

## THE RIVAL WIZARDS.

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RONGOMAI lived on a little island not far from the mainland. With infinite care and excessive patience he had fashioned a greenstone fish-hook, to which, having pronounced the proper incantation over it, he ceremoniously gave the name of one of his most famous ancestors. Then Rongomai went a-fishing.

He got into his canoe, and paddled along the shore of the mainland till he was opposite a village named Motu, the fishing-grounds of which bore an excellent character for hapuku and kahawai, two species of fish much prized by the Maoris.

He cast his line, and almost immediately he caught a fish some two feet in length.

"That's right," said Rongomai, "my hook is a good hook: the incantation I said over it's strong. My hook surpasses all others, and I am the greatest fisherman there is." As he was reputed to be a terrible turehu, a being who could assume monstrous or human shape at will, nobody in the canoe thought of disputing his dictum.

"I have named my hook Hua-kai, after my grandfather," continued the chief. "The one caught men, the other catches fish. Now again." He re-baited the hook and made another cast. Soon with a jerk the line was pulled taut, and the slack ran quickly through the hands of the fisher, who before long began to pull in the line, with which came the fish, hooked fast by Hua-kai.

"Now my hook is making a reputation for himself, just like my grandfather," said the chief.

He threw the line a third time. The sinker fell

into the water, the line ran out, and Rongomai waited expectantly, while you might count twenty.

"The fish are sitting round my bait, and having a talk," said the wizard-chief. "They can't decide who shall have the first bite." But before the words were out of his mouth the line was jerked suddenly towards the bow of the canoe.

"I've got a big fellow," said Rongomai, as he began to haul. "Hoo! ha! I can't pull him up." The line shot out towards the stern. "I think he is the chief of the fish, the biggest of them all. He has the best of it: I can't move him." Next the line was carried out to sea, and then with a rush the fish shot under the canoe. The chief pulled, the fish pulled; now the chief gained a little, now the fish brought things to a standstill. "I have him, I am getting him bit by bit!" exclaimed Rongomai. "I shall win." And just as he gave a mightier pull than ever the line snapped, and he fell sprawling to the bottom of the craft.

The broken line hung limply in his hands. Picking himself up slowly he peered over the side into the water. "Oh, Hua-kai!" he cried. "Oh, my greenstone hook, where are you? In the belly of some big fish is Hua-kai, whom I made from a piece of greenstone with great toil, from a piece of greenstone belonging to my great ancestor. Over it he had breathed his spell; it was sacred like himself and great in power. It was part of himself. When I made my hook it was indeed the great Hua-kai come back again. Now it is in the belly of a fish: some hapuku has swallowed the sanctity and power of my grandfather: the soul of my ancestor is troubled in hell. He left me all his sacredness and greatness, and I have cast them to the fishes. I am distressed. I am miserable. I am pouiri. Take me back to my pa, to the little island of Motiti."

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Now, watching the whole of these proceedings from the shore was old Te Pou, the chief of Motu. He

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like Rongomai was a turehu, and it was his habit to take the form of a whale or of a shark when he wished to have a little sea-bathing or a quiet cruise upon the ocean, where he brought terror to everything that swam. At other times he was satisfied to dwell at Motu, and in the person of a chief to lord it over an obsequious tribe.

Te Pou had seen the incident of the fish-hook, but he could make nothing of it. So he went home, and talked the matter over with his wife—for when a turehu wishes to marry, he does so with that part of him which is human, as it has been proved beyond doubt that the human wife exceeds all others in domestic virtues and wifely qualities. Te Pou's wife was sister to Rongomai's, so of course she knew all the gossip of Motiti Island.

"I expect I know what it is," said she. "Rongomai is testing his new fish-hook, which he has been making for the last six months; and it looks very much as if he had lost it." And she told her husband all she had learned from her sister concerning Hua-kai.

"We must try to get that hook," said Te Pou. "I will go and see about it." So after dark he went down to the beach and, stepping into the water, he took the form of a shark and swam about, looking for the hapuku which had swallowed the coveted hook.

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But Rongomai was not to be outdone. Before dawn he went out with his canoes, and as the day broke the people of Motu could see him dragging his immense net off the mouth of their river.

All the people collected on the beach, expecting to see a huge catch made, as the reputation of Rongomai as a fisher was very great, and they hoped to participate in his luck. Therefore imagine their astonishment when he drew his net full of fish, to find that he would not give them so much as a single rock-cod or even a flounder.

