

said that he had always known it could be done, if only worked systematically and on the right lines. His only stipulation was that they were not to start work till after the New Year, they must enjoy a good holiday first. Both boys in their eagerness declared that they would ask no better holiday than this promised to be, but the old gentleman was inexorable.

"Look here, lads," he concluded, "as Tommy says, I offered a pound a head last year, but beef is up now, and the beasts are a year older and more valuable. I'll gladly double the figure. It'll pay me well to do so. I want to clear that mob right out; while they're there others are always joining them. And Rhoddy, mind one thing. I don't know much about you, but Tommy's a fine bushman, you'll never get lost if you stick to him, don't lose sight of him, whatever you do. He knows every inch of that bush, and understands every dodge of steering his way even better than I do, and that's saying a good deal.

The next few weeks of anticipation were glorious ones to both Tommy and Rhoddy. They felt that they were now men about to undertake a job which would task all their abilities to the utmost, and if successful give them ample return for their labour. They were realising the fact that money earned by one's own honest exertions is infinitely preferable to that which one receives from other sources, and the fact that it was their first experience in this line, gave it immeasurable added zest. Tommy already loved the great solitudes of the bush and all that they contained. To Rhoddy the bush was a vast, unexplored wonderland into which he longed to dive. The petty cares and small economies of his school-days were fast dropping from him in this great, free vista that was opening up before him.

Fitz, when first he heard of the cattle-hunting, declared he would

join in the sport. But this was before he grasped the nature of it. He had understood cattle-hunting was always done on horseback. Tramping for days in the bush was too much like hard work for him.

The Governor did not at first approve of the lads buying their own horses, but Tommy explained that both he and Rhoddy would be far happier if they really owned the horses they rode. The old gentleman had not the heart to object to anything which had this end in view. Tommy bought a colt cheap from a cadet on a neighbouring station, which had defied all his owner's efforts to ride him. He had been christened "Firefly" by one of the many rough-riders who had taken him in hand and given him up as incurable.

Tommy surprised the animal intensely. He was prepared for another contest of brute force. He expected Tommy to mount him immediately and try severe measures forthwith. But the lad did nothing of the sort. He started to work as he would with an unbroken colt, put the breaking tackle on him, and let him stand about the yard for a few days, till Firefly wished he would hurry up and come to the point. Then he exchanged the tackle for a saddle and gave him another few days with that on. When he did condescend to mount and ride a few times round the yard it was without whip or spurs, and so quietly that Firefly, much to his surprise, could not possibly find it in his heart to object. There was something about Tommy's quiet but firm methods that utterly disarmed opposition, for after a few days he could ride the colt anywhere, and he would follow him like a dog.

Fitz pooh-poohed the idea that Firefly had ever been really rowdy, and laughed at Tommy's careful treatment and want of pluck to mount the animal earlier. Tommy could not stand this, he bet Fitz a new hat that he wouldn't sit