

refused. What d'ye think of that?" and the old chap looked at me in a manner that showed plainly what he thought of it.

"Perhaps they weren't thirsty," I ventured.

"Weren't thirsty? That's no excuse. D'ye think I'd wait to think whether I was thirsty or not, if a respectable stranger, who I could see was feeling lonely, wanted me to join him in a whisky?"

"No, I really don't think you would," my friend replied.

"Downright rudeness, sir, that's what I call it. No one who had the slightest respect for himself would be guilty of such atrocious conduct. I turned on my heel and asked the driver to join me. He had some gentlemanly feeling about him. After starting again we drove on in the same studied silence till I couldn't stand it any longer. 'Hang it all, gentlemen!' I said, 'I come from New Zealand, and I'm not used to this sort of thing. How much longer is it the etiquette of this country for us to sit, each in our own corner, glaring at one another like a lot of mopokes? For Heaven's sake say something, if it's only——'" and the old fellow gave them their choice of several uncomplimentary remarks which need not be particularized here.

"The infernal fools," the old man continued, "had positively mistaken me for a bushranger. I wasn't so stout as I am now, and I wore my riding boots and breeches. Directly I said I came from New Zealand they cottoned on to me properly, and I had no occasion to round them up again. I had been right in my surmise—two of them were station holders, and what's more, shorthorn men. They were going up to the Agricultural Show, whither I was bound, and I didn't have to drink with the driver alone after that."

I'd let a friend up there know I was coming, and they had a great dinner on for me after the show. Every man jack of them would have

pressed me to drink, but you know pressure isn't required among shorthorn men. I soon saw there was a conspiracy among them to knock the New Zealander under the table, but they didn't know the stuff I was made of. It put me on my mettle. One after another the weakest of 'em left—carried out for the most part.

My two mates on the journey up were warriors; they held out the longest. Then one tottered and fell and I had only one left to tackle. Only one—but what a one! Must I give in. Never, I thought to myself. New Zealand for ever! For the honour of my country I must see it out, and I did! But it was a hot time, lads. I never had a hotter, I give you my word!"

The old fellow looked as proud as if he'd won a much more important championship.

When he began his yarn I hoped we should have had some interesting information about Australia. But this was all he seemed to remember. The importance of it had so impressed him that everything else had dwarfed in comparison and dwindled out of memory.

"But, boys," he added after a short interval, "I don't know why I told you this. I wouldn't advise fellows of your age to take on any such contracts, mind that now!"

By this time we had entered the boundary gate into the old gentleman's domain, and certainly he had laid his lines in pleasant places. Before us lay a model farm, rolling downs and verdant valleys richly grassed, ornamented with small clumps of native bush, and stocked with superb shorthorns of all sizes and correct colours. Here, verily, the old fellow had something to be proud of for this perfect stock-farm had been won from the wilderness under his own hand. He pointed out the spot where he had himself ploughed the first acre turned over in the district by a white man, and showed us afterwards a number of stalwart plough horses, the