

THE GOLD DIGGERS

BY

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Author of The Gun Sight Mine



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To

My Mining Partner

MR. LOLA W. WHEELER

Whose marvelous imagination and sympathetic, understanding interest inspired me to write this true story, it is affectionately dedicated.

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THE GOLD DIGGERS

CHAPTER I.

FINANCIAL SNAGS

On my writing desk is a copy of the *Meridian Star* dated Thursday, June 12, 1924, with the weather forecasts until 7:00 P. M. Friday. "For Meridian and vicinity, cloudy, probably local thunder showers, not much change in temperature." The forecasts were unfavorable, especially to farmers. During the previous week there had been an almost incessant downpour of torrential rains. Small streams and large rivers, such as the Tombigbee over in Alabama, were out of their banks, inundating the low lands and destroying the crops. And cotton fields that escaped the flood were boll weevil infested, in some instances almost one hundred percent. When the skies cleared after the minor Noachian flood they were ruined completely. As a planter I am an optimist myself, but I had to admit I was on the brink of financial ruin. Pessimistic planters affirmed they were as flat broke as the course of a coal scoop-shovel through new fallen snow bearing a double over-size young woman tobogganing down a forty-five degree inclined plane. My cotton field had escaped the worst boll weevil infection, so I wanted to try out the latest method of exterminating the pests by spraying the plants with a poisonous solution of which one ingredient is timethylamine which has the odor of decaying fish. The formula is a closely guarded secret which I had no inclination to pry into as long as it filled the bill. The solution had to be sprayed from an airplane, and the nearest licensed pilot lived at Jackson, Mississippi, about a hundred miles away. He was engaged over the long distance phone, and agreed to come on the morrow. During the night before his arrival neither the Madam nor I could sleep a wink. We were not even drowsy, but wide awake won-

dering how we could best entertain the featherless bird of the air, for a knight of the joy stick is exalted above the common herd. The pilot landed promptly—in the middle of my garden, and he did no good to my collards and cabbage plants. I was not at all disappointed in his boyish aspect. His countenance radiated a celestial expression with duco finish baked on by his association with clouds, penetrating the furthest outpost of the empyrean. Once only had I beheld an expression akin to the pilot's flit across the countenance of our beloved minister, Rt. Rev. U. Bett Split Sheep Skin. I cautioned the kids, three all told, to be careful how they gaped at the youthful eye-blinder, for his effulgence might affect them with Bartimeus' misfortune.

"Most exalted sir," said the Madam, approaching him with utmost humility. Her eyes were cast down at a large crack between the floor boards through which the house cat had thrust a paw, trying in vain to gain admittance to the living room. "Everywhere we tried to get ambrosia and nectar for your breakfast. Please overlook the calamity."

"I am no god," the pilot replied. "Just trot out some home grown, hickory-smoke-cured fried bacon. Hot soda raised biscuits, pone of corn-bread, cup of rather strong coffee minus cream and sugar, topped by a plate of collard greens, and a glass of butter milk."

The bars were let down and we acted like ordinary mortals. The pilot asked the extent of the cotton field to be sprayed, and a frown came over his radiant face.

"Oh, sir," I exclaimed, dismayed, "I hope this airplane will hold together until the job is finished and you are safe at home again."

"The machine is in prime condition," he replied, "groomed for an endurance flight. Perhaps I can finish the job in two hours."

He tinkered with the engine while the exterminating dope was placed aboard. Then the engine started with a deafening roar, the machine ran down the garden and took off. It just missed the clothes-line post, and brushed the top of the tallest apple tree. Over a corn field the contraption flew low. The stalks swayed violently, and a few were broken off at the ground by the current of air from the propeller. The pilot

circled to gain altitude, well above the high tree tops growing at the lower end of the field. Then he returned and circled over the dwelling house; cupping hands to my mouth, I shouted, "When you reach the cotton field let her go, Gallagher," meaning for him to begin spraying. He heard me not, the motor kicked up such a confounded racket which seemed to re-echo from the South. A few minutes afterwards the sky teemed with airplanes, each driven by a young aviatrix on a Derby race from Mobile, Alabama, to Legrand City, Kentucky, and each hoping to win first prize of twenty thousand dollars. From the classiest machine a curly head leaned, and a fair hand beckoned the weevil-exterminating pilot to follow. I shook my fist in protest and yelled in potent wrath, all to no use. Like a mad hornet the pilot flew straight toward me, dumped the dope—which landed on me—and followed the siren. The only reason I am living today is that I am not a boll weevil. Next day a rainy spell of ten days' duration set in, and when the sun shone again all squares and blooms were punctured. Cotton stalks were of extreme height; many ten feet or more. There, in the heart of the Old South, was where tall cotton grew. I hoped the growth would continue until saw logs, cross ties, phone and electric poles, could be cut, but during a mid-November night Jack Frost breathed his hoar breath on the immature forest, and it died despite mild weather which prevailed for a month afterwards. Failure of the cotton crop put me "in the hole," to use a slang expression for financial embarrassment, but I was not down and out.

My plantation is large even for one of ante-bellum days. The nucleus was a quarter section homesteaded by great grandfather Adoniram Wirewig, who in the course of a long, active life added thousands of acres to his original holding. Not an acre has been added or taken away since his demise. He was full of energy and thrift. He plowed all day barefoot in the field, and at night made corn husk horse collars which he sold to the neighbors. His wife was as energetic and more frugal, hoed the garden, milked the cows, and like her worthy consort went barefoot. On Sunday these worthy ancestors went to church in an ox cart driven by a slave, and they put on their shoes when in sight of the church. Her dying request was that her kid slippers should not be put on her feet

until her corpse was in sight of the plantation's burying ground. My forebear named his plantation Blue Buttermilk, but since the surrender it is more commonly known as Poverty Flop. It consists of a great variety of soils; predominant are post oak and "Crawfish." In the northeast corner where the dwelling house stands there is a small plot of black prairie soil occupied mostly by the garden in which Bermuda grass and broom sedge thrive as nowhere else. Johnson grass has crept in and is fast taking possession.

The Crawfish portion is under woven wire fence, and hogs eke out a precarious existence subsisting on crawfish. Each porker heeds the admonition: "Root, hog, or die!" Once in a long while a few get their fill, but many lean days intervene. The number of crawfish are enough to keep the hogs in good flesh but they are very small. "There must be a way of improving the breed," I reasoned, for every living thing that has come under man's dominion shows improvement; "why not experiment with crawfish?" Not only could swine be profitably grown on the crustacean but they could be marketed with profit as Dixie lobsters. A lady missionary friend who labored among the Aleut Indians, converting them to the true religion, forwarded me a pair of salt water crawfish. The male weighed twenty-five pounds and the female twenty pounds. A small stream of the same consistency as sea water flowed from a spring in the center of the crawfish land, and when the crawfish were turned loose, they dug to bed rock five yards in this particular spot, deeper than anywhere else on the plantation. They were beyond reach of the most ambitious swine. Several of the porkers rooted until they became living skeletons; they got nervous prostration, Malaria seized them, and they pined away until nothing much was left but their squeal. Then when the hogs were harmless the crawfish came forth, the male began devouring its mate, and when discovered nothing much was left but two pinchers. Next day the male began devouring itself and in no time consumed its tail, and the remainder of the body went piecemeal.

My neighbors affirmed I was down on the canvas with nine counts against me. However, I rose up before the referee shouted "Ten and out!"

On the post oak portion was a depression several acres in

extent, more or less full of water the year round. This is known in the South as a pool. Every planter and many small farmers have a pool or two to retain rain water for live stock during the dry season and for negro women to do white folks' laundry work. My pool teemed with bull frogs, the largest and seemingly most happy of any in the country. During the spring white and colored boys trespassed on my premises. Aided by a spot light they spotted the frogs out on the bank and shot them with a small caliber rifle. When summer closed the pool was almost devoid of frogs. The kids sold the "saddles" in Meridian at top-notch prices. So a strong woven poultry wire fence was built around the pool. To several tree trunks were nailed short pieces of board, on which was painted: "No trespassing allowed. This means you, frog catcher."