"I want them all," he said, and straightway he and his men began to clean the entire catch.

"There is a big hole in my net," said Rongomai.



"You Motu people may mend that for me, and then I will give you such fish as I don't want."

To this they agreed, and all worked amicably and industriously, while the fishermen examined every fish for the greenstone hook.

The work was half completed when a man appeared walking along the shore. It was Te Pou, who had resumed his human shape, and had come to see the result of the fishing.

"This is a fine haul that you have made," he said to the chief of Motiti.

"Yes," answered Rongomai, "I've caught plenty of fish."

"I see, however, that there is a big hole in your net."

"Yes, that was where a shark broke through, but some day I shall catch him too, and then he will break no more nets."

"Don't be too sure of that. Perhaps he will catch you, my dear brother-in-law, when you are bathing, and then there will be no more fishing—for you at least."

"We shall see," said Rongomai.

Just then one of his men raised a cry, and held up something in his hand. "The hook!" he cried. "I have found the hook Hua-kai in the belly of a big hapuku."

The people crowded round the man to examine the hook that was lost, but Rongomai, pushing them to right and left, thrust himself through the crowd, and seized the precious piece of greenstone.

"Hua-kai!" he exclaimed, "the hook I made from my great ancestor's jade. The next time I lose it will be when I myself am eaten by the fishes."

Te Pou had to turn his back upon the scene to hide his annoyance. He walked back to his whare, which he entered without so much as a word of greeting to his loving wife, who had sat up all night waiting for her lord's return.

"Have you been successful?" she asked timidly.

"No," replied he. "Not only has Rongomai

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"No," replied he. "Not only has Rongomai

cheated me out of this hook, which I certainly would have found, but he actually tried to take me in his net. Now, what am I to do with such a fellow?"

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Rongomai sailed home with his canoes full of fish and his heart full of joy. As the roofs of his kainga came in sight he thought of the triumph of his homecoming. But his expectations were doomed to be sadly blighted.

As he neared the shore he could see a group of disconsolate women wringing their hands and crying.

"Why is all this weeping?" he asked. "Is anyone dead?"

His chief wife, Hinetu, met him with tears. "Come and see your house," she said. "It was through no fault of mine. One of your other wives lighted a fire, and the flames caught the thatch. All is burnt. There is nothing left."

The chief strode quickly towards the village, and there he saw that his house had vanished. Its place was occupied merely by a heap of smoking ruins.

"Who has done this?" he cried. "Bring the culprit to me!"

A wailing girl came forward, and threw herself at his feet.

"I lighted the fire," she said. The hangi oven, smoking and hot, was beside the blackened embers of the house. "A spark caught the thatch, and all is burnt. Do not hurt me. Oh, spare me! Have mercy!"

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The sequel of the story as told to Te Pou, was that the girl had been killed and that her body, flung into the fire of her own making, had been burnt to cinders.

"But she was a member of my tribe," said Te Pou. "She was my niece, whom I gave to Rongomai that we might live in peace. This cannot be—he would never be so foolish as thus to provoke me to war."

But he was assured that the thing was not only possible, but true.

"Then there will be another fire," said Te Pou. "We will wait till he has built a new house, bigger and more imposing than the last, and then there will be a bigger fire than ever."

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Rongomai's new house was certainly better than the old. It had a dado of reeds inside, and its gable and side-posts were carved with skill and care in the true and ancient pattern.

When he moved into his sumptuous new abode, after all the proper ceremonies had been performed to make it sacred to himself and his belongings, Rongomai felt that his loss might be forgotten.

But that same night Te Pou walked down to the sea and turned himself into a fish. He swam to Motiti, where he landed in his true and proper person.

It was very dark, and he could hardly distinguish the huts of his rival's village, but slowly and silently he found his way to the place where the new house stood. He wished to make no mistake, so he felt the carving carefully with his hands. "It is all right," he said to himself. "This is the house. This is new carving—there was none like this in the village. This is Rongomai's new house."

In the middle of the pa smouldered a fire, to which the revengeful wizard crept. Seizing a burning stick he returned to Rongomai's house, into the thatch of which he thrust his firebrand. Then he slunk away noiselessly to the shore.

From the water's edge he watched the flames mount up, till the whole house was ablaze and he heard the roof fall in with a crash which awoke the whole village. Then he plunged into the water and became a fish.

