It sounds like "Jib the boom!" "What on earth is that?" "I don't know." More yelling and shouting.

Then miraculously a rope comes free, the sail flaps and "Beauty" is now broadside on, wallowing towards that beastly rock again. Now there is another shout, "Look out!" I am trying to push the boat off with an oar.

Then, just in time, Dad clambers from “Shag Rock” into the boat, grabs the oars and we are safe once more.

When we are ashore, “Beauty” is examined for any damage. “Lucky for you,” says Dad darkly, and the lecture followed.

All that night the waves crash over “Shag Rock” but in the morning it is reflected in the sea which lay about it at low tide, reflecting it like a mirror, and two black shags sit drying their wings after the short summer storm.

Low Tide Shag Rock

Whether dashed over by the waves, or exposed at low tide Shag Rock is one of my favourite haunts, for when the sea is calm, exploring the rock pools is a fascinating pastime.

Did life originate in such a pool or is this pool too clear and sparkling to be the origin of mankind?

More lowly creatures dwell in it now carry on their predestined lives unconscious of their very being. Or are they? How do we know they do not enjoy their existence in this beautiful world?

This evening the candy-floss cumulus clouds are piled high above the mainland hills, tinted pink by the setting sun, which also stains the mirror of the sea that lies between them and Shag Rock. I am indeed looking through rose-coloured glasses.

Even some of the small stones in the pool are pink, being covered with a kind of sea lichen which also clothes the tips of the brown seaweed, hardening like coral. Pink, white and grey stones make a lovely mosaic in the shallow water intensifying their colour and form.

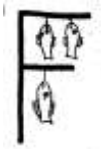
In this underwater world all kinds of strange and beautiful creatures live. Sea anemones close their tentacle-like petals on a finger poked gently

into them, tricked into thinking it is a morsel of food. They appear to be at a stage of evolution half plant, half animal. Which way will they go?

Winkies move busily about their business of finding food. Hermit crabs scuttle for their shells, carefully backing into their homes deserted by their former inhabitants. Limpets and paua cling tightly to the rocks till the tide comes in once more bringing food.

It was a different kind of day from that on which Nora and I nearly wrecked “Beauty.”

This is one of the first places I re-visit after a time spent in the city and after being cooped up in an office. It is though being released from prison.

 ishing in the  asin

Soon after the "Beauty" episode we are in Dad's bad books again, so we decide to go for a picnic in the Basin, we go on foot.

The Basin is beyond Taepiro, so we set off early taking our lunches. We do not pause to examine the fascinating pools by Shag Rock, even though it was tempting to do so as the tide is very low, there being a full moon. The going gets rougher as we proceed along the shore, but we are able to walk along the ridge left by the earthquake that had lifted the island six feet or so in 1855.

Reaching the waterfall which is nearly opposite the Fishermen's Islands (and from where they get their water), we pause to admire its beauty. It is refreshing just to look at it. Then we climb up the cliff track a chain beyond the waterfall and drop into the dark gully where Dick Fletcher, the possum trapper, lives when working down this end of the island. He is not in residence just now. Had he been we would not have come here, for we avoided the trap line like the plague.

Through no fault of their own, possums have been liberated on the Island, where they cause so much damage. Slats are fixed against a tree and the cruel gin trap attached to it, so possums, which are very curious, delightful little animals, get caught. Often not killed outright, they are left to suffer agony till the trapper goes round the trap line next day.

If women saw the suffering of these little creatures they would never wear fur coats. There are plenty of other warm materials to wear. When will men learn that they upset the balance of nature at their own peril? And that animals have the right to live in their own habitat in the country where they belong.

One aristocratic visitor to the island sometimes goes round the trap line with Dick. That anyone could take pleasure in the gruesome 'sport' astounded us, but it has given Dick an endless topic of conversation. Now every remark is prefaced with, "The day me and the Countess caught twenty five possums today" or "The Countess said to me…." or "I said to the Countess …. " etc., etc., Poor old Dick, he does not ask

much from life and this was one of the highlights for him. He is kind hearted, always willing to lend a hand with the boats, and helps plant many trees. Dick contributes a great deal to the well being of the island.

