

was at the rate of £150. sterling, or, in round figures, seven hundred dollars per ton. Previous to this we had been inclined to take credit to ourselves for great self-denial in deciding to walk the whole distance, having our luggage carried; so that I can well recall to mind the strong revulsion of feeling consequent upon realizing the enormity of this demand, and the miserably reduced and unresponsive condition of our united exchequer. Why, the thing was simply impossible, for we could no more have raised seven hundred dollars than paid our passage back home again, which many would have done that day, had they but been able. Here was a difficulty we had not calculated upon, for though the distance was not really great, yet in consequence of the heavy and incessant spring rains, all the line of travel from Melbourne to the "diggings" (at that time there were no distinctly defined and properly made roads) was in such a state, that ordinary drays took from six weeks to two months in making the trip; in fact, on our way up, we passed many of them hopelessly sunk to the axles in the soft and spongy surface, with the draymen permanently camped alongside, daily consuming the very freight they were carrying, at so much expense, to the stores in the interior.

A good night's rest somewhat restored the mental and physical capacities of the more hopeful of our number to meet this tax upon their energies, and we resolved, that having come so far, nothing of an ordinary nature should prevent our going the remainder of the distance, even though we should be obliged to carry every thing required upon our backs. After considerable persuasion, we succeeded in imparting a portion of the same spirit to the more despondent ones, and at once proceeded to change all our plans, in order to carry out this resolve, the luggage of each party being divided as equally as possible amongst its several members. Now, in Australian phraseology, this mode of travelling and carrying your own luggage—that is, making a mule of yourself—is termed "Swagging" as the luggage so carried is called the "Swag," which is usually bound into two bundles

connected together by two straps, about nine or ten inches apart, with rather a larger interval between the bundles. When ready to make a start the "Swag" or double bundle is lifted up, and the head passed through between the bundles, allowing the straps to rest upon the shoulders, one bundle being supported on the back of the shoulders, and the other, which should always be the lighter, resting upon the chest. Arranged in this manner, it is really astonishing the weight a man can carry, day after day, for quite a long distance, without any extraordinary fatigue.

Consequent upon having "to Swag" everything, we were compelled to leave many things behind, that under other circumstances, would have been considered indispensable, but had now become luxuries, and so we had to content ourselves with the barest of bare necessities, leaving the remainder of our luggage in store at a cost of one shilling per week, for each separate trunk or box. The party of which I was a member comprised six persons, representing as many distinct localities in Canada, and, when our "Swags" were apportioned to each individual member, the utter despair with which I contemplated my share, came back upon my memory almost as fresh as on that wretched day. However, being committed too far to draw back at that late date, I made a virtue of the necessity, and at once tested my power by placing the load upon my shoulders, to see if it were possible to bear it over the long and dreary road before me.

The trial was moderately satisfactory, and as many of my readers would no doubt like to hear what a digger's "Swag" was composed of in those early days of the Australian diggings, I will give, from recollection, as exact an inventory as possible of my own particular load; premising by saying, that, as the tent of each party was as much as one person could carry, the tent carrier's individual "Swag" had to be divided equally between the other members of the party. My load then consisted of one pair of blankets, one woollen rug, one overcoat, one spare red shirt, an extra set of woollen underclothing, an extra pair of don't-mention