



By Lt. H. H. GREY

I HAD BEEN in the saddle the best part of fourteen hours and was tired. The cattle had been sulky and difficult to move, and a pup of whom I had great hopes had paid for his youthful enthusiasm with a kick in the haunches from a recalcitrant steer which would keep him indoors for a couple of days. When my horse shied at the homestead gate I cursed him in a flat, tired voice and urged him closer.

It was then that I saw him, lying full length in the long grass to the side of the gate, with his canvas bag containing all his worldly goods under his head. Almost a year had passed since Fred had favoured me with a visit, and the sight of him cheered me. To-night I should forget the cares of a small station owner as I listened to the gossip of the Coast, interspersed with Fred's philosophical musings. To one on whom the cares of this world pressed heavily at times it was refreshing to yarn with a man whose home, in the current phrase, was under his hat and whose possessions ended with a spare shirt and two pairs of socks.

I roused him with a yell. "Hey, Fred, come up to the house and have some tucker." Fred woke and sat up. "Good-day, Mr. McAllister. Those fruit-trees are woody." I grinned. Trust Fred to notice them. "Haven't been touched since you were here last, Fred. Waiting for you. By the way, how long will this present visit extend?" Irony was lost on Fred. "Maybe two, maybe three days," he replied; "time to do the trees."

As we walked up to the house together he told me he had just come down from a back station where he had been fixing up a leaking tank and doing odd carpentry jobs round the homestead, for Fred was general handyman as well as first-class orchardist.

The wife of the station owner had been of the overbearing kind, and after she had interfered in two or three jobs which Fred had been doing, to tell him the way in which she wanted things done, he had packed his swag and hit the trail. Arrived at the house, Fred left to unpack his blanket in the whare 50 yards away, and I went in to tell my wife to lay an extra place for tea.

The children greeted the news of his arrival with whoops of joy and asked to be allowed to sit up after tea and listen to his talk. They adored Fred, and he in turn was fond of them in a detached and speculative way. The local gossip they were not interested in, but if Fred got on the topic of his early days they would be all ears.

When I had first settled in New Zealand I had taken the swagger to be the counterpart of the English tramp, but I soon learned better. A dirty, frowsy individual who cades in a whining voice and would

run a mile from work is no picture of the colonial swagger. In the Antipodes the swagger is simply a good workman cursed with wandering feet. On the station he turns his hand to almost anything from helping muster cattle to cooking in the men's whare. One thing he