Dick is very fond of my mother, who asks him in for many a meal and also gives him pots of jam. One day when she was busy making jam, she ran out of jam jars, so Dad goes down to the waterfall hut to bring back those she has given to Dick. It is providential that she did so, for Dad enters the Hut to find Dick lying helpless on his bunk with a broken back. Had Dad not gone down when he did, Dick would undoubtedly have died. The poor fellow had fallen out of a tree nearby and just managed to crawl to his bunk. After lying there all day and all next night, he realised that if he did not get assistance, he would die.

So he just managed to drag himself to the top of the cliff and down the perilous track to the beach. There, gathering as much wood as he could, he lit a fire to attract the notice of the fishermen on the nearby islands. They did not see it. Eventually he hauled himself up the track again, deciding, I suppose, it was preferable to die on his bunk than down on the cold, bleak beach. Then Dad arrived, got help, and Dick was taken over to the Mainland. An ambulance rushed him to Wellington Hospital where he stayed for months. He never returned to Kapiti, and we missed his cheerful countenance and oft repeated jokes, like "Keep her out of the ruts, Sylvia," when I was at the rudder of "Slug" or the wheel of Ngatea.

George Hughes follows Dick as trapper. He, like Dick (in spite of his gruesome job), is a very helpful, gentle person, deeply concerned for the sanctuary. He too helps with tree planting, and does many other things.

We are glad to leave the area of the dismal hut. But after the dark bush it is delightful bursting out into the bright sunshine of the clearing, where the pungent scent of pig fern fills the summer air. "What a lovely spot. The best place on the island," says Nora. I agree.

Flinging ourselves down on the springy fern, I think of "The Midsummer's Night's Dream". "I know a bank…." "Well," said Nora, "there are no oxlips nor wild thyme here." "It's a pity, isn't it?" "No, I like the pig fern best. Pity it hasn't a more poetical name." "It's proper name is "Paesia Scaberula" – that's worse." Dad says it is found nowhere else in the world but New Zealand.

This fern makes a delightful springy bed. We are too far distant to hear the waves, but lying on our backs, gaze up at the white clouds floating

gently across the blue sky. The clearing is surrounded by a grove of Rewarewas, in which tuis and bell birds sing. Every now and then comes a low ‘coo’ of the wood pigeon, and a shower of supplejack berries come down, disappointing the prowling wekas. Who doesn’t care for them? Time stands still. It is “The Dream Time” before man came to earth – which is the belief of the Australian Aborigines, or Eden, before the ‘Fall’.

We awoke with that feeling of refreshment that only sleep outdoors can bring – but hunger also. Our lunch tasted like ambrosia. Then we spend delicious moments dangling our feet in the cool waters of the meandering stream, the only one on the island that does not rush down to the sea through rough ravines, where cascades of water descend to the shore lines. We peer into the water which gently flows over a bed of clear, dark pebbles, whilst the pink roots of some plant grows out of the bank to drink the pure water, contrasting with the bottom. Ferns and rushes hang over the banks. It is one of those unforgettable experiences.

As our eyes adjust to the darkness of the bush after the bright sunshine of the clearing, we see something moving in the water, and drawing our feet smartly out, Nora says, "I didn't know there were crawlers here, did you?" "No, I certainly did not or I would have not put my feet in here!" "But look, it is a fish! A trout! I didn't know they were here either, and I'm sure Dad doesn't!" "What a surprise he will get when we tell him!" "He won't believe us of course," "Yes he will – we'll catch some and take them home!" "How are we going to do that?" In our hands, of course. Look how tame they are." But they are not as tame as all that, and slip through our fingers like silk. "How do people tickle them?" "I don't know. Let's find a hook." "The Maoris used to make theirs out of green stone." "Well, that's not much use to us – there isn't any here."

