

be written. The accident, in fact, of a commonplace custom's difficulty with some dutiable items among our belongings, the transit entries of which we left Lockyer behind to settle. Surely is the sum of all human existence made up of trifles, of themselves intrinsically contemptible. For, had we but quietly abandoned Madame's pet properties to the officers who clamoured for their confiscation, none of us would have been very much the poorer, while Fred would have been on the passenger-list of the *Ashburton*, and the whole course of his life been changed.

As it happened we ran through the Heads, and up the Ninety Mile Bight with none other than our own mutual society. But, before making Gabo Island, there were, after the fashion of travellers, many new acquaintanceships formed. The Far North was just then alluring to their disappointment many thousands of sanguine settlers, numbering among them no inconsiderable quota of recruits from the gayest of old-world society. Among the contingent to be furnished ex-*Ashburton* was one particularly joyous youngster, known as Mr. Ernest Vane, a scion, as we understood, of the great house of Londonderry, and, from his high spirits and invincible determination to be amusing, an immense favourite with everybody before we had been twenty-four hours to sea. Vane was a good sailor, as well as a man of the world, and ever ready with those *petits soins* which ladies who go down to the sea in ships know how well to appreciate. Nelly undertook to patronize him graciously, and, as a lively and pleasant *compagnon de voyage*, we were both well enough pleased to know that we should have him for a few days with us in the capital. And of a truth that metropolis did need some such assistance towards making itself tolerable quarters even for the briefest stay. It seemed a piece of exceptional good fortune to escape being left entirely to a mutual discovery of its disenchantment at the first moments of our arrival. So we felt a very sincere regret when our new friend, towards the close of the week, started merrily north-wards, only tempered by the expectation of Lockyer's promised advent on the morrow, an event for which our most urgent invitation could not prevail upon the other to remain.

When Fred joined us at last there was an earnest council as to further proceedings, at which it was decided that he and I should go up the river some fifty miles, there to make enquiries at to the particular objects we had in view on leaving our old colony. And here it becomes necessary to explain a peculiarly brilliant piece of financial operations of which the writer of this story had made himself the wondrous hero. Exchange ruled high in those days, and the transfer of even a few hundred pounds from one provincial currency to another cost no inconsiderable sum of money. I had therefore congratulated myself not a little on having been so successful as to have, before starting, been able to secure at par quite a large amount of notes of Northern Banks, care-