

**Kaffir, Kangaroo, Klondike:**

**Tales of the Gold Fields.**

**Thad. W. H. Leavitt**

**1898**

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Kaffir, Kangaroo, Klondike.

TALES OF

# The Gold Fields

--BY--

THAD. W. H. LEAVITT.

Author of "The Witch of Plum Hollow," Etc.

R. H. C. Browne, Publisher, Toronto.

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## A STRANGE PARTNER. An Australian Story.

When the P. & O. steamer called at Albany, West Australia, only two passengers came on board, a young Englishman and his wife. Before we reached Sydney I made his acquaintance in the smoking room and he told me the following story. I give it in his own words:

My name is Henry Detmold, I was born in Lincolnshire, England, and I am twenty-nine years of age. My parents were of the middle class and gave me a fair business education. When I was eighteen my father secured me a position in the County Bank at a very small salary; there I remained until two years ago. My salary had been increased to eighty pounds a year and I saw no prospect of an advance for years to come. I had never been out of my native county save two flying trips which I made to London for a few days during my holidays. By accident I picked up a copy of the Melbourne *Age* in which I read an account of the discovery of gold in Western Australia. The spirit of adventure, so strong in an Englishman's blood, was aroused. I resigned my position and took passage for Sydney. From that point I made my way to Perth, the capital of West Australia. I took passage on the coach for Coolgardie, and during my trip over the desert of sand, which I was compelled to walk, my box only riding on the stage, I more than once came to the conclusion that a situation in a bank at a meagre salary was highly to be preferred to gold seeking with the thermometer at 120 degrees in the shade. Coolgardie was a wilderness of tents and fleas, with absence of water, and what was worse, I discovered that the prospector's country lay still in the interior, but for shame and the knowledge that my position in the bank had long since been filled, I would have turned back. In Coolgardie I made the acquaintance of George Vail, a young Australian from Gipps Land, who like myself had been attracted to the west coast by the tales of wonderful finds made by the first comers to this land of sand and heat. Vail was very slight in build and in no wise adapted to roughing it as a miner, but such was his charm of manner that he won my sympathies and as we were attracted by our mutual ignorance of our new life and unfitness to cope with the difficulties which hedged us in we soon became inseparable companions and finally decided to strike out for the interior and try our fortunes. Our last money was expended in the purchase of a mule and provisions enough for a three months trip. The mule was to carry the provisions while we were to trudge alongside on foot. With swags strapped on our backs we turned our faces towards the east and bid good bye to Coolgardie. Fifty miles inland found us in the most bleak and desert-like country which you can imagine. We had turned to the north of the beaten track in the hope of coming upon a new field not taken up by the old-time and experienced prospectors, who overran like the locusts of Egypt. We camped upon the confines of a small creek, the only one in that part of the country. Day after day was spent in vain attempts to find a trace of gold, but so profound was our ignorance of mining that our ill success was no proof of the absence of the precious metal. A few miles to the north of the camp the sand plains terminated in a series of hills, almost mountains. This region we carefully avoided lest we should be lost in the hills. As a last resort we decided to explore the foot-hills, taking care to keep our camp continually in sight. To avoid fatigue we placed part of our supplies on the mule and with the tent advanced to the range which proved to be well watered, much to our surprise none of the water coming down to the plain, it being sucked up by the sand in a short distance. Our search was fruitless and we had determined to abandon our quest and return to Coolgardie when the following remarkable circumstances transpired. In consequence of Vail's youth and lack of strength we had made a division of the work, he took charge of the culinary department while the hard labor

fell to my lot. But for his skill in this particular I should have abandoned the search in two weeks. Given the most common materials he could be relied upon to prepare an excellent meal. One day while I was absent in the hills he found in the neighborhood of the camp a small piece of opal which evidently had recently been broken from its bed in the rock as the fracture was new and bright. Our conclusion was that we must have a neighbor but why he had not made his appearance known we could not conjecture. There was but one interpretation to be placed upon his desire to remain concealed and that was that he had hit upon a new field and was working it. We had never heard it stated that opals were found in the Colony, but Australia is a land where one is not surprised at any mineral discoveries. On the island were gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, diamonds and in Queensland opals. We resolved to prolong our stay and if possible discover the more fortunate prospector. We made a careful examination of the hills for traces and soon discovered them. On the fourth day we came upon a hut built in a secluded ravine, wherein we found an old man, who gave his name as Burton and stated that he had been in the country for months but had not succeeded in finding any gold. From that time an intimacy sprang up between us but we found the old man extremely reticent relative to his past life. Originally he had resided in Sydney, then in Melbourne, and finally had removed to the west coast. He was exceedingly feeble and ill-fitted to cope with such a life of hardships. From the first he conceived a strong partiality for Vail, who never tired in treating him to delicacies of his own making over the camp fire. We acted on hints given by our new friend, who evidently possessed a good knowledge of mining, but were not rewarded for our perseverance. At the end of two weeks the old man fell ill and we removed him on the mule to our camp where he could be made much more comfortable. Gradually he grew feebler, there was no disease, but a general breaking up of the system which indicated, but too clearly that the end was drawing near. To my surprise he manifested a strong desire to be left alone with Vail in the camp. They spent many hours in whispered conversations which excited my curiosity, but not a word fell from their lips which gave me a clue to the mystery, for mystery there undoubtedly was. One night the old man was very low, when he summoned me to his side and Vail went outside.

The old man said, "I have made a wonderful discovery, what it is I cannot tell you. It is possible that you may make the same discovery, I cannot understand why you have not made it long since. I want you to promise a dying man that should you make the discovery before you return to Coolgardie that you will conduct yourself as an honorable man and an Englishman."

I gave my promise and an hour later the old man breathed his last. The grief of Vail was so intense and poignant that I was still more mystified, though I knew that he loved the stranger dearly. The grave was dug beneath a flowering wattle and Vail, in a low, sweet voice, broken by sobs, read a chapter from the Testament as the last burial rite. The following day I proposed that we set out on our return trip.

"I have a secret," Vail answered, "which if you can unravel may result in the betterment of our fortunes. The old man strove in vain to solve it and his life paid the forfeit. It was for that he came into this colony and not for gold."

"I have given the old man my word of honor that I will not profit by the discovery if I should make it," I answered.

An embarrassed look spread over my companion's face and to my surprise his eyes filled with tears.

"Bear in mind," I continued, "If it will benefit you, any thing in my power will be freely done and you can rely upon me to the last."

"I know it, I know it," Vail answered, "fortunately your pledge in no way applies to the

subject to which I refer.”

“Do not deceive me,” I said hotly, for a moment I doubted him. “A man’s honor is not to be bartered for gold.”

“I pledge you my word,” was the answer, “and I value your honor as highly as you do yourself.”

I grasped him by the hand and we were friends again. What could it all mean? I was gravitating from mystery to mystery and not a ray of light to guide me. “I have the riddle in my pocket,” Vail continued, “perhaps you can read it.” He drew out a piece of paper yellow with age on which had been traced with a pen some rough outlines. Vail spread the paper out with a careful hand and said, “This is supposed to be a map of this part of the country. The white paper represents the flat or sand country, that is the plain, the small crosses the hills, this circle a marsh, lagoon or pond in the rainy season and the square an island of dry land in the centre of the marsh, the three small dots on the island, three gum trees growing only a few feet from each other and what is to be remembered is that the gum trees all lean toward a common centre. If you can find the island and the gum trees there is every reason to believe that our fortune is made. Years since a convict buried under the gum trees a magnificent band of Queensland opals.”

I started and exclaimed, “some of the opal of which you found a small piece.”

“Yes.”

“And the old man came here to look for it.”

“He did.”

“And confided the secret to you?”

“Yes.”

“We must find it.”

“Certainly.”

“And begin the search to-morrow.”

“I am agreed.”

I was consumed with curiosity but did not attempt to pry into the mystery as Vail did not volunteer any further information. My experience in the back blocks had taught me that to succeed we must proceed in a methodical manner. I studied the map carefully and concluded from the crosses representing the hills that the marsh could not be inland from the plain more than five miles and that all that was necessary was to go in that distance, using the compass, then move over half a mile at right angles and come out to the plain. This system repeated over and over again would cover the whole area and must in the end prove successful. Vail agreed with my conclusion and that night we went to bed confident that the prize was ours. The following morning we set out, taking the mule with us to carry two days’ provisions, and incidentally to give Vale a lift when he grew weary, for I realized that his strength would soon give out on such a march, though I refrained from mentioning that part of the program to him, for he was exceedingly sensitive on that point. Day after day we toiled over the hills but caught sight of no lagoon. It was the height of the hot season and a great drought was upon the land. I had learned enough of this strange country to know that we were confronted with great difficulties as the rainy season would transform the entire country. Where now were only barren stretches would be great sheets of water or broad and fertile plains covered with waving grass. A week passed and at heart I was utterly discouraged, but Vail never grew despondent. But for him I should have abandoned the quest. His courage never faltered, it was only a question of time and we would succeed. In two weeks nature drove us from the field, every

stream and lagoon in the hills dried up and at our camp the water was running very low. I felt that it was dangerous for us to remain any longer and urged the necessity of our departure upon my companion. He pleaded for delay but could furnish no reasons of any weight. To my surprise I found that under his gentleness was a firmness much greater than my own. In those trying days I used the word 'stubborn.' One Sunday Vail reluctantly consented that we should take up our march to the south on the following day. My spirits rose at the prospect, but Vail was depressed and wandered aimlessly along the first range of foot-hills. I was up bright and early making up the packs when Vail went down to the water hole for a supply with which to cook the breakfast. He came back with astonishment written all over his face.

"Come down here," he cried, seizing me by the arm.

I hurried down. Imagine my surprise when I saw oozing from the parched ground, which, owing to the intense heat, had cracked in a thousand places, opening to a depth of five or six feet in some spots, the water, clear and sparkling.

"What does it mean?" he asked in a whisper.

"It has rained on the higher ground," I answered.

"Rained! Who ever heard of it raining at this season in West Australia?"

I was compelled to acknowledge that I never had.

"You may as well unpack," Vail said, "there can be no danger on the score of water." I had no answer to this and grumbling I untied the packs and ate my breakfast in moody silence. I could see that Vail was watching and that while he regretted my disappointment he was equally determined to have his own way. That day we walked up among the hills and found the water bursting out of the ground in numberless places. We knew that it had not rained. The coming of the water was so strange and unaccountable that I was compelled to confess that I was unable to find any reasonable explanation. On the other hand Vail regarded the outflow as an intervention of providence on our behalf. We waited for several days until the low-lying places were filled with water and then began our search again. Not three miles from the camp we came upon a low plain which we had repeatedly, crossed in the dry time but never for a moment had we associated it with the hidden opals. Simultaneously we stopped and Vail pointed to the higher ground in the centre, now surrounded by a sheet of water only about a foot deep, but constantly rising. We waded across and in half an hour had located the blue gum trees which answered the description laid down on the map. Then we hurried to the camp and returned with picks and shovels and began digging. The ground was very hard and our progress slow.

Evening was coming on but such was our impatience that we resolved to continue the work. The moon came up and by its dim light we toiled steadily, at last we struck ground that was not so compact, this encouraged us and we sank our pick at that point perpendicular. At the depth of five feet we unearthed a small wooden box, we burst off the cover and in the pale moonlight saw five bands of opal more beautiful than anything we had ever dreamed of. Each band was fully four inches in breadth and about eighteen inches long.

"Hurrah!" shouted Vail trembling with excitement.

We started for the camp, crossed the lagoon and entered a thick piece of scrub to take a short cut. I heard not the slightest sound, suddenly something stung me in the calf of the leg, the pain was intense and I cried out, "I have been bitten by a snake." I put my hand down and found instead that a small spear was sticking in my leg.

My presence of mind returned instantly and I whispered, "down on the ground, quick and crawl into the bush to the right." I could feel the blood trickling from the wound and hurriedly bound it up with my handkerchief. Vail crouched by my side and was trembling violently.

Fortunately our revolvers were in our belts and we drew them and waited and listened. The silence was oppressive and every minute seemed a half hour. All that could be heard was the beating of our hearts.

My loss of blood must have been great for I whispered to Vail, "I am growing faint." He put his arm about me and asked, "Shall we venture it?" "No we are in an ambush and shall be speared if we move." The next instant half a dozen spears sped through the air over our heads and thrashed through the brush wood. We flung ourselves prone on the ground and waited, all was silent again. Then I fainted from loss of blood. Ere I lost consciousness I had a faint impression that tears were dropping on my face. When I regained consciousness, I found that another handkerchief had been bound around my leg above the wound and a small stick passed beneath it and then twisted until the handkerchief had been pressed into the flesh, thus stopping the flow of blood and probably saving my life. There we lay hour after hour till at last the welcome dawn came creeping in through the haze. I was too weak to sit up and remembering Vail's fright when the attack was made, gave up all hope. With the daylight our position would become known to the natives and in a few minutes all would be over. When I looked around Vail was no where to be seen. I cursed him for a coward and half struggled to my feet. Then there rang out the sharp report of a revolver followed by shot after shot in rapid succession. The boy was making it exceedingly hot for them. I put my hand to my belt, my revolver was gone; this accounted for the number of shots which had been fired. Then followed a pause and another volley of shots, he had reloaded and reopened the battle. A little later he dashed up the path to my side, a revolver in each hand, and cried "all that are not dead have run away, we must get to the camp." He helped me to my feet, but I could not touch the wounded foot to the ground. Leaning on his shoulder and hobbling forward we at last reached the open, there my strength gave out. Vail propped me up with my back to a boulder and bathed my forehead with some water and gave me a drink.