We search about and then find a safety pin, used to pin our serviette round our lunch, and bend it in the shape of a hook, using flax for a line. We catch five and decide that is enough. We have to use our rucksack filled with water for a fish tank.

We'd better start for home now and go as fast as we can so the fish will last out. Gathering up our few belongings we return to our fish. We might have known! There was a weka running away with one, having upset the rucksack, and tipped out the fish which are gasping and flipping about in the fern. After picking them up and refilling the sack with fresh water we set off for home, taking turns at carrying the aquarium. They swim around happily, at least, so it seems. How can one tell if a fish is happy or not? Every now and then some water splashes down our backs, but fortunately no fish escape down our necks!

The tide is out again so we speed along the beach not stopping except to examine our fishy load. Arriving home we call out "Brew!" our usual family greeting, anticipating a cup of tea. Mum and Dad come out of the house. "Have you had a good day? And what did you see?" "Look," we said. "You didn't know these were on the island, did you?" Dad gazed in

horror, quite speechless for a moment. "Struth!" he exclaims. "Didn't know they were there! I only put them there last week!" He begins to put on his gumboots. "What are you going to do?" asks Mum. "Take them back of course," he says. Then picking up his hob nailed boots and transferring the fish into a bucket of fresh water he goes off. Now we hear the Elto (the new outboard motor for attaching to "Beauty") start up. "Oh dear!" says our mother. "He'll be caught in the dark." We think it wise to be in bed when Dad returns.

That was my one and only fishing expedition on the island.

Jimmy Arrives

Lacking company my own age and missing my pony, I am lonely, so when one day Dad says to me, "How would like to have Jimmy over here?" I gasp. "but Dad - won't it cost too much?" "No, not if it makes you happy," he says. I am overjoyed. "Can I go over and ride him back from Masterton?" I ask. Dad says I can, but Mum says "No, it is too far for her to ride all that way on her own." No amount of argument would shift her. "Oh well," says Dad, "not if your mother says no. I'll get him railed from Masterton to Wellington and shipped from there."

Two coastal vessels "Storm" and "Calm" ply the coast, but as a rule only pass between Kapiti and the mainland when the sea is very rough. Sometimes they come close in to Rangitira, and we wave to one another in friendly greeting. It lessens the isolation, for during storms the mainland can be completely obliterated, and it is as though we too are on a ship far out on the ocean.

When the exciting day comes and we see the little ship approaching Rangitira and slowing down, the excitement is intense. Dick has come to help, and he and Dad row out to the steamer in the "Flatty" whilst I wait with bated breath on Rangitira Point.

There is shouting and waving. Now I can hear the winch starting up and the horse box with my pony inside begins to rise off the deck. It is swung over the side and then lowered into the sea, and much to my consternation, I see the front open, the rope attached to the halter given to Dick, and poor Jimmy is floundering in the sea! Surely he will be drowned! But no, fortunately all animals can swim. Dad rows ashore while Dick pulls on the rope and Jimmy follows behind. The halter is placed in my hands. Jimmy does not listen to my endearments, but after shaking himself all over me, swings around to look at the monster that has brought him to this place, and flinging up his head lets out several loud indignant snorts. Then I lead him over to the flat, rub him down and brush him well, revelling in having my horse again. I will not ride him today as his legs seem sore after unaccustomed standing in a hard stable, and then tossing about on the little steamer.

Kapiti is not an ideal place for riding, but I enjoy galloping about the flat, and riding as far up into the bush as possible. In summer we often swim in the bay. Swimming a horse is a delightful sensation. If there is a sandy spot on the beach Jimmy loves to roll in it. Then after grooming his coat shines like silk.

Creation of a Garden

My horse is not my only companion, but also proves to be very useful in many ways. With him I am able to gather that ever-present necessity, wood, and now that Dad has made a sledge I am able to collect a larger quantity, as well as sand, and seaweed etc., but his greatest use is in collecting rocks from the hill behind the house for a rock garden which Dad has been planning for some time.

