

peculiarly offensive laugh. "I shouldn't mind! I'm getting along in Maori as it is, but it wouldn't be a popular innovation, not with most of the chaps, I fancy."

The cadet said he should hope not, and the visitor uttered a snort that might have meant anything, and put up a silent, earnest prayer that he might live to see the assistant swing if every other purpose of his life failed.

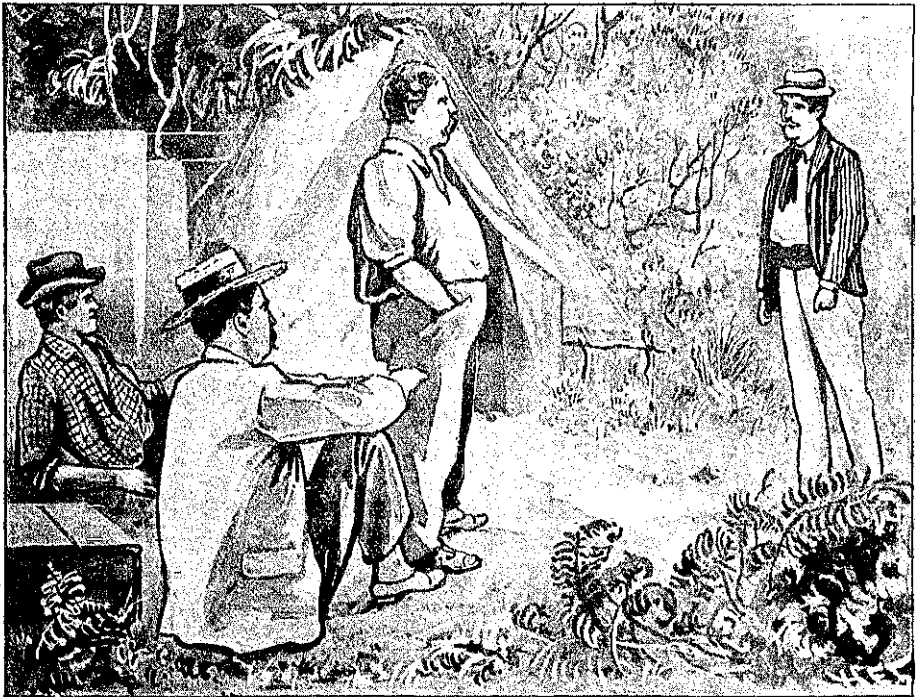
"Who is this Hawke, anyway?" pursued the subject of his prayer. "Why, if the boss had only condescended to ask me——" he finished the sentence with a shrug and a

raw material to be licked into shape by us!"

"Pity some one wouldn't take you in hand," said the visitor, *sotto voce*.

At this moment a figure emerged from the tea-tree and came towards them. A slim young man in white, his hot face, with a fringe of straw-coloured hair, beaming out from under a white hat. A very spick and span young man, looking inexperienced and immature from his pale moustache down to his dusty, fashionable boots.

"By George, here he is, the new chum!" said the assistant under his breath. "What



A VERY SPICK AND SPAN YOUNG MAN, LOOKING INEXPERIENCED.

jerk of the eyebrows, more expressive than pretty.

"Oh, Hawke's quite a noted man!" exclaimed the visitor, glad of the chance to put in a word. "A splendid interpreter, and a great fellow with the Maoris; no end of a fellow to manage them!"

"Is he?" said the assistant, and his tone was contemptuous. He had little belief and no interest in the accomplishments of others.

"And there's that other chap due to-day, too," he said presently, in an aggrieved tone. "New chum, of course; more excessively

a coon of a fellow he looks! I say, you chaps, he's fresh from the Old Country, you know! We'll have a rise or two out of him about this Maori row, as sure as I'm——"

"A conceited town fool!" added the visitor with conviction. But the assistant had risen to meet the new-comer, so only the crushed cadet heard it; he became convulsed with laughter where he lay, and his heart yearned towards the visitor with affection and gratitude. The assistant turned back to say in a whisper:

"Now don't you two say a word; just