

of groceries and tobacco, with an occasional addition to his wardrobe in the shape of a shirt or a pair of trousers.

The onion-bed was his main chance. He always came back to that: and many a half-hour I have listened to his calculations as we sat together in the "whare." They were as faultlessly perfect as the prospectus of a new joint-stock company. "'Tisn't every one as can grow honions," he would say. "It looks easy enough, and so does playin' the fiddle: but there's money in it, and it's a sure thing if you manage it properly. You see, a packet of seed only costs sixpence. The labour will cost nothing, as I'll do it myself, and all the manure you want is a few barrow-loads of hashes and a bit of lime that you can make by burning a couple of kitfuls of pipi-shells that you can hump up from the beach. Well, you see, a packet of seed will sow half a square chain"—I thought it must be a very large sixpennyworth, but that did not matter—and then he would estimate how many rows would cover the space, and the number of onions in each row at six inches apart. Taking half a pound as the average weight of a bulb—or a quarter to make sure—that made so many hundredweight, which, at fourpence a pound, or say threepence, would run up into quite an imposing figure.

Thus far his calculations were generally pretty uniform: but this was only the preamble. The real question was the investment of the capital thus acquired. Sometimes he inclined to a fowl-farm. "Hens is easy managed," he would say, "and they bring in a quick return: and besides, they eat up all the small spuds and things that you can't find a sale for." And then he would proceed to show how the stock would increase at a ratio to which geometrical progression was not in it. But his favourite spec was a calf. He would purchase a

heifer calf for a pound or thirty shillings. In two or three years' time she would be a cow and be having calves of her own. Two of these he would train as working bullocks—he never had any doubt as to the sex of the coming progeny—and with this handy team he could undertake a larger cultivation, besides hiring them out to the settlers and taking contracts for hauling posts and rails and so forth. It all went on without a hitch. There never was any question of failure. "Why, so-and-so," and then he would mention some well-known capitalist, "didn't have half the start that I would have, and look at him now, smokin' cigars and drinkin' champagne. Why, he could buy up the whole of the River if he liked." But he never got any further, as soon as he got his cheque he would go off to the nearest place where he could get it cashed—generally in the neighbourhood of some bush pub—with the firm intention of limiting his expenses to the purchase of some necessary articles of clothing and investing the balance in the savings bank, but in two or three weeks he would turn up in a more or less battered condition, without even the sixpence for his preliminary outlay on the onion seed.

The winter had passed and the logging up had long been completed. The grass-seed, sown on the ashes, had sprouted, and already a fresh, green tinge was beginning to spread over the clearing. Strange to say, with the exception of one slight lapse, old Jack had kept perfectly sober all those months—a longer spell, he said, than ever he had had since he came to the colony. Still, I had an idea that this satisfactory state of things was not going to last. There was evidently something coming. The old man was getting restless, and though he did his work as well as ever, he seemed gradually to lose interest in the place. He got silent and gloomy. There were no more yarns