Down on the Solomon Islands lived an ex-Great Lakes sailor who had gone to the antipodes about thirty years before. He settled there, and wed several dusky belles. A large number of children will be his passport to Mormon heaven. He sent me a great horned tree-climbing frog (*Creatobatrachus guentheri*) which weighed thirty-five pounds. I hoped it would mate with a female of native stock and improve the breed, but the foreigner was not welcome, and was shunned by all others. All day long Nehemiah, as I named him, crouched in a fence corner and croaked dolefully. At night he poured forth lamentations exceeding those of the prophet, Jeremiah. He was dying by inches for his native pond. I tried to cheer him by singing the Death March from Saul, but the result was not satisfactory. On the pool was a house boat I had recently constructed to take Madam and the kids on an around-the-world voyage. Our world was the pool. By circumnavigating it each one of us could boast of being a globe trotter. On board was a portable phonograph. Dolly Pusher, my eldest son, wound it up, and put on the record, "Beautiful Blue Danube." A joyful croak and jump, and Nehemiah was on his hind feet keeping time. He waltzed around the pool, then paused where he had begun, with a look of ineffable sadness in his eyes. He did not know what was the matter with himself; he had the same lonely sensation that a man experiences waltzing alone around a ball room with scores of

pretty debutantes looking on and giggling at the chump for making an ass of himself. Nehemiah's thinking box was of two-inch hardwood thickness, so it took several moments to reason out the cause. He leaped far out in the pool, and seemed to be swallowed up for the rest of the evening. "Dolly Pusher," I shouted, "grind out the Rocky Road to Dublin," but instead he put on the record "Roll, Jordan, Roll." Nehemiah came to the surface, his forelegs clasped around the plumpest female in the pool. They rolled over and over without coming ashore. "The Beautiful Blue Danube" was played again. Nehemiah and his partner came ashore, waltzed twice around the pool, and kept perfect time. "Dolly Pusher," I commanded, "put on a fox trot." But he put on the record, "Greenland's Icy Mountains." With convulsive shivers the dancing frogs dived, and that was the last seen of them that evening. Henceforth Nehemiah was on amicable terms with the native frogs, and the outlook for a successful frog farm was never so bright. Reluctantly we left the pool, Dolly Pusher to go to bed and enjoy a dreamless sleep; and I to sit up and read the New International Encyclopedia on Frogology, which consumed my time until past midnight, then to lie down and dream of frogs more numerous than those that constituted one of Pharaoh's plagues. I did not rise up very early next morning. The sun shone through the scanty foliage of a juniper tree that for two decades had tried to die. Dolly Pusher was out in the garden hoeing and straightening up collards and cabbage plants which the airplane had pressed flat to the ground. Amid the Bermuda grass something stirred which I thought was a mangy hound pup that neighbor Cowskinner had cast in the front yard after dark the previous evening hoping to inoculate us all with toe itch. Great was my surprise when Nehemiah manifested his presence, croaking with delight. I told Dolly Pusher to catch the frog and put him back in the pool, but Nehemiah was not to be caught. He leaped, doing his best to reach the public highway about a quarter of a mile distant. I ran after him as fast as my legs were accustomed to go, and even faster; in fact, as fast as that time in the long ago when an infuriated bull charged me for trespassing on his grazing ground. As I bellowed at Nehemiah he must have imagined a bull frog was croaking,

and he stopped full of rage. "Quick, Dolly Pusher, get the phonograph," I wheezed, out of breath. Dolly Pusher never before acted so promptly, and arriving on the front gallery where the phonograph was, he slipped on the record "Frog-town Debutantes." Nehemiah leaped back, and tried to hop on the revolving record. Then every record was played to entertain Nehemiah; and finally he leaped to the juniper tree, ascended to the most shady limb, and went to sleep. Thereafter he roamed at will within the wire-enclosed hog pasture.

Once he leaped over the fence on the Jackson Highway, also designated as Number Forty-Five. To prevent Nehemiah from getting there again, where scores of automobiles pass hourly, I fastened a watch chain, one bought for pure gold that had turned out to be old tinkling brass, to his left front foot. To the other end of the chain was tied a baseball autographed by Babe Ruth. He was thus the solitary member of my chain gang, but he did not appreciate it and sulked all the while. Finally, Dolly Pusher insisted that Nehemiah had served his time and should be liberated. I promised to pardon him on the morrow. Late that afternoon Nehemiah's temper rose more suddenly than a Mississippi shower that comes up when a white person minus coat and umbrella is on his way to a colored baptizing. He leaped for the Jackson Highway, and I ran after him. Keeping within a few paces, I would have overtaken him but stepped into a concealed hog wallow. When on my feet again, I saw that Nehemiah had not made much headway, but sat on his haunches, panting, one forepaw up to his forehead. He was doing some serious thinking how to overcome the baseball handicap. Suddenly, uttering a savage croak, he grabbed the baseball between his jaws and leaped tremendously. One more leap would bring him against the fence but he divided the distance and made two leaps. With the last one he rose almost straight in the air and made a graceful curve. To my consternation a Ford sedan was in the way, but instead of landing under the wheels he shot through an open window and landed in the flapper driver's lap.

Most any other girl would have let go of the wheel and screamed, but not she. She held the wheel with one hand, and with the other patted the ugly amphibian. "My baby," said

she to a companion beside her who held on her lap a young baby that resembled an Armour bisected sugar cured ham. Nehemiah turned partly around and spewed out the baseball with such force that it brought a streak of crimson from one of the back seat occupants—a rubescent nosed spinster. I called for the driver to stop and deliver my property, but she pretended not to hear me. So I took the auto number and phoned ahead for its detention until I overtook it. Rushing back to my garage, I found two flat tires. Dolly Pusher had used the car the previous evening to attend the talkies at Electric Mills. I then phoned the sheriff at Dekalb, giving the auto number, and requested the name of the person to whom the license had been issued. I was informed a colored preacher named Moses Abraham Wade Hampton had taken out the license on a Mighty Michigan 40 touring car—an orphan outside the pale of any automobile asylum. I saddled Dobbin and ran him most of the way to the ebon dominie's house in the center of a cotton field. About the only shade was cast by a dilapidated family surrey on which hens roosted. From a piccaninny I learned his reverence was conducting a revival at Good Hope church, and I hastened there, reining my horse before an open shutter. The parson was speaking more than two hundred and fifty words a minute. Words warred with one another to be among the first to emanate from his cat-fish mouth. Most of his congregation were members of F. T. T. A. (Free Thanksgiving Turkey Association). His discourse was against coveting our neighbor's property. I did not take in much he said except a few closing sentences which went: "Lastly, brethren, I warn you not to yield to the tempter, but should you do so, when you sit down this coming Thanksgiving to your free turkey dinner the Lord will demand a mighty powerful blessing."

The Mighty Michigan 40 automobile was in a ditch beside the highway miles from home. The engine had died an ignominious death of ignition trouble and a culprit had purloined the license plate. At midnight I returned home none the wiser. The Ford sedan transporting Nehemiah was headed south. I phoned the sheriff of Lauderdale County at Meridian to be on the lookout. After working most of the night my auto was in condition to make a fifty mile trip to Meridian,

hub city of the state. The Ford sedan had not arrived; it was bottom side up over an embankment at the foot of a dangerous curve near the hamlet of Lauderdale, half way from Poverty Flop plantation to Meridian. The occupants of the overturned car were none the worse for the accident, and had been given a lift to Meridian by a genial commercial traveler whom I interviewed. He remembered the two young women distinctly but had only a hazy remembrance of the two elderly ladies; he said that each of the young women had a baby or something resembling one concealed from view. The kids had all the covering while the mothers tried to get by with little more than Eve's first costume.

"Did you notice anything out of the ordinary concerning the kids?" I asked.

"Not to speak of, except that one yelled as hoarse as a yearling male calf."

"Nehemiah, my Solomon Islands frog," I replied.

"Just two kids or flapper mothers," he remarked as he pressed the starter and rolled down the street headed west. More than one street Arab from behind a board sign yelled at me, saying "Old bull frog, croak some other tune."

I would change the theme after one more inquiry of the next pedestrian coming my way regardless of sex, race, or condition. My victim was a middle-aged colored man of pleasing personality.

"Boss, have you seen a bull frog as large as a toy hootch still?"

"Sure thing, there's a frog sitting in the grass on Mr. Blackfangs' lawn. At least it was there not an hour ago. Mr. Blackfangs is mighty curious. He tries to shoo every living thing onto his front yard. His trees are always full of birds; many sing mighty sweet. In his back yard are more cats than anywhere else in town. He is a dentist and it is rumored an eye plucker also, 'cause gouging out eyes and pulling teeth belong in the same category. He has pulled teeth by the bushel basket full and made so many plates that nearly everybody in town bears evidence of his handiwork. He wanted to pull all my teeth, said I had Riggs disease. If I ever get ophthalmia, he can gouge out my eyes, but pull my teeth, never!"