This is a heavy, tricky job, for the large rocks have to be rolled and lifted on to the sledge and carefully tied so that they cannot roll off the sledge and onto Jimmy's legs, or alternatively go hurtling down the hill. We take quite a time selecting the rocks for their shape and form as well as for their beautiful covering of moss and lichen.

We begin the garden by constructing a wall at the bottom beside the path going down to the bay. Soil is firmed in and then the beautiful rocks placed one third beneath the ground so that they will not move if walked upon. With flat stones we make paths through the garden so that we can wander comfortably about it. A small pool is formed at the bottom of the

garden near the house where water seeps off from the hill. When complete, it is as though the hand of nature has placed the rocks there.

Stone steps also lead down from the front of the house to my mother's rose garden. Soon the garden extends all around the house. Now it is planted with lovely and unusual alpine plants and dwarfs, but until these are established, packets of linaria are sprinkled about. When in flower it is though a rainbow has fallen out of the sky, the bright hues of these dainty annuals, contrasting with the dark bush behind and mingling with the sparkling sea beyond.

Many birds visit the garden – tomtits always arrive when the soil is being turned over, sometimes sit on the spade handle and sing a gentle little

melody. Pipits appear, lured by what they can find in the garden and for the crumbs they know my mother always has in her pocket for them. Occasionally a flock of parakeets arrive and we can hear their chattering as they descend with a flash of bright green upon some seeding plant. Tuis and bellbirds sip the sweet syrup put out for them and reward us with their sweet music. My mother's tame kakas arrive with cheery cries looking for dates. Silver eyes, sparrows and sometimes Californian quail, heads adorned with a proud plume will sometimes appear - once with a brood of youngsters about the size of bumble-bees. In fact, we often notice that more birds may be seen at one time in the garden than in any similar patch of bush.

First thing each morning, often with cups of tea in our hands, we walk through the garden, for there is always something new to be seen. We are just watching to see a gentian open its bud (the only one) for the first time. Just when the glorious blue flower burst and we go to admire it only to see a dastardly weka make off with it!

Te  auparaha and the Fantail

The sad but inevitable time has come for us to leave Kapiti for the Mainland. I am home for the last time to help pack. It is a melancholy task.

We all go outside now for air. I with my sketch book I clamber up the steep trackless hillside behind the house. How everything grows here is amazing for there appears to be no soil, only rocks which look as though a giant stonemason has sliced them into geometric shapes. Only the trees and supple jacks anchor them to the soil beneath, but we always had the premonition that if a big earthquake should come they could be hurtled down on to the house below!

The rocks are covered with a thin growth of dry moss. Light filters through the canopy of the large leaves of karaka and kohekohe which casts shadows upon their beautiful clean trunks, which seem to repeat the geometrical shapes of the rocks. What magnificent trees they are, and how strangely the delicate lily-of-the-valley like flowers pop out of the great trucks of the kohekohes. A light breeze rustles the leaves as if the forest were breathing, as indeed it is. How marvellous if trees could sing. Some make characteristic sounds like wind instruments as the air moves through them, some rub together like bows on violins. The leaves whisper, and occasionally one drops to the earth.

Although the breeze in the trees seems to be the only living thing, the forest is really teeming with life, some microscopic, each dependant on the other, life and death struggles resulting in the survival of the fittest. The birth of new life maintains the balance.

Now here is welcome company – a fantail's sharp eyes have found some edible life in the forest. He darts and dives after his prey, his little beak snapping at the minute insects he catches on the wing. Having satisfied his appetite, he lands on a nearby twig. He never stays still for a second, but like a ballet dancer turns this way and that, looking at me with his bright little eye reflecting friendly confidence. Then like a leaf he is off again and I am alone once more.

Leonardo says that when a bird alights on a tree the whole earth must move, and when a drop of water falls in the ocean it rises that much.

These things he pondered as he wandered about the Italian woods, or sat by the seashore flinging pebbles into the water, deducing that the air waves travelled in the same way.

