

heaving seas curled over and burst continuously on the shore, the sand was hard and dry a few feet away from the water-line, and Drake's spirits rose when he saw a tent and fly standing not far from where the man was working. He had been tramping over many miles of swampy, snake-infested country ever since daylight, and the prospect of obtaining a drink of tea and a meal of damper and salt beef enlivened him so that he soon covered the distance between himself and the "hatter."

No "doddery" old greybeard, worn out with long years of toil and disappointment, answered his "Good-morning," but a tall, well-set-up young man of under five-and-twenty years of age. He was leaning against the rude cradle, shovel in hand, as Drake came up, and his short-sleeved flannel shirt, opened at the neck, revealed the muscles and chest of a powerful man.

He was dressed in all respects like the generality of the men his visitor had seen mining on the beaches along the coast, except that instead of the usual rough, lace-up "Bluchers" he was wearing an unmistakable pair of sea-boots. A thick, reddish-brown moustache hid the firm mouth with its strong, white teeth, and drooped down the sides of the square-set, determined jaws, which so well matched the grey, resolute, but yet pleasant eyes. Drake "took" to the man at once.

"Are you working alone?" he asked.

"Yes, at present. I have a mate, but he has been ill for a week. He's up there in the tent."

"Getting anything?"

The stranger laughed. "Not much, but I guess