I decided to saunter until the birds had gone to roost and the cats come forth. Arrived in front of Mr. Blackfangs' magnificent residence I peered over an ornamental iron fence, and sure enough, crouched in the grass was a bull frog not quite Nehemiah's color. Perhaps the hazardous experience he had gone through had changed the color of his skin. "Nehemiah," I called many, many times until quite hoarse. To conserve my vocal organs from fraying to a frazzle I abbreviated the frog's name to "Miah." "Oh, Miah," I yelled at the top of my lungs. "Miah, Miah, Miah!"

Somebody misconstrued my words and yelled "Fire! Fire!" "Fire! Fire!" responded somebody else and out of sight came more yells of "Fire! Fire!" Somebody unknown turned in a fire alarm. Presently the 21st. Ave. fire department arrived, and I was almost run over by the chief's auto. It was a hoax: who perpetrated it? I was pointed out as the culprit and was taken in charge by one of the good natured cops for which Meridian is noted. So reasonable was he that he let me go when I explained I was calling bull frogs, but he advised me to go to some swamp and call frogs until I was satisfied. I hired a small negro boy to watch the frog until dark, then I would recover my property. The boy, faithful to his trust, mounted the top of a front gate post and stared at the frog like Patience on a tombstone smiling at grief. When it was quite dark I dismissed the boy and cautiously entered the yard. I crept up on the frog and with a spring encompassed it within my arms. Next moment a strong hand was thrust under my shirt collar, and frog-horn-voiced Mike McCowall bellowed, "By the shade of Saint Patrick, you should be sent to the bug house, trying to swipe a concrete bull frog!"

"But I lost a frog," I protested meekly, unable to realize the chunk in my hands had never been alive.

"Come with me," said Mike McCowall as he jerked me up on my feet.

"Sir," I expostulated, "you must certainly know me. If not, Mr. Blackfangs will vouch for my uprightness and business acumen."

The loud voiced cop attracted Mr. Blackfangs to the spot, and he, seeing me in custody, turned purple with rage. "Fool!"

he thundered, "let that man alone; dare not lay your plebian hands on him again. He owns Poverty Flop plantation, and is my partner in Meridional Frog Farm, Limited!"

The cop shrunk up so it seemed as though his clothes would part company with his body. Mr. Blackfangs went on: "McCowall, report promptly at my kitchen door and hear what your chief has to say. You, sir," he went on, addressing me, "enter by the front door. You know where the wet goods are kept." Then he conversed over the phone with the chief of police. The chief's voice, more positive than ever, boomed: "Tell McCowall to patrol his beat and look for frogs only. Murder, arson, highway robbery may be committed but pay no attention. Let him get a move on to recover the bull frog and return it to the lawful owner." McCowall was a man of splendid physique, a swell dresser, and he was supercharged with egotism; he imagined every young woman was anxious to wear out her spike heel slippers chasing after him. "Alas," he muttered, "I, Mike McCowall, am degraded to a frog catcher!"

Mr. Blackfangs inquired as to how the frog farm was progressing. I informed him that Nehemiah had taken leg bail. He was not at all down-hearted, instead, he thought the pool would in one season teem with super frogs, just as soon as the eggs hatched. He upheld the same fallacy as counting the chickens before the eggs are hatched. The name of my frog farm spread far and wide, and took on the form of an oil well boom. Many business men asked my advice how to successfully operate a frog farm. Potential profits soared to ten figures. It looked as though the country within a hundred miles radius of Meridian would be turned into frog farms, making millionaires almost over night. A prime bull frog "saddle" would be worth four dollars. One million super frogs could be raised on every acre of swamp land and ponds. However, when facts began refuting such bare-faced whoppers excitement died away and profits were figured on the same basis as an acre of boll weevil infested cotton.

I remained in Meridian without securing a trace of the missing frog. Then I went to Memphis, Tenn., to consult the head of a hardwood logs concern about furnishing me one hundred hollow logs for bee trees. I wanted to set them up

in fields and woods and capture swarms escaped from numerous apiaries that had been established by Yankees in the vicinity of my plantation. On a vacant lot close to the business center was a small show with freak animals. The chief attraction was an enormous horned tree frog, Nehemiah. I tried to obtain possession of the amphibian but the proprietor beat me over the head with a rattan cane. I took legal steps to recover my property, but when an officer went to serve the papers, a flying machine took the air and left behind an empty tent. Nehemiah was up in the air, and I down in my boots. The airplane circled over the city as if on an endurance flight. Quite late in the afternoon it descended within a hundred feet of the earth where I stood unobserved behind a dogwood tree. "Nehemiah," I yelled; above the engine's roar a frog's croak was heard. Nehemiah's head showed from the cock pit but a feminine hand pushed it back out of sight. Had any airplane been in port I would have hired a pilot and got possession of the frog. The airplane flew west until directly over the middle of the Mississippi River, then went up stream several miles and returned down stream twice that distance. In the meantime I hired a colored boatman to row me across the river, for the boatman had overheard the pilot tell his wife that Nehemiah would be taken across the river to the Arkansas Mammoth Frog Farm. Crossing the river as far as the middle, the boatman pulled with full strength on the oars, then ceased as the airplane swung low. "Nehemiah, O Nehemiah," I wailed in despair, and the frog heard me and made his escape. The descent was perfect; he would have landed in an outstretched fish net which the boatman and I held to receive him, but something beneath the surface rocked the boat, the boatman fell in the bow and I in the stern, and within an oar's length a monstrous blue channel catfish, with mouth wide open, rose to the surface and received Nehemiah. The frog's velocity was too great for the fish's stomach, however, and it was torn open as if a stick of dynamite had exploded. On the surface the fish floated on its back, and, lifeless, close by floated Nehemiah, brained from the impact of striking the fish's upper jaw. Over the result the boatman was elated and I depressed.

CHAPTER II.

AMONG OLD FRIENDS

Bakersfield, California
November 21, 1925

My Dear Old Procrastinator:

This is the fifth reminder, written at the end of each fifth year from that memorable day when you left the Golden State, California, with the promise you would be gone no longer than a year. Wholly inexplicable is the length of your residence in Mississippi, King Cotton's famous state, for I do not consider Texas as the paramount cotton state. She is nothing more or less than a mongrel with her cattle rustlers; greasy "greaser" oil men, wild-catters without end. They would delight in devouring all con and shell game men with which the state is infested. You must be mighty struck on Old King Cotton whose whiskers no doubt you grease with cotton seed oil, smooth down the humps in his linters mattress, and fluff up his cotton seed pillow. How often does the old gentleman get rid of a bale by baling you out of the cooler? From diverse Southern newspapers I glean that each cotton grower is an expert poisoner, slaying boll weevils in a way that would make old Locusta, were he living, feel hardly competent to deal out "rough on rats." Is there the same lure in growing cotton that there is mining for gold? Is the percent of bug-house cotton growers as great as among gold prospectors? King Cotton's microbes must have penetrated every tissue of your corporosity. If you labor under the baneful hallucination that King Cotton will put you on the road to affluence, go to the nearest electric operated gin, crawl in the press, and have such bosh squeezed from your addle pate. Take up some honest occupation that will grease the reverse side of a soda biscuit with oleomargarine. I am informed a contract will be let soon for building a causeway from San Pedro Harbor to Santa Catalina Island. Get a subcontract, and carry out the material in your pockets. The prerequisite

would not be great but greater far than chasing the Dixieland ignis fatuus—growing cotton with freed negro labor under present boll weevil conditions.

Within the present month will occur the quarter century anniversary of my wedded bliss, and also the half century of my mundane career. Not the least, Junior will attain his majority. Only a boy yet, he has mature ideas, and about a year ago he committed a bold deed, the results of which are expected any day. The Madam whom you used to address as "Gentle Nellie" intends giving a whoopee Thanksgiving dinner to a few intimate friends, and your name tops the list. Of course you will not refuse to put your big feet under our table. The golden egg laying turkey will grace the platter. The golden egg laying goose threw up her job, when doped with Bakersfield crude oil for missing a day each week. A self imposed task was assumed by our best turkey hen, who never misfired. I am willing to sacrifice that much for your presence at our Thanksgiving dinner. Start at once on a donkey; or come faster by pony express, faster still by the Overland Limited, faster and faster by airplane. Hurry! S. O. S.