One of my mother's Kakas arrives with a merry greeting but after eyeing me for a while to see if I have a date for him, just as I begin to hastily sketch him away he swoops. I can hear him screeching, joined by his relations as they gaily swoop about above the tree tops. The fantail appears again, but, "You don't deserve to be immortalised," I say to him. "Can't you keep still a second?"

Tired, I find a soft spot of mouldering leaves to rest upon, and lying on my back looking up the straight trunks, to the light flickering through the canopy of the forest I begin to feel delightfully drowsy, falling into one of those half waking half sleeping states when the island seems to be filled with dim sounds long past still lingering, mingling with those of the present, and will so continue…..

The sounds grow louder, and more urgent – primitive.

Te Rauparaha is planning war. His eyebrows come together in such a frown, his paua shell eyes glint as if looking out of a deep cave. His nostrils dilate as he tries to puff out fire and smoke, and now he draws them together until his nose is a hawk's beak. He gnashes his teeth as he thinks of the enemies he is going to devour.

When Te Rauparaha picks up his greenstone and begins to slice through the air with it, his warriors flee, for with their chief in this mood someone's ear could go missing.

Now with a terrifying roar he begins an incantation of battle and revenge, whilst he leaps up and down stamping his feet in a ritual war dance. So engrossed is he with his posturing that he does not notice that the braves have gone. Then he is very angry. He also feels rather foolish. "I'll punish them for this," he shrieks. He frowns so hard, his moko becomes so distorted that the artist who drew it on the youth's soft skin would not have recognised it now.

Working himself into a fierce frenzy, he begins to act out his strategy, jumping up and down in rage. Now he sees the fan tail. "Haere atu!" he roars. The fantail laughs at the big chief, "Catch me if you can?" he taunts, and nose dives.

Now the big chief and the little bird join in this extraordinary dance, the fantail flitting lightly on the air, whilst the big Chief pursues him with leaps and bounds.

Now they stop and look at one another, the fantail sitting on the magnificent mere, flirting in an impudent way which infuriates Te Rauparaha. But he is rooted to the spot, and can only glare fiercely at the fantail, who says sternly "Te Rauparaha, your fighting days are over. Do you not know where your duty now lies? I have a message for you from Tane who is weeping (his tears lie in the cloud which always hangs over Kapiti) for men are destroying the forests and killing his children. Kapiti is their refuge and here you will remain to protect for always. Here your spirit will always remain."

Te Rauparaha
Cry in the Wind
Moan on the shore
Kapiti will hold you
For evermore …….

Photographs

Black backed gull on nest (1931)

Grey Teal Duck (1931)

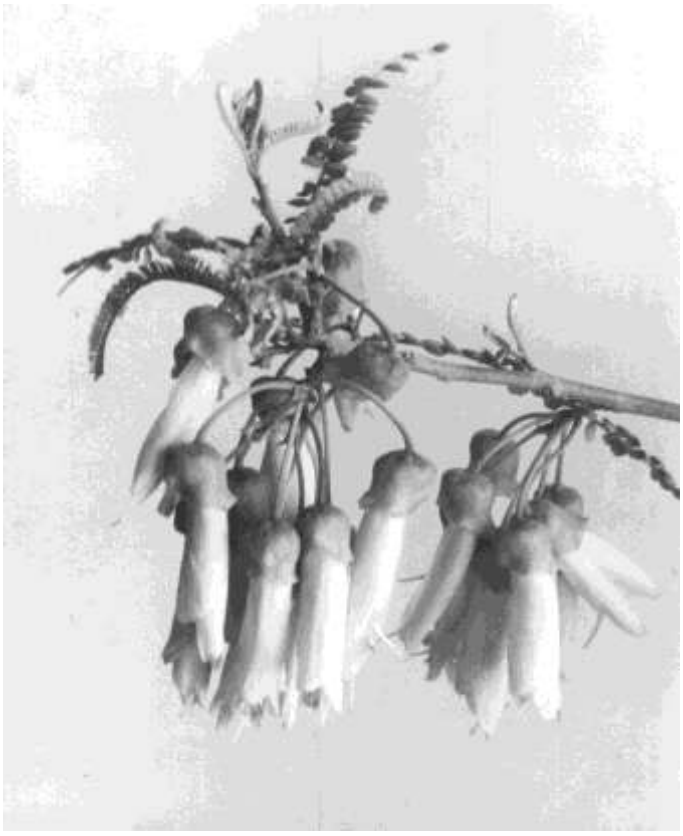
Black Shag (1932)

