

Gold Hunter's Adventures.

When my pick struck the pipe-clay, which constituted the bottom as it is called, and upon which the gold is usually found, if found at all, I unearthed a small nugget of four or five pennyweights, worth as many dollars, and like many a new chum, I concluded that the bottom of the claim was paved in that particular way. I cleared off a portion of the bottom but found, that the nuggets had run out. However, Coleman came round and indoctrinated me into the mysteries of gold washing, so that with tub and cradle I was able to take out from \$10 to \$20 per day. Knowing nothing of tunnelling or drifting, as it is termed, I burrowed in as far as I could from the shaft in the direction of the gold lead which I found cut diagonally across my claim, and then sank another shaft, which enabled me to work to the extent of my limits. A shipmate of mine by the name of Suzer, had the next claim above mine, and took out of it eight pounds weight of gold as the result of ten days or a fortnight's work. As I was unable to get another claim in this gully, I directed my attention to working some of the claims in Devonshire gully where the sinking was about twelve feet, and here I worked from shafts which had not been drifted, and succeeded in making fair wages, but it being the wet season, the ground soon became water soaked, and the upper soil being rich alluvium, made the drifting dangerous work, so I suspended mining operations. Those who had surface claims, or wash dirt, got out during the dry season, now devoted their whole time to washing up, and clay-banks or dums were made in the hill sides and the heavy rains diverted to them. Only those who have lived in a tropical or semi-tropical climate know what a heavy rain really means. Here when it rained the water literally fell in sheets, and those who had no fire-places or covered sheds to cook under fared badly, as it was impossible to keep up a fire outside. We were in this unfortunate predicament, but availed ourselves of some of the sheds of the Chinese encampments, which they had covered with mats and gunny bags, to boil the water for tea and coffee, while sardines and other canned material and bread made up the substantial part of our living. Sometimes the rain would cease for a day or two, and then we made up for our enforced fast. We purchased considerable gold here, which I had to carry to the Bank, or Escort office, at View Point, and on these occasions I carried Coleman's revolver, and to save distance and as the safest route, usually took a direct course across ranges and gullies, I was less likely in this way to be molested by any of the bush-ranging fraternity, who usually plied their trade in the more secluded portions of the regular travelled roads. These gangs were in the habit of going from one diggings to another, and hanging round just outside the diggings, "stuck up," draymen returning to Melbourne, with the pay for their two or three week's trip, and the digger going down with well lined pockets. Some thirty drays were "stuck up" one morning, by a gang, just outside the Ballarat diggings, and one at a time marched off the road into the bush and placed under a guard until they had got through with as many as they dare risk, when they were off 30 or 40 miles to another place to carry on the same game. These bush-rangers were well mounted, as the question of ownership never entered into account with them, and being well acquainted with the country, they generally managed to elude pursuit. No one could successfully follow up their trail except the native trailers or runners, employed by the government, but who could not always be depended upon. These natives are almost equal to a blood hound in trailing criminals. I was never molested in the performance of my gold escort duties, and only had to present my revolver once, when a party seemed determined to become better acquainted with me than his good looks would warrant, and who finally concluded that it wasn't advisable to in-

