

in which everyone took the keenest interest. Long tables with forms on each side were placed in a building opening on to the garden. Fresh banana leaves were put at intervals on the table before the guests, each leaf measuring about two feet by one. They looked fresh and nice and made capital plates. One banana leaf serves for all the courses, which are brought round by attendants. Curries of all sorts, rice chutnees, fresh and dried fruits, sweets and cakes, were placed by the servers on each guest's leaf, till the pretty plate was dotted over with all sorts of good things, which were apparently enjoyed indiscriminately by the guest. Thus, a mouthful of curry was followed by sweets and cakes, by chutnees, all eaten in the daintiest way with the fingers, spoons and forks not appearing at all. At the end of the meal attendants

brought round a bowl and brass jar, and poured water over the fingers of each guest.

Mr. Franji took me round the brilliantly illuminated gardens, where some of the guests were enjoying the music of the band. It was impossible to seat all the guests at once, owing to their numbers. The custom is for the host and his intimate friends and near relations to dine with the last company. The festivities would not finish till about midnight, when the bride and bridegroom would go to their house accompanied by a remnant of their guests.

Is it from the Parsees we have borrowed the custom of throwing rice at a wedding? With them it means, "May prosperity and plenty always be with you." Is there any such meaning in the comparatively modern custom that has sprung up amongst us?

MAY THORNE.

A COLONIAL SUMMER TRIP.



"HE AND HIS WIFE HAD PITCHED THEIR CANVAS HOME" (p. 175).

WE were a party of six; our rendezvous was at a neighbouring homestead, and a merry set we were the night before our start, discussing plans and making our final preparations for a month's trip across the middle island. The following morning dawned as only in New Zealand the lovely prelude of a beautiful day can dawn; and with light hearts we made an early move, after carefully packing our "swag." This, consisting principally of saddles, bridles, and guns, was stowed away in our two carriages, a dogcart and tandem, and a buggy and pair.

Our first bit of road was nothing but a rough track over some fifteen miles of hilly country, and our party were well occupied in holding on while the

wheels made frantic plunges into heavy ruts or jumped concealed boulders. After rounding some pretty lagoons, we presently joined the coaching road, and found ourselves left with a promising crop of bruises and sore bones. With a sigh of relief, the ladies arranged their hair and hats, and settled themselves comfortably to enjoy the remaining three hours' drive to the hospitable station at which we were to lunch. Such a cosy, snug little homestead it was at the foot of a high mountain, planted around with trees, as protection from prevailing winds; dogs chained up here and there, and a breed of pure white poultry strutting in the sunshine.

Our bachelor hosts being university men, devoted their spare time, among other refinements, to forming

and classifying a collection of flora and minerals ; and we spent a very pleasant hour in overhauling these and other curiosities, with which their pretty rooms abounded. At the luncheon table an extra chair was set for a magnificent tom cat, introduced with great dignity under the title of "Beelzebub."

In what manner he had earned this name we did not learn, but are bound to admit that in company his Majesty behaved with unusual propriety and decorum.

Proceeding on our way through a peculiar country of somewhat ugly terraced formation, we had occasion to cross a small river, itself inoffensive enough, but banked in rather steeply—too steeply, at all events, to suit our unfortunate dog-cart wheeler, who chose the middle of this stream as a likely place for jibbing obstinately, and it was only when a collapse seemed imminent, that, with the timely help of a road-mender, we persuaded our horse to return to duty. Meanwhile our friend in need, who was thoroughly soaked, sturdily refused the proffered tip, saying he had "only done as he would be done by." So we went on our way, feeling we had met with true colonial courtesy and independence.

Bachelor establishments seem to be very comfortable quarters out here, as was proved during a few days spent at another station on our route. This place was quite dainty in its colouring, the bedrooms being all tinted in pale pinks and blue, while coal fires burnt in each grate to cheer the feminine heart ; for among the mountains the air gets decidedly cold, even in summer, as the sun sinks behind snowy peaks. The coal, by the way, was obtained by our host from a small mine upon his own run.

From this homestead we made a picnic expedition to a waterfall, reported as very lovely. Following a path along the river—the ladies were dismayed to find the track occasionally crossed and recrossed the stream ; leaving them the alternative of wading or being carried over by the gentlemen. As the current ran fairly deep and strong, we all preferred the latter evil, which was achieved 'mid laughter and stumbles ; but even then the feet and skirts got wet—an indiscretion which would probably have cost us sundry colds and influenzas in the Old Country. Here, however, in this dry, clear air, it produced nothing more serious than a laugh at the immediate inconvenience.

