

"Hullo, Bill, how 'yer doing?" said the man from the verandah, a long, lanky youth, coming forward and grinning over a boiled, starched collar fixed on to a woollen shirt. "Think it'll rain?"

Bill anathemized the rain in particular and a few other things in general, and went on: "Where's my wood? Where's my—coruscated adjective—wood, that's what I want to know?"

"Must have been washed away by the rain, Bill," grinned the lanky youth.

"Washed away!" echoed Bill, too mad to colour it with even a solitary adjective from his bullock-driving vocabulary.

"Well, it might have been spontaneous combustion, Bill!"

"A cord! A cord and a half was here when I left, so help me, Moses! The worst den of spiefers, the biggest crowd of loafers as ever I saw in this here township! Why didn't they chop the *whare* up for firewood? Too much like hard work, Jim, that's why!"

"It is a paralytic shame!" responded Jim solemnly over his collar.

The inhabitants had turned out by this time, about twenty in number, and they all murmured, "a paralytic shame!" though some of them voiced the adjective. It is sad but true, adjectives are much in vogue in bush townships. It's not in China you want missionaries, my dear friends, it is much nearer home, but I believe that has been said before.

A motley group they were, motley with

strong jaws and heavy features, though one or two faces stand out in contrast, clean cut. Do you see that man there? His father is a prominent literary light, and that one hails from an English public school, and that one—oh well, I'd better not tell you who his father is!

One or two women are in the crowd, and they also are worn with the wear of the bush.

Bill gazed fiercely all round, and a big bony horse in a cover, staring placidly from the background was the only one that looked him in the face.

"Faith! a drop of tay water'll do yez good, Bill! Come and have a dhrink at my place!" urged a sympathetic lady, very

*negligée*, with her hair touzled over her eyes.

"No, thank you, Mrs. O'Reilly," Bill answered, touched his hat, and walking into the *whare*, shut the door.

Whoever saw a bushman impolite to a woman?

The inhabitants slowly dispersed, remarking: "Bill was wild!"

Jim reckoned it was tempting Providence to leave a cord of wood split up when you were going away for a week.

Bill, inside, swore a great oath; he would be even with them, and he was, and this is how it happened:

On the following morning Bill got a small barrel of blasting powder from the storekeeper to pay back a friend, he said. Storing away the powder in his hut he set to work, and cut up a lot of *maire* backlogs, and carted them



HE WAS A SQUARE-SET, OBSTINATE LOOKING MAN.