

void of any constructive skill whatever, and make up that deficiency in a great degree by the many purposes to which the easily procurable bark can be applied. Not only in geographical position but in almost every aspect of nature this island continent is the complete antithesis of the rest of the earth, and not the least shirking of the numerous contracts is the fact that that the trees do not cast their leaves but shed the bark instead, thus accounting for the ease with which that covering can be removed.

It was on this very occasion that I made my own debut in the novel character of cook to our own immediate party of six, and my first essay in the agreeable occupation proved eminently satisfactory, save in the two particulars, first the quality of my preparations, proved to be so exceedingly good as to receive the united commendation of the other five hungry fellows to such an extent, that the quantity turned out sadly deficient, in as far as I was personally concerned, leaving me to content myself with a crust of bread and cup of tea, and secondly the valuable leather medallion so cordially voted to me on that occasion, has never come to hand to this day. In one respect, however, my culinary skill did not meet with the cordial appreciation due to modest merit, and that was on laying my first "damper" or loaf of colonial unleavened bread before my ravenous confreres. This specimen of high art was most ungratfully declared to be literally a damper to the appetite and the other members of our party, with rare ingratitude asserted that the cook was the only proper person to eat it. In spite, however, of all mishaps and difficulties we enjoyed a good rest from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning, while pausing beneath the shadow of Mount Macedon.

On Monday morning all was bustle and excitement making ready to continue our weary journey. Tents were struck, "Swags" repacked and a hearty breakfast prepared and disbursed of by nine o'clock, at which hour we were ready to resume the pilgrimage, we had completed thus far. About an hour after leaving our last camping place, we entered upon

a tract of country locally known as the "Black Forrest" and if our travelling had hitherto been attended with great difficulty from the almost impassable state of the roads, that difficulty was much increased here from the more broken and uneven formation of this part of the country. It was a constant succession of deep hollows and sharp elevations, and as the only known track to Mount Alexander passed through this Forrest, every solid foot of the surface had been positively ploughed up by the enormous traffic passing between Melbourne and the diggings. This was a most miserable day's walk, and it was with the greatest exertion possible that we were able to make the distance of eight miles arriving just at dusk in sight of the "Bush Inn" the site of the present thriving town of Gisborne. Before reaching this point our party had become very much scattered, several being almost a mile behind, but as we came in sight of the snug looking little tavern and comprehended at a glance the incapacity of the building to accommodate so large a number, a most exciting race ensued: each striving with might and main to arrive there first so as to secure sleeping room of some kind or other beneath its roof. On arriving breathless and tired out at the Inn we found that every available space on the floors had been already secured by those who had as it were out-ran us in the race and no other course appeared open to us than going out in the fast falling darkness and hastily set up our tent as best we could. This certainly was not an agreeable prospect, but one of our number—that is our own immediate party of six—was quite equal to the emergency, for while endeavouring to come to some arrangement with the tavern keeper he noticed that the dining table was a fine large one and without more ado engaged the use of it for the night, subject to the modest charge of thirty shillings sterling or seven dollars and a half. Upon this extraordinary bedstead the whole six of us slept that night the deep unbroken sleep of worn out nature, completely surrounded by others whose forms were laid out on the floor with mathematical preci-