

ALVORD'S LUCK

CHAPTER I

DRAKE, the supercargo of the *Palestine*, made Alvord's acquaintance one dull, lowering day when a black north-easter was blowing hard, and a sullen, heavy sea tumbled upon the long line of beach that stretched from Point Plomer on the north to the harbour bar, ten miles away.

He, Drake, had emerged from the dense scrub of wild apple and bungalow palms, which in so many places breaks the monotony of the sea coast of New South Wales; when, from the bluff on which he stood, he saw about a mile away the figure of a man working on the beach.

"Some poor hatter* beggar beach-mining," he thought, as he laid down his gun and lit his pipe; "I'll go and have a yarn with him. Daresay I'll find him as dodderly and dirty as any other 'hatter.'"

After resting a few minutes, he took up his gun and three black duck which he had shot, and descended to the beach. The tide was low, and although the

* A "hatter" in Australian mining parlance is a man who works by himself, *i.e.*, has no mate. Men of this class are frequently met with on alluvial gold-fields in Australia.