

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

HOW I SECURED A BONANZA.

(A Story of the Nova Scotia Gold Fields.)

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

Reluctantly surrendering the tempting sample I bid Mag good night and hurried back to Brown's.

In order that the reader may understand what follows and also to make clear some points already alluded to, it will now be necessary to describe as briefly as possible the method of taking up gold claims in Nova Scotia. And now I confess my heart fails me. As I turn to the mining act with its pondrous clauses, its checks and counter checks framed to protect the original discoverer of gold properties, but in reality filled with pit falls, into which the simple prospector is sure to tumble and become the victim of the legal shark and the wily speculator; I am at a loss how to proceed. If I go into details, the general reader will turn away in disgust. If, on the other hand, I simplify too much, some brother, "learned in the law" will rise in his wrath and point out that most important matters have been omitted. The old fable comes to mind and it is with "fear and trembling" that I go on.

Gold belongs to the Crown, and the owner of the soil in which it is found has only the same privilege to secure it by application to the government that an outsider has, with one exception, the discoverer of gold in order to secure his claim, has to hurry to the Mines Office in Halifax and make application in writing for the number of areas he desires to cover. If his description is faulty, and many of them are, there is sure to be trouble ahead in case the mine proves of any value.

Quartz mines are, as far as possible, laid off in areas of one hundred and fifty feet along the general course of the strata, and two hundred and fifty feet across, and are described as class number one. He can apply directly for a lease, or for a license to search for gold, called a "prospecting license." It is with the latter that I have to deal, and I will add that they are good for six months, when a lease may be obtained. The fee is fifty cents for each area, up to ten, and twenty five cents for each additional area, and the number of areas to be taken under each license may include a tract not exceeding one hundred areas of class number one. He must also give bonds to recompense the owners of the soil for any damage that may be done.

Where properties have been occupied and staked off, the applicant is given a week, and in addition a day for every fifteen miles he has to travel in which to apply. This privilege is seldom effectual, and has proved a fruitful source of litigation. The first applicant is given the license or lease, and when the actual discoverer arrives at the Mines Office he too often finds that his property has been covered. Too poor to obtain legal advice, or to carry on a suit, he returns sorrowfully homeward and is often happy in obtaining employment as a miner in the property that should be his. In the West they have a summary way of settling "jumpers" and mining swindlers, but in Nova Scotia, aided by a mining act that should be reformed, they have nothing to fear. In conclusion, the Mines Office is open at ten in the morning, and closes at four p. m., and all applications have to be made during these hours.

Ralph had been escorting the girls to their respective homes and I met him at Brown's gate.

"That you, old fellow?" he asked; "I am going into town to-night with Dave. Sorry to leave you, but I must be at the office at ten. Luckily for me Dave has to go in."

There was an air of constraint about him that made me suspicious, but I merely said, "this is a very sudden move."

"Yes, Dave had a chat with the miners after you left and arranged to go into town and buy them fresh beef."

"Fresh beef, indeed!" thought I; "Dave has found out about the new discovery, and he, and you, my fine friend, are going to secure it if you can." I was too indignant to speak, and followed him silently in the house.

"Is that you, Mr. Rambler?" called Dave.

"Yes."

"I'll be ready in half an hour."

"How are you, Mr. Spendall. Where have you been all the evening?"

"Down at Mag's, where I have heard about the business that's taking Mr. Rambler and you to town."

"Does Mag know about it? Then the whole settlement will be at the Mines Office in the morning!"

"Why not see Jake Rehm at once and try and buy a share with him?" I ventured to ask.

"Pshaw man! I found the property myself, and that clumsy Dutchman must have stumbled on it by accident, I intended to secure it last week but was short of cash. To-night I heard he had found it, and of course I hain't agoing to allow myself to be jumped. Mr. Rambler has advanced me the money to pay the fees, and it's the best day's work he ever put in." Here my friend gave me a most provokingly triumphant look. "I found the boulders and hid them under the bushes, and what's more, I struck the lead and stripped it for over ten feet. The quartz is just rotten with gold, and gentlemen, you may think I am exaggerating, but I tell you Salmon River aint a patch on it."

"Where is the property?"

"Now wouln't I be green to tell you! No one git's that description until I hand it into the Mines Office."

"Well, tell me an interest with you."

(To be continued.)

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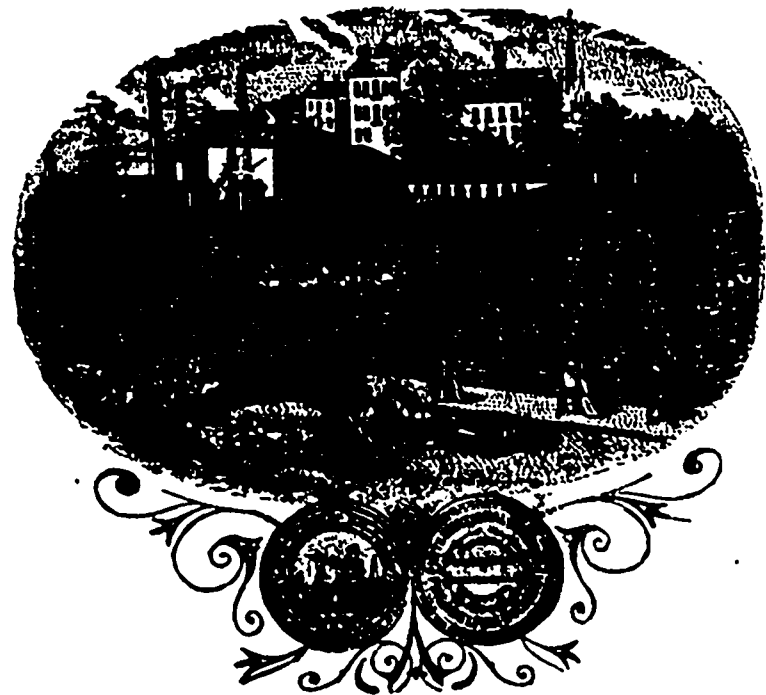
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