

Mining shares at a few pence per share; but I looked on this as a very wild speculation, and thought it extremely unlikely that I should ever see a cent of my money again. The news, however, which I now received was disastrous—it was the collapse of the Bank of New Zealand and the Loan and Mercantile Agency Co. The calls on these two unlucky investments ruined me. In my effort to double my capital I had lost the lot. In this strait I determined to sell my mining shares at once for what they would fetch,

billet as a clerk in town. At this juncture I happened to meet a man, recently out from Home, in similar straits, Arthur Milman by name, and he induced me to join him and try that refuge for the destitute in the Auckland province, gum-digging. My moleskins, which luckily I had not disposed of, would be invaluable now. We just managed to scrape up enough of the needful to purchase spade and spear, and pay our passages to one of the best gum-fields in the North—the exact locality matters little. Like most other occupations,



"THE BULLOCKS SANK KNEE-DEEP AT EVERY STEP."

and interviewed my broker, only to hear that they were totally unsaleable. He even went so far as to say he would not take them at a gift, and that I was a fool to have purchased them. I agreed with him.

What now would be the use of prosecuting my search? If I found Fred, I had put it absolutely out of my power to claim my reward, I was penniless in a strange land. I had been playing at being a working man, now stern necessity compelled me to be one in earnest. I was unknown in Auckland, and had simply no chance of obtaining a

gumdigging is not picked up in a day, and we found it hard indeed to keep body and soul together on what we earned for the first few weeks.

A more dreary and desolate tract of country than that on which the gum camp was situated, it would be hard to find throughout the whole length and breadth of New Zealand. The dull, colourless monotony of the scene proved inexpressibly depressing to the spirits of those who had but to traverse it; how much more so to me in my present circumstances! Stunted brown fern, puny rushes,