Your Partner of prospecting days,

FRANK P. MOORE

Such was the letter from Mr. Moore, which was delivered at Bull Head Flat postoffice on my return from an unsuccessful attempt to recover the Solomon Island horned tree frog. The postoffice was on the ground floor in the southeast corner of Bull Head and Flat's emporium. The usual gathering of loafers conspicuous at almost any village postoffice was ready to offer consolation or reprimand, as the case might be. As soon as I came in sight each one had his way of expressing his sympathy or gloating over my loss. First to air his opinion was Mr. T. S. (Trouble Shooter) Lovejoy, blue white sparkler of humanity. He grasped my hand and pump-handled my arm as though my body was a town pump supplying water to extinguish a conflagration that was destroying Bull Head Flat.

"Cheer up, brother; you brought nothing into the world and you take nothing out. Do as a school boy, spit on your slate, erase the figures which are your misfortunes with the palm

of your hand, and begin life over again."

"My ruined cotton crop, unsuccessful crawfish and bull frog farm, are eye sores."

"Brother, Adam was not grouchy over his fall, Julius Cæsar never kicked about his bald head. George Washington did not rant when he crossed the Delaware full of moving ice instead of waiting for a hydroplane. Woodrow Wilson uttered no cuss words when his fourteen points would not sidetrack the ten commandments."

"But I am raked from head to foot with pains, aches, and ails. I should be called Old Man Achers."

"Brother," responded Mr. Cheerful Face, bringing a hand down forceably on my shoulder, "pains, aches, and worry such as you imagine beset you are figments of a diseased imagination, just so much earthly matter as you carry under your finger nails. Dryclean yourself from head to foot as though Judgment Day was close at hand and your ascension robes were ready."

Next in line was a matter of fact old gentleman, a recent arrival who had bought a small farm adjoining Poverty Flop plantation at the southeast corner. "Alas!" said he, "the day of one's death is better than his birth. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"Shut up, old croaker of evil!" I retorted. "Nehemiah during his most wretched hours never croaked more doleful."

There were others to express their sympathy, but I turned them over to a hitching post. Without further molestation I reached my plantation home.

"Any good news?" inquired the household goddess.

"Yes; but I did not recover Nehemiah. Here is something in the way of news—pretty good news." I gave her Frank Moore's letter.

"But you do not intend to go that far for Thanksgiving dinner?"

"Why not?" I asked, flabbergasted that she did not agree with me.

"In the first place you have not the ready money—not money enough to buy a Thanksgiving turkey with the labor's trimmings."

"I am going to put a plaster on Poverty Flop plantation."

"You are not! There is a piece of the new clothesline that the clerk threw in for good measure. Hobble yourself and graze on the front lawn; if you like the diet, I shall keep you company unhobbled until thoroughly grass fed."

"You might lend me the price of a return ticket to California."

"Does Charon give away a return ticket?"

"Once you would give me your last cent, and your imitation alligator leather pocketbook included."

"That was when your face seemed of undrossed gold, but it has changed to tarnished brass."

For several years past the Madam had added a little to her savings account from eggs, and from milk and butter from a single cow; but no revenue had been derived since the cow got hollow tail—and recently no tail at all! A neighbor's bulldog deprived her of it. Madam was huffy, and would not speak to the bulldog's owner when they met for Thursday evening prayer meeting.

I decided to go to California as an airplane stowaway, as a last resort. Recently an airport was established in Meridian, where I could attempt the almost impossible, but an agent for Henry Ford searching for antebellum souvenirs appeared. Grandfather had left a Wade-Butcher razor—or rather hair puller—a German silver rim spectacles, a pewter snuff box, and an imitation gold watch of English make; and I disposed of the trinkets for more than a one-way first class ticket to California. My imitation Gladstone cowhide bag was not ready to burst from overstuffing with costly clothes. Instead, it resembled a deflated automobile tube, for the cotton boll weevils had leached the last drop of my financial blood. The train I came on from California to the cotton growing states twenty-five years before, was a crude affair. The President of the United States of America, a quarter century ago, could command no such luxury as the train I returned on. On the third morning after my departure, at nine thirty a brakeman walked through the palatial train bawling "Bakersfield! All out for Bakersfield." Among the first to disembark on the platform in the impetuous stream of humanity was myself. Among the heterogeneous crowd assembled if for no other purpose than to see the train arrive there was not a familiar

face; most noteworthy among them was a tall, portly, snow-white haired and mustached gentleman whose white eyebrows made his brown eyes seem black. He scrutinized each man as he left the train; accompanying him was a small, stoop shouldered, thin faced, middle aged man who said, "We are disappointed as usual." A sudden sandy gust swirled past. The small man's derby skittered over the crowd and landed in a coal yard. The departed hat revealed a cranium destitute of hair although there were a few scattering ones at the base of the skull concealed by a clerical stand up collar. The clothes that dangled on the spare figure were those of a clergyman.

"Your Reverence," said the tall portly man, "your dream that Mr. Procrastinator would arrive on this train did not come to pass, but you are excusable for all the other events you foretold in dreams came to pass."

"Your dream has come true," said I to the parson. "I am here in person."

"By proxy you mean," replied the reverend gentleman. "You no more resemble that man we bade adieu in San Francisco at the Market Street Ferry building than the gate of perdition resembles the gate of Paradise."

The portly gentleman grasped hold of my shoulder and turned me facing the sun.

"You are. Frank Moore, I know you by your grip," I exclaimed in delight.

"Old Procrastinator here at last!" they exclaimed in unison. My gladstone bag of almost feather lightness fell on the floor.

"Guess him," said Mr. Moore pointing to his comrade.

"President of the worthy order of bald heads," I replied, blinking in Moore's face.

I should have recognized Mr. Moore on sight but his dark hair had changed to snow white.

"Who are you?" I inquired of the runty individual.

"Am I so changed that you know me not?" he asked, holding a silk handkerchief over his bald head. "William Ramsay," he added in a whisper.

"Not Reverend William B. Ramsay of Los Gatos?"

"Yes," with a sigh.

"What! William Ramsay who had the finest suit of hair I ever saw on a mortal's head."

"Must have been the aftermath of miring down in quicksand and borax water in Death Valley when we prospected for The Gun Sight Mine. From that date my hair began coming out, first one at a time, then by the handful. Nothing could stop the shedding. I wore a wig until night before last when an evil disposed man took it from my head while I was returning from a revival meeting."

"We are living in Bakersfield," said Mr. Moore, "for the present where I have established my residence. I left San Francisco to be near my business interests; besides, I am running for Congress. Strongest plank in my platform is removal of Napa insane asylum to the heart of Mojave desert, turn the inmates loose among the desert rats, and discover all mineral resources at once. I am as good as elected, so says my campaign manager." He led the way to a Packard limousine. At the steering wheel was a youth about one and twenty years old, a reproduction of Frank Moore when he and I met for the first time, only the young man's hair was yellow. He had blue eyes and as winsome a smile as any siren, ancient or modern.

"This is Junior," said Mr. Moore, patting his son affectionately. "He resembles his mother."

"Gentle Nellie changed only in sex," I replied.

Reverend Ramsay was somewhere among the great piles in the coal yard searching for his hat, which at length he recovered, himself begrimed with coal dust.

"What do you think of our city?" asked Mr. Moore.

"The city is progressive, judging by the many splendid business houses and also by the large number of automobiles which indicate a factory is close by."

"You cannot make the same deductions concerning the source of manufacture of automobiles as to how far the outcropping is away when you see float rock coming down a hill."

Down an oil sprayed highway the limousine sped for three miles, and stopped in front of the most magnificent of many palatial dwellings of Spanish architecture. Junior relieved me of my hand baggage. Mr. Moore and I went up the broad concrete walk, while Reverend William Ramsay followed a

few steps behind. In the patio with a smile of welcome for me stood Mrs. Frank Moore—"Gentle Nellie" not much changed. Any nearly blind mendicant would recognize her. The boyish form had changed to a matron's, the long golden curls were not in evidence, but her eyes were just as blue, with the same confiding expression; her face was fuller. Freckles along the bridge and on one side of her nose in the form of a cross, were now of the letters I. X. L. As I clasped her hand she said, "I cannot see much change in you, but I do not just remember how you looked when you left for the Southland. I have two lady visitors, and I know you will recognize each one at sight."

In the living room heavy footsteps shuffled, and presently a very tall, corpulent, middle-aged woman came in view.

"Who is she?" asked Gentle Nellie.