We continued our journey, after a day or two, by driving over a mountain pass on such a road as most of us had never been before, and through a country so justly renowned for its grand beauty that, compared with it, Swiss Alpine scenery dwindles into insignificance.

The carriage-road, following the Wai-Makarere river-bed, wound up a mountain side, and, as we slowly climbed this and gained the highest point, we here and there rested our panting teams, and took our fill of the glorious panorama stretching beneath. A foaming torrent in its broad rocky bed, gleaming coldly blue against the velvety olive green of the bush ; and this, in turn, giving way above to bare peaks, crowned in the glistening southern afternoon, with snow and glaciers. Our road, cut through solid rock

which walled it in and sometimes literally overhung it on the one side, fell on the other with an unprotected edge a sheer drop of many hundred feet into the valley below.

As we had increased our number by the addition of another man, and hints having spread of the road being in bad condition through recent floods, two of the gentlemen rode, leading spare horses to be ready for accidents. Happily these were not needed, and that evening we safely reached the Bealy Accommodation House. In these "Hotels," as they prefer to call them, there is but one public room, where all classes sit down together to the *table-d'hôte* tea, the driver of the mail-coach generally taking the head of the table and carving for all. The bedrooms, each with two beds and a wash-hand stand, are mere cubicles run up with matchboard partitions allowing every word to be plainly heard on either hand. Unwilling eavesdropping to our neighbours' conversation made us wary, and among our party silence was a strict rule observed in these rooms : scarcely a whispered "Good-night" being sent from one bed to another, and as for confidences and secrets those were reserved for the mountain summits.

The rumours of damage to the roads by storms were confirmed here, and being advised by the knowing ones to discard our light buggy and dogcart, we ladies left the Bealy on the mail-coach—a remarkable construction, eminently suited to its work and drawn by a team of five horses. The gentlemen rode, each leading a spare horse, and formed our mounted escort. As the dawn was only appearing when we started, the cold was intense, and, though well wrapped in furs, the first sunbeams found us with blue faces and numb fingers. Just here the route involved some rough travelling, for, descending sharply, we crossed the river, and for some distance ran over its shingly bed, where the track, formed by the simple expedient of rolling aside the larger rocks and stones, is, needless to say, constantly effaced by the first freshet. This had occurred a few days before we passed, and the "going" was equally trying to the temper of springs, spokes, and passengers. Our genial driver—who, by the way, grew prolific in thrilling anecdotes when he spied a nervous passenger—here improved the occasion by a graphic account of a recent capsizing in mid-stream, when a lady, being washed upon a handy rock, calmly took advantage of her point of view to produce a sketch from life of the catastrophe for an English paper. Though admiring her pluck, we secretly determined that, should the opportunity offer, our moral condition would unfit us to earn a similar tribute of praise from our Jehu.

After skirting the foot of the bush for a few miles we struck a fresh gorge, and turned into its deep and narrow defile, where the cool, early morning mists still lay to soften splashing cascades and sharply cut rocks, or help birch and pine, fuchsia and lancewood, to blend with a hundred gracefully falling creepers into a fairy-land of beauty. Higher up it melted where snow and ice shone rosy and golden in the sun's rays.

In this part the road had been destroyed, and several

times the coach occupants had to get down and scramble along the edge of the bush while the coach itself took to the river, and made its dangerous way up stream, which proceeding was watched with anxious eyes; for had it turned over—though our party could rely on their saddle horses—the other passengers would have been left stranded in the centre of the bush. Later on we passed some really awful places, having been mounting for some hours, and at one part the coach tilted over a large stone, so that those having the outside seats hung for a second over a yawning precipice. It took some little time to recover one's equanimity, which was not aided by our coachman's little weakness again moving him to ask coolly if we had seen some white bones at the bottom. These, he explained, were remains of a waggon team which had fallen bodily over.

It was on our return down this nightmare road that one of the gentlemen's horses bolted, together with the one in leading; and how he steered the runaway pair safely round the sharp corners and avoided the precipices, he has never been able to recall.