Crested Penguin (1932)

Dottrell on nest (1932)

Fantail on Nest (1933)

Flowering Manuka Christmas (1932)



Kowhai Flowers

Grey Duck with ducklings (1932)

Grey duck on nest (1932)

Kakapo – the only one on the Island (1932)

Little Blue Penguin (1932)

North Island Robin on nest (1932)

Mainland off shore

Motungarara and Tahoramarea Islands off Kapiti

Morepork entering nest (1933)

North Island Tom Tit (1932)

North Island Robin on nest (1932)

North Island Kiwi (1932)

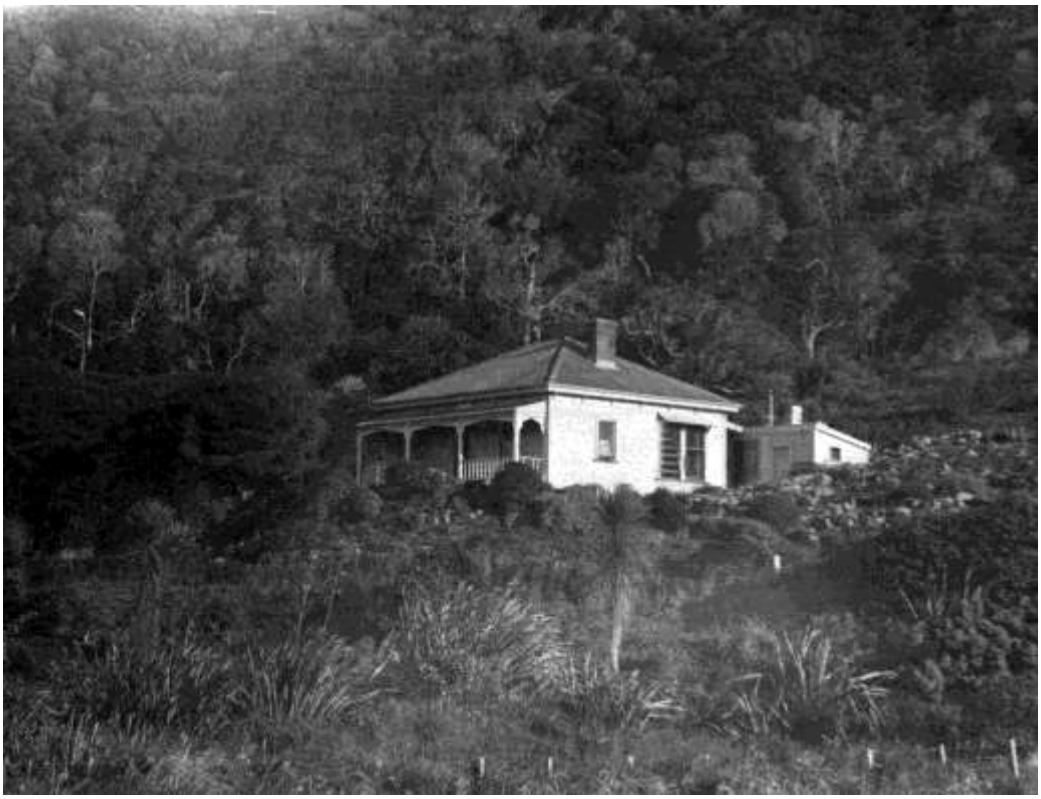
North Island White Head (1932)

Partridge

Red Billed Gull (1932)

