

when he told how he had got into a hollow hinau tree, and being unable to climb out, had spend three days in cutting his way out with a pocket-knife, Louise merely looked tired, and Bert said that very few men could boast of having been inside a hinau. But the Bloke was undisturbed. He stayed rather late, and on rising to go he turned rather markedly to Louise.

"Ye'll find it awful quiet up 'ere, Miss."

"Oh! I shall do very well with Dad and the boys for company," said Louise, rather cruelly excluding him. But he was not thin-skinned.

"But ye'll be dull in the winter. Are ye fond of music?"

"Very."

"I'll bring down my accordion to-morrow night, and cheer ye up a bit."

"Thank you, but you mustn't let us monopolise all your evenings."

"Oh, never name it!" And he took his leave.

"You'll have to snub that fellow," said I, addressing Louise.

"Don't I snub him, Dad? Oh, I do wish he would stay away! I was just longing to talk and laugh, as we do when we are by ourselves, but I felt obliged to be stiff and distant. And the things I said when I did speak!"

The next day was very wet and stormy. We fondly hoped that the Bloke would not keep his promise. But he was worse than his word. We had hardly sat down to dinner when little Jaek, seated opposite the window, exclaimed: "Here comes a man in yellow oilskins. The Bloke! Yes, I think so."

"Oh! he's only coming to borrow baking-soda, or pain-killer, or the hand-saw," said Bert.

By this time the Bloke was at the door. In his hand he dangled four pigeons, which he presented to Louise. From under his oilskin coat he produced a "Little Lord Fauntleroy" accordion. Then he took off the coat and entered with a cheery "Well, 'ow are ye doin'?"

"Oh, come in!" I said, and Bert added: "Make yourself quite at home," in tones of unmistakable hostility.

"I always do," replied the Bloke. "You see, boss," he continued, "it was too wet to work to-day, so I did a tog-up and come over to give ye a tune."

He had discarded the harmony in green and blue, and had donned a very new tweed suit. Round the neck of his dirty shirt he wore a bright tartan tie.

Of course we asked him to share our frugal meal. He was not "particler," he said, and he fell to accordingly. Though we could well have spared his presence, the Bloke evidently meant well. He was deeply sensible of his own kindness in coming through the wet bush to amuse us, so much so that I felt called upon to say: "Yes, but you really ought to consider yourself a little more. You have a good shed to work in, and you and your mate might have found something to do."

Louise looked quite shocked at my plain-speaking, and evidently expected the Bloke to rush out of the house in a rage. But he merely smiled and said: "My mate? Poor old Ike! 'E wanted badly to come with me, but I wouldn't bring 'im. Oh, no, not by a jugful! 'Never hinterdooce yer donah to a pal,' that's my motto," and he winked at Louise, who looked astonished.

"Say, Louise,"—Louise, indeed!—"I'll learn ye to play the accordion. This little Font Lee Roy—we call it 'The Pup,' cause it's so small, but by gosh, it is good! I'd back myself for twenty quid to play it all night for the dancin', and never rest, it is so light."

On the Bloke's initiative we left the table. The dishes were washed to the howlings of the "Pup."

Gentle reader, were you ever weather-bound in a small cottage, in enforced companionship with an accordion enthusiast? Do you realise the feeling, changing by degrees from amused toleration to homicidal mania, induced by the strains of his fell instrument? All the tunes are in the same key, the bass is mechanical and monotonous; no air involving even the simplest transition of key can be correctly played. But the accordion's worst quality is the ease with