"Good luck," he cried, "there is the mule," which we had hobbled and left in the vicinity of the camp. A few minutes later I was on its back and soon reached the tent. It was impossible for me to go forward, but the natives had paid too dearly for their attack to return and undoubtedly left that part of the country for we saw no more of them. Vail explained that when he saw that daylight was coming on he decided that the only way to save our lives was to creep out and make a rear attack upon the savages, thus creating the impression that they had been attacked by a rescuing party. The ruse had proved successful and resulted in the death of three natives and the wounding of several others. Beyond a doubt I owe my life to the skill and forethought of my companion. The wound in my leg healed slowly and was exceedingly painful, two weeks passed before I was able to set out for Coolgardie, which we reached without further incident. From Coolgardie we jourmied to Perth. At the capital we met a French expert who paid us four thousand pounds for the box of opals, which I have since learned was much less than the market value of the gems. The money was equally divided and I was preparing to return to England when Vail made a request which I felt I could not refuse, it was that I should remain in Perth for one month during his absence, he would meet me at the Imperial hotel, on the first day of the following month at eight p.m. I opined that the request was connected with the promise which I had given to the old man at the camp and anxiously awaited the denouement. So anxious was I that there should be no delay that I took up my residence at the hotel a week previous to the termination of the time. The last day I carefully scrutinized all new comers, but saw nothing of my friend. When eight struck I abandoned all hope and grew anxious lest some accident had befallen him.

On the stroke of the clock a bell boy came down the stairs informed me that a lady wished to see me in private parlor "A." So far as I was aware I was not acquainted with a lady in Australia and I concluded that a mistake had been made. The parlor was dimly lighted, when I entered a young lady advanced from the window and said, "Mr. Detmold, I believe."

I answered in the affirmative.

"Be seated, please."

The voice was exceedingly sweet and musical and awakened memories, but in vain did I attempt to recall when or where I had heard it. There could be no doubt but that England was the place and I awaited impatiently a clue to the explanation.

"I have learned," the lady continued, "that you made a trip into the interior with a very dear friend of mine, George Vail, and that you both returned to Perth, where a handsome sum was received for the sale of a large package of opals. You will pardon me for my frankness but I am deeply interested in Mr. Vail." I heard an audible sigh and mentally registered the conviction that Vail was a deuced lucky fellow, for the woman was exceedingly attractive if not beautiful, and so far as I could see possessed a figure of exquisite proportions.

"Your statement in reference to Vail and myself is true," I answered, "and any information which I possess will be freely furnished."

"Thanks, will you kindly furnish me with Mr. Vail's address?"

"Unfortunately I am unable to do so. He left me in Perth one month ago to-day and was to meet me at this hotel at eight o'clock this evening, in fact I was waiting for him when I received the message from you."

"A remarkable coincidence," she murmured, with a perceptible shade of doubt in the tone which irritated me.

"Another question, where did Mr. Vail go to from Perth?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"He mentioned no place, merely stated that he would meet you in one month?"

"Yes."

"Who beside Mr. Vail and the purchaser was cognizant of the fact that you had sold the opals and received a handsome sum for them?"

"No person, the purchaser requested that no mention should be made of the transaction, alleging that if it became known that such a large quantity of opals had been thrown on the market it would depreciate the value of the gems."

"What became of the purchaser, may I ask?"

"He left the following day for Albany and informed us that it was his intention to proceed to Sydney and take the first Messageries steamer for France."

"Then it follows that you were the only person remaining in the colony who was aware that Vail had been paid a large sum of money?"

"The only person."

"May I ask what was the sum?"

"Two thousand pounds."

"And you received?"

"An equal amount."

"One more inquiry and I have finished. I have never heard that opals were found in West Australia. Did you discover an opal mine?"

For the first time I hesitated, I could feel that I was being closely watched by my fair questioner and an uneasy feeling crept over me. Was I free to explain the circumstances under

which the opals came into our possession? I was well aware of the old superstition that opals were unlucky and it was possible that our gems possessed this peculiarity.

“You have not answered my question Mr. Detmold.”

“No, I was considering; the opals came into our hands in a very remarkable manner and I do not know whether I should be justified in divulging the facts without Vail’s consent, as it was through him that they were discovered.”

“I may be frank with you, Mr. Detmold, and thus remove your doubts. From my infancy I have been the constant companion of Mr. Vail, he is my dearest friend and I feel a deeper interest in him than in any other person. I am convinced that were George present he would, under the circumstances, ask you to speak unreservedly.”

What more could a lady say? She referred to him as George, quite unconsciously, there could no longer be any doubt as to their relations and as I glanced at her I forgot my momentary irritation and envied the lucky fellow. Then I told her the story of the finding of the box, of Vail’s tact and bravery, and my admiration for the man. As I proceeded her face flushed and a new light came into her eyes. She paused a little time to recover her composure and then said:

“What you have told me is very wonderful. Have you the map of the ground where the opals were found?”

“No, Vail took it with him.”

“All of your statements have been direct but unfortunately, for you there is not the slightest evidence to corroborate them.”

“No, only my word.”

“Permit me to point out the facts,” she continued. “You go into the interior with Mr. Vail, you find four thousand pounds worth of opals under very peculiar circumstances, you return and dispose of them and on the day the sale is made Vail disappears and since that day he has not been seen or heard from. I may tell you that it is known that he did not leave Perth by any of the coast steamers, he did not proceed to Albany and take passage on one of the European steamers which call at that port, there is no trace of his having gone to Coolgardie or to any other point in the interior. What has become of him?”

“I would give my share of the money gladly to know,” I answered, now thoroughly alarmed.

“If I am compelled to apply to the police they will undoubtedly ask your assistance.”

Then it dawned upon me that in stating the facts I had woven a net of suspicion around myself. Could it be possible that I was already in the hands of a female detective? My blood ran cold. But a few weeks previous, Deeming, the murderer, had been arrested in the interior and taken to Melbourne, public feeling ran high in the colony and Justice ran a swift race.

Conscious of my innocence my courage rose and rising I said, “My advice is that you at once report the matter to the police.”

“And my advice is,” said the lady also rising, “that you Henry Detmold, are a great goose.”

I stared in amazement. What could it all mean.

“It may be so,” I answered stiffly.

“You came here to meet George Vail?”

“I most certainly did.”

“And you don’t know him when you see him?”

Was my brain failing? I advanced to my persecutor and instantly it flashed upon me. I threw my arms around the girl and carried her up to the light, there was no mistake, it was George Vail, he struggled to get free but I held him fast.

“You humbug,” I cried, “Even now when I know, you, you look pretty enough to kiss.”

“Do you think so?”

“Yes,” and remembering that he had kissed me when I lay in a half faint, I stooped down and kissed him on the cheek blushing as I did so, but George’s blushes were carnation compared with mine, and I set him down on his feet.

“What a stupid,” he said.

“I quite agree with you.”

“And you don’t understand yet?”

“Understand what?”

“That—that I am a girl.”

“A girl!”

“Yes.”

“And always have been?” I blundered out in my blunt way.

The only answer was a merry, ringing laugh. “Yes and always have been.”

“Then I am doubly glad I kissed you.”

“You held me.”

“No matter. Tell me, I am dying of impatience.”

“You made a promise to the old man, did you not?”

“Yes, and I think I understand. He must have known the secret. How did he discover it?”

“He knew immediately and accused me and I confessed.”

“And I was a stupid.”

“You did not find me out.”

“Who are you?”

“Helen Vail.”

“I am glad that I have only lost one half of my old partner, you are at least Vail.”

Then Helen told me her story. Her father had been an English half-pay officer, who on his retirement from the army had emigrated to Sydney in the hope of bettering his condition. His wife having died the first year after his removal to the colony, his health had failed, and as Helen was the only child her life had been devoted to his care. They had no surviving relatives, so far as she was aware and when her father died a few months previous to my meeting her at Coolgardie, his sudden death had thrown her penniless on the world, as his pension ceased with his life. After the small debts and the funeral expenses had been paid there only remained some fifty pounds with which to face the world. She had proceeded to Melbourne and in vain attempted to secure employment as a governess, but her youth and inexperience had proved an insuperable stumbling block and as a final resort she had resolved to go to the gold fields of West Australia and to facilitate her project and chances of success she had donned a man’s dress and made her way to Coolgardie. Her timidity and the roughness of the miners had prevented her from engaging in any enterprise and but for my arrival and friendship she would have been compelled to acknowledge her sex and obtain menial employment.

When she had concluded I said, “The natives found you an excellent shot, even if you are a girl.”

“Yes, my poor father taught me the use of the revolver when I was a little girl and that gave me confidence and taught me the tactics, for I had frequently heard him give his experience of adventures among the hill tribes in India, where he was stationed for many years.”

“After we came to Perth, why did you retire for a month and why did you lead me through such a maze before you made yourself known?”

“I had to secure a wardrobe and to remove the tan from my face and then I wished to ascertain whether you would recognize me in my new apparel.”

“Where did you hide?”

“I went to the Convent and the good sisters took me in and were very kind to me, though the Lady Superioress read me many lectures on the enormity of my sin and extracted from me a solemn promise that I would never again commit the offence.”

“There is one more mystery which I should like to have cleared up. It is, how did the old man become possessed of the secret that a box of opals had been buried on the island in the lagoon?”

“For many, many years he was a squatter in Queensland, so long ago that the penal system was in vogue in that and the other colonies. He had on his station at one time a ticket-of-leave man, by the name of Vigor, whom he treated very kindly. Vigor had been transported for forgery and was intelligent and had been educated as a mining engineer. He was a lifer and the one object of his life was to return to England, where he had a wife and family. The old man won his gratitude by attempting to secure a pardon for him from the authorities at Sydney, but his efforts were fruitless. Vigor, who acted as a shepherd on the run, found the opal mine but kept the secret to himself. He dug out the opals found by us and made his escape to Sydney where he hoped to obtain passage to England but failed. He was finally captured and sent to Norfolk Island from which place he was transferred to West Australia. The opals he had buried in Sydney. On his return to Sydney he dug them up and carried them with him to the west coast. At Perth, as a ticket of leave man he went into the service of a squatter. He wrote a letter to his old master in Queensland telling him that he possessed the treasure and that if he did not succeed in getting away from the colony he would bequeath it to him on his death, sending at the same time the sample which I found. Vigor kept an accurate account of the journey into the interior in search of pasture and made a map of the route as well as of the spot where he ultimately buried the opals. Vigor and his companions made their way to the coast but he was so enfeebled in consequence of the hardships he had undergone that he died in a few months after his return. Previous to his death he sent to his old employer the map by which we located the treasure. The old man had no faith that he would be able to find the opals and years passed by. The great drought in Queensland ruined him and as a last resort he came to Perth and set out on his search, encouraged by the fact that the gold miners were pouring into the interior. You know the rest and his unfortunate death at our camp. When he ascertained that I was a girl and had heard my story his heart went out to me and he gave me the treasure, provided I could find it.”

“And you divided it with me.”

“That was only fair.”

“Yes, if you had been a man, but as you are not you must take my part less the few pounds which I have spent.”

“Never,” exclaimed Helen the tears coming to her eyes.

I had loved Vail as a boy, as a girl I worshipped my old partner and the result was that within one week we were married and are now on our way to the Illawarra district where I propose buying a small station and settling down for life. Some time in the future my partner and I will go to Queensland and on the run of the old man, which is on the Barcoo, attempt to locate the original opal mine.

Eighteen months later I was not surprised when I read in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that a very rich deposit of opals had been discovered on the Barcoo by a man named Detmold.



## THE BLACK CAT OF KLONDIKE.

In the winter of 1896 I was attending the Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto, and drawing wills, deeds and mortgages for a firm of barristers on a salary of five dollars per week. I was young and ambitious and dreamed that it was only a question of time when I should become, if not a judge, at least a leading barrister. At a conversat, given by the Law Society, I met my fate and fell in love with Edith Hawthaway. The passion was reciprocated and a few weeks later we were engaged. When the marriage would take place was delightfully nebulous as was my legal status. We had decided that it was to be and that was all-sufficient. One caution we exercised and but one, it was, we kept the engagement a secret. Edith's father was a broker living in a fine residence on fashionable St. George Street, and reputed to be in very comfortable circumstances. Possibly he might object to the betrothal of his only child to an impecunious law student, who had only passed his first exam, and was by no means certain of passing the next one. So we drifted pleasantly with the tide and cherished our secret with infinite satisfaction. One Saturday afternoon I received a hurried note from Edith asking me to call that evening. Instinctively I felt that our mutual happiness was threatened. I was busy engrossing a mortgage at the time and unconsciously I made all the sums payable to Edith Hawthaway, instead of Isaac Lazerus.

I found Edith in tears. "We must part," she cried, "all is over."

"No, no," I said, "it cannot be."

"I was so happy, and now the cruelty of fate."

"Calm yourself and tell me all. We shall never part, come what may."

"We are ruined," she sobbed. "My father, my poor father risked everything in Chicago and he has lost. Home, money, everything must go and yet there will remain a debt of honor for twenty thousand dollars. This money was entrusted to him by a widow, it was her all. The shock was more than he could bear, he has had a paralytic stroke and the doctors say he will never recover. He may live for years but will be helpless. Mother, as you know, is an invalid, and, she paused and wiped away her tears. How can I tell you? but I must, only yesterday Fred Reingold asked me to be his wife. He knows all and yet he declares that if I will consent, the old home shall be saved and the debt of honor paid. What am I to do? In one year we shall be turned into the street. Mother has a few hundred dollars, we can subsist upon it for a year by discharging all the servants and living with the greatest economy. Then will come the poor-house for father and mother, and for me God only knows."

"Some way will open," I murmured.

"What way?"

I was silent.

"I have made up my mind," Edith said, shuddering. "There is but one way for escape, we must bury our love, I must be sacrificed."

"No," I protested. "You do not, you cannot love me."

Edith turned deadly pale and gave me one look. The cruel words died on my lips. Then we sat and brooded. Edith sprang to her feet and exclaimed, "I have it, the one chance."

