

First Water had been travelling about in a circle in front of the stalls, led by a syce. The latter stopped to talk to the boy who was putting the putties on my legs, and the big chest-nut heard Robin Hood sneer at little Sting.

"You big lob, you! why don't you leave the little man alone? You're seventeen hands high, and your thigh is as big as my neck, but you never won a race in your life—not since you came to India, anyway. Everybody knows what's the matter with you, too. You're fast enough, but when any of us squeeze you, you just quit. You funk it, and my trainer says he wouldn't have you as a gift—your heart's in the wrong place, he says."

This made Robin furious, for he was a bad-tempered brute, and he lashed out a vicious kick at First Water.

"What did Sting do in the Cau'field Cup, at home in Australia?" continued First Water. "Didn't we all pocket the little chap, and keep him there for a mile—and then, when we rounded the corner for home, he got through and made hacks of us, winning by as far as he pleased? Don't mind that big soft mushroom, Sting. We're glad to see you out from Australia. Did Teddy Weeks bring you over? You'll find the ground hard and dry here, and the heat'll crack your hoofs and burn your liver. My hoof is split so that I have got to wear a big all-round shoe on it."

Then the syce led First Water away, and a stable boy came to take Robin Hood for a spin.

When we were alone Sting commenced to talk.

"You were only a youngster when you left Australia, Dip," he said; "how have you gone on? I heard my master, the captain, telling people that you were favourite for the Viceroy's Cup, and that you were the only horse he was afraid of. And look here, Dip, I'll tell you a secret, for you'll not give it away, will you? The captain's awfully fond of your master's daughter, Miss Jess—I've seen them together and I've heard them talk. I've heard a lot of things; they think I don't

understand, and the syce only knows the pagan language they have got here, so they talk.

"Last night the captain said to me: 'You've got to win the Cup, old man, for if you don't I'll make a mess of it. Besides, you'd like to have Jess for a mistress, wouldn't you?' And one morning your mistress, Miss Jess, came to me on the course, and, rubbing her soft little hand down my neck, said: 'You must be a brave little horse, and win the Cup for your master.' Dull spurs! but I laughed out at this—it was too funny. For my master, to be sure!—there I was to run and win, not the Cup alone, but a small fortune in bets, so that the captain could have your mistress, Dip. Do you see now what is bothering me?"

I nodded slowly for this had set me thinking. This was why Miss Jess had been unable to fret more over my illness.

"Well, you'll just have to win," I said to him. "You won three times in Australia, and ought to be good enough to beat these other fellows who should be running as qualified hunters. I'm sure I hope you do, for if my mistress will be happy through your winning that will please me."

"Yes, I won the Cau'field, Dip, but the getting through the crowd was just a little too much for me. When I gallop more than a mile now I get a pain in my side."

"That's what Robin Hood says," I ejaculated. "He says he gets a pain in his side; but we all laugh at him, and think it's because he's soft and cuts it."

"No, Dip, it's not that. You'll find his heart has been strained once, same as mine—has had to do too much. By Saint Gladiateur! when you're galloping there—the other fellows knocking you about, shoving you against the rail, and carrying you wide on the outside of the turns, or closing in on you in a pocket, and the dust is that thick you're breathing mud instead of pure air, so that the pipes leading to your lungs are all choked up, and a boy on your back, who doesn't know anything but to try and get in front,