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to be a rule with a turehu when he "goes out"—so he became a kahawai, big and voracious, and lived a life of seclusion and security in the deep. But he still retained some of his malevolent power, and possessed attributes unexpected in fishes. Thus, though a kahawai, he could command great whales and they obeyed him; he could drive away all the fish from the coast near Motu, and so bring scarcity to his rival.

Yet with all his desire to work wickedness, he could not expect to avenge himself upon Te Pou personally, but that powerful wizard had a little son named Kopara, who was too young to be taught the potent incantations necessary for his protection, and too irrepressible to be safely guarded even by his necromancing father. So against this child all Rongomai's arts were directed.

One day, escaping from the vigilant eye of his doting father, who in the seclusion of his hut was busy manufacturing spells for the discomfiting of some new enemy, the little fellow went to bathe with the boys of the village, and swam out to a canoe in which some men were fishing with but scant success for kahawai.

The fishermen, greatly annoyed at the approach of the boys, who, they thought, would spoil their sport, beckoned them to keep away from the canoe, which direction the swimmers obeyed by making a wide circuit out to sea. But in executing this manoeuvre they became scattered, and Kopara, though like all Maori boys a good swimmer, was outdistanced by his companions. Suddenly the men in the canoe heard a cry; little Kopara threw his arm out of the water, and then with a shriek disappeared.

The fishermen paddled with all their might to the spot, to find no sign of the child. The cry of "Sharks!" was raised, and the other boys swam rapidly to the canoe and were pulled in over the stern.

"Who was it?" asked one of the men.

"Kopara," replied the boys, who missed the chief's son from their number. "Did a shark get him?"

"There are no sharks here," said another of the

men. "If there had been, the few kahawai we caught would have fled."

"Certainly you don't catch kahawai when sharks are about," said a third; "but at any rate it must have been a fish as big as any shark."

The trailing lines were now hauled in and wound up, for the fishing was over for the day.

When Te Pou heard the ill news his rage was something phenomenal; but as it was proved that nobody but the boy himself was to blame, his anger gradually gave place to grief, and he wept the scalding tears of a sorely stricken turehu. All day and far into the night he paced the beach, calling for his son, the light of his eyes, the hope of his declining years, the natural successor of his occult power, the recipient of his mystic mantle.

It was then that it suddenly dawned upon his uncanny mind that the author of his woe was none other than his old enemy, Rongomai. What was easier than to prove this surmise by making inquiry of the denizens of the deep, among whom the facts of his little son's death would be current? Nothing was more simple. Changing himself into a kahawai he swam till he met with a shoal of fishes, and joining the piscine crowd he heard his finny companions discussing the details of his son's decease.

"And Rongomai quickly devoured him," said a well-grown kahawai. "He wouldn't give me so much as a mouthful, though I could hardly wriggle for want of food."

"I managed to pick up one of the flippers," said a small rock-cod, "but the crabs had left little more than the bones, at which I was nibbling when up swam Rongomai, who told me that if I didn't take those bones at once and cast them on the beach he would bite my tail off."

"What was that for?" asked a butter-fish, who had strayed far from his feeding-grounds, and was ignorant of the incident under discussion.

"I really can't tell," said the rock-cod. "He came



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"I really can't tell," said the rock-cod. "He came

from the land, they say, and I suppose he likes to give a piece of his catch to the god of the land; but I lost my dinner."

At this point of the conversation an enormous kahawai came swimming rapidly towards the gossiping fish, and said, "Come, we must get away from this shore. The whole shoal of kahawai is under orders for Hawaiki, where Rongomai says the best feeding-grounds in the whole sea are to be found."

Away swam all the fishes, and Te Pou, left alone, turned his nose towards the shore and swam sorrowfully homewards.

Next day, when he had resumed his human shape, he put on all his robes of flax and feathers, called together his whole tribe, and made an oration.

He said that he was about to depart on a journey and might be away for a week, though he did not expect it would be for so long, and during that time they must continue to prepare the ground for next year's crops. "My great desire is to see my tribe increase," said he. "But to secure that end I must get plenty of fish, for when it is known that a tribe has a large supply of food, then all who can possibly do so immediately claim relationship. In this way a large body of people may be got together, and that is the time to make war upon our enemies. Therefore I am going to visit my tuaahu"—it was by that name that he called his sacred place—"and there I will say incantations and perform rites which will cause large shoals of fish to visit our shores. When I have finished I will return, and then you may drag your nets till the pa is full of dried fish and your ovens smoke constantly. In the meantime I advise you to prepare the ground for the crops, and to make nets as fast as you can—big, strong nets which will be able to catch the thousands of fish that I shall bring. All I shall ask in return for this service is to be allowed to pick three fish from each catch before it is divided."