There was a ring in her voice from which hope was bred.

"Tell me, name it," I cried.

"You will have to consent," she said slowly, as if weighing every word.

"Then I consent."

“It is an inspiration,” she continued, “I will tell Fred Reingold that I will marry him one year from to-morrow, provided the twenty thousand dollars is not paid by that time. You will have one year in which to make a fortune.”

“But will he consent to such terms?”

“Yes, if he loves me.”

My hopes sank to zero, then froze.

“I have not finished,” Edith said, she had divined my thoughts, “they have found great gold fields on the Yukon, it is a frightful country on the confines of Alaska. You must go there and find a fortune and be back in time.”

“But how?” I asked.

“That shall be a secret until you come back. I will see Fred Reingold to-morrow and to-morrow night you shall know your fate.”

The following evening she met me at the door and smiled. “It is all arranged,” she said. “The year has been granted, you are to go.”

“When?”

“To-morrow morning on the first train.”

“But,”--I never finished the sentence.

“Every hour means success or failure,” Edith exclaimed reproachfully.

How that evening fled away we only realized.

When I kissed her good-bye she slipped three crisp one-hundred-dollar bills into my hand. Then she whispered, “remember this is St. Patrick’s day, March the 17th, and the time will expire at twelve o’clock at night, one year from to-day. I must give you something to bring you good luck, what shall it be?”

“That which you love the best, next to me.”

She glanced around the room, at her feet on a white rug lay a small black kitten. “There he is,” she said, pointing to the kitten, “my second love.”

I picked the kitten up, inspired by a sudden impulse.

“He shall keep me company.” I put him in my coat pocket and half an hour later I was packing my scanty wardrobe. Six days later I was standing on the quay at Vancouver, making inquiries for transportation to the Yukon gold fields. The man to whom I addressed the question was a rough, burly fellow, none too clean, with a heavy beard covering his face up to the eyes.

His answer was, “What are you going to the Yukon for?”

“To mine gold.”

“Ha! ha! ha! Jim,” to another man who was loading some packages into a yawl, “Jim, come here, do you see this spindle,” pointing to me. “Here’s a new chum who wants to go to the Yukon and hunt for gold. Look at him, see them legs and hands. Ha! ha!”

“Only another tenderfoot gone mad,” was Jim’s reply as he walked away.

“I’m going to the Yukon,” I said decidedly.

“Right you are my boy. You may start but you’ll never come back. I’ve seen plenty of new chums on Bendigo and Yackendandah, they always talk big on the go-in, and cry on the come-out. What’s that you’ve got in your pocket?”

“A kitten.”

“Is the kitten on the rush too?”

“He goes with me.”

“Bless my eyes, Jim, this slim has got a kitten going with him to the Klondike.”

“No fear of them ever getting there,” Jim responded.

“Boy, take my advice and go home to your mother,” the man said in a kind tone.

To be called a boy brought tears of vexation to my eyes. I turned to walk away.

“Hold on, you are determined to go?”

“Yes.”

“Have you money to pay for your passage and an outfit?”

“Certainly.”

“It will cost a hundred and fifty.”

“I have it.”

“Jim, the new chum has the dust, shall we take him? He will bring the party up to an even dozen and reduce the expenses.”

“You’re Captain, do as you please, anyway the tenderfoot and the cat don’t weigh more than a puff ball,” Jim answered.

“My name is Simeon, Simeon of Ballarat and Bendigo and Fiery creek. This way sharp if you mean business. See that schooner over there, we sail at four this afternoon.”

For an hour we were busy securing my outfit and provisions. When all were on board we hoisted sail and were off, I had only fifty dollars left and the kitten. The men were all experienced miners, some from Australia, the others from California, Nevada and Colorado. When I took the kitten out of my pocket and fed him there was a roar of laughter and a fusilade of remarks. They named the kitten Klondike and ere we reached Dyea he had become a universal pet and the mascot of the party. It would have made Edith’s heart glad to have seen the miners fondling Klondike. At Dyea we unloaded our supplies and hired the Indians to pack them over Chilcoot Pass. At Lake Linderman a boat was built in which we floated down the Yukon, I could only make myself useful as cook, being totally unfitted for the hard work. Simeon counselled that we should not descend to Dawson City, but turn off and ascend a tributary at a point estimated to be from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles from the city. The object aimed at was to discover a new field and locate the best claims. His advice was taken. We made our way up the creek until our progress was stopped by a series of rapids, there we pitched our tents. I was left in charge of the camp while prospecting parties went out in every direction. Gold was found in the beds of most of the streams, but not in paying quantities. Then the boat was hauled up the rapids with a rope, we were to make a further advance into the interior. That night the boat broke loose, was swept over the rapids and totally destroyed. Two of the miners went down to the Yukon to ascertain if they could get some boat which was descending the river to transport our supplies to Dawson City. They failed, but brought back the news of the wonderful strike made on the Eldorado. Instantly all was confusion. The men became mad. The mines were one hundred miles away. Packs were made up the following morning, a cache was built, in which to store the provisions, and in twenty-four hours a start was made. The men each carried one hundred pounds of provisions in addition to a pick and shovel. Simeon assisted to make up my pack of fifty pounds. The heat, during the middle of the day, was intense, the air filled with insect pests. The route ran over mountains, through bogs, across streams. In places the moss was two feet in depth. With my load I plunged and fell and ran, for the men marched at a rapid pace. Not ten miles had been covered when I fell exhausted. Not even for the coveted fortune for Edith could I have gone another mile. I was at the rear of the line and would have been left unheeded but for the watchful care of Simeon, who came back and sat down by me.

“You can never go through,” he said, “I knew that it was madness for you to try. You have done much better than I thought you would. Miners on a rush would leave their best friends to

perish. I have been through it before, I know what it means. If you would save your life go back to the cache. There is plenty of provisions, you cannot starve. Go to work and build a hut, dig a hole into the hill-side so that the back and most of the sides will be of earth, finish it with small logs, put on a roof of poles, cover them with moss, then with a layer of earth, then more moss and more earth, make it thick. About a foot distant from the walls of the hut build another row of logs and fill the space between with moss, taking care to pack it tightly, then plaster the cracks with mud. Be certain and have a big fire-place at the rear, make it of stone and the chimney of green logs standing on end. When you have these things done you will be safe, but not till then. I promise that I will come back for you, but it may not be until Spring. Here is my hand and John Simeon never breaks his word. Cheer up, we will probably have to return for provisions in a few weeks. Then you shall go through, even if I have to carry you on my back.”

He gave me a hearty hand-shake, turned and was gone. I sank back on the moss and cried with a bitterness which I shall never feel again. Then a great fear came upon me. For a moment I believe my heart ceased to beat. Could I find my way back? Every other question vanished. I struggled to my feet and turned back with an energy born of despair. Every few minutes I stopped and examined the foot-marks. The sun had gone down but the night only lasts, in that latitude, in summer, for one brief hour. I was without a watch and could only guess the time. At last I could proceed no further. I threw off my pack and released Klondike from the little wicker cage I had made to carry him in, and in ten minutes I was fast asleep. When I awoke the sun was up, but how long I slept I never knew. I built a fire, ate a hearty breakfast and started. In half an hour I came to a point where two trails crossed, which to take I did not know. I went forward on one, then turned back, took the other and again turned back. I was lost. Cold beads of sweat stood out on my body, my brain beat like a trip-hammer. As I stood thus at the parting of the ways my eye caught sight of a fluff of cotton wool on a branch not five yards distant. I had lined Klondike's basket with the material before leaving the camp. “Saved by Klondike!” I cried. So bewildered was I that I should have passed the cache had it not have been for the cat. He began to mew and try to get out of his basket. “Here we are at last,” I cried. For four weeks I labored at the hut, a miner would have built it in four days. After three weeks I began to look for the return of my companions, but at the end of six weeks I abandoned all hopes. The cold gradually increased. I made everything tight and snug, then I determined to prospect the nearby creeks for gold. I found gold on every side but my best work did not exceed five dollars in a day. Klondike was my constant companion, he had grown strong and agile and roamed about the camp, at times going into the forest for hours. The cold came down over the mountains and drove me into the hut. I only ventured out to cut my supply of wood. I fell into a despondent mood, but for Klondike I believe that I should have gone mad. With infinite patience I taught him a variety of tricks and there were times when I talked to him of Edith and the happy days when he had nestled in her arms. In such hours I imagined I saw her spirit looking out of his eyes and bidding me be of good cheer. At night he crept into the fur-lined bag in which I slept and comforted me in the solitude with his pur. In January I noticed that every afternoon he wished to leave the cabin and remain outside for nearly an hour. As this continued day after day my curiosity was at last aroused and I determined to watch him, which I did the following day. Leaving the hut he made his way diagonally up the hill-side and then disappeared. I resolved to ascertain the attraction. I struggled into the snow which was piled twenty feet deep and sank to my waist. Then I took a shovel and commenced to dig. My progress was exceedingly slow as I had to cut the snow down several feet before it would support me. Twenty feet per day was the best progress I could make. Klondike evidently believed that I was

constructing the road for his convenience for when he daily returned from his mysterious visit he stopped and rubbed himself against my legs as if to encourage me in my good work. On the fourth day I had reached a point where I could see the hole in the snow in which he disappeared.

It was on the top of a ledge of rock some ten feet wide.

“To-morrow,” I said, “I shall know the reason.” That night I constructed a short ladder with which to surmount the difficulty. The following day I placed it against the ledge and climbed up. The crumbling snow, running down the bank, prevented me seeing what was before me. I brushed the snow away and looked in. At my very face was a skeleton hand holding a small black object in its bony fingers. I screamed with terror, the ladder lost its balance, the next instant I was twenty feet below on my back in the snow. I ran to the hut and actually barred the door, so great was my fright. What could it mean? I had read of demons appearing in the guise of black cats, a thousand grotesque fancies danced through my brain. Then I called Klondike, he was at my feet. He could not possibly be in the skeleton hand and also Klondike at the same time. Yet even that I imagined might be possible. You must bear in mind that for months I had lived isolated from human companionship, that my brain had become warped and my thoughts abnormal. Was the skeleton hand a warning? Should I abandon the quest and leave the mystery unsolved? Perhaps it was a portend of my fate. Thus I reasoned and surmised, conjured and imagined. My one consolation was that Klondike had crept into his accustomed place and was apparently sleeping the sleep of innocence, unmindful of the skeleton hand. When the sun came up over the mountains the next day my courage returned. I determined to probe the affair to the bottom. To prove that there was nothing supernatural about the cat, I took Klondike in my arms and made my way to the top of the ladder. The hand was there and the cat was there. He sprang from me and entered the opening, coming out again with a bone in his mouth, the fore-arm of a man. “Only the last resting place of some poor miner who has died in this wilderness,” was my comment. Then, for the first, I noticed that the object in the grasp of the skeleton hand was a small book. I reached out and tried to remove it from the bony fingers. They held it in a death grasp and I was compelled to pick up the hand, which I carried to my cabin. I pried open the fingers and opened the book. The fly leaf was closely written over in a language which I was unable to read. The book, printed in a fine, small, black type, was equally unreadable. From the chapters and for other reasons I decided that it was a copy of the New Testament. I carefully wiped it and laid it away on a shelf. “To-morrow,” I said, “I will close the opening, the stranger’s bones shall rest in peace.” The next day, provided with pick and shovel, I climbed the ledge and carefully removed the snow. Then I knelt down and looked in, the cavern was some three feet in height and eight in length. The small bones were strewn about, but the trunk remained prone upon the centre of the cavern. Suddenly something soft touched me on the face, I sprang back, lost my balance, and for the second time found myself on my back in the trench below. I scrambled to my feet and ran for the hut. Then I stopped and turned, Klondike was sitting complacently on the top of the ladder. “Now I will be a man,” I said, and I walked back heartily ashamed of myself. I took my tormentor to the hut, fastened him in and returned. I resolved to replace all of the scattered bones and seal up the mouth of the cave. To do so I was compelled to crawl inside. In my task I chanced to move the trunk, the sun shot a beam of light within and reflected a dull, yellow glitter. There could be no mistake, it was gold. Then I paused, should I take it or bury it with the bones? It had been his in life why not in death? If Simeon did not return I too would be found some day, my bones bleaching beside my handful of yellow dust. No, I would leave it with its rightful owner. Carefully I gathered the

bones, they were sacred to the memory of the unknown. Edith's love, hope and avarice all were but memories, as long passed as if ages had gone by. Then it came upon me that a trust had been committed to my charge. The dying man had left a message, a sacred injunction written in God's Book. The handful of gold was to be sent to some loved one. Instantly all my sympathies were aroused. I had something to live for, to work for I felt like a new man. I went back to the hut and brought with me a small tin dish in which to gather the last grain. I picked up the nuggets one by one. So intent was I that it was not until the pannikin was half full that I noticed that the supply was by no means exhausted. I went for another and larger dish and another and another, and still more remained. Night came on and I was compelled to relinquish my task. The cabin had been transformed into a treasure house. A demon whispered in my ear, "You are rich. Edith and love and happiness are before you. Fool, you have but to reach out your hand and take the gold. Dead men tell no tales."

A violent trembling seized upon me. My resolution wavered, then my eye rested upon the little black book and a great calm fell upon me. "No," I said, "it is not mine, I will not be a thief." From that moment I was firm and I never doubted but that providence would rescue me from the Yukon. When I had removed all the treasure I closed the mouth of the cave, then I fashioned a rude cross and planted it firmly in the ground to mark the burial place. My next step was to make forty small bags out of heavy cloth into which I poured the gold, the bags I buried in the hut beneath my bed. The possession of the treasure brought a new fear, that of robbers, yet so far as I knew, there was not a man within one hundred miles of me. I frequently awoke in the night and listened intently, believing that I heard footsteps. One night I suddenly sprang to my feet, at the very door were snarling and fighting dogs, then followed a thump on the side of the hut.

