



BY W. REUBEN WATTS.



O the uninitiated, country life in New Zealand is not quite the rosy, picture-book consummation of early youth that the sanguine and hopeful thirster after fame imagines it.

True, there are experiences connected with it which a few years of one's life would be well spent in gaining, and which the artist and poet would revel in. Herewith are some of the experiences of new chums in New Zealand, with a thirst for greatness, not as yet having had it thrust upon them, nor yet been born so.

After a varied and eventful voyage, we landed at Wellington under most unfavourable climatic conditions, for it was one of Wellington's at home days—a "southerly buster."

Although Wellington is sufficiently interesting and picturesque to deserve more than passing comment, it was not sufficiently so to detain us more than three days after landing; we simply thirsted for the much vaunted country life of which we had read, no matter how rough. During our three days' sojourn in the Empire City, the hand of fate caused our mild and passive eye to be attracted to a contract advertised in the daily papers of some hundred acres of scrub to be cut. And the before-mentioned hand of fate, doubtless with an eye to the humorous, also caused our eye to observe in a certain store axes and slashers of comely shape and fair to look upon, with beautiful insinuatingly-shaped handles and glittering blades which simply made one long to be crashing through trunks and scrub and jungle. After gazing at them in a lingering sidelong sort of way, and considering how picturesque we should appear in squatter's garb, wielding these artistic and primitive tools with graceful sweep, and laying low monarchs of the woods at one fell swoop, we somewhat diffidently lounged into the store and essayed to make purchase thereof—we consisting of my brother and self, and a "braw chiel" fra' Edinburgh, and "anither yen" from Newcastle. The assistants in the store eyed us in a commiserating and wondering fashion, observing by our tell-tale "Home cut" that we were "new chums!" But all the commiserating glances in the world would not have deterred us from our venture, after once handling the bewitching tools. We instinctively looked around for something to chop, but finding nothing we sighed inwardly, paid for our weapons and departed in haste.