Next day Te Pou was absent. It was supposed that he was at his tuaahu, the position of which was

of course a profound secret; but in reality he had gone on a voyage to Hawaiki, where he wished to interview Tangaroa, the supreme ruler of the sea and all that therein is. There, in a coral cave beneath the limpid water, Te Pou was received in audience by the dæmon of the deep.

The formidable monster, moving his mighty fins and curling his stupendous tail, fixed his enormous eyes upon the wriggling suppliant, and said, "Speak!" and the motions of his huge mouth showed how great was his voracity.

Te Pou, in the form of a porpoise, told his tale:—"I had a dear son, great atua, who was the darling of my heart and the hope of my declining years, a boy who would have been a credit to the mighty deep when he had been initiated into its mysteries. But alas! he took to the pleasures of the sea before he had been made a turehu, and was most unfortunately drowned. I intend to hold a great tangi"—which is the Maori for a wake—"at my pa so soon as I return, and I have invited all the tribes from far and near; but I also want a tangi in the sea. I want all the kahawai, over whom you hold absolute sway, to come to Motu, and there at the mouth of the river to weep for my son."

"I am very sorry to hear this," said Tangaroa. "If you had applied to me earlier, I would have had much pleasure in making your boy proof against such an end, but as it is I will order all the kahawai to Motu. They shall start at once."

"There is no immediate hurry," said Te Pou. "I shall not be ready to receive them for at least a fortnight."

"Then they can go leisurely," said the atua. "They can take their time over the journey. I should very much like to be present myself, but I have so many duties to perform in these waters, where I have lately had great trouble with the sharks, who have almost exterminated the hapuku which I had collected here for my own especial use. Consequently, I have had

to eat all sorts of little fish and even mussels and crayfish, a diet which does not agree with my digestion. It may be that when all the kahawai are gathered together at Motu, perhaps I may pay you a visit. A change of water and of food would not only be beneficial to me but very pleasant. You may expect me."

"That would really be a great pleasure," said Te Pou, "but please don't put yourself to any trouble on my account. I fear the water at Motu is hardly deep enough for you; we have such extensive mud-flats, and the river is so shallow, that I fear you would find it a most inconvenient place for a fish of your size. It would be the greatest honour possible, and I should be delighted to receive you, but if you will send the kahawai . . . . ."

"They shall go certainly," said the monster."

"I am more than content," said Te Pou. "I should never forgive myself if anything happened to you in my waters: it would be disastrous to my reputation. It would be said of me, 'How can he protect himself if he lets evil happen to Tangaroa before his eyes?'"

When Te Pou returned to Motu, which he did in a remarkably short space of time, he at once assembled his people. "We are to hold a great tangi for my son," he said, "and are likely to receive visitors from all the surrounding tribes. We must therefore lay in great stores of food, otherwise our guests will scorn us, and we shall become a byword throughout the land."

"But fish are very scarce," said Titipa, the chief next in command and secretly Te Pou's rival.

"Make the nets, and I will bring the fish," said the old wizard.

"How will you do that?" asked Titipa.

"By my spells," replied Te Pou. "Haven't I been to my tuaahu for three days? What do you suppose I have been doing there but saying incantations which shall bring the fish? But if you have no nets when they come, what will be the good of my spells?"

"I also can pronounce spells," said Titipa. "I also have my tuaahu. You will see what I can do. I



know an incantation which will not only bring the fish, but will catch them when they come."

However, the people set to work to gather flax and to make innumerable nets.

Every day Te Pou would stand on the shore with his face towards the sea. At length he said to the people, "Everything is ready. The fish are come. Set your nets, and you will catch them by the hundred. I ask one thing only: that before the catch is dried I may pick three fish for my own use."

So the people went to the beach, where to their astonishment they found Titipa pacing up and down and reeling off his spells by the dozen. The canoes were launched, and under the direction of the lesser chief a tremendous haul was made.

The cleaning of the fish was commenced immediately, and hundreds of fish were soon drying in the sun. In the middle of the work Te Pou came down from the village.

"What is all this?" he asked.

