

miums were subject to no fluctuations. I only once regretted being a cadet, but this regret was a long one, it lasted until I reached home safely again. The loss of time and money annoyed me at the time, and my father even more, but now I felt that my "colonial experience" might be of service to me.

On the voyage out I matured my plans. I felt assured that it was useless searching the cities for the man I sought. Mining camps, back-country stations, and similar out-of-the-way corners were much more likely to be the refuge of a man whose sole desire would naturally be to efface himself. They should be my hunting grounds. His father's agents, I rightly conjectured, had confined their energies to the cities and to advertising in the principal daily papers, the only result of which had been fat cheques for their services from the old gentleman and good commissions from the papers for procuring advertisements for them.

My first idea was to ride round what I deemed likely haunts and make all sorts of enquiries. For some weeks I tried this plan. But I soon found that, for some reason I could not understand, I was regarded with suspicion by most of the rough and ready miners and station hands whom I questioned, and I could get but little out of them. An old miner less reserved than his fellows, who had succumbed to the temptation of a glass of whisky and a game of euchre with the stranger, after some ordinary conversation, addressed me as follows:—

"Look here, boss, if you want to get chummy with the boys, and find this 'ere mate of yours, doff that black riding coat and breeches, they make you look for all the world like a parson or a detective in disguise, both of which the boys steers pretty clear of. Just take my tip and shove on a pair of mole-skins and a jumper, and mix with 'em, and work with 'em for a spell now and again in places where you reckon he's likely to have been, and you'll drop across news of him fast enough."

I took his advice on several occasions and it bore some fruit, although not much. Dur-

ing the next few months I came across the first tidings of him. At Kumara, a mining township on the West Coast, a digger was describing "a rum sort of mate" he once had, and I knew from the description that it must be Fred.

"Drank like a fish," he said," and the quickest and handiest man with his fists on the whole Coast. 'Fighting Fred,' the boys called him, and he wasn't misnamed. When he first came to the Coast, big Jake was the champion, but Lord love you! Fred knocked Jake out of time in one round, he was more nor half boosed, too, at the time. Jake started to bully him in a pub one night, as he did most strangers, but found he'd struck a snag that trip and no mistake!"

"He was out-and-out the unluckiest cuss I ever struck for a mate. Spotted a fine deposit of black sand in the Molyneux river bed one afternoon, that went two ounces and a half to the bucket. The river was at its lowest; we hadn't got out more than three bucketsful before down came a flood and swept the whole lot away! Narrow squeak for our lives, lost our tools and everything. There was seven or eight of the boys drowned in a drive in the bank before they could get out, like rats in a hole that same trip. Snow melting up above. Another time on this Coast we started trenching for a reef. A big tree stump was right in our way. Fred wouldn't wait to rip it out, but turned the trench away to the right to save trouble and get round it. He was an impatient devil, and we hadn't any powder. We found nothing, and chucked the ground. Blamed if some of the boys didn't take up that identical ground six months after, blast that bloomin' stump, and there was a rich leader right under it. They made their piles, we'd just missed our'n. He wasn't no 'count of a mate neither, for when we did make a bit, he took the lot and bolted. Never seen him since, nor don't want to. What was his surname? Never asked him. If a man doesn't give his name in a mining camp, nobody ever asks him, it isn't considered etiquette, 'specially when he's a feller like Fred. Fighting Fred was all I ever heard him called. When he