

the fire, and yarn and speculate on any and every subject that came into our heads. This was the time that the old man was in his glory: and he would interlard the narrative of his youth and colonial experience with theories of the age of the kauri, the formation of the gum and the spontaneous generation of the fern—with all the other unsolved problems that are threshed out every night in a Bush camp—or

for himself in some sheltered spot far removed from the temptations of the mill-stations—there were no townships to speak of in those days—all he wanted was to get a start. Once that was done the rest would arrange itself. So far all he had to show for his twenty-five years of hard graft, was the suit of clothes that he stood in, with his axe and billy and a pair of worn blankets. But that did not matter. He could



A light and dexterous Hand with the Frying-pan.

which used to be before the bushmen had learned to read, and a weekly mail brought in the latest news of the sins and sorrows of the outer world.

He sometimes—though not often—dropped a metaphorical tear over the “might-have-been,” but he was generally hopeful about the future. Like most old-time bushmen, he had a fixed idea that sooner or later he would make a little home

tide over the first year by splitting posts and rails for the Forty-Acre men while he was making his clearing and his crops were maturing. There was plenty of wild pork in the bush, and that, with a sufficient supply of potatoes and pumpkins, was good enough for any man. He would manage to pick up a few fowls, and with the eggs and the surplus of his onion-bed he would procure what he wanted in the way