"These are the fish I have caught," replied Titipa. "This is the result of my power as a tohunga."

"But didn't I tell you I should expect the pick of the catch?" cried Te Pou.

"If you want fish, catch them yourself," retorted Titipa. "You don't get the pick of my haul."

"Indeed," said Te Pou, and he walked along the beach and inspected the fish that were drying in the sun. "We shall see whose catch this is presently."

Walking to the water's edge and stretching out his arms towards the sea, he repeated mighty spells before the people.

Everyone wondered what would happen, but it was not long before Te Pou came running up the beach.

"Get back!" he cried. "Get back to the high ground, or you will be drowned," and running past his people he climbed the high cliff, where he took his stand, and repeated more spells.

The people, thoroughly terrified, followed helter-skelter, and left Titipa alone upon the beach.

Soon the sea grew dark and troubled and angry, and presently a great wave, which gathered strength as it came, swept towards the shore. It advanced over the sandy beach, sweeping Titipa and all his fish before it till with the noise of thunder it struck the cliff on which the people stood.

"That is one," said Te Pou. "That is for the first fish. There will be two more."

The great wave receded, sucking with it innumerable boulders and the helpless, struggling Titipa.

Then another wave, greater than the previous one, came with tremendous force and, sweeping the shore, struck the cliff with a thunderous roar. This was followed by a third which, when it receded, left the beach scoured and bare. Titipa and all his fish had disappeared.

"I have finished," said Te Pou. "That is all. There will be no more trouble. To-morrow you will catch more fish, hundreds of them, thousands of them. Give me the first pick, and you may have the rest."

The people went to bed that night feeling the deepest respect for their chief, but next day respect was changed to perfect adoration.

Early in the morning two boys were playing at the moari, a sort of giant-stride, which was planted on the bank of the narrow creek beside which the village stood. As the boys swung from bank to bank one of them fell into the water—no unusual thing for a lad playing at the moari—but imagine his astonishment and that of his companion when, instead of sinking, he was borne upon the surface by reason of the multitude of fish which filled the creek.

Scrambling ashore the boy ran to the huts, from which the drowsy people were emerging, and soon the news of the miraculous advent of the fish was in every mouth.

An immense number of nets, laid one upon another, were quickly set at the lower end of the creek, and then the catching of the fish began. Men walked into the water and, taking the kahawai with their hands,



threw them on the bank, till their arms were tired. Others armed with long, sharp spears stood in the water, and plied their weapons till they could hardly raise their hands for weariness. As the fish were flung upon the bank, the women carried them in huge baskets to the chief, in order that he might take his pick of them.

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Te Pou had made his choice. Three big fish, cooked to a turn, lay in flax baskets on the ground before him.

"This," said he, holding up the smallest basket, "is for my son. Let it be thrown into the sea." He took up the next in size. "This is for my wife. Let her eat and be strong. But this"—he held up the largest fish of all—"is mine. This is Rongomai." The steaming fish filled his nostrils with its delightful smell, and his mouth watered. "I will now show you what shall be done with him who ate my son—he himself shall be eaten." He commenced his revengeful meal. "Ah, his flesh is tender. It is nourishing. I snuffed him out of his human body, and when he is a fish I feed upon his flesh. Rongomai is nothing—he is quickly becoming a part of myself. See, I grow in girth, I am forced to let out my girdle, I am increasing in size; but that is not wonderful, for I am consuming the flesh of my enemy. There is not a part of him that I will not devour, except the tail and the fins and the bones and the head, which I will bury carefully at my sacred place, that none may share his greatness with me. Henceforth there is no one like me: I am the greatest chief and the greatest turehu." Suddenly, however, his face bore a look of distress, which fortunately proved but fleeting. "Ha! Rongomai gives me a twinge in my stomach, he is kicking against his fate. But I will digest him. He is becoming part of my flesh, I am absorbing his strength."

When his meal was ended Te Pou leaned back, and said, "Rongomai has ceased to exist. I am Te Pou and Rongomai. Tell the tribe living on Motiti that

if they want their chief, he is here," and he patted his distended stomach. "I bear ill-will to no one, but I shall expect my greatness to be recognised. If anyone thinks to thwart me, let him beware lest the fate that has befallen Rongomai should become his. He yawned, and stretched himself. "I have finished eating and talking," he said. "You all may now go about your business, and I will sleep contentedly, for have not I eaten my enemy?"