Regrowth

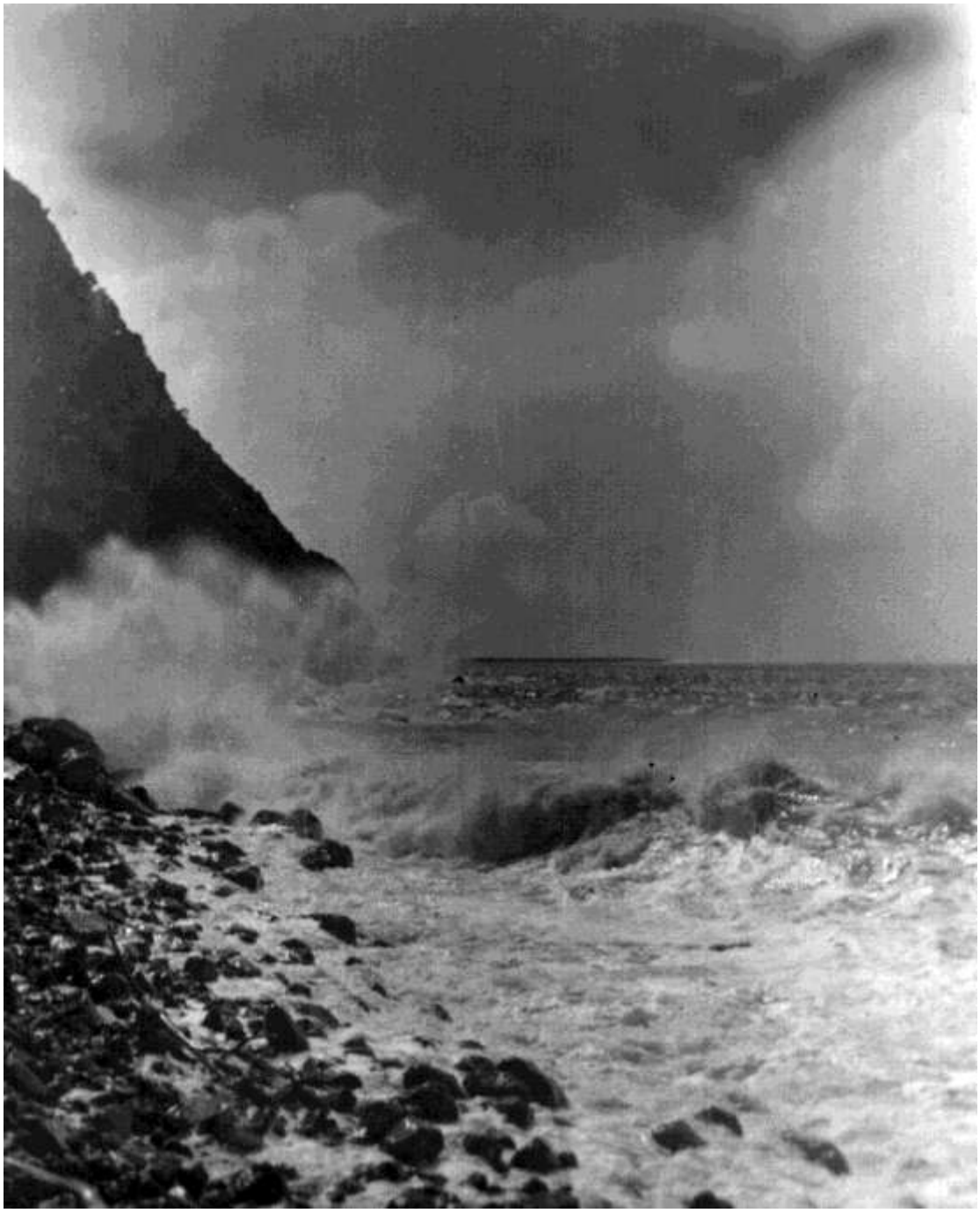
The rock garden



The Homestead

Shag Rock – Kapiti Island

Dawn over mainland



Stormy weather

Views from up high

Kapiti Waterfall

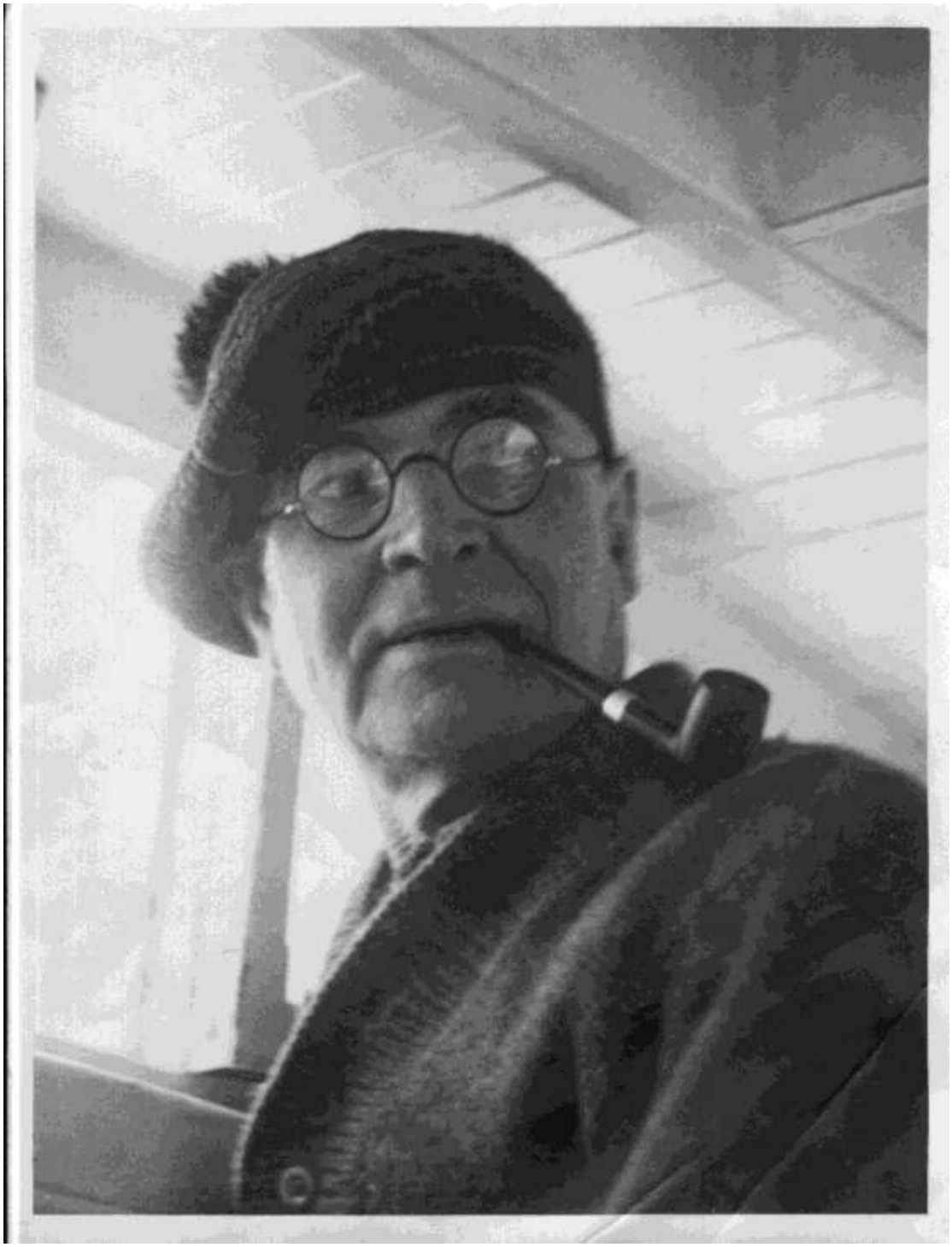
Weka (1932)

White Pointed Tern (1932)

White Pointed Terns nesting Kapiti (1932)

Wood Pigeon on Nest (1932)

Hand feeding tuis



A. S. WILKINSON (Stan)
Caretaker Kapiti Island
1924 - 1942