"I have a correct opinion, but please do not take offense. Did not the Ringling Brothers' fat woman quarrel with her manager and decide to locate at Bakersfield, where she made a fortune speculating in oil stocks? Recently I read an article in the San Francisco Examiner that she had already made more than her weight in gold, a vast fortune, buying up seemingly worthless oil stock?"

"Meow!" exclaimed the fat woman. Her pug fingers clawed at the wall, and all was plain.

"Why, Feline Gatos Ramsey!" I exclaimed in wonderment. "Excuse me for not recognizing you sooner, my eyesight is sort of warped watching crooked niggers. You are not much changed; certainly not for worse, but much for the better. Corpulence brings out your womanly loveliness. Mr. Moore wrote me once you had a little girl. How is she?"

"Meow! Kitty, come here quick." From somewhere or other there bounced into our presence an under-sized girl of about fourteen, more hatched-faced than her mother at that age, judging from an old photograph, and with as heavy a head of hair as her father had once possessed.

"Kitty is such a sweet child," said the fond mother. "Kitty, your fondest wish?"

"When I grow up to be just like you, Mama."

"What about your Papa?" asked the father.

"Lord! no; last Sunday I heard somebody in the congrega-

tion whisper, 'Keep your eyes peeled on old skintubs when he spiels.'"

"Daughter, you should not have listened to such rude remarks, made no doubt by a Billingsgater."

"I want to be ever so big just like mama," continued Kitty, trying in vain to span her mother's waist with both arms.

"The other visitor you will recognize more readily than the parson's wife," said Gentle Nellie.

A small, prematurely gray woman so round-shouldered as to be almost deformed, whose head jerked from one side to the other because she was afflicted with St. Vitus dance, and whose right hand shook with palsy, hobbled forth.

"How are you, Mrs. Tom Garbage?" I asked. "You do not seem a day older than when I saw you last on a load of garbage with Mr. Garbage pushing on the cart to help the horse make a steep Mission street grade. I suppose your kids, —ten were there not?—long since grown up, are married with families of their own."

There was reproach in Gentle Nellie's eyes, and Mr. Moore's mustache spread like a puff adder. The parson's wife said "Meow." A ten year old boy romping with Kitty boldly stepped up to me and said, "Stranger, I should put a head on you for telling Ma she is a garbage man's wife. I want you to understand, sir, she is some pumpkin, the wife of Mr. Dinky Poodle, dogcatcher of Los Angeles."

That information left me none the wiser.

"Kid," I retorted, "we admit your mother occupies an exalted station in life as a dogcatcher's wife, but who was she before her marriage?"

"None of your business," he replied, wry-faced.

"I am so changed," said the dogcatcher's wife, "that my own photograph of ten years ago would pass me up as a total stranger. Before marrying Mr. Dinky Poodle I was Angelia Angel of Los Angeles."

"Impossible! you have pined away to a shadow."

"My son was rude toward you. Recently he has on the sly associated with rude, outspoken boys such as neither his father nor I would tolerate in our house!"

"The kid is on the square and when older will tumble to himself," said Mr. Moore, taking up Toy Poodle.

"We are living in the past. Gone forever are the great expectations and delusions of youth. The great Creative force has gently placed children in our hands, that we may through them in a measure live our youth over again devoid of thrills, and as children enter the Kingdom of Heaven," said the Reverend William Ramsay.

A slender young girl with an Indian's spry step, passed before the open window, rifle in hand. Mr. Moore went outdoors and in low tones talked to her, trying in vain to persuade her not to go rabbit hunting alone in the foothills two miles distant. When he returned to our presence his skin seemed several shades darker and his hair a shade whiter. We sat down to a sumptuous dinner. Reverend William Ramsay asked an impressive blessing. He mentioned my name several times, for which I felt better. Before the blessing ended Toy Poodle stole in and stood behind his mother's chair. "Son," said Mrs. Poodle, "be a good boy, go play with Kitty."

"Not much, I have a little piece to speak."

His mother quit the table to lead him from our presence, but Mr. Moore objected, saying, "Let the boy speak his piece. He may be the making of a great orator, greater than Patrick Henry or Daniel Webster."

So Toy stepped behind Mr. Moore. "Friends and dead beats," said he, "listen while I spiel; just before we left home our domestic felicity was man handled and trampled under foot. Do you know that Pa can't sprout any whiskers? He wears a false French mustache made of hairs from Ma's shins. Ma has mighty hairy shins, so hairy that she is called 'Old Feather Legs.' Three days before we left to come here two naughty boys concealed behind advertising signs, one extolling the virtues of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and the other Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, shouted in derision, 'Brat of old Feather Legs.'"

"What did you do to them?" asked Mr. Moore.

"I did the only sensible thing, ran home and told Ma what I had been called."

"You should have beat them up," admonished Mr. Moore.

"Not I. When Pa shaved Ma's shins last he found two gray hairs and the way he swore was worthy of Satan. He declared he would never shave her shins again, says he is going

to get a bill of divorcement and marry a young woman with golden hair. He is dead struck on wearing a yellow false mustache. I am a guy who will wear a yellow false mustache from shins of the heifer's youngest sister. We are engaged and will marry soon. Just as soon as Pa croaks, and he will die soon, for Ma says he is too mean to live."

Mrs. Poodle began crying.

"My dear Mrs. Poodle," said Mr. Moore, "the boy has told a laughing instead of weeping joke. Mr. Poodle is vain and wears suitable hairs for a false mustache which he imagines will improve his looks. The deception is harmless. Life is full of deception. I practice deception, see!" The upper front teeth on a gold plate came from his mouth; several teeth were knocked out. "I have worn false teeth ever since I was as old as Junior," said he, replacing the plate.

In years long gone I had complimented Mr. Moore on his good teeth.

"Madam's hair is deception. You would swear it was bobbed but the permanent wave is natural," said Mr. Moore, as he pulled at her hair, and down came long golden curls as heavy as when she was a girl.

"Say, Old Procrastinator, what have you?"

"Nothing," I replied, "except a large bald spot which I try to conceal by wearing my hair à la De Witt Talmadge."

Putting my hair back on one side of the fence where it belonged I was quite bald.

"Your Reverence," said Mr. Moore laughing, "we all know you are as bald as a Los Angeles whiskey jug; there is no need to hear from you. The parson's wife will confess next."

"Meow," responded corpulent Feline Gatos Ramsay. "I am wearing lots of false flesh which I would like to get rid of but yearly I get more corpulent."

"Mrs. Poodle, we know you have upper false dentals; do you wish to make a complete confession?"

"I want a lower plate so much, but Mr. Poodle objects. He says times are so hard, there seem to be no more dogs to catch."

"Mr. Poodle should be a cat-catcher, move to Los Gatos, and exterminate the felines in a humane way. Wicked boys

stoned many cats to death until I preached a sermon against throwing stones and mud slinging.

"Rehearsing the sermon in my study, window open on the street, I mentioned that a stone is a deadly missile and narrated how David killed Goliath with a pebble hurled from a sling. 'Your reverence,' bellowed somebody from the street, 'David did not kill Goliath, but Elhanan, the son of Jaare-origin a Bethlehemite, slew Goliath.' 'Brother,' I replied, 'for the sake of argument we will admit David killed Goliath first and Elhanan killed him second and if he was not dead enough to suit your fancy then old age got his goat long ago.' The interrupter shrunk silently away. When I began rehearsing my sermon my imaginary congregation was as in years past a papier-maché bull dog. Nothing I ever said changed his pugnacious aspect, and a glance from his savage eyes would spoil a quart of joy tonic. I cannot rehearse a sermon without something representing a congregation. The most appropriate object was a jackass, symbol of the Democratic party, which since their defeat cast the emblem out in utter darkness. No matter how stale my remarks, there was a grin on its face which improved my delivery and stepped up my thinking-box. For complete satisfaction I advise all my co-workers to preach first to a papier-maché jackass, and then to the congregation. Last New Year's Day a new mayor of Los Gatos entered on his official duties. He is antifeline but procanine. He issued a proclamation to do away with cats and fill vacancies with dogs. It was hard indeed on life long residents to become reconciled to the new order of things. Tabbies were dethroned and sluts elevated to the highest pinnacle. The mayor has a silent partner in the pelt business. Indeed it is alleged the unknown gentleman was a silver fox raiser on a small scale on one of the largest Aleutian Islands. The enterprise ended in failure and disgrace. He doctors up old tom cat skins so that they look and smell like silver fox skins, and an expert furrier cannot tell the difference. The nefarious fraud was fast making millionaires of the mayor and his silent partner while many high-toned, middle-toned, and low-toned members of my congregation wore genuine and imitation silver fox scarfs. They declared they were willing to swear on a stack of Bibles as high as my head standing in the pulpit that their

scarfs were not imitation, but were as genuine as my sermons are original. I decided to lay the matter before Tige, my bulldog who is minus an eye from an encounter with an ancient tom cat last Christmas day. Tige followed me into the church and hid in a corner. When the last tardy worshipper was pewed I sneezed and sputtered, and Tige came forward. He smelled of the men first and growled in disgust. Then went among the women and when he smelled Mrs. Chestypride he tore the imitation scarf from her shoulders. Many others would have had their imitation scarfs ruined, had they not run screaming from the church. I tried to quiet the turmoil by shouting 'Hell fire and brimstone,' but I lost my job as pastor of the first Tom Cat Avenue Holy Roller church. I am not at all down-hearted, however. Soon I shall sail for the Solomon Islands to labor among the innocent natives, and convert them to the white man's religion. My greatest effort will lie among the young women to teach them that a biferous G-string is the most important adjunct of civilized women's costume."