"Hello! Hello! are you there!" came in a hoarse voice.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Open the door, new chum." It was Simeon.

I gave a shout, rushed out and fairly hugged him with joy and Jim too, who was unharnessing the dogs.

"And here's Klondike, grown as big as a tiger," Simeon cried, picking up the cat. "Have you any grub?"

"Plenty."

"Boil the billy and make tea. Is any of the brandy left?"

"I never touched it."

"The best news yet. Knock the neck off a bottle, Jim, brandy." Jim was in the hut in an instant. After justice had been more than done to the meal, Simeon after looking around said, "Well done for a boy. Had a long wait, eh?"

"I always thought you would come."

"Hear that Jim, no one doubts the old man's word. That's better than gold. I would have been back in a month, but we got word from a party who came down from this section that you had left and that the cache had been robbed. It must have been another camp. Had many visitors looking for food and stealing what you did not give?"

"I have not seen a man since we parted in the woods."

"Good heavens! why hundreds and hundreds have gone down the river and you did not know enough to make for the big stream, get taken on board and find yourself in Dawson City in two days."

"No."

“I told you Jim, that being a new chum he’d sit down as long as the grub held out.”

“Did you mine any gold?”

“A little.”

“Show it?”

I handed him the buckskin bag which held the gold I had mined.

“Twenty ounces, enough to take you home.”

“How did you succeed?” I asked.

“Struck it rich, took out twenty-five thousand dollars worth, Jim twenty thousand, and the rest of the party about the same and we have only scratched over our claims. The dust is down at the city.”

“When shall we make a start?” I asked.

“In the morning.”

Then we turned in for sleep.

At an early hour Jim was busy loading the sleds with supplies. “I’m blessed if you have eaten as much as a canary bird,” he remarked to me. “The boys will have to run up and bring down the rest.”

I had purposely said nothing of my wonderful experience, waiting until I could tell Simeon privately, which I did showing him the skeleton hand and the black book in confirmation.

“I don’t know where you picked up these things,” he said, “but one thing is certain you are off your chump.”

“But I have the gold.”

“Where?”

“Buried there.”

“Take the pick and dig it up.”

“What do you say to that,” I asked as I pulled out a bag, “and that and that and that.”

“Jim, we are a fine lot of duffers, come in, this new chum and the cat, mind you the cat, have beaten every man on the Bonanza and Eldorado.”

Jim came in and stared, he could not speak, then he whispered, “How many has he got?”

“Only forty bags.”

“But the gold is not mine,” I said.

“Not yours, then whose is it?”

“The dead man’s.”

“And you will not keep it?”

“No, if the book contains a will.”

“And you are a lawyer’s clerk?”

“I could not keep it,” I repeated firmly,

Simeon turned me around and around and then said. “I believe you, if you live you will make a man, you have got the timber in you, shake.”

The gold was carried out and loaded on a sled while I put Klondike in a bag. We reached Dawson City and after some weeks delay secured a steamer for St. Michael’s, from that point we sailed to Vancouver. At the latter place I ascertained that the value of the find was one hundred and ninety-five thousand dollars. The dust was deposited in the Bank of Montreal. Then Simeon and I went in quest of a man who could read the writing in the black book. At last an officer from a Russian man-of-war was found. He translated the message. Here is the translation:—

“My name is Vosparr Plonvisky, I was born in Warsaw of noble Polish parents. The Russian

authorities arrested me as a member of a secret society and banished me to Siberia. There I remained for twenty years. Again and again the black knout (cat in English) cut my flesh to the bone for trying to escape. Finally I made my way to sea in an open boat and reached Alaska. The accursed Russian was there. I was seized on suspicion and sent into the interior to look for mines with several officials. Our voyage was up a great river. One night I stole the boat, which was well supplied with provisions and firearms, and sailed away up the river. After several weeks I came to the rapids, where I abandoned the boat, then I packed my provisions into the interior, keeping to the west. My intention was to make my way to Canada, when I reached a small stream, near this spot I found a small stream the bed of which was yellow with gold. I resolved to gather a vast store, hide it and then proceed on my way. After I had collected the gold I hid it in the cave where my bones rest. Then my last sickness came upon me. I grew weaker day by day. I realize that I am dying, my last act is to write this and creep into the cave I make a solemn vow, it is: If a Russian should find me and touch me or my gold, I swear by the memory of the black knout (cat), that I will return and curse him and his children and his children's children. To the man of any other nation the gold is a free gift."

I sold the gold to the bank and handed a cheque for five thousand dollars to Simeon.

"Not a cent," he said, "I have enough and to spare."

Then I gave him five hundred to hand to Jim. One week later I was in Toronto. It was Saturday night when I arrived. When the cab drew up at Edith's home I saw that the drawing room was a blaze of light. Then my heart sank, I had not had a word from her since I left on the quest. I felt that she had broken her promise to me and married Fred Reingold. With a trembling hand I rang the bell. I ignored the servant and walked in with Klondike in my arms. The next instant Edith was in my arms. Her first words were:

"Did you get any of the letters or telegrams?"

"Not one."

"Did you see the notices in the newspapers?"

"No, what notices?"

"Notices for you to come back. Father did not lose his fortune. It was a mistake in the telegram from Chicago, the margin was on the right side and all was explained when the broker wrote. Father nearly recovered and is very well."

"What of Fred Reingold?" I stammered.

"Married six months ago to Bessie Loudon."

"I have got the gold," I said.

"And we don't want it," Edith answered.

In our library, under a glass case, stands the skeleton hand holding the Greek Testament. Now and then I point out this hand to the new baby whose name is Simeon.



## THE SKELETON MINE. A Tale of South Africa.

I was one of the first prospectors in the Transval to search for gold and a precious dance it lead me. At that time but few Englishmen had ventured into the Boer country and such was the jealousy with which they were regarded that it was impossible to secure any information which would assist in the search. Footsore and weary I tramped from farm to farm, content to obtain a supper of mealies and the toughest of tough South African mutton. There were rumors on every hand that gold existed but to locate it was quite another matter. It has since transpired that in my wanderings I passed over some of the richest gold bearing deposits in the world but so unlike the gold bearing fields of California and Australia is the Rand that the most experienced miner would never have dreamed of the richness of the claims. I was not searching for quartz but the poor man's field, placer mines. To add to my perplexities my money ran short and I could only replenish my purse at Cape Town. I sank so low that I was compelled to sell my horse and from that hour I was on a level with a Kaffir in the estimation of the Boers. The white man who approaches a farmhouse in the Transval on foot must be prepared for abject humiliation. Fortunately I had acquired some knowledge of sheep in Australia else I believe that I should have starved. When all else failed I became a sheep doctor and vended a compound whose virtues would have done credit to the most widely advertised patent medicine nostrum.

One long to be remembered evening I arrived at a Boer's house situated twenty miles from any other habitation. When I asked for supper and a night's lodging the door was slammed in my face and in the worst of German I was ordered to begone. Physically I was incapable of complying with the command and mentally I had not the slightest intention of departing. In an outhouse, devoted to storing mealies, sheep skins and harness, an old man was sitting on the doorstep compounding a mixture, which I recognized as a sheep remedy. I approached him and gave him to understand that I was possessed of a remedy which would work wonders in such cases. He was all attention instantly and the result was that in a few minutes an excellent meal was spread in the house, to which I was invited. Then I proceeded to mix a number of simples, which the man possessed, and finally I poured into the simmering mass, with the greatest care and ostentation, a few grains of borasic acid, which I fortunately possessed.

The following day I was the most surprised man in South Africa when I learned that my preparation was working a marvellous cure. I was invited to remain with the Boer the balance of the season as an honored guest. Day after day I tramped the hills, returning at night as wise and as rich as when I set out. There were unmistakable indications that gold should be found in the vicinity but the stubborn fact remained that I could not find it. I had given up all hopes and only remained to recruit my strength previous to setting out on my long journey to the coast when the following remarkable circumstances transpired.

I slept in a great four poster bed of proportions ample for a race of giants, and as I was deposited between two feather ticks in the old German fashion, the weather being the reverse of cold, my dreams were not the most pleasant and my rest not untroubled. But for offending the good housewife I would have asked for a sheepskin on the floor.

One sultry night, after a long day's walk, I found myself tossing and restless and unable to get even a forty wink nap. For hours I thus lay lamenting my fate and regretting having abandoned the land of the Golden Fleece for the land of King Solomon's mines. At a late hour I fell into a disturbed sleep. I awoke with a start and listened attentively. All was quiet in the house and yet I felt certain that some one was preparing to leave the place. How long this

impression remained I am unable to say. I am by no means certain that I again fell asleep, and yet I am compelled by that which followed to acknowledge that it is probable that such was the fact. Whether dreaming or waking, I saw a venerable old man, dressed as a German peasant, walk quietly out of the front door, cast a suspicious glance around, as if to ascertain whether he had been observed and then slip out into the darkness, where he disappeared.

So realistic was the scene that the following morning I inquired whether a friend of the family had paid them a visit after I had retired.

The answer was, "No."

Two nights later I saw precisely the same thing happen again but as on the former occasion I could not decide whether I had been dreaming or not. The appearance of the venerable old man was indelibly stamped upon my brain. I saw distinctly that he was very old, that his beard was as white as a lamb's fleece and that he was dressed in an antiquated garb, seen only in the most secluded parts of Germany, in which country I had spent several months attending a school in my boyhood days. The next night I determined to remain awake but was not successful and again I saw the old man depart. His constant re-appearance had at last a powerful effect upon me. I decided that the next time, whether asleep or awake, I would follow him. With this resolve upon my mind I retired the next night and soon fell into a heavy sleep, due, no doubt, to my former wakefulness. Once more I awoke, or imagined that I awoke, with the well-defined conviction that some person was preparing to leave the house. Cautiously I crept out of bed and as the old man left by the front door I slipped out by a side entrance. I remember distinctly saying to myself: "This is certainly not a dream; there is the man walking slowly over the veldt and here I am watching and ready to follow where he may lead."

Follow him I did. My strange guide never once looked behind him after he had left the house but proceeded directly to the hills, which ran along the north of the farm and were distant some two miles. He gradually quickened his pace and finally I was compelled to run to keep him in sight. After he entered the hills he turned and doubled on his track in the most provoking manner and frequently I not only lost sight of him but barely escaped meeting him face to face, so sudden were his turns and so unexpected his re-appearances. Why I was following him I could not tell. In fact I was possessed of but a single impulse and that was to follow. The old man never halted or hesitated but finally entered a narrow valley, at the end of which rose a precipitous cliff. At that point he suddenly disappeared. When I reached the spot I found that beneath an overhanging rock an excavation had been made at some time in the past, as there were no signs of recent work. The pit was thickly strewn with fallen leaves, and as it was but a few feet in depth, I let myself down into it in the hope of discovering some passage by which the old man had disappeared. My foot struck something which was evidently metal. It proved to be an antiquated shovel with a short handle. The night was a bright one and at the time the moonbeams streamed directly into the place. I could discover no means of retreat save by the way I had entered and it was impossible for my strange guide to have returned by that route and passed me unnoticed, unless he possessed the power of rendering himself invisible. To probe the matter to the bottom I commenced digging. The ground was exceedingly hard and my progress correspondingly slow. I threw out several shovels of earth and then climbed up the bank and examined it. I came upon a nugget, worth at least five pounds, then another and another, but all smaller than the first. All of my mining instincts were aroused and I forgot the strange circumstances under which I had been led to the mine. Again I entered the pit and set to work with all my energy and again I was handsomely rewarded. The fever of greed seized upon me and I worked as if my life depended

on the result. The seventh time I began digging but the first thrust of the shovel brought it in contact with some hard substance. I stooped down and found that I had uncovered the complete skeleton of a man. An indescribable terror seized upon me. I had been mining in a grave. I am not superstitious but for the first I clearly realized the uncanny circumstances which surrounded my discovery. I imagined that I heard vague whisperings in the air and that a rumbling sound came swelling up the valley. I lost my presence of mind, threw down the shovel and ran for my life. I would have sworn that a legion of nameless fiends were at my very heels, so insane was my fright. When I emerged from the hills the moon was shining calmly and the sense of peace and repose brought me to my senses. I walked rapidly to the farmhouse, which was in sight, crept in and without undressing threw myself on the bed. I was soon asleep nor did I awake until the housewife called me to breakfast.

When I discovered that I was dressed I was amazed. I remembered distinctly going to bed the previous evening: but had no recollection of having got up during the night, until by chance I put my hand in my pocket and drew out one of the nuggets. Then it all came back to me with a vividness which was startling in its intensity. There could be no doubt of the mine for the gold in my pockets was worth fully one hundred and fifty pounds.

I resolved that I would keep my discovery a secret and continue to work the mine which had yielded such handsome results in a single night. Then I repaired to the hills and began my search. Half an hour convinced me that I retained not the slightest clew as to the location of the mine. Day after day I continued the search but in vain. No trace of the valley could I discover and finally I was compelled to admit that a doubt existed in my mind as to whether the gold had been found by me or had been placed in my pocket by some kind fairy.

To have found and lost such an exceedingly rich deposit was exasperating in itself but the uncertainty which enshrouded the whole business made me doubt my own sanity.

One evening as I was sitting in the house brooding over the problem the Boer's wife opened a great clothes' press, removed several articles of wearing apparel and laid them on the floor. My attention was immediately attracted to an old coat.

"Who owns the suit of clothes?" I inquired.

"They belonged to grandfather," was the answer.

"Is he dead?" I queried.

"Dead more than twenty years, in fact before I was married and came to live here, for he was my husband's father."

"Did you know him?"

"Yes, but I was only a little girl at the time."

"Why have the clothes been kept?"

