

Gold Hunters' Adventures.

After sinking our shaft some 30 or 40 feet, we concluded that it wasn't advisable to keep up the night shift so, Carr one of my partners and myself took the job of getting out some slabs for Simpson, who had opened a broker's office at Simmon's Reef. These slabs we split from the stringy bark tree, using a froe and wedges for the purpose, first sawing the trees into seven foot lengths. Frequently after cutting down a tree we would find it wasn't straight grained, and so had the labor of cutting down for nothing. A tree of two or three feet in thickness was first quartered with wedges, and afterwards with the froe split into slabs of about two or three inches in thickness. These slabs were set on end, nailed to poles, top and bottom, and served as walls for stores and other buildings which were afterwards covered with bark or canvas.

The stringy bark tree bark, as its name implies is very fibrous, resembling cocoa matting, and makes an excellent roof, the only objection to it being a strong tendency to take fire. Where water is convenient it can be readily drenched the outside fiber soaking up water enough to keep it damp for some time.

For splitting seven foot slabs we had \$5 or \$25 per hundred, and while there was a demand for them we made good wages as the two of us could get out from 75 to 100 per day.

The quartz crushing mills which were all run by steam, and of which there were seven at Simmon's Reef, consumed a large quantity of wood, for which they paid \$2.50 to \$3 per cord at the stump. All the land being Crown land the wood in its natural state cost nothing. Canadian axemen were able to earn fair wages in cutting cordwood.

The mills in operation were principally stamps with Chilian Rollers or Berdan pans, and as they were kept going day and night, the noise was very annoying and at night almost deafening. The Chilian Rollers, consisted of 5 or 6 pairs of stone wheels with iron tires, running from 3 feet down to about a foot in diameter, and these were kept revolving in metal pans, in which quick-silver was placed, and with which the gold formed an amalgam which was afterwards passed through a retort, the quick-silver passing off in vapor which was condensed to be again used, and the gold remaining in a round cake as if cast in a small kettle.

The weight of these cakes would be from 5 to 20 pounds according to the richness of the ore and the quantity crushed. It was considered ore yielding less than \$5 to the ton, would not pay for crushing, but at that time crushing mills hadn't attained their present perfection, a good deal of quick-silver escaped and gold with it.

I have since seen that one of the best paying quartz mines in Australia, the Clunes Reef, yields only 8 dwts. or less than \$8 to the ton, but it has a very large ore bed.

The mills were placed on the banks of Blackwood Creek, and this was one of the few places in Australia where we had good water the year round. As no paying alluvial working had been discovered higher up the creek than where it was crossed by the Simmon's Reef, the water above this point was beautifully clear and we frequently caught a nice string of black fish, about the size of ordinary brook trout which were a welcome addition to our ordinary fare of bread and meat. In some of the clear pools we could see scores of these fish amongst which mingled numerous eels of about 18 inches to 2 feet in length. When we wanted blackfish only, it took a good deal of skillful manipulation to keep the bait out of the way of the eels.

Every water hole or chain of water holes in this part of Australia contains eels and crawfish, the latter very good eating although in the vicinity of Loddon and Murray Rivers we caught them only as bait for the river cod.

Along the banks of the Blackwood

Creek were beautiful tree ferns growing 8 to 10 feet high and a foot or more in diameter. These when cross cut into sections exposed numerous indented concentric rings, beautiful as those formed by a kaleidoscope, and were generally used for camp seats or stools.

Our expenses in working our quartz claim were heavy. When working night and day shifts, the cost of powder fuso drills, picks gads and hammers averaged \$24 per day, and as we were getting no return whatever our funds were daily becoming beautifully less.

Still we determined to stick to it as long as we had a shot in the locker, and two of us by working occasionally for some of the richer claims owners managed to keep the pot boiling for the party. At last after sinking 96 feet, and losing ten months time we found ourselves "dead broke," and abandoned our claim.

Probably some party has made a pile out of it, as I have always thought that where ever the leaders united forming what is known as the quartz reef, there must be gold in paying quantities. In every claim which had struck the reef between ours and the Crown claims, the yield of gold had been abundant, and who knows how near we may have been to a fortune.

In a shallow gully on the Mayborough diggings, where the sinking was on y three to four feet deep, and a wall of about a foot in width was left to define claims, an individual who spent his time in working these walls after the gully had been waked out, found an \$4 lb nugget in one of them, which actually had a pick mark on it when found, so that somebody came mighty near scooping in over \$20,000, and missed it after all.

My luthad cost mesome £20 and Isold it for \$1 to take me off the diggings, and with a couple of companions we lunched our swags to Forest Creek, near Castlemaine, one of the first discovered Victorian gold fields, where for one week we lived on Chinaman's fare, rice alone, not a mouthful of anything else except water, tassing our lips. This I found rather tough living so I finally made up my mind to try for a situation in Castlemaine, anything that would provide food that a white man could do a day's work on.

Fortunately I ran across an acquaintance a Mr. Warren, formerly of Toronto, who kept a restaurant and auction room at Gisborne, during my stay there. To him I explained my position and was immediately engaged as clerk in a store kept by him near the junction of Forest and Campbell's Creek, at the moderate salary, of \$7.50 per week and board, but as Mrs. Warren was an excellent cook, I do not think anything was made out of my board expenses.

Verbatim et Literatim.

Wallace, Kan., 2-4 day, 1889.

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