

mained, he appeared to rather enjoy the tickling than otherwise. On several occasions he seemed to have frightened timid individuals, who had met him accidentally, into the firm belief that he was charging them, when in all probability he was only seeking his own safety in a totally different direction, as they might have seen, if they had not been in too much of a hurry to look. At least that was how we interpreted many of the stories of hair-breadth escapes which filled the balmy air. That he would be only too ready to charge if in a tight corner, we did not in the least doubt, but we had not much of an opinion of the parties referred to, we did not believe them capable of getting him into a tight corner, even by accident.

In any case, Bob and I considered it was quite time that we took a serious hand in the game. So one day we mounted our stock horses, and armed and accoutred for conquest—which meant in those days, when choice of arms was limited, double-barrelled, muzzle-loading fowling pieces, bullets, tomahawks and sheath knives—we sallied forth determined if possible not to return without his hide.

It was a glorious spring morning, and the country we rode through with its pleasant alternation of magnificent clumps of bush, fragrant with the mingled scents of myriads of spring blossoms, and waving fern flats, could not be surpassed for beauty. The track was one made by the Maoris, winding intricately about, disclosing fresh beauties at every turn. Our horses were all that could be desired. My mount was a nuggety four-year-old colt I had purchased for a song because none of his former owners could sit on his back long enough to enjoy a ride. It was only after considerable practice and failures—with no spectators, I took all sorts of precautions on that point—that I succeeded, and thereby gained for myself a high reputation as a rough rider, of which earlier publicity

would have prevented the acquisition. Once not only his master, but his firm friend, he became, out and out, the best stock horse I ever got a knee grip of. Bob was a bad enough judge of horseflesh to disagree with me on this point, he always persisted that the nag he was on that morning was points ahead of mine in every respect. He was a horse with a past, too. We both had a decided predilection for animals with evil reputations, providing we got them in time. It cost Bob a fiver finding out which of the two was the swifter. He would not take my word for it, so it served him right. But neither the loss of that, nor all my efforts to convince him—as to my animal's general excellence were any good, though goodness knows I spent time enough over it. Anyhow, his obtuseness had its advantages, we were never at a loss for a subject of conversation to fall back on in slack times, and I always knew how to set Bob's jaw wagging when I wanted a spell myself.

As we slung merrily along at an easy canter on this particular morning, however, our chat was of our anticipated sport. We agreed that there was only one thing wanting to make life on this beautiful earth of ours so supremely perfect that we would not care to leave it for any future happy hunting ground of them all. The one thing needful was of course to get within range of that old ruffian of a bull. As we approached the flat on which we expected to find him, we pulled our horses into a walk. Riding down a winding cattle track through sweetly scented manuka scrub, we got our first view of the open ground below, and there where the bush swept down to its further border was the mob of cattle which the old veteran had so recently deigned to take under his fatherly care. With a field-glass we scanned every inch of the flat for him in vain. There were beasts of all possible colours save black. Not a solitary one that could possibly be he! This seemed