

# Rambling Recollections.

By ROLLINGSTONE.

## WILD CATTLE HUNTING.



REAL old-fashioned wild bush bull had always a powerful fascination for me. I have a typical one in my mind's eye now. He might have been first cousin to the old brindled outlaw, Tommy covered himself with glory by shooting on his uncle's run—but that is an old story now.

These wild bush cattle were the descendants of beasts which had strayed from earlier settlers' herds, and taken up their residence in the bush back blocks far from the haunts of man. At times some of these outlaws strayed from their mates, and appeared amongst the cattle we and other settlers turned out to forage for themselves on the land, then owned by the Maoris, giving them what they considered ample remuneration for the privilege, and on that point we were quite willing to be guided by their opinion. In the spring our stock came out of their snug winter quarters in the neighbouring warm bush gullies, sleek and fat from feeding on the lower branches of the Karaka trees and similar delicate leaf fodder, to bask in the glorious sunshine, and enjoy the complete change of diet which the juicy young fern-shoots on the open land afforded. Not having seen a human being for months the tamest cattle get to regard the race as one which it is desirable to keep at a very respectable distance, and our animals happened to be originally none of the tamest.

We had several times seen from a distance the old patriarch alluded to above with a small mob of the wildest and choicest spirits of our

herd. They never ventured very far out into the open country, but fed near the edge of the friendly bush. He seemed to take special care of that. The few occasions on which we had a gun with us, he had dived into the dusky shades long before we could get within shot.

He was a huge limbed, coarse-headed, rusty black brute, and evidently gloried in his strength as with a thunderous crash and rattle he tore his way through the dense supplejack-tangled bush, regardless of all obstacles, his head thrown well back, his mighty muzzle extended, and his wide-spreading horns turned swiftly from side to side to allow the thicker branches to slide off them instead of bringing him up standing. Talk about "the men who made the tracks"—a man is a mere amateur at the business, compared with a genuine old pioneer bull when his route lays through an apparently impenetrable thicket.

At a tearing gallop, with his new adherents at his heels, he burst through entanglements which would tie up a man—if he had not his sheath-knife handy—or a horse, or paddock bred beast hopelessly in their own lengths.

All sorts of reports had been circulated about this old black demon of a bull. The few crack-shots our settlement boasted had already been out, and, if they were to be believed, had managed to get to closer quarters than we had. They told us of marvellous shots they had made. They swore they had hit him every time, for they saw hair fly in clouds, but concluded his hide was too thick for an ordinary bullet to penetrate, for far from being