"Has Mary returned yet?" Gentle Nellie asked her husband, as she looked from the west window toward the foothills.

"No," replied her husband, "if she doesn't return within an hour I shall motor out to her tepee and wickiup."

"They must be greatly interested in a young squaw," I said to myself.

An hour of watchful waiting passed, and Mary had not returned. There was no great alarm as the sun was about two hours high, and she had never failed to return by sunset, each time in a different mood. Her parents did not understand their eccentric child. Just before the sun disappeared behind a mountain Mr. Moore called for Junior to bring out the Ford roadster, his business car. He requested me to go with him. For the first time during our long acquaintance he was nervous, and could not keep the machine going on a straight course so I took hold of the steering wheel and did a little better, although the contraption had more sudden movements than a bucking broncho. I drove until the pavement ended, then Mr. Moore, now quite his former self, relieved me and drove through the sand which in several instances almost stalled us. Progress was slow, and the motor over heated so

we stopped to let it cool. "Do you believe in reincarnation?" asked Mr. Moore.

"Certainly I do, but not in transmigration. We are reincarnated spirits of human beings who may have lived during the first glacier period or as recent as the generation just gone before. Everybody born into this world has his life planned, laid out by the great Creative force, call it what you will. We cannot deviate one iota from that course; as the ways of the Lord are inscrutable so is our future, we cannot foretell what may happen from one hour to another. And this is fortunate indeed; if we could tear asunder the veil that hides the future from us there would be revealed in all their hideous starkness obstacles, pitfalls, disappointments so appalling that we would joyfully end our earthly careers. Blessed be the all wise Providence for planting the seed of Hope in our breasts. Hope for something on the morrow better than the best that occurred today is what makes us go around with the world, too good to leave for mysteries of the great beyond."

"I never gave reincarnation a moment's thought," said Mr. Moore, watering the radiator from a gallon can, "for I considered it bosh, until Mary was born. No doubt you saw how Indian-like she is."

"Why! I thought her a Simon pure Indian," I replied surprised she was his and Gentle Nellie's daughter.

"She is the reincarnation of Mary Saline."

"What! that old leathery Death Valley squaw? Impossible!"

"Nevertheless it is so. One year before she was born, my leg that was injured by Old Long Bow's arrow gave me a great deal of trouble again. The wound broke out anew and suppurated. A San Francisco surgeon said my only hope of recovery was to have it amputated, but my wife as well as I myself was adverse to an operation. On the golf course I injured my leg the time Mr. Bungo dropped dead. I shall always blame myself for his death. We were playing an exciting game. The old gentleman got the best of me until I smote the ball underhanded, using the same energy as striking a drill doublehanded, drilling a hole in an upraise. Mr. Bungo got excited contrary to his physician's advice, and dropped dead of heart failure. Carrying his body to the clubhouse, I

stepped into a hole a dog had dug for a ground squirrel, and tore open the falsely healed wound. For months I was an invalid with excruciating pains in my lower limb. If Mary Saline had been living she would have given me some simple remedy to ease the pain and cure my leg. Hourly I thought of her. The more intense the pain, the more I cherished her memory. Our daughter has had every advantage of modern civilization, but in looks, thought, and deed, she is a squaw, and I fear she will never be anything else. By every fair means I have tried in vain to make her forsake her barbarous ways. She complains that the ways of civilized folks make her sick. The county sheriff's hammer-bearer, who goes with that worthy officer when the hammer falls on a creditor's chattels, is enamored of her, gone daffy completely, but she noticed him only long enough to get a hand in his long front hair, and would have scalped him if he had not torn loose."

Twilight had come when we arrived at Mary's tepee of sage bushes wattled between willow poles. The father called her name loudly, but in vain. Evidently she had been there a few moments before; she had not entered, for within a step of the door was the imprint of her moccasined left foot, and beside it the impression of a man's hob-nailed brogan shoe. Seeing the track the father turned as white as his hair and mustache and said, "A tramp has kidnapped her."

I examined the track and presently found several other tracks—those of a Piute Indian. "Mr. Moore," said I, "the offense committed cannot be laid to one of our own race. A young Indian buck is the abductor."

"All is plain," said Mr. Moore, throwing himself across the auto cushion. Both doors were open. "Why did I not watch her? I was warned time and time again that this was her tryst and her horse thief Indian lover's. The most good-for-nothing buck in all Southern California is probably now her husband. I am in a hell of a fix."

"Mr. Moore, you jump at conclusions. Your suspected son-in-law may be old Ike Maverick, cattle rustler, oil promoter, train robber, former partner of John Shongtag and Chris Evans. Who is the better of the two?"

"Either of them is a hard nut to crack."

Behind a clump of sage brush were pony tracks which I called to Mr. Moore's attention.

Said he, "The buck came and departed on horse back, while she followed squaw-like, carrying his traps and her rifle."

The spoor led among the foothills, and presently there were other pony tracks; one pony in particular dragged a hind foot—old Pe Po Broos' mount with a stiff hock joint from entanglement in a barb wire fence. Pe Po Broos was the witch doctor for the San Joaquin Valley Indians, and licensed to perform a marriage ceremony.

"That heathen disciple of Endor's witch has wed my daughter to a horse-stealing buck. I shall shoot him on sight."

"Mr. Moore, be reasonable. Your daughter is of age and was probably a willing party to the marriage contract."

"Searching further for the elopers by automobile is useless, but Junior can spot them from his airplane. Let us hurry back."

Turning homeward, he stepped full strength on the gas. The auto flew rather than ran through the deep sand. I clung fast to the windshield, consoled by the thought that I carried a large automobile accident insurance policy issued by The Chicago Daily Tribune. In case of death by accident my heirs or assigns would receive several thousand dollars plus ten percent additional yearly. The policy costs me a bagatelle per annum, but nevertheless I am not at all anxious to be bumped off by an automobile. On the paved highway we almost collided with a fire truck, and ran into a junk collector's wagon without material injury, but a calf ran across the highway directly in front of us, we ran over it, and were wrecked. Above us, lying bottom side up, was our automobile wrecked beyond repair. Fortunately we escaped uninjured. For a man of his age and corpulence Mr. Moore regained his feet remarkably soon. He ran down the highway, never once looking to see whether I was following. At the front gate, he yelled, "Junior, get out your airplane and beat it for Mt. Baker."

A white capped nurse thrust her head from an upper chamber window, two fingers to her lips, in tacit request for silence. Junior with arms crooked on his breast as if holding a small animated object, leaned from the window and nodded for his

father to draw near. "Dad," he whispered hoarsely, "prospects are splendid for me being a dad and you a grandad."

"Mary is lost, she must be found," said Mr. Moore, almost weeping.

"I have lost no kid but one will soon find me; great, isn't it, Dad," replied Junior.

Mr. Moore imparted the news of Mary's disappearance to his wife who swooned for the first time, and the midwife doped her with catnip tea. The quiet house was now in an uproar, which prevented me from sleeping although my bed chamber was furthest from the scene. I had not slept much during my journey to California. Pullman sleepers were made for children, policemen, night watchmen, church goers,—and the house cat might be included. Finally, I slipped on my outer garments and low shoes, and went out in the moonlight. The moon shone with California effulgence, brighter than anywhere else on earth. The Chinese cook occupied a small building at rear of the mansion, and lay in his bunk hitting his pipe, and had dropped off to sleep. A disagreeable odor from consuming opium pervaded the cook's room as I entered and sat down. Soon I became somnolent, crawled into an empty bunk, and gave way to voluptuous visions and dreams. I was seated on a bird of Paradise throne. At my feet was Pandora's box full to the lid with the hoardings of Henry Ford, J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and numerous other multi-millionaires. The Almighty Dollar's juggernaut rolled over a road spread with Aladdin's magic carpet which was obedient to my behest. Such were my visions and dreams superinduced by opium. What if I had smoked opium? Joy would have finished me before the owl hooted on the midnight air. I did not get up until long after sunrise.

