

got wealth, wandered remorseful and discontented over their former claims, now worked out, and despising small gains cursed their own folly and the exhausted diggings in vile colonial phrase.

Most of the crimes of violence which were only too prevalent at this time, might I believe, be traced to these idle ruffians, of whom a good sprinkling were ticket-of-leave men.

"Feb. 24th.—A fellow entered a store opposite our tent last night, and was caught in the act of robbing it; when caught, he kicked up a tremendous row, cursed policemen and storekeepers, and pretended to be drunk, and kept us awake most of the night with his shouts."

25th.—The thief who was taken last-night spent the hours till breakfast time chained to a log, outside the police tent. The police foolishly took off the handcuffs to allow him to eat his breakfast, but they had no sooner done so, than he made a spring, escaped from amongst them, and ran a considerable distance before he was retaken; some diggers stopped him, so he was manacled again, and marched off to Castlemaine with a guard."

We had now been three weeks at the diggings, and though we had worked hard and had sunk many holes, we had found very little gold. We tried surfacing; we washed cradle tailings; we "*prospected*" in new gullies, in hopes of coming upon something good, but all to no purpose.

Our expenses were heavy and our purses were growing light, for flour was a shilling a pound, and butter four and sixpence; so it is not to be wondered at that my journal abounds in sage reflections upon the folly of leaving home, and the desirability of getting back again, the frequent record of which appears to have afforded me a melancholy satisfaction. At this time, however, a change in our affairs took place; my companions returned to the tent one evening with something like exultation on their faces; they had just heard of something good, they said: C. had had an offer of £3. per week, as driver of an escort waggon; H. had been encouraged to offer himself as trooper, and a berth as book-keeper, clerk, &c., in a *General Store*, which though worth only thirty shillings a week at first, might eventually bring me more than twice that sum, was waiting my acceptance. Was not this better than digging? and such digging as ours had been!

I cannot say the news affected me very agreeably, as I had no particular fancy for the new line of life proposed to me. But there was necessity in the case, so I lost no time in visiting the store-keeper who required my services, and on the 28th February, I entered his canvass-roofed establishment as his assistant.

My duties were particularly light; in fact, during the middle of the day