

him for five consecutive minutes, even now.

Fitz took the bet readily, but brought out his own saddle that he had with him, a flapless, English hunting saddle, declaring he couldn't bear the beastly Colonial thing that Tommy used. Tommy won his bet, with quite four minutes and a half to spare. Tommy held the animal for Fitz to mount, but the moment Tommy let go of his head, and Firefly recognised that he had a stranger on his back, he tucked his head under his forelegs, and his tail under his hind ones, arched his back, gave one spasmodic bound, and Fitz was shot into the air like a pebble from a catapult. The ground was fairly soft where he fell, and his dignity received the severer hurt.

Rhoddy was bent on preventing Tommy from spending much on his mount. A Maori boy had a pony he wanted to sell. It was a ragged, weedy little rat of a thing, apparently constructed of wire and whale-bone. The owner declared he had once won a Maori pony race. Rhoddy laughed at the idea, but tried him, and found he had a surprising amount of go in him. Rhoddy was a light-weight, so after getting Tommy's opinion on his soundness, three pounds changed hands, and Kiore (The Rat) was Rhoddy's.

Fitz was not to be outdone. He also must have a horse of his own, but of a superior class entirely. He met a young fellow riding a horse, named Fleetwing—a thoroughbred, sold out of a crack racing stable in town, but quite good enough to win the big events at little bush meetings, his owner declared. Fifty pounds was the price asked. Fitz said he was above haggling about a little matter like that, and at once drew on his father for the amount, declaring the horse dirt cheap at the price. Tommy's opinion was not asked on this occasion, but he gave it very unreservedly and entirely unfavourably. Fitz's retort was an offer to back Fleetwing

against Tommy's Firefly for a fiver, which offer Tommy promptly accepted.

The Governor heard of it, and applauded. He was fond of a bit of sport of this description, and much to Fitz's surprise and scorn, insisted that Kiore should be in it too, the winner to draw the stakes. Rhoddy pleaded poverty, but the Governor insisted on putting down the fiver himself. Rhoddy felt that he could not offend his host by refusing, but felt sorry that he should lose his money, and said so.

"Money be hanged! It's the sport I look at," retorted the Governor gaily.

The course was once round a fine grass paddock, the Governor was appointed judge, and a station-hand, starter.

Fitz was cocksure of pulling off the prize, and Tommy no less so. Rhoddy, on the other hand, rode out in a discontented spirit. He did not see any fun in courting certain defeat, and felt annoyed with the Governor for his insistence.

Fleetwing sprang away with a good lead. He had been raced before. Fitz looked back with undisguised scorn at his competitors as the distance widened between them. Tommy was in no hurry to catch him, and Rhoddy, in the rear, was amazed to see that Kiore was not further behind. Half the course was run in this order, then Tommy noticed that Fleetwing was slackening his pace notwithstanding his rider's efforts to keep him going. Firefly required no urging. Round the third side of the paddock they flew. Kiore, to his rider's increasing surprise, kept close at Firefly's heels. He felt that he would not be so disgracefully beaten after all. Half way down the last side Firefly and Kiore flashed past Fleetwing, who was already in trouble. That was joy unspeakable to Tommy and Rhoddy. The wiry little Kiore was still going strong at Firefly's heels, and Rhoddy had not once touched him with whip or spur. Then it