"Any news of Mary?" I asked Mr. Moore.

"Absolutely none; I am a grandad now."

"How does Junior wear the iron-spiked crown, fatherhood?"

"He seemed ashamed, went out to the hangar, crawled into the cockpit, and slept until a few minutes ago—away from squalling infants. It must be a reinforced brass-lunged kid to kick up such racket."

"A litter," he went on, as we strolled toward the hangar, where Junior tinkered with the engine.

"Dad," he inquired sheepishly, "were you glad or sorry the night I was born?"

"Delighted, son, as any normal father should be, especially with such a good son as you."

"Thanks, Dad, for your good opinion. I cannot express as good an opinion. About all night I dreamed of being on the summit of Mt. Golgotha, dodging kids pitched at my head by irritated fathers all over the world. I was snowed under by kids for all time. Let us find sis."

"After breakfast, son."

We entered the house by the kitchen door. The midwife and nurse had a cup of catnip tea in each hand. Said the nurse to Junior, "You are fortunate that you didn't live in the days of Malthus. With a few more of your kind he would have died from worry as how to feed an over-populated world."

"Who was Malthus?" inquired the midwife.

"Trouble brewer," replied the nurse, ascending the stairs with agility.

The midwife climbed up slowly.

Ah Ching's saffron face was suffused with smiles.

"Heap kids, me no savvy what for."

"Cease this kid racket," retorted Junior, showing impatience for the first time, for he had the amiable disposition of his mother. Breakfast was served without Mr. and Mrs. Frank Moore's presence. The children, Kitty and Toy, were at the table. Toy sat beside his mother, and every time he opened his mouth to receive food she covered the cavity with her hand, for she knew he would make a bad break. Kitty was silent with admiring eyes on her mother, in whom she saw perfection. Breakfast over, we sat in the hall; entered the midwife and nurse, each with a babe. "Your son," said the nurse to Junior. "Your daughter," said the midwife.

The son was dark like the mother, the daughter was light like the father.

"Son, by the time you have raised and educated these children you'll learn that marriage is no joke," said Mr. Moore.

"What shall I do to support and educate them?" asked Junior, down-hearted.

Presently the nurse and midwife returned, each with an infant exactly like the others.

"Your daughter," said the nurse. "Your daughter," said the midwife.

"A scurvy trick you are playing on me, counting my kids twice and trying to make me believe there's a litter."

"Seeing is believing," said the nurse, turning over her charge to the midwife, and soon returned with the two infants first exhibited.

"Great Scott! by all the apples of Sodom, Dad, Mary must be found!"

Hatless, he ran for the hangar, rolled out the airplane, and Ah Ching started the propeller whirling. Half way down the runway the airplane took the air, and Junior flew straight toward Mt. Baker. He was soon lost from view. Neighbors began gathering to admire the quadruplets and to give advice on raising so many at a time. One caller was disappointed because she had been told there were twelve. Said she, "At one time I had four grandchildren by two mothers. One was a good mother, the other a bad mother. In the long run the good mother looked after the four."

After being absent two hours Junior zoomed down on his private landing field and reported a small band of Indians was encamped in a valley beyond Mt. Baker. Among them he had recognized his sister who with her buck had not reached the camp when first observed. The buck took the lead on a pony, and admonished her for not walking faster. By detouring fifty miles an automobile could approach within a mile of the camp. So Mr. Moore, Reverend William Ramsay, and myself in a new Ford roadster made the trip. Under similar conditions a Ford Model T car never made better time. When we reached the encampment all the Indians had slunk away. Mary stood alone, rifle in hand.

"Daughter," said Mr. Moore gently, "return home. These vermin infested savages are not your fit associates."

"No, Father, they are my people. I cannot desert my husband, even if he steals horses. I am happy with him in the great outdoors, the Indian's heritage."

"Call your buck; maybe I can placate him. A few silver dollars go a long way with a redskin."

"Pejudi," she called, which in English means Strutting Buzzard, and Strutting Buzzard came from concealment.

"Cayuse purloiner," said Mr. Moore, "I want my daughter. What shall I give you to annul the mesalliance?"

"All the lands of my ancestors and kindred, which includes the whole of California and Nevada."

"Promise, Cayuse, not to steal any more horses."

"I promise when all the lands stolen by the pale faces from my ancestors are restored, not to steal any more cayuses."

We returned without Mary.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOLD DIGGERS

All the visitors at Mr. Frank Moore's except myself departed for their homes at the end of the week. I would have gone also had there been any other place where my welcome would not become "seedy"—even threadbare—after twenty-four hours. The other visitors would come at any other week end while I came once at a quarter-century end. My visit would not be repeated in all human probability, for Mr. Moore showed symptoms of not living out his three score and ten years. When I reached that age the chimney corner would hold me down with irresistible force, and at any attempt to rise my old bones would be broken. I had returned to California as an adopted son and like every native son wanted a spade of California earth thrown over my breast bone, rather than on the boards above me. There were more legitimate ways of winning Dame Fortune's favor in the golden state of opportunity than squandering it in weevil infested Mississippi. Daily on the street I met old timers who told of hidden and lost mines. To one who has prospected and mined for precious metals such tales make the blood course faster through his veins, his eyes grow brighter. He who is unmoved when such themes are discussed must be as unemotional as a bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, Miss Liberty, and Brigham Young. On my way to drop a postcard in a mail box, I passed a second-hand store and pawnshop combined. A lone customer was in there haggling over the price of a worn miner's pick, U. S. Government short-handled shovel, milk pan with a hole in the bottom a lizzard could crawl through, which would do to test gravel for gold. His optimism, if not plain lying, enthused me. I was among the clouds and tiptoed from one lofty peak to another, including Mt. Whitney. Through him I learned the story of the White Mule mine discovered by Tom Scott and erroneously called Tom Scott's mine.

"Scott, a half breed Indian, had a white man's acumen and

industry. He first appeared as a miner during the Havilah, Kern County, gold rush in the early sixties. He located and worked a mine within a stone's throw of Kern River, where at the base of the foothills are the Havilah gold mines. With much profit he worked his mine to water level; the inflow was strong from close proximity to the river, but there was no machinery heavy enough to keep the mine in workable condition and he abandoned it. With a burro carrying most of his outfit and the remainder on his body, he went forth to discover new diggings. When his supplies were consumed and he was weak from over exertion and under nourishment, he entered a narrow valley in the vicinity of Mt. Baker and rested there, living on mountain trout and wild plums. After two weeks, fully recuperated, but finding no gold, he resolved to cross a high ridge to the east. Across the valley in the rays of the setting sun he espied the outcropping of a white quartz ledge shaped like a mule, and something that resembled eyes gleamed yellow. He was familiar with such a gleam, and what he found was gold nuggets. The ledge was full of gold, more coarse than fine. That night he camped at the foot of the Bonanza's outcropping. Two hundred pounds of nuggets he put in his cowhide panniers, and one hundred pounds more he would carry himself which he picked up at the base of the White Mule outcropping. But his greed ended in disaster and death. In the gulch was a spring of viscous matter called malthas or crude asphalt, and he daubed the outcropping with asphalt so that nobody would examine it for the fortune it contained. He dared not make a location, for the monument containing notice of the location would be a dead give-away. He should have gone due west over a high ridge beyond a deer trail that led down to the valley where Bakersfield now stands. Like a stream he followed the course of least resistance down the gulch and after a while came to a depression almost full of asphalt which seemed safe to cross. The donkey, with more sense, refused to go further, but he forced it out on the treacherous substance and it bogged down. He cut loose the load of gold on which he stood. With Herculeanean efforts he extricated the donkey. The gold filled panniers settled beyond the surface ankle deep; trying to free one foot his other foot slipped off a pannier and went down to the knee. The donkey

