

I had little or nothing to do, as the diggers made their purchases and sold their gold chiefly in the evening, the day being employed in working on their claims.

Chalmers, the store-keeper, and his wife were a kindly and respectable couple of canny Scotts; he had been fortunate during the palmy days of Friar's Creek, and had prudently given up mining when gold became scarce, and had invested his findings in diggers' requisites, which he exchanged for gold at a very remunerative profit. My engagement lasted only five weeks, as by the end of that time I had partly recruited my resources, and had moreover, formed a decided dislike to the business, infinitely preferring to undergo any amount of hardship as a digger.

During my stay I had a good opportunity of studying the character of the diggers, who, with few exceptions, spent their gold as quickly as they found it, and were on the whole most excellent customers. They were great devourers of sardines and mixed pickles, and went through an astonishing quantity of butter considering the price. Of tea, also, and sugar, they were amazing consumers. There was quite a run upon candles, which were burned in the holes, and raspberry vinegar and lime juice they bought freely. I am glad to say we sold no spirits, nor could we do so, even if willing, under a penalty of £50. Spirits was, unfortunately, sold on the diggings, by so called "sly grog dealers," who usually gathered round them a most depraved and reckless set.

One of these dens was a great deal too close to us for our comfort. On this head I have noted, "March 3rd. Towards evening some people warned Chalmers that an attempt was likely to be made to-night to rob the store; he was warned a second time this evening, and as he was robbed about a year ago, he evidently was much alarmed. I remained on watch part of the night; heard the police galloping past early this morning; (4th) they halted at the grog shop, and after some examination of its contents, commenced its demolition by tearing off the canvas. It has been for some time the haunt of bad characters, and we were not sorry to see every trace of it quickly removed. About thirty pounds' worth of spirits was seized and carried off, and the owner also. His wife, a young and very wretched looking creature, came into the store soon after, lamenting the mishap. She mourned above all other things the loss of some port wine, "for," said she, "that's the stuff I'm fond of." She brought in for sale fourteen ounces of gold, but having lately bought a quantity, we had not money enough to purchase it. March 18. An old Irishman came in to-day overcome with grief, because, under the influence of brandy, he had sold some land in Melbourne at the rate of eight pounds sterling per foot, frontage; though if he had waited till he had become

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