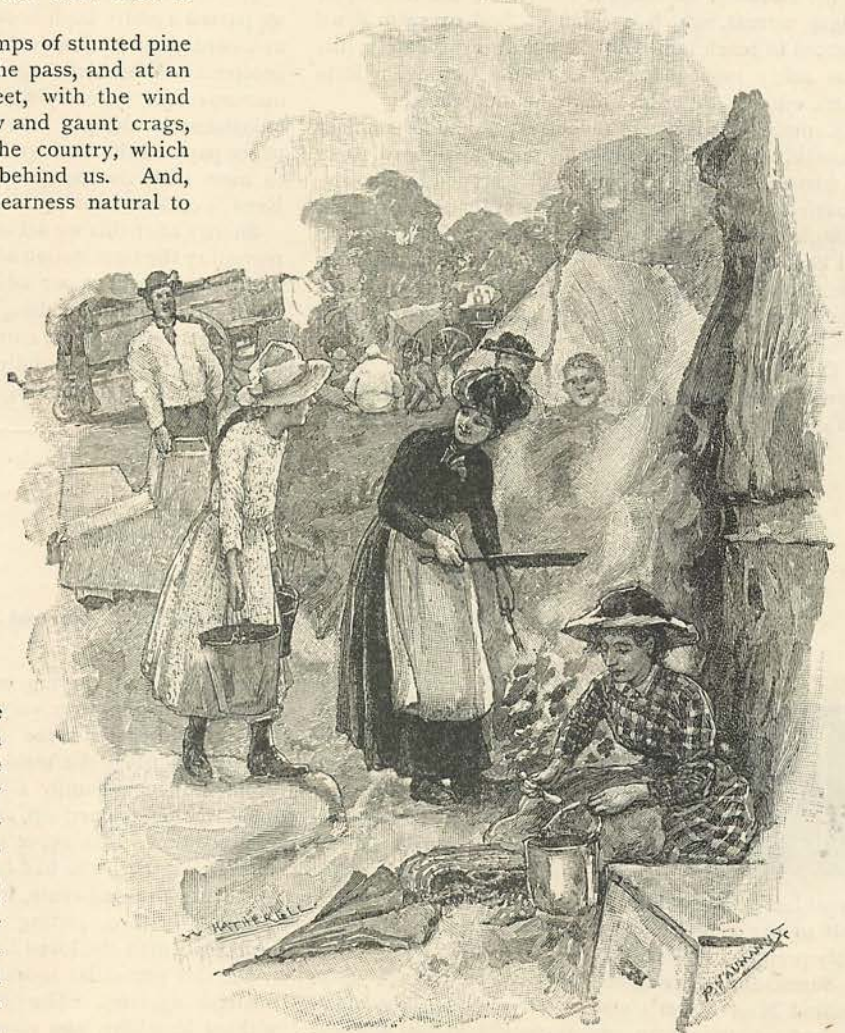
Rising above the last clumps of stunted pine we gained the summit of the pass, and at an elevation of some 1,000 feet, with the wind blowing keenly across snow and gaunt crags, we turned to look over the country, which lay sharply mapped out behind us. And, though the extraordinary clearness natural to this atmosphere rather dwarfed the effect of distance, the prospect of shining peaks and rolling bush was unsurpassably grand.

Once over the crest, with a quick spin down the other side, and our day's travel ended by seventeen miles of fine level road, winding its way through that mystery—the Natural Bush.

Macdonald's Accommodation House stands in its very midst; miles and miles of gigantic fern-palms and mighty tree monarchs, overgrown with parasitic creepers and fragile ferns, stretch away on every side. And this, our goal, a place of many excursions, was kept by a Scotchman, and, if bare of luxuries, was comfortable and exquisitely clean. Many a merry evening did our worthy host and his son entertain us with bag-pipe and fling, not to mention the adventures of his

gold-digging days, when, as a young man, he and his wife had pitched their canvas home and made their pile. Gold had been found in the mountains behind his present hotel, and, being personally interested in the diggings, he took us up to persuade us to invest in a few shares.

"Spot" was an old spaniel, born and bred at Macdonald's, and possessed of all, if not more than, a bushman's instincts. The sight of a gun always roused in him the usual sporting dog's excitement; but shown in his own peculiar way. His method was to disappear among the trees, when, after a few moments, a persistent barking would lead the sportsman to some tall, black pine, at the foot of which "Spot" gave tongue. This was a sure sign that game of some kind, whether pigeon or ka-ka, was perched amongst its branches. The dog was never known to make a mistake, which is the more remarkable because the majority of these bush trees are so lofty that birds in the topmost boughs are frequently nearly out of gun-



"THE COOKING ITSELF IS NO LIGHT TASK" (p. 176).

shot, though within the range of the clever animal's perception.