"Before he died he gave orders that they were not to be used and his wishes have been respected. My husband has told me that he was a man of many peculiarities and as it was due to him that we have the farm we cherish his name and respect his wishes."

"What were his peculiarities?"

"One was that he paid several visits to the Cape and when he returned he always brought with him a bag of money, but to the day of his death even his son, my husband, did not know how he came to have it. With this money he bought land and cattle and sheep and thus became rich. Had he lived he would have been the richest Boer in this part of the country. Then his death was a mystery and a mystery which has never been cleared up. He had grown to be old and feeble and he did no more work, but nothing could keep him out of the hills. If anyone followed him he flew into a great passion and cursed him roundly. My husband feared that

some accident would befall him in his wanderings and the fear was at last realized. These clothes were his best and he prized them very much, for he said that they had brought him 'good luck.' It was for that reason he wanted them kept, no doubt. One day he went away to the hills and he never came back. The whole country joined in the search but no trace was ever found. He was not able to walk a long way and could not have wandered any distance and that was what made his disappearance the more strange. Some were of the opinion that he was carried off by the Kaffirs, some that he had been murdered, for it was well known that he always had gold in his pocket. Whatever befell him no one knows."

I took up the coat and hat and could have sworn that the man I had followed to the hills was dressed in precisely the same garments. Could it be possible that after all these years I had found his grave? Had it been his ghost which I had seen night after night issuing from the house and making its way to the lonely grave in the hills? Had his wealth been derived from the sale of the gold which he had dug out of the pit? Admitting these facts, why had I been chosen to solve the mystery? Was it possible that a sympathy existed between the dead and gone Boer miner and the needy prospector, myself? These questions I was unable to answer. My common sense revolted at such conclusions and yet, argue as I would, the gold was in my pocket to prove their truth.

There remained another explanation, it was that I had not been awake during the periods in which I saw the old man. I had developed into a somnambulist and had got up in the night, imagining that I was following an old man and while in that state picked up the gold found in my pocket in the morning. Unfortunately this theory did not account for the previous existence of my ghostly guide. I realized the uselessness of attempting to explain to my Boer friends the peculiar circumstances of the case and in consequence kept silent. From that hour I abandoned my search for a mine, which was alike a mine and a grave, the location being only known to ghosts or somnambulists.



## A MAORI LEGEND. A New Zealand Story.

I spent a week in a pah down in the hot lake country, the King's land, New Zealand, a short time before the destruction of the Pink and White Terraces. One night as I lay in my thatched hut, with the boiling water singing and simmering on every side, an old Maori wise-man paid me a visit and told me the following story.

"A thousand moons ago my people came over the sea in great canoes from the islands. Then the Maori was like the white man of to-day, restless as the wind, ever roving to and fro from land to land. The canoes came ashore down at the coast and it was beside these lakes that the pahas were built because the fern root grew here in the warm, damp earth and the Great Spirit made the water boil, in which to cook it. Then our wise men said, 'Here is our home and this land was made for the Maori. Here shall be found that which we so long have sought.' All would have been well if our people had listened to these words. After a time there spread from ear to ear the story of a wonderful lake, hid away up in the mountains. No man could tell where the story came from, for no man could be found who had ever seen the lake. The mountains, or the lakes, or the boiling springs, or the pink hills, may have whispered it at night into some ear. It may have been a dream, but it came and at last that no man doubted it. Many a Maori set out to find the wonderful lake and wandered among the mountains, which grew blacker and blacker and higher and higher as he went on, but one and all came back telling of great streams, of jagged rocks, of dark caverns, but never catching a glimpse of the lake."

"Then our wise men held a council in the great pah, and day by day they studied and thought. At last it was decided that a venerable old man, who had never eaten of human flesh, should go forth alone into the mountains in quest of the lake. Much we wondered as he departed, for with him he took only a staff and no fern root or anything to eat. We bade him good bye with sorrow in our hearts, for we felt that we should never look upon his face again, and that his bones would bleach upon the mountain side, with no pah to covert them, but there they would lie for all time to come, a warning to men who went in search of the wonderful lake. Days went by and the wise man was given up for lost, when he came down the mountain side and all of our people went out to meet him. When they asked him if he had found the lake he bowed his head upon his breast and smiled, and the people, young and old, gathered about him with many questions, but answered he never a word. One and all saw that a great change had come over him. A mild light beamed in his eyes and a smile ever played about his lips. Kindness and sympathy covered him as with a mantle of sweet fern and all felt that he was good to look upon. From him there went out a power for good never felt in Maori land before, and the people knew that to him had been given a sign which would lead them to happiness. Yet some there were who scoffed and said it was a trick of the wise men, that he had been hidden in the hills and no good would come of it. From that day the wise man went about doing good and to all he said, there be three things:

"Eat not of human flesh."

"Help one another."

"Be content with your lot."

"A few followed his counsel and found peace, but the many went on their way, blind in their own conceit. The quiet of the valley and its simple fare were to them as bitter herbs. They wandered away to other islands and over the land to the north and south. They fought and ate each other, and the message of the wise man became to them and to their children but a dream.

Once a year, at spring tide, when the moon was full, the wise man left the pah with two young men and went into the mountains and to the lake. Each time they returned on the seventh day and from that day to the day of their deaths their faces shone as did the face of the wise man, and they went about saying:

“Eat not of human flesh.”

“Help one another.”

“Be content with your lot.”

“What they saw, what they heard at the lake, no man knew. Year after year only three went out and returned. At last the hour came when the old wise man fell sick and death sat by his side. Then he sent for my father’s father, who was an old man, and to him confided the task of leading each year the young men into the mountains, telling him also of the first visit and what would come of it. This is the story which he told to my father’s father:

“I went into the mountains, trusting, that was all. If for me to see the lake would be good for my people then I knew that the way would be pointed out, so I journeyed on and on and though without food for the whole day, I felt no hunger. As night came near I descended into a valley in which plenty of ferns were growing and the water boiling in a small spring. I gathered my fern roots and cooked them in the spring. The next day I faced the mountains again. I had gone but a little way when I saw before me an immense bird pluming itself on a shelving rock. I had seen the skeletons of such birds many times, but never a live bird before. Its plumage was dazzling white and its arched neck shone like the wattle in the sunshine. Its tufted head was more than twice the height of a man’s head from the ground and although the bird was a long way off I felt that its eyes were soft and full of tenderness. As I approached the white bird walked away, stopping each minute to pick some green morsel, for its stride was enormous and in the twinkling of an eye it could have mounted into the clouds, hanging over the mountains. All day long I followed the bird, turning and twisting, going forward and coming back again until I lost all reckoning of the pah, but something whispered in my ear that it was to be. At night I always found ferns for food and a hot spring so my wants were provided for. On the third day out, as night drew near, I came very close to the bird, almost close enough to touch it, when it stepped through some great ferns with leaves of silvery whiteness, such as I had never seen before, and when I had followed it the bird had disappeared. I raised my eyes and there at my feet was a circular lake, girt about by immense mountains, with cliffs rising from the water higher than twenty Kauri pines. Looking behind me, the way I had come, I saw the silver ferns but in the background a wall of rock through which no opening was visible. Much I wondered, but being tired and hungry I gathered some of the ferns, but no hot spring was at hand as before. I stepped to the lake, touched it with my hand, it was almost boiling. That night I slept beneath the silver ferns. The next morning when I awoke there was no sign of the white bird but a little boat lay on the sand before me containing three seats and three paddles. After eating some fern root I stepped into the boat and paddled out. Then, for the first, I saw that the lake contained a single island, lying in its centre, but this island was not like any other island. It had three equal sides, on it was neither tree nor shrub. I soon made my way to its shore. There was only one landing place, a narrow ledge upon which I drew up the boat. By some natural steps I went up and found on the top a circular, shallow basin full of boiling water. The basin was formed of a dazzling white stone with alternate bands of a soft yellow, which I had never seen before, but which I now know the white man calls gold. From the centre to the outside these bands ran round and round and it was only a question of time when they would cover the whole island. A great attraction had the pool for me. I sat down by its side and watched the blue water run over

the rim and splash its way down to the lake, leaving behind little bands of white and yellow, and as I sat there the steam coming up in the centre sang a song in the Maori tongue. The song was:

“Eat not, eat not, eat not of human flesh.”

“Help one, help one, help one another.”

“Be content, be content, be content with your lot.”

“I knew that I was to tell these things to my people and I never forgot them.”

“Then I lay down and fell asleep, how long I slept I know not. When I awoke the sun was gone and the great cross blazing in the sky and yet the pool sang the same song and the water ran over the rim and down into the lake. Once again I looked into the basin and then my heart grew still. As I looked down I saw away and away a group of islands with a blue sea all around them running into little bays and long arms, and under a part of one island was a great fire burning and sending up boiling water. Away out in the ocean I saw another island, with an opening in the centre, through which rushed flame and smoke. This island was the chimney for the fires burning below me, on which our paha were built. On our islands I saw many Maoris, some good, many bad with fierce fires burning in their hearts. And the voice of the spring said, ‘Behold your brothers, but the day is near at hand when great canoes will come over the waters with white wings and a white man will come in the canoes and in his heart burns still fiercer fires and he will make war upon you; not with spears but with things which vomit fire and carry death a long way off. He will kill the Maoris and take the land and in a few years your people will be no more, but to you is given a trust. In the full moon, once in the year, bring hither two wise Maoris and let their ears hear my song. Then shall they go to their brothers and speak the truth. If your people listen, one island shall be preserved for them and the black men shall not all die.’”

“Returning to the shore, I found the moa standing by the bunch of ferns and following it for two days I was once more in sight of the pah. There I told the story of the mysterious lake and the pool to the wise men and when the full moon came the next year three Maoris went forth in quest of the lake. They were guided by the white moa and they too heard the pool sing and saw into its depths. Season after season three men went and came and repeated the song of the pool. The scoffers asked, ‘Where are the white men with fire in their hearts, and where are the big canoes with white wings?’ And the ferns grew and faded into brown and rotted on the damp earth. But at last the white man came and the wise men knew that the day was at hand. With the white man came also wise men, who, while they pointed to the sky above and told us of the Great Spirit, stole the land from under our feet. And we saw that a great fire burned in their hearts, but it was not the fire of war but a yellow flame, which could only be quenched by a treasure they called ‘gold.’ These wise white men heard of the lake in the mountains and the pool with its yellow bands and much they searched the mountains but found it not. Then they heard of the journey of the three Maoris each rainy season, led by the white moa. They watched and when the Maoris set out they followed and thus it was that they found the lake. Three white men had followed the three Maoris. While the Maoris were standing beside the lake the white men seized the boat and paddled as fast as they could to the island. The moa stood on the shore and nodded its head up and down as much as to say, ‘You shall see.’ Two white men clambered on shore, the other remaining in the boat. Once beside the pool the white men saw not its beauty, they heard not the song, for their eyes were filled with the yellow metal and their hearts with greed. They were blind to the blue waters, the purple mountains, blind and deaf to all but gold. Then they set to work and dug up the yellow rim and the little channels

over which the water ran, and, where once all was beauty and song and the whisper of the Great Spirit, only desolation was left. All day long they toiled and carried the gold and loaded it into the boat and so blind were they that they did not see that the boat grew no deeper in the water. All day the moa nodded its head, all day long the Maoris wondered. Then a great sleep fell upon them. The water in the lake was sinking down, down, down, carrying with it the little boat. It sank away as silently as a bird in the air, without a gurgle or a splash. The fountain sang and flowed and the yellow bands ran out and down and over the two men binding them fast to the rock. When they awoke they were pinned fast. They writhed and twisted and screamed for their companion in the boat but he was a thousand feet below, paddling, paddling, not to the island not to the shore, but around and around. Then through the jagged rocks, away below came a great roar as of a mighty river lashing itself into fury on the black stones. When this sound fell on their ears they set up a pitiful cry which came over the lake to the Maoris and made their hearts sad. Then the fire died out of the white men's hearts and the green leaves of the ferns, where the Maoris stood grew into wondrous beauty in their eyes and the plumage of the moa shone like burnished silver. Their cries for help died away in the rushing waters below. The fountain stopped, the blue water sank down to the black river, leaving only a jagged hole, crusted as far as they could see with gold, but now they loathed the yellow metal and blamed it, instead of their own hearts, for all the evil which had come upon them. Out of the pool then came a faint blue wreath, spreading about them, embracing them and creeping like a cloud over the island. Then the hot steam gushed forth. Madly they writhed and gasped for breath but hotter and hotter grew the steam. The sun went down and night came on. Under the green ferns the Maoris lay down and slept. When the sun came up the pool had ceased to vomit steam. Two skeletons on the island were bleached as white as snow on the mountain tops. A skeleton in the boat, with a skeleton paddle in his hands was paddling in a never ending circle around and around."

"The moa nodded his head and led the way back to the pah and from that day to this never a moa has been seen in New Zealand. Amid the mountains lies the wonderful lake but it will never be found until the yellow fires have burned out of the hearts of the white men."



## THE GARDEN GULLY MINE.

“You ken Bendigo,” said my companion, looking out of the corner of his eye at the bottle sitting on the table before us.

“Right well,” I answered. We had dropped in at the Criterion, Swanson street, Melbourne, for an evening.

“Weel,” continued Sandy McLeod, “it’s a long time ago but I’ll never forget it.”

“Forget what?”

“The Garden Gully, did you ever hear the story?”

“No, I’m a new chum, as you know.”

I poured out a glass of Falon’s sparkling, at the sight Sandy smacked his lips. Sandy was a colonial solicitor and apparently an unprofitable mine to work for a story, so I bided my time. The glass of wine began to mellow his heart, for he abruptly exclaimed, “Men on gold fields are crazed with greed, but a good-looking woman sends them stark mad. Even I, Sandy McLeod, was once mad.”

“It was only a passing craze,” I suggested.

“Not a bit of it, mad for months, mad when awake and doubly mad when asleep.”

