

IT HAPPENED TO ME

(Written for "The Listener" by "ATORA")

THE work of a schoolteacher in a back-country school is not merely a matter of imparting the fundamentals of the primary school curriculum to a group of unsuspecting hopefuls. His life merges of necessity with that of the community, and as a result he is often obliged to help in everything from burying the dead to burying the proverbial hatchet.

I remember one busy week shortly after I had been appointed to a small native school, when I was asked to perform the burial service for no fewer than four people—one adult and three children. The first of these was a small Maori baby who had died of pneumonia following the capsize of one of the long, cigar-shaped Maori canoes still used by the Maoris in this district. The baby's mother had swum for a considerable distance in the flooded Wanganui river with the baby still tied to her back, and unfortunately the cold water proved too much for him.

For the whole of the night following the child's death the tohunga harangued his listeners with an oratory foreign to his everyday manner. In the morning men, women and children looked deathly white. Their faces were drawn and haggard; their bodies listless. Smoke from a fire in the centre of a punga-walled out-house, well away from the main living quarters, filled the building, yet none of the occupants cared.

As my wife and I approached the building, on invitation, to take the brief service, we were greeted by the chief-tainess who rose to meet us.

"Haeremai te pakeha, haeremai," she called, and as she beckoned, all the huddled forms in the whare rose to their feet. Following the service, the cortege wound its way through tall manuka and over bridle tracks to the cemetery. Only the elders knew where their fathers lay, for graves were strewn through punga clumps down to the edge of the river. Hundred-year-old red manukas mingled with pungas, bearing testimony to the respect in which the tapu was held—and firewood was obtained much further from home.

The small casket was lowered on to the new kapok mattress in the grave, and all the child's personal belongings were strewn around at the foot. Following a very simple service, and with the mother crying a lament, the party dispersed to the nearest creek, and there all the party, children as well as adults,

IN 1838 during a terrific storm the steamer Forfarshire was wrecked off the Farne Islands, and but for the courage of a man and his daughter there would have been no survivors from the wreck. The man was the Outer-Farne lighthouse keeper and his daughter was the immortal Grace Darling. They set out in a coble (a kind of fishing boat) in the heavy sea and were able to rescue four men and a woman. The story of Grace Darling will be heard in the ZB series "Women of Courage," to be broadcast from 3ZB on Friday, January 21, at 9.15 p.m. From 1ZB in the same series will be heard the story of Anne Bonney, from 2ZB Caroline Chisholm, and from 4ZB Lilian Bayliss.



ceremoniously cleansed themselves by washing head and hands before proceeding home.

The second and third calls on my services that week made me feel as if burial was to be a major part of my duties in this district, but each service made me more accustomed to the strangeness of the rite. By the end of the week, when word came round that an old Maori horse-trainer had succumbed to a lingering illness, we resigned ourselves to the inevitability of the tangi. But as it happened, the day the horse-trainer was to be buried was also one of the greatest days of the year for the district—it was the day of the School Sports. This must have been occupying more of the tohunga's mind than the forthcoming burial. Early in the morning a sledge, with a rough, box-wood coffin lying on water-fern, was seen bumping over the pig-rooting in the direction of the cemetery. Repetition had made a sacred rite seem commonplace. As the last words of the service were uttered the almost cheerful tohunga asked,

"Is that all?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Oh, well, boys. Heave in the dirt. On with the sports!"

Elasto

The Wonder Tablet

for LEG TROUBLES

Elasto has often achieved amazing results for sufferers from varicose veins, varicose ulcers, swollen legs, and practically all similar leg troubles. The relief after taking Elasto Sometimes Seems Magical, although it's not due to magic—it's usually the result of Improved Circulation.

How ELASTO can help

Elasto, the tiny tablet that does so much, can really be of assistance in improving circulation, because it can help Nature in her work of restoring elasticity to the veins, thus re-establishing Normal, Healthy Circulation. With afflictions of this type, bad circulation or lost elasticity is often the main trouble. That's why it's Worth Trying Elasto.

Send now for FREE SAMPLE

Write E. W. Hall & Son Ltd. (Dept. 2L) 117 Armagh Street, Christchurch, **TODAY** for Free Sample and **SEE FOR YOURSELF**. Elasto in the regular size is sold by all Chemists—7/6 for one month's supply (or posted, 7/9 from the above address).

The New Era Treatment Co. Ltd., Holborn Viaduct, London, England.

MAKE MONEY
DESIGNING DISPLAY CARDS,
POSTERS, TICKETS,
ILLUSTRATING and
CARTOONING
Earn 5/- to 10/- hr.
Write for Free Illustrated Booklet.
MCKAY'S ART STUDIOS,
P.O. Box 367, WANGANUI.

Take a Look at Tired Tim

Today there's nothing pleases him,
He's sulky, but not really bad,
So Mother says, 'Your tongue, my lad?'
And sure enough it's furred and white,
But Califig soon puts *that* right.

Yes, California Syrup of Figs is the gentle, safe, delicious laxative specially made for children.

California SYRUP OF FIGS

(CALIFIG)

STERLING PRODUCTS INTERNATIONAL INC., ASTOR ST., NEWARK, U.S.A.



35.3