

were found in the Colony, but Australia is a land where one is not surprised at any mineral discoveries. On the island were gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, diamonds and in Queensland opals. We resolved to prolong our stay and if possible discover the more fortunate prospector. We made a careful examination of the hills for traces and soon discovered them. On the fourth day we came upon a hut built in a secluded ravine, wherein we found an old man, who gave his name as Burton and stated that he had been in the country for months but had not succeeded in finding any gold. From that time an intimacy sprang up between us but we found the old man extremely reticent relative to his past life. Originally he had resided in Sydney, then in Melbourne, and finally had removed to the west coast. He was exceedingly feeble and ill-fitted to cope with such a life of hardships. From the first he conceived a strong partiality for Vail, who never tired in treating him to delicacies of his own making over the camp fire. We acted on hints given by our new friend, who evidently possessed a good knowledge of mining, but were not rewarded for our perseverance. At the end of two weeks the old man fell ill and we removed him on the mule to our camp where he could be made much more comfortable. Gradually he grew feebler, there was no disease, but a general breaking up of the system which indicated, but too clearly that the end was drawing near. To my surprise he manifested a strong desire to be left alone with Vail in the camp. They spent many hours in whispered conversations which excited my curiosity, but not a word fell from their lips which gave me a clue to the mystery, for mystery there undoubtedly was. One night the old man was very low, when he summoned me to his side and Vail went outside.

The old man said "I have made a wonderful discovery, what it is I cannot tell you. It is possible that you may make the same discovery, I cannot understand why you have not made it long since. I want you to promise a dying man that should you make the discovery before you return to Coolgardie that you will conduct yourself as an honorable man and an Englishman."

I gave my promise and an hour later the old man breathed his last. The grief of Vail was so intense and poignant that I was still more mystified, though I knew that he loved the stranger dearly. The grave was dug beneath a flowering wattle and Vail, in a low, sweet voice, broken by sobs, read a chapter from the Testament as the last burial rite. The following day I proposed that we set out on our return trip.

"I have a secret," Vail answered, which if you can unravel