“What cured you?”

“A nip of the same dog,” and then he burst into a laugh. “One more glass and then I will tell you the story.”

Settling back in his chair, he began in a voice, mellow than I dreamed that he possessed:

“Teddy O’Flynn, yes O’Flynn with a big O, as he used to say, had a little cabin on the Bendigo field, and behind the cabin was a little garden in the gully. It was the only garden on Bendigo at that time and we all knew it to a man. No deep shafts then, only a spade, a pick, and a tin dish, and thirty thousand miners on the field. That garden grew roses and English roses too, at that. I can see them now and it’s near on fifty years ago. They whispered to every man Jack of us of home, dear home. When we went up there and leaned on the palings of a Sunday, back we were in our native villages. Teddy O’Flynn was not the man to cultivate roses, save the ones which blossomed on his nose and they were always in full bloom. Teddy had a foster daughter, the queen rose of Bendigo, and as the roses bloomed so bloomed Rosa, for that was her name. While the roses were in bloom on Saturday afternoon Rosa made a round of the camp. She never sold the roses but she made each miner a present of one, and the miners not to be outdone, made her a present of a pinch of gold. She had to pinch it herself between her rosy little finger and thumb. Rosa took up the camp in a regular way so that in time we all got a rose and were satisfied.”

“Teddy O’Flynn had never studied books and yet he was a bit of a philosopher, and an Irish philosopher at that. Teddy never worked and yet he ate and drank of the best on Bendigo. Perhaps the pinches which Rosa made had something to do with Teddy’s good fortune. The miners were content, Teddy was happy, and Rosa—well the whole camp was in love with her.”

“And you fell in love with her too,” I ventured to remark.

“I never denied it.”

“At that time there were but two lawyers on the field, Phalin Shea and Sandy McLeod, that’s myself. Part of the time we dug on the lead, for we both held claims, but when a dispute arose Phalin was retained by one client, and McLeod by the other, then we fought it out before the Gold Commissioner and honors were generally equally divided. The Shamrock and the

Scotch Thistle, they used to call us. The best of friends we were, though we often nearly came to blows. Rosa distinguished us from the other miners by calling us gentlemen. Phalin and I were regarded as the favored suitors but that did not prevent the other men from striving to secure such a valuable claim. One evening I was at O'Flynn's cabin and the next night Phalin was at the same place and basking in the same smiles. To all of our vows Rosa returned the same answer."

"What would become of Teddy O'Flynn if I married?" We each promised to allow Teddy a pension for life. Rosa well knew that Phalin and I could not scrape up a hundred pounds, but like all miners, we were willing to bank on the future for any number of thousands. Rosa was most impartial and fed each on the same manna. Our infatuation increased month by month and when the rainy season came on and no roses remained Teddy proved equal to the occasion and regularly borrowed half a sovereign from each when we called at the cabin. Phalin may have lent the money out of sheer Irish good-will but I know that Sandy McLeod, in his heart regarded him, Teddy, as a golden fleece. How the contest would have ended I cannot say, but unfortunately Teddy suddenly conceived the idea of becoming rich. That decided our fate. His plan was to sink a shaft in the garden in the gully and open up a gold mine. Naturally we expected that Rosa would protest, but on the contrary she declared that the plan originated with her own sweet self. She had dreamed that there was an immense deposit of gold hidden away beneath the English roses. Teddy had only to dig and he would find the treasure, but no person was to assist him and the work must be done at night. Only Phalin and myself were taken into the secret. Teddy went to work and day after day poured into our ears the history of his progress. As the garden lay far removed from the Bendigo lead and no indications existed that gold would be found, in our hearts we secretly felt that it was a clever device, upon the part of Rosa, to keep her foster parent out of the public and at the same time set him to work. The mining had been going on for about three weeks when one afternoon Phalin and I each received a note from Rosa asking us to call that evening at the cabin. We were punctual to the minute, but each was somewhat crestfallen on discovering the presence of his rival. Teddy O'Flynn was laboring under an excitement which he in vain attempted to conceal. After a substantial supper and a glass of hot toddy, Rosa drew the curtain of the four pane window and then told us the story.

Teddy had struck upon one of the richest leads ever found on Bendigo. The earth was literally packed with gold. Then Teddy took up the running.

"I tell yez I've struck it."

We both grasped him by the hand, for Teddy had suddenly become an important factor, a factor we instantly saw must be counted upon and conciliated. Rosa was now sole heiress, it might be to millions. Not that we loved her any more ardently, that was impossible, but fortune had suddenly turned the wheel and we keenly felt the change. All we could say to Teddy was, "Rich, rich."

"Just loaded down with the yellow beauty," he exclaimed. "Come down and see the jade. She's led me many a fine caper from the old sod, up here among the kangaroos and the wallaby and the bears wid no tails and the dirty hathen nagers, but I've got her down in the gully, and it will be sailing away to the blessed shores of St. Patrick that Teddy O'Flynn will be, with a mighty big O."

"Come with me this blessed minute."

We hurried down to the gully. Once on the spot we saw that Teddy was original in his mining. He had cut a series of short trenches which grew deeper and finally terminated in an

irregular hole, into which we all crowded, though unable to stand upright, so low was the pit. Teddy lit a candle and pointing to the pick said to Phalin, "dig, dig," then he gave me the shovel. The ground was very hard, of a dull yellow color and interspersed with small grey, broken quartz crystals. We filled a wash-tub which Teddy deftly lifted to his head and balanced with his hands, then marched out and up to the cabin. In the kitchen we began to pan out the contents of the tub with the aid of some water and a tin wash-dish. Teddy stood aloof leaving Phalin and McLeod to do the work. The earth was literally full of coarse gold. In all of our experience at Ballarat and Bendigo we had never seen its equal.

"I want yez gintlemen to float a Company," said O'Flynn.

"What shall we call it?"

"The Saint Patrick."

"No," said Rosa, "I dreamed it out and I must name it."

"What shall it be?"

"Call it the Garden Gully."

Then and there it was christened and baptised in the wash-tub.

"How much shall we float it for?" inquired Phalin.

"Fifty thousand pounds at a pound a share. Give all the boys a chance."

The following morning the notice was on the door of the Commissioner's office and within two hours every rod of land for half a mile on each side of the cabin had been staked out. The camp went mad, hundreds of good claims were abandoned and as promptly jumped by the unlucky. Before the sun went down Phalin and I had more cases than had ever fallen to us before in our lives. When questioned about the Garden Gully we related the story of the wash-tub. That day every share was sold and half a crown paid down. For two days it was almost impossible to get near the cabin. The earth swarmed with miners but not a spec of gold was found.

On the morning of the third day Phalin and I found our huts besieged by an angry mob. During the excitement Teddy had been transformed into Teddy O'Flynn, Esq., a personage who held high carnival at the Golden Fleece and who, during that time, had ordered and helped drink one hundred bottles of champagne at twenty dollars a bottle. The situation was serious. Phalin and I were marched up to the Golden Fleece where O'Flynn was secured and the trio, followed by thousands, proceeded to the Garden Gully where Rosa was mounting guard over the entrance to the mine. She was armed with an antiquated musket and resolutely kept the men at bay. A fierce light burned in her blue eyes which enhanced her beauty a thousand fold. At our suggestion two miners were let into the pit to secure some wash-dirt. Our lives hung upon the issue. If the miners did not find gold our fate was sealed. Phalin, McLeod and Teddy would dangle from the limb of the nearest gum tree within ten minutes. The dirt was brought out and panned off in the presence of the mob. I shall never forget the silence which fell upon the men till my dying day. When the miner turned and flashed the gold in the pan in our faces a cheer for O'Flynn broke forth, and such cheers as Bendigo had never heard before. The very hills rang again and again. Rosa was the heroine of the hour. Dirty and greasy miners clasped her in their arms and kissed her with frantic joy. O'Flynn and his solicitors were escorted in a triumphal march back to the Golden Fleece where Teddy made a speech and 'shouted' for all who cared to drink. In the confusion Phalin and I made our escape. The next day shares in the Garden Gully advanced to two pounds each. A week later the mine was turned over to the share holders and work commenced. Teddy O'Flynn was entertained that night at a banquet at which it was declared that he was the gold king of the land of the Southern Cross. At midnight Teddy

sank a limp mass under the table and was carried to bed with the honors of a dead Pharaoh.

For a few hours the Garden Gully realized the wildest dreams and then just as suddenly stopped. Not even the colour could be found. Shares dropped to a shilling and no takers. The gold Commissioner ordered an investigation. During the inquiry it was clearly shown that the mine had been salted. The plan had been to first dig the hole and then charge a gun with powder and coarse gold and fire it into the earth. Rosa, who was innocent of the fraud, testified that at night she had heard many shots and that O'Flynn had explained that he had been shooting at kangaroos, which came to gnaw the rose bushes. When confronted by the evidence, O'Flynn refused to confess maintaining a dogged silence, save that if the mine was salted Rosa and his solicitors were innocent. The money received was returned to the share holders, except a few hundred pounds which O'Flynn had squandered. O'Flynn was committed to stand his trial.

The following night Phalin and I repaired to the little cabin where, much to our surprise, we found Rosa, apparently in the best of spirits. When we asked her for an explanation she said:

"I tell you there is plenty of gold in the Garden Gully and it was not put there by Teddy O'Flynn. I saw it again last night in my dreams. It is down deeper and runs away out there," pointing toward the range. "Will you dig for it or shall I do the work myself?"

We suggested hiring two miners.

"No," she said, with a toss of her pretty head, "it must be found without any outside help and Teddy set free."

Instantly we both agreed with her. We would have agreed to any proposition falling from the same lips. Without a moment's delay she produced two miner's caps, into the peaks of which she thrust two candles, then marched us out to the pit. The candles were lighted. Rosa took a seat on the tub, we seized the pick and shovel and began to dig. Rosa chatted and laughed, the hours flew by, at midnight she brought us a lunch and two bottles of ale, but it was not until near dawn that our taskmaster called a halt. Rosa explained that during the day she would wash some of the dirt and report the result the next night. Worn out and completely exhausted Phalin and I staggered to our huts. Not a word was exchanged as we stumbled down the path. Our hands were covered with blisters, our clothes bedaubed with yellow clay, our faces streaked and seared with soot and grease from the dripping candles. Two such melancholy objects could not be found in all Bendigo. Each was determined not to yield. It was a contest of Scotch grit and Irish pluck. All day long we slept or nursed our lacerated hands, each recuperating for the second struggle. We were animated by no hope that gold would be found, a more powerful influence was at work and bade us continue the struggle. At night we were again at the cabin. Rosa reported "No gold." Then we renewed our labors, with the same hardships and the same results. For eight nights in succession the struggle went on. Our legal business went by the board, rumor said we were drinking ourselves to death and appearances confirmed the rumor. On the ninth night imagine our surprise when Rosa informed us that we had struck the lead and in proof exhibited fully an ounce of the yellow metal. No miner ever gazed upon a great nugget which he had found, with joy equal to ours. It was a drawn battle. When will it end? was the query in our minds. Rosa gave no sign but served an excellent supper, prepared to celebrate our success. It was then arranged that Rosa was to pay the gold Commissioner a visit the following morning and inform him that the lead had again been found in the Garden Gully and that consequently Teddy O'Flynn had committed no fraud and should be released. Our offices was opened that day, but no attention was paid to our reformation so great was the excitement. An investigation of the mine proved the truth of Rosa's statement.

Once more the tide turned in favor of Teddy O'Flynn and for the second time he became the gold king of Bendigo. Teddy had sold the Garden Gully for a rich mine and it was rich. The shareholders demanded the return of their stock, paid in their money and gave Teddy a second banquet at the Golden Fleece, with the same results, save that Teddy went under the table at ten thirty instead of at twelve, a weakness attributed to his confinement in the caboose and consequently condoned by his friends.

Three days later Phalin and Sandy McLeod each received a note from Rosa requesting them to be present at the cabin at eight p.m., and also stating, in post script, that it was an important occasion, therefore we were to be dressed in our best. Phalin inferred from the word 'important' that he was the lucky man, while I drew the same inference from the same word. Walking on the air, for our happiness made us oblivious of Bendigo, its dust and its wretchedness, we approached the cabin at the same time, punctual to a minute. We passed compliments of the day and then surveyed each other. Phalin was dressed in a pair of black trousers, a white shirt and a collar, a yellow vest, but no coat. Sandy boasted an antideluvian dress coat, blue trousers and a red shirt. We were met at the door by Rosa, clad in a white muslin gown, with a great bunch of roses at her belt. I had never seen her look lovelier. So great was my happiness at securing the prize that the words died on my lips. Phalin was equally overcome and for precisely the same reasons. Teddy received us with genuine Irish hospitality and a glass of whiskey. Entering the cabin we were face to face with a young English curate who had been sent up from Melbourne as a missionary. It was evident that the hour had come, we were confronted by our destiny. The curate remarked in a languid drawl, "This is a happy occasion." Rosa smiled her sweetest. Then she went out to the kitchen and came back blushing and leaning on the arm of Dennis McCarthy, a young Irish miner.

"My dear friends," she said, "I have bid you to my wedding. Dennis is the lucky man, we pledged our troth in dear old Kerry."

The ceremony proceeded and each kissed the bride. It was the first and last time. How we spent the next hour I shall never know and Phalin can furnish you with no fuller particulars. I have a confused recollection of Rosa, the curate, Teddy, a bunch of roses and McCarthy, that is all. At last we got away, heaven only knows what we said. Once out on the path we stalked along in moody silence. When we came to the Golden Fleece we both turned in, entered the private parlor and ordered whiskey, straight. Two hours later we were sent home by the landlord in barrows. When I awoke the next morning I found myself in Phalin's hut and in Phalin's bed. Phalin found himself in my hut and in my bed. How the thing happened we have never been able to explain. The following day when we met we concluded to enter into partnership and the sign reads to this day, Shea & McLeod, solicitors.