sist upon too close companionship, in travelling the same road. At this time a great deal of dissatisfaction was expressed by the diggings population at being obliged to pay the thirty shillings a month license fee, whether engaged in mining or not, and many a one unfortunate in mining, couldn't afford to pay the fee. Mass meetings were held at View Point, and cleaning out the military and police, in the camp enclosure within pistol shot, was freely discussed, but better arguments prevailed, and delegates were appointed to visit Melbourne, and confer with the Government. It was then decided that licenses should be issued at the rate of £2 for three months; but this did not satisfy the diggers, and the upshot of it was that the diggers formed a league, wore a ribbon on their jumpers, and considered themselves in duty bound to resist all attempts to collect a license fee, even going so far as to station squads, in the vicinity of the commissioners camp, which prevented those inclined to take out a license from doing so. This state of things did not last long. Lieut. Governor La Trobe showed a lack of back-bone, and was continually vacillating between a desire to grant the wishes of the diggers, and the representations of his hirelings that the trouble was solely due to the influence of a few turbulent spirits who were having a good time at the expense of the diggers. The fact was that many of the gold lured gentlemen of the diggings, knew that the doing away with the revenue derivable from diggers licenses, would necessitate the reduction of the staff of government officials, and throw the most of them out of an easy berth. And so the matter hung until the attempts to enforce the collection of the license fee resulted in a collision between the Ballarat diggers and the detachments of military and police stationed there, resulting in considerable loss of life on both sides. The diggers succeeded in taking possession of the stockade and barracks, which it afterward surrendered or it was retaken. If I mistake not, it was a portion of the 40th Reg't, in command of Capt. Thomas, which was stationed there. In referring to this event it must not be understood as having occurred simultaneous with the Bendigo manifestation. It only took place several months after, but it brought the matter to a crisis. The Government had to take action with the result that the license system was done away with and in lieu thereof of a miners right was issued which cost £1 a year. The taking out of this was not compulsory, but without it one was not entitled to protection, and the miner who had it could take possession of the claim of one who had it not. The one who paid for protection got it. In a dispute which we had afterwards with some Tipperary men, who jumped a portion of our claim in the Blackwood diggings, the first question asked by the Commissioner was, "Have you a miner's right?" and although we had procured one for the occasion, and one of our opponents had seen me, as he stated, going into the license tent for them, as he was coming out with his, this didn't avail anything, and we were awarded the full possession of the claim as we had staked it out, and which gave us 70 feet frontage on the creek—10 feet for each miner. At the Ballarat disturbance an acquaintance of mine, a Bytown man by the name of Abe—if I ever knew his other name I have forgotten it—had a bead drawn with his rifle on one of the officers, and as Abe was a sure shot, and looked upon it as a business matter, it would have been "all up" with the officer if his chum hadn't knocked up the rifle, asking him if he wanted to shoot a man in cold blood. When I first knew Abe he was in partnership with a couple of friends of mine by the name of Lloyd, formerly of Melbourne, Quebec, and now wealthy wool growers on the Goulburn River, Australia. They had a saw-pit on the Iron Bark Gully, and Abe was the one who handled the pit end of the saw. His Ottawa experience did him good service, as eighteen pence a foot was the price of their inch boards, and if the boards hap-

pened to be half an inch thick in one place, they made up the quantity by giving it a thickness of an inch and a half in another place. In my trips back and forth between Eagle Hawk and View Point, I was much amused with the antics of the lizards, who were continually starting out from the dry bark and shrubs almost under my feet. They are very gaudy looking creatures, and assume a very inquisitive appearance when looking up at you. They become quite tame when encouraged round the tent, and as they are sure death to any fly within reach, I usually made pets of them, and they seemed to enjoy sipping tea out of my spoon if I made it sufficiently sweet for them. On hot days one or two would lie in my blankets under the shade of the tent and catch flies by the score. The paroquets chattering in the trees above made the bush seem cheerful. They are a beautiful green and yellow plumaged bird, a little larger than a swallow, and very swift of wing. They always go in flocks. We never saw any kangaroo in Bendigo. They had probably made room for the diggers, as from the name of Kangaroo Flat, it may be inferred that they had previously existed there. After three months spent at Eagle Hawk, I shifted my quarters to Long Gully, where I took a situation in a store kept by Alfred England, a lank six foot Englishman, who had spent some years in New South Wales and whose every day dress was corduroy trousers, top boots, flannel jumper and red woollen night cap. On state occasions he donned a felt hat, and a pepper-and-salt colored coat. He lived to please himself and appeared to be quite indifferent as to whether he pleased his customers or not, and still he was a nice agreeable man to converse with. It annoyed him a good deal to have any one do part of their trading at another store. He wanted their whole trade or none. I recollect on one occasion a woman who had done her trading at a store along side of us, came to us for hops. We were the only ones there who happened to have hops, and he very coolly told her she could go and get hops where she got the rest of her goods, he had none for her. In this situation I received \$15 per week, and as Mr. England, when there, did most of the heavy work, I had not much to do except cook for the two of us, and as he was fond of good living, I had *carte blanche* for everything the store afforded. One thing we had there which I had never seen before, and that was potatoes, ground up like starch, and packed in sheet-iron boxes holding 50 lbs. or more. To cook this, we had simply to pour boiling water on them and then season them with butter and the usual condiments.

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