Sport of this sort was plentiful, and wild pigs were fairly numerous; but they are dangerous customers to meet at some seasons, or if molested. One day, when returning from a scramble, we ladies encountered a whole pig family, and, rushing back with the news, were finely laughed at when "mine host" suggested that our quarry were only his tame ones, accustomed to wander, and probably wending their way home to supper.

The wild-duck-shooting was a failure according to feminine notions; for we could only spare one day, and that was threatening a downpour when we started on our ten mile ride to the lake. Before arriving the rain began; and, though the sportsmen braved the weather in boats, we preferred to take such shelter as could be got in a rough cowshed, where we passed the time as best we might; devoured damp sandwiches among the cattle; and were glad enough to mount for the return journey. On coming to a river, easily forded in the morning, we found it swollen by the rain to an angry torrent, which our horses had to swim if we wanted to reach home and supper. Fortunately this was safely managed, and, as to the wetting, a little extra water more or less made no difference.

Camping-out is a very favourite pastime for summer months, and we came suddenly one day upon a party of friends, mostly young people, chaperoned by a newly-married couple. We joined them once at dinner, bringing our share with us, and a very jolly time we all had together. Generally one servant is taken for the rough work; the ladies do all the rest, and when there are many men the cooking itself is no light work.

Our last excursion was to Lake Brunner, about fifteen miles away, and, there being an accommodation house, we decided to sleep the night, and make two

days of it. We arrived at dinner-time to find the house shut up, and the host and hostess absent. So, letting our horses run in a little paddock attached to the place, we awaited events with as much patience as our appetites would allow.

The lake itself was lovely, and our artist prepared to sketch, but was ignominiously routed by overwhelming sandflies, which swarmed in thick clouds round his head. Pipes and cigarettes were *unavailing*, and an experiment with kerosene, by using as a puggary his handkerchief soaked in the oil, proved so offensive that we at last retired, leaving the unhappy painter to fight the tiny pests alone.

While our dinner cooked we watched a little sailing boat come gaily across the lake in the blood-red rays of the setting sun. As it touched land out sprang two stalwart young bushmen and made their hurried way to the house. In a few moments they returned, and we learnt afterwards that they were bridegroom and best man come to borrow spoons and such like for wedding festivities.

The following day, on our ride back to Macdonald's, we passed a pretty bush homestead, whose owner gave us a cordial invitation to lunch, which we gratefully accepted. Whilst the national and always savoury mutton-steaks were frying, we found an unexpected enjoyment in the old jokes of "Mr. Punch," whose pages papered the sitting-room walls. It was strange to meet with the refinements of a Du Maurier and Keene's cockneyisms in this remote bush cottage.

Shortly after this we set out on our return journey, regretting the termination of a most enjoyable holiday; and though perhaps our adventures may seem a trifle rough to English readers, accustomed to take their summer trips with every comfort, they can be sure that any loss of luxury is fully repaid to their colonial cousins by a corresponding gain in robust health.

LILY CARLON DAVIES.

OUT OF THE FASHION.

By L. T. MEADE, Author of "Engaged to be Married," "Scamp and I," etc. etc.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.



MISS POWER was old and rich, and had apparently nothing whatever to do. Nevertheless she kept early hours, and never wasted a moment of her time. Punctually as the clock struck eight she sat down at the head of her modest breakfast-table, and drank the coffee, and helped herself to the nice fried bacon which Susannah invariably prepared for her.

Susannah, in her queer, old-fashioned dress, stood behind Miss Power's chair while she ate. Susannah looked intensely grim and respectful in this attitude, never indulging in speech, but showing by the queer

contortions and varying expressions of her features that her thoughts were very busy.

Miss Power read the *Times* as she sipped her coffee, and when the meal was over the old servant brought the big family Bible, and Jane the kitchen-maid was summoned up, and Miss Power read a few verses aloud. She never prayed, she only read the verses, and when she had finished she invariably went up to her drawing-room, where she busied herself for an hour or two, getting it into the prim state of neatness which she loved best.

On this particular morning Susannah followed her mistress upstairs. She entered the drawing-room without knocking, and stood silent and respectful just within the door. Miss Power was watering a stand of