"No, we have never married."

"What about the Garden Gully?"

"The mine is running yet and has paid the shareholders many handsome dividends."

"Rosa?"

The day following the wedding, the bride, McCarthy and Teddy took a special stage for Melbourne en route for the old sod. A week later my partner and I each received a letter, precisely the same, written in Rosa's best hand, containing a certified cheque on the Bank of Australia, drawn in our favor, for five hundred pounds.



## THE GREEN DOOR. A Night in Melbourne.

A winter night in Melbourne; it had been raining all day, the wind from the south blew chill and raw. As I wandered down Great Bourke street I saw, drawn up in a line some fifty men standing in the gutter. Each man had his eyes fastened on a green baize door directly in front of them, as if their last hope depended upon its opening. The men were of all sorts and conditions, the sundowner from the back blocks, the costermonger without a barrow, the new chum who had deposited with his gracious uncle, the professional free lunch rounder and the decayed gentleman. One wretched creature in particular drew my attention. At one time, some time, heaven knows how long distant, he had been a gentleman. The fragments of a Prince Albert coat were buttoned tightly up to his very chin. I should have said pinned, for every button was gone. His hands blue with the cold were clean and there was something in his very attitude which said, 'I am not to this manor born.' I beckoned to him and when he came up I said, "Come with me my friend." He followed at my side but spoke not a word. Entering a private room in the Coffee House I called for a glass of hot beef tea. While he was drinking the tea greedily but shivering between each gulp I ordered a hot dinner. He ate the dinner with the voracity of a starving man. Then I handed him a cigar. I closely watched him and saw, written on his face an unsatisfied longing. "What is it?" I said.

"Opium," came in a hoarse tremolo from his throat.

"I have it," I said drawing a half ounce bottle of laudanum from my pocket. I had purchased it for a prospective trip.

"Quick, six glasses," he whispered.

The waiter brought the glasses. My strange companion placed them in a line and then said, "Divide it into six parts," pointing to the laudanum.

I complied with his request. He seized the first glass, drained it and closed his eyes. Taking up the *Herald* I waited. After the lapse of five minutes I turned to my guest, his eyes were wide open, almost staring, while the ghost of a smile played around his mobile mouth.

"What is your name," I asked.

"John Lilburn," he answered slowly, as if he were struggling to recall his own name.

"Where from?" I queried.

No reply, only a puzzled expression on his face. Then he croaked out, "Time for number two." Immediately he swallowed the contents of the second glass and again closed his eyes. This time the interval was not so long. A tinge of colour stole into his thin cheeks, his hands ceased to tremble, the creature began to look like a man.

"How long have I been here?" he inquired, as if surprised at his surroundings and the complaisant mood in which he found himself. Then his eyes fell upon the glasses and he nodded his head as much as to say, "I see it all now."

"You came with me from in front of the green door," I replied.

"What does the green door signify?"

"Supper," he answered, "supper for all who stand in the line at eight o'clock and are sober."

"A good Samaritan on Bourke street, a Christian in a new quarter and in a strange guise."

"That depends upon your standpoint of view," murmured my companion. "The man conducts, side by side, a drinking place and the restaurant. In the restaurant, every night for half an hour he cares for some of the finished product turned out by his other establishment."

"Has he turned you out as finished?"

“I never drink,” he said, a trace of hauteur coming into his manner.

“Worse,” said I, pointing to the glasses.

“My last remaining friend,” was his reply, and he raised the third glass to his lips and drank it off with the dignity of a gentleman of the old school. He brushed back his tangled hair with a nervous energy, his very presence grew upon me, then he unpinned and threw back his coat exposing his bare chest, for he wore no shirt, arose and paced the room with a decided step which betokened a man used to command. The homeless beggar had vanished and in his stead stood God’s noblest work.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, “but whom have I the honor of meeting?”

I gave him my name and he bowed with courtly grace.

“We are brothers,” he said, “all men are brothers but unfortunately our pride prevents us from acknowledging the truth.”

Then we drifted into conversation and I learned that he belonged to an excellent family in the north of Ireland. He had obtained his degree at Trinity College, Dublin, taken orders and proceeded to South Australia where the Bishop gave him a large parish in the pastoral country. Suddenly the relator became reticent and relapsed into silence. I divined the cause and pointed to the glasses. He hesitated and then drank off another but with the disgust shewn when one is compelled to take medicine. The effect of this potion was unexpected. The parson, for such I must call him, burst into song, at first sentimental and then comic. They were certainly not acquired at a divinity school. He fairly rollicked in the patter songs, so famous years ago in the London music halls. When he drew a comparison between a monkey and a dude, in which the monkey had the best of it, he was irresistible and I laughed till the tears ran down my cheeks. The reckless abandon, the rollicking gaiety, the quip and quirk,—all were perfect. I forgot who he was and what he was.

As the last patter song died on his lips he turned ashy pale and began to tremble violently. I handed him another glass but he dashed it from my hand and poured out upon me such curses as I had never heard before. They froze my blood and gave me a sight of the very soul of the man, reeking with blasphemy and hatred and a savage malevolence so vindictive that a fiend from the bottomless pit would have turned and fled. As I darted to the door he seized me and with the strength of a mad man hurled me into a chair, his horrible laugh ringing out with sardonic glee, piercing the ears and running into a mocking refrain. Turning to the table he swallowed all the laudanum which remained. Two minutes later he was another man. His mouth was that of a child with the pathetic pucker always seen before an infant bursts into tears. I forgot his violence, his obscenity, everything, in the new character before me, I felt that the curtain was up for the last act, when it fell there would be darkness, the light would fail and the green door come back.

“I have never told the story,” he exclaimed, “but the time has come when it must be told.” His voice was so low that I was compelled to bend forward and listen as the words fell from his lips. Then he dashed into the recital startling in its intensity.

“In my parish was one great squatter who made his home upon the estate, the other squatters living at Adelaide or Melbourne. John Bond held by the good old English practice and lived upon his estate. ‘If the land did so much for him,’ he said, ‘then he was bound to stand by the land.’ At my first visit I fell in love with John Bond’s daughter Helen. Up to that moment I had been bound up in the work of the church. Men called me an enthusiast, a dreamer. I believed and acted upon my belief. I know that I had a mission, tidings to impart, hope and comfort to offer. I was a priest consecrated to the work, not an interpreter. I believed

that a priest should not marry. Twenty-four hours spent at John Bond's house made me a new man. I looked back on the past as a dream. I saw myself a phantom, a church instrument, but for the first time I felt myself a man. I had been a slave, I became a living fire. I had dreamed of happiness for mankind, mankind were swallowed up in Helen Bond. She constituted the universe, my universe. I pouted out my passion and found my love returned, what more could priest or man demand? Half the summer I lived in a dream, an ecstasy, a delirium. I had not saved a sovereign, for my creed was, 'Give all to the poor,' that is, it had been my creed before I met Helen. She took absolute possession of my heart, my emotions. My first pang came when my would-be bride told me that the dream of her life had been Melbourne, when we married there we must live. I implored the Bishop of Adelaide to secure for me a parish in the great metropolis and received in reply to my letter a curt refusal, with an admonition relative to neglected duties. Helen was adamant, the condition was Melbourne. She suggested that I should appeal to her father for assistance but my pride revolted. At this juncture the news came describing the new gold fields of Western Australia. Helen whispered in my ear, it was but a hint. I caught at it and drove to Adelaide and tendered my resignation. The bishop refused to accept it and told me that I was mad and upbraided me for deserting a sacred cause for mammon. Stung by his reproaches I confessed my secret. I painted Helen as I saw her, her beauty, grace, sweetness, but nothing moved the ecclesiastic. I flung all to the winds and sailed for Perth on the next steamer. The terrible march to Coolgardie did not abate my ardour. At the mines I was one of the few successful. In four months I wrung out three thousand pounds, but at a fearful cost. The toil, the damp earth, the coarse food and the delirium which drove me on by day and harassed me by night, sapped the very springs of my life, ate up my imagination, devoured my sympathies, obliterated my faith, and planted in their stead a greed for gold behind which I saw the smiling face of Helen. The mail brought me no tidings, though I sent letter after letter down to the coast. Sleep forsook me. I resorted to opiates. My luck deserted me and this increased my fury. I was soon known as the mad miner. I laughed at the taunts. Was not a priceless reward before me? Helen ever beckoning me on. I saw her face in every nugget, her form in the little smoke clouds as they rolled away from the candle in my miner's cap, her smile in the water running over the ripples. I could endure the torment no longer. With my treasure I started for the coast. I watched it by day and slept beside it at night. A thousand times I woke with a horrible start believing that it was gone. How much opium I used on that journey I shall never know. I landed at Larges Bay and hurried into Adelaide. The green belt which girds the city, the blue sky above, the camellias bursting into bloom made no appeal to me. I had burned up my capacity for enjoyment. I was no longer a man but a husk, a mere cinder, a bit of scoria sucked up by a mighty tempest and driven forward. At the Bank of Australia I drew up and as I did so Helen came tripping down the steps and smiling as only Helen could smile. I rushed forward and caught her in my arms, the next instant I was hurled half senseless into the gutter. The bishop, my bishop, stood towering over me in a rage."

"How dare you sir, how dare you affront my wife in such a manner, you hair-brained?" he exclaimed. He raised his hand to strike me, but Helen interposed. "Your grace, my dear, forgive him, we both know that he is not always responsible for his actions."

"Then they entered a carriage and drove away. When I turned and saw my box of gold how I cursed it. Once to-night I saw it again, pardon me if I shocked you. The box lies in the bank vaults at Adelaide, it has been there for five years, I shall never touch it again, never, never."

"How have I lived?"

"As the birds live, on the crumbs. I have begged, the opium fiend has me, you know it, sir,

but here take this,” and he thrust into my hand a sealed paper. He lived for a week after, I went out daily to see him at the Alfred Hospital, St. Kilda Road.

The Lilburn wing of the new Adelaide Hospital was built with the treasure and the Lord Bishop delivered a most eloquent address upon the occasion of the laying of the corner stone, but that was many years before the present bishop arrived in the colony.



THE THREE GREAT  
PEARLS.  
A New Guinea Story.

At the Queensland National Club, Brisbane, I made the acquaintance of an Englishman, Leonard Chapman, who fascinated me. I can describe the charm of his manner, his fund of information, and the originality of his conversation in no other terms. He had travelled extensively and possessed a thorough knowledge of the South Pacific. Chapman was not over thirty-five years of age, he spent his money with a lavish hand, even for that lavish country, and I learned from some of his acquaintances that he paid Brisbane an annual visit, and that he was engaged in pearl fishing in Torres Straits, off the north coast of Queensland. No one appeared to know the precise locality. His appearance was striking in the extreme. No taint of the beach-comber hung about the man. On the contrary, he reminded me of a College professor out for a holiday. His fund of anecdotes was unlimited, yet he was as modest and unassuming as he was undoubtedly brilliant. From the tenor of his conversation I gathered that he took a special interest in scientific discoveries and inventions, and I soon learned that he had not only read of the nineteenth century marvels, but possessed a thorough knowledge of the means by which they were wrought. I inclined to the opinion that he had devoted many years to the study of chemistry, but he was equally conversant with the principles of electricity and of molecular research. So varied were his gifts and so accurate his knowledge, combined with originality, that I marvelled he should bury himself on an island in a half-known sea, for I gathered that his was an island home. So startling were his views relative to changes to come in the near future that there were times when I sat spell-bound. He held that science would extract nitrogen from the air by a simple and inexpensive process enabling man to increase a thousand-fold the fertility of the earth. In one of his conversations he said, "From that hour man will no longer toil for his daily bread."

"Now he is grovelling in the earth, then he will be a giant, with nature as his hand-maid. By artificial processes we shall produce gold and silver and all the precious stones. We shall, in a few hours, from the elements, bring forth pearls and all the most prized and beautiful things which nature has provided. It was never intended that we should dig and delve for these things, they were provided as samples, as illustrations. Nature turned them out of her laboratory in the twinkling of an eye and man can do the same if he is guided by her hints. The water wheel, the steam engine and the electrical engine are but the implements of a savage, they will disappear the moment we have cast off our swaddling clothes. The motive power of the future will be the sun's rays. Tens of millions of tons of energy, but another name for force, are daily going to waste on the earth's surface, while the blind toil with pick and shovel and plough. The air was intended for navigation, not the water. We shall not be mere copyists but shall improve upon nature. She only produces the bitter plum, orange and grape. It remained for man to render them sweet and luscious. The same principle applies, not only to the fruits and grains, but to every created thing. Then and not till then will life be worth living."

Many of his views were so new and startling that I refrain from stating them, and yet they were presented with such an air of plausibility and so buttressed by facts drawn from recent discoveries, that no one in the club ventured to dispute them, and yet the following day when other men tried to restate them, they appeared most visionary. I have never been able to decide whether this was due to want of knowledge or to a charm which Chapman wove around his hearers.

From a prospector I learned that several rich quartz claims had been discovered in the north and thither I decided to proceed. I secured passage on a coast steamer for Port Darwin, the point where the cable from Asia lands on the Australian coast. Arriving at Port Darwin I made a trip into the interior but found nothing of value. At the Port I secured a large sailing boat and set out to explore the coast. With a plentiful supply of provisions I set sail, taking care to skirt the coast as closely as possible. I camped at night and on the second day, in making a run across a large bay, a sudden squall came up, prevalent in that latitude. The boat was rapidly driven out to sea and the Australian coast soon lost sight of. The wind increased in fury and I gave myself up for lost. Night was coming on, the haze and spray prevented my seeing a dozen yards in advance. I knew that I was rapidly approaching the coast of New Guinea and the reputation which the cannibals of that island enjoyed in the southern hemisphere did not add to my peace of mind. I heard the breakers roaring and caught sight of the white crests of foam. I was powerless to change the course of the boat by a single point. I threw off my coat and boots and determined to make a fight for my life. Suddenly the boat struck, broached broadside and rolled over. I was seized by the waters for a brief moment and then flung upon the beach. The warmth of the sand was comforting, and worn out as I was, I soon fell asleep, nor did I awake until the sun was high in the heavens. I was in a small bay where the woods came down to the very shore and nothing was visible which would indicate that a white man had ever visited that part of the coast. Fortunately I was provided with a water tight match safe and I determined to secure some shell fish on the beach and cook them for breakfast. I waded into the surf and soon had a supply of pearl oysters which I cooked. They were extremely tough and unpalatable but they satisfied my hunger. The boat had been washed ashore and was a complete wreck and I was compelled to abandon all hopes of using it again. I made my way into the thicket and had proceeded but a few yards, when I came upon a small, square building made of rough logs. There was no window and the massive door was secured by two large padlocks. I knew that the structure was the work of a white man but for what purpose it had been built I could not determine. It might be a place used for storing provisions by pearl fishers, if so, I would not die from starvation. I tried the door and then attempted to peer between the logs, but as the interior was pitch dark all of my efforts were fruitless. By climbing an adjacent tree I reached the roof and after an hour's hard work succeeded in removing two logs. I saw that the hut only contained machinery. I clambered down inside; there was a small naphtha engine and a network of wires with several other devices, the use of which I did not know. Then I made my way out and as I was replacing the roof I heard a whizzing sound which was followed by a stinging sensation in the leg in which stuck a long bamboo arrow. Instantly I dived through the opening into the hut. There at least I would be safe for a time. Immediately I heard voices in a language which I did not understand, followed by the running of feet. I was surrounded and it was but a question of time when I should not only be captured but probably eaten. I seized an iron bar and determined to sell my life for its full worth. Then came a lull. Were the savages building a fire for the purpose of roasting me out or of cremating me for their next meal? Half an hour of dread suspense went by, followed by a knocking at the door and a voice asked in English, "Hello! who are you and what are you doing in there?"

"I am a shipwrecked man. I have been shot in the leg by the natives and I am hiding in here to save my life."

The key turned in the locks, the door opened and I was face to face with Leonard Chapman. For a moment he did not recognize me, so woe-begone was I without coat or boots and the blood oozing from the wound in my leg.

“Chapman!” I exclaimed.

Then he recognized me and reached out his hand, but not with the cordiality which I had expected. I noticed that a look of vexation, if not of distrust, was written on his face.

“How did it happen,” he asked.

In a few hurried words I told him the story.

“It is fortunate that the arrow was not poisoned,” he said “or you would have been booked with a through ticket. Can you hobble for half a mile or shall I send the natives for a boat?”

“I think I can manage it,” I answered.

A little way off stood a number of natives with great bushy heads and holding in their hands immense bows and spears made of bamboo.

“Your retainers gave me a warm reception,” I remarked.

Chapman smiled. “They are not my retainers, they are natives who protect my property along the coast and to whom I give a few pounds of tobacco and occasionally a bottle of square gin.”

Half a mile brought us to a deep bay. A yawl lay near the shore manned by four as villainous looking Malays as I ever set eyes on. At a signal from Chapman they brought the boat along side, we stepped in and they pulled away. The water was shallow and the bottom muddy. A third of a mile from shore we came to Chapman’s home. Large bamboo poles had been planted in the mud and at a distance of twenty feet above the water other poles had been lashed in a horizontal position, thus forming the foundation of the floor of the hut. The floor was also of bamboo poles and over it was built a substantial camp thirty feet long and twenty feet wide. When we arrived a ladder was let down and up it we scrambled.

“This is most extraordinary,” I said.

“Not for New Guinea,” Chapman answered. “Let me see the wound? Fortunately only a flesh wound, it will be troublesome for a couple of weeks, the only danger is inflammation in this hot climate. I have a medicine chest and a lotion which will remove the soreness.”

When the bandage and the lotion had been applied I felt more comfortable.

“Why did you build your house on stilts?” I asked.

“To guard against attacks by the natives.”

“Then they are not to be trusted?”

“No, I have been attacked three times since I took up my quarters here. On the shore one would certainly be murdered. The jungle is so thick that they creep up to the door and make a rush, then all is over. Out here they must come in canoes, I keep a watch day and night, if they are seen approaching we are prepared. By this windlass we draw up the cutter, we have an ample supply of ammunition, pointing to a heap of stones on the floor. They can only climb up by means of a ladder and before they can accomplish that we simply drop a stone through the bottom of their canoes, then there is trouble down below. A few shots from a Winchester and the battle is won. The natives in the immediate vicinity have learned that I am not to be trifled with and with them I am now at peace. The danger lies with the fellows down the coast, who come up on expeditions against other tribes and incidentally take in the white man.”

“Prospecting for gold is sufficiently hazardous for me and I shall leave the pearl fishing to others,” I remarked.

When a substantial meal had been served I asked, “Why do you employ Malays?”

“They are good fighters and the best pearl fishers.”

“What did you build the hut in the woods for?” I inquired.

“When I first came to the coast I had the hut built for the purpose of conducting a series of

scientific experiments.”

For several days my leg was so stiff that I could not get out.

Each morning Chapman, with four of the six Malays, went off in the cutter and did not return till noon. I noticed that only a few pearl oyster shells had been stored in the hut. I saw no signs of a diver's apparatus or of the small nets used by the divers to bring up the shells. There was an air of constraint upon Chapman out of harmony with the man I had known in Brisbane.

The Malays did not speak English, and even if they had, I doubt whether I should have been able to extract any information from them. They were devoted to Chapman and evidently could be relied upon in an emergency.

Daily when Chapman returned I looked in the bottom of the cutter but saw no pearl oysters.

“The fishing must be poor,” I said one day.

“Months are frequently spent in searching for new beds,” Chapman answered.

“Do you bring the oysters here when you find them?” I inquired.

“No, the stench would be unbearable, we have to let them decay before we can search for the pearls.”

When my leg improved I wondered that I was not invited to accompany my host in his daily trips, but he gave no sign. A week slipped by and I was beginning to discuss how I was to get away from the perch, as I had grown to call it, when the natives came down to the shore, late in the afternoon and made signs, which immediately threw the Malays and Chapman into a violent state of excitement. Rifles were loaded and a plentiful supply of ammunition lowered into the cutter. When all was ready Chapman turned to me and said: “Don't be alarmed, one of my stations is in danger of being looted. I must teach these savages the rights of private property.”

I immediately volunteered my service.

“No, no,” was the answer, “A wounded man would only be in the way, you have already paid dearly enough for your visit without getting another taste of bamboo.”

As the cutter drew away I noticed that all the Malays had accompanied Chapman, leaving me to guard the house. At one end of the platform, on which the house was built, rested a medium sized canoe, made from a single log. The cutter soon swept around the point and was lost to view. I listened attentively for half an hour, then there floated across the head-land a faint echo of firearms, the battle had evidently begun. Fainter and fainter grew the sounds and after five minutes they died away in the distance. I watched for the return of the victors but they never came. That night I did not close my eyes but sat peering out upon the sea. The following day was full of dread and anxiety. Every instant I expected to see the canoes of the savages sweep around the point and swoop down upon me. Several rifles had been left behind. These I loaded and made ready for the foe. When the second night came I gave myself up as lost. It was utterly impossible for me to keep awake. At first I only slept a minute or two, then suddenly awoke and sprang to my feet. I heard the dip of paddles, the stealthy creep of naked feet on the platform at my side and saw the gleam of savage eyes. Nature at last succumbed and I forgot the horrors of the situation. When I awoke the sun was creeping, up, the sea was calm and not a sign of man white, black or brown was to be seen. The house was the only place of safety and yet such was my anxiety to ascertain the fate of Chapman and his companions that it was with the greatest difficulty I restrained myself in going in quest of them. On the third day I could endure the suspense no longer, I lowered the canoe to the water, loaded all the guns, took on board the balance of the ammunition and a supply of provisions and sailed away around the point. I was not long in suspense. In the little bay, where I had been washed ashore, lay the wreck of the cutter. Over the gunwale hung the corpse of a Malay, with a spear run

completely through his body. Whether Chapman and the remainder of the party had been killed or had made their escape to the woods I was unable to decide. Only the dead Malay remained, the sail and the oars of the cutter were gone. I paddled to the cutter and listened, not a sound smote my ears save the ripple of the water on the beach. Finally I decided to visit the small house where I had taken refuge from the natives. I crept cautiously through the underbush: the house was standing but the door had been battered down, the fragments of the engine and other appliances were scattered over the ground. When I retraced my steps to the beach I noticed on the sand a number of fine copper wires in a tangled mass, mechanically I stooped down and took one of the wires in my hand, then I saw that it ran into the bay.

“All that remains of Chapman’s wonderful dreams,” I said to myself.

The spirit of curiosity, which had been so keen in the past, was aroused. I would ascertain what was at the end of the wire. I brought the canoe around to that point, and keeping the wire in one hand, gently paddled out. When reached a point where the water was about four fathoms in depth I came to a bamboo pole which had been driven into the bottom of the bay the top of the pole was only a few inches under the surface of the water and the wire ran up to and over the top. Putting my hand down and grasping the end of the pole I was surprised to find that a small pulley had been fitted into the top of the pole, through which the wire ran and then dropped perpendicularly. I carefully drew up the wire and imagine my astonishment when I saw attached to its end an immense pearl oyster. I landed the oyster and broke off the wire and then returned to the shore. I was very curious to ascertain what the oyster contained and proceeded to open it, a feat I accomplished with the greatest difficulty. Carefully removing the meat of the oyster, I saw at a little distance from where the wire entered the shell a faint blue circle and in the circle, one enormous pearl and three small ones. My heart nearly ceased to beat. The great pearl was pear shaped and in beauty of tint and exquisite coloring, far exceeded any pearl which I had ever seen. I knew that it was worth a very large sum, but its size was so great that I was unable to estimate its market value. The three small pearls were very fine, but were completely overshadowed by their magnificent sister. In my exultation I forgot the fate of Chapman and my own immediate danger. I hurriedly went ashore and from the tangle of wire traced another wire, which ran into the water. This wire I followed with the same result, it terminated in an oyster. In the second oyster was the same blue ring, in which lay a great black pearl with two small pearls of the same color. These pearls differed from those first found in that they were perfectly round. Again I went ashore and once more I was rewarded with one immense pearl and two small ones, the largest being the most beautiful in my collection. A careful search proved that all of the remaining wires had been broken and I was not able to make any other finds.

Then a great fear fell upon me. I had intended to return to the perch, and wait for a few days, but possessed of the treasures of the deep, I resolved to make my escape. I hoisted the sail and steered south. Five hours out I sighted a steamer and half an hour later I was on board one of the British India line bound for Brisbane. On my arrival at that port I immediately communicated with the authorities and the Colonial Secretary despatched a full account of the tragedy to the High Commissioner at Thursday Island.

Six months later I read in the Melbourne *Argus* that the murder of Captain Chapman had been avenged by sending H.M.S. Tiger to New Guinea, where she shelled several native villages, and drove the savages into the interior. I kept the finding of the pearls a secret as the ends of justice would not be aided by making my discovery public.

After reflecting upon the facts I decided that Chapman had discovered a process by which, with the aid of electricity, he had been able to stimulate the growth of pearls to an abnormal size

and also to develop them with greater rapidity than under normal conditions. I recalled his statement at the Queensland Club and no doubt remained in my mind that he had selected the New Guinea coast as the place where he was least liable to be disturbed by white men, owing to the hostile character of the natives. I also found that the scientists had concluded that pearls were formed by some extraneous substance getting inside of the oyster, thus setting up an irritation and giving rise to the term, "The tears of the oyster."

There was but one market in the world where my three great pearls would find purchasers at their full value and that was London. I therefore took passage a few months later on the Orient steamer, *Orizaba*, and a jeweler in Regent street paid me a very handsome sum for my find, but he informed me that he would willingly have given double the amount if I had been able to produce two that would match.

An old friend, whom I had not seen for years, invited me down to his box in the country for a week's shooting. One day as we were standing before the Crown Arms, a carriage rolled up to the door. I gave a great start. Leonard Chapman hurriedly alighted and went inside.

"Who is that man?" I asked the moment I recovered my voice.

"The young Earl. He only came into the estate a few months since. His life has been quite a romance. The Black Earl, his father, quarreled with him some ten years since and turned him out of the Hall. The trouble arose over the Vicar's daughter, whom the young man wished to marry. For nine years not a word was heard from the son. The Black Earl had lived a fast life, but after the quarrel he redoubled his pace and when he died everything was mortgaged to its full value. After his death the Jews swarmed down like the plagues of Egypt. Three months later the heir suddenly appeared. The debts were paid and what is still better, he married the girl, though it is said he never wrote her a line during his absence."

I entered the Arms and found the Earl speaking to a game keeper. As he turned to leave the room, I said: "Permit me to congratulate you, Mr. Chapman, I felt certain that the natives had turned you over to the great majority."

He raised his eye-glass and gave me a well-bred stare.

"Chapman you say? I am the Earl of Ibster."

"So I am informed, but in New Guinea you were Mr. Leonard Chapman."

"How many cases of mistaken identity are constantly occurring," he said, "the Tichborne case being one in point. Excuse me, sir, I trust that you will yet be able to find your New Guinea friend, Mr. Chapman." He raised his hat, bowed, entered the carriage and was driven leisurely away.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Printer errors have been fixed.

Spelling retained as written by the author.

Inconsistent quoting has been fixed to close open quotes.

[The end of *Kaffir, Kangaroo, Klondike: Tales of the Gold Fields* by Thadeus William Henry Leavitt]