stood by, braying, seeming to call for help. There was a rope about its neck which he grasped and pulled himself to safety except for his left leg still mired to the knee. His pack of gold was in reach, so he stuffed the donkey's ears with nuggets and sewed them up. In his blue flannel shirt he put fifty pounds of nuggets and fastened it to the donkey's tail, hoping some prospector or miner would find the donkey and hasten to his rescue. Three days afterwards Mr. Ed Vaughn found the donkey at the mouth of Bodfish Creek. He knew the donkey and immediately began searching among the mountains for the owner. What had become of him? Ask the mountain lions. Years afterwards a human skeleton, with the left leg bones missing below the knee, was found near the mountain lions' den. By the teeth of the upper jaw, double all the way around such as Scott had, the skeleton was identified. Thousands have since looked for the auriferous ledge which must have sunk back into the mountainside. Talk about solid mountains! The Sierras are not permanent: there is upheaval in one place and depression in another, slowly changing the contour. The asphalt pond disappeared long ago. The White Mule mine has become a beautiful legend which keeps alive the fast dimming sparks of adventure in the hearts of sturdy old prospectors who believe all but the impossible. I have searched for the mine constantly since I abandoned hope of finding the Miller Brothers cement mine supposed to be located in the vicinity of Mono lake. Hoax you may say. Mark Twain searched for the mine and so have countless others. Somebody yet unborn may be predestined to uncover the White Mule mine and somebody else the Miller Brothers cement mine which is more than half gold. Partner, please grubstake me. I will make you a location at the end of my two claims, and as you are aware a discoverer is entitled to locate in his own name two full claims, three thousand feet along the course of the ledge. Besides, I might lend you several nuggets to salt ground ten miles from my mines. Pard, what say you?"

"Would not a railway ticket to Napa be more appropriate? You would be relieved of all the anxiety of operating a huge enterprise and the fear of being robbed by machine gunners. Some one of the younger generation should shoulder your

great responsibility. What you most need is good credit with a funeral home."

I asked Mr. Moore's opinion concerning the White Mule mine, and he believed it to be a hoax. He did not care to prospect for it. With advancing years the lure of searching for sudden wealth had departed from him. He turned such matters over to Junior, who adopted the modern method of prospecting for precious metals by airplane. Never was I more keen for a prospecting trip if Junior would gratify me by taking me aloft in his airplane and fly low over the terrain. I would use my eyes, and what they failed to observe a camera would catch. The mother of the quadruplets was doing well and the babies better, so when they were two weeks old Junior and I went aloft and scouted among the foothills and mountains west of Bakersfield. We saw nothing much except barren rocks and scrubby pines. As we started homeward I looked over the tail of the airplane, and silhouetted against the setting sun was a white object resembling a mule. I was positive the White Mule mine was found again. Junior turned the airplane around, went over the spot, and took a snapshot. I wanted him to fly low so that I could jump out and make a location. Of course, to jump would have meant instant death, so ignorant was I of aviation, and Junior used forceable language to prevent me from jumping. He declared he would tell his father I had gone suddenly insane. The photograph revealed the perfect outline of a mule except the ears curved over the shoulders. Somehow or other the news leaked out that Junior had rediscovered the White Mule mine. All forenoon a constant throng of excited people viewed the photograph. All afternoon men, women, boys, and girls stole out of town with the stealth of chicken thieves, to search for the mine. That night Mt. Baker from base to summit was aglow with the camp fires of the gold crazed searchers. Next morning more than twenty airplanes scoured the mountains and continued all that day. At dusk a real mad business man, out of pocket a thousand dollars or more hiring airplanes, came to see Mr. Moore.

"What idiot or d—d fool took the photograph that kicked up this racket?" he roared.

"My son took a photograph and, sir, I give you to under-

stand he is neither idiot nor fool. Nobody asked you to butt in," replied Mr. Moore, whose grey hair rose on end, for he was wroth.

"The photograph is that of a cursed Angora billy goat. Any fool could see that a mule wears no horns."

So the famous White Mule mine lapsed into obscurity again. Meanwhile, Mr. Moore had important business to transact in San Francisco, where he and Junior would go by airplane down the San Joaquin Valley. He asked me to go along but I decided to make Ed Vaughn a short visit, and asked Mr. Moore if it would be demanding too much to drop me at Hot Springs Valley airport, located on the old Dick Palmer ranch, equal distance from Havilah, home of the Ananias Club, and Kernville. That reminded Mr. Moore that Mike Welch was still among the living. He and Mike had been good friends since their meeting at Keeler a quarter-century before. From a commercial traveler recently returned from Kernville we learned Mike Welch was not in affluent circumstances, but operated a cucumber farm on Bodfish Creek, formerly Ed Vaughn's old homestead. He pickled cucumbers in two and one half percent alcoholic solution; often the percent was more but never less, for his prosperity depended on the kick the cukes gave his bibulous customers. Dry agents never molested him. He won the lifelong gratitude of Andrew Volstead by sending him a jar of pickles. Volstead wrote Mike a nice letter congratulating him on the great kick the pickles gave him. Mr. Moore filled a small trunk with wearing apparel for Mike Welch, and Gentle Nellie baked him a hat box of cookies, pies, and what nots. My contribution was a rayon shirt, my Sunday best, only the back was about eaten up by Dixie moths that had thrived on moth balls. Junior intended to donate something but the quadruplets must have pacifiers, nursing bottles filled with certified milk. Mr. Moore did not keep a cow. He cared little for dairy products. He ate peanut butter and sometimes oleomargarine.

Soon after midnight of the next day we intended to go, but a northerly gale sprang up and terminated in one of the worst sand storms in a decade. San Joaquin Valley outdid Death Valley entertaining Boreas. So fierce was the gale that young fruit trees and grape vines were stripped of their bark. Peb-

bles cut through double strength window glasses. Several new painted houses bore the aspect of a flapper's latest idea of spreading face paint. While the storm raged outdoors a severe storm in Mr. Moore's house centered in an upper chamber, the temporary abode of Junior's wife and the quadruplets. One kid had colic, and began squalling. The refrain was taken up by the other three, and they all tried out their leather lungs. Each mature inmate who listened, declared there was no harmony, rhyme, or reason. The mother in the storm center commanded the nurse to bring the father forthwith. Junior, whose chamber joined mine, was meanwhile full of happy dreams and imagined he was single again. His calf love, which Dan Cupid had nursed to bull-moose love and by which he had won his fair Donna, was throttled and confined in a dungeon. "Ah," he laughed, "my plane outflies Cupid."

"Junior," called the nurse, knocking on his chamber door. "Donna wants you to quiet a kid with an attack of whoopee colic."

"Which one?" asked Junior half awake.

"I cannot tell," replied the nurse, pounding on his door.

He yawned and dropped off to sleep again.

There were more infantile wails; the mother was using corporeal persuasion, and spanked one and all, while she hissed "Brats! cease your racket."

Mr. Moore, with the experience of more than two decades in kidology, dressed himself hastily and entered the storm center, but failed to pacify them after exhausting every known expedient. Said he, "Donna, a grandad is too old fashioned for up-to-date kids. Their father best understands them."

So he forced the lock to Junior's chamber door, but could not rouse Junior out of his half awake condition.

"Father, please let me finish my nap. Piloting an airplane is a wide awake job."

"Donny is calling. The quadruplets are most obstreperous. I cannot comprehend where they got their awful temper. You were a model kid and Mary about the average. Oh, that Mary was a child again! I would devote my whole time so that she would understand her mother and father. With all our devotion she repaid it by marrying a worthless Indian."

"Dad, do you think I could give away my daughters to

some old squaw and my son to an old buck? Sis might look up a market for my wares. I learned too late the wisdom of your suggestion when I went to you head over heels in my calf love affair asking your consent to wed Donna. Your advice, as on all other matters, was sound: a man should not marry until the sun has set the last time on his twenty-fourth year, and then only if favored with a gold spoon in his mouth."

Footsteps on the hall carpet were heard between intervals in the squalls, and a large, white clad, female figure came into Junior's chamber. Mr. Moore had neglected to close and bolt the door as Junior demanded. Flashing black eyes blazed, white teeth gnashed together, and strong white hands fastened their grip in Junior's yellow locks. He was pulled bodily from his bed.

"Donna, please let go of my hair! I will go; I'll do anything to save my hair."

And he went, she a step behind talking in her ancestors' pure Castillian; he hardly understood a word.

The nurse was walking the floor with two babies, while the other two were in a clothesbasket, black in the face from squalling. They kicked and clawed at the dusty air.

"Coward," she hissed in broken English, "here are your brats. Nothing would satisfy you until I promised to wed you and give up my career, the most noble ever conceived by modern woman. You obliterated my road to fame and high renown. I thought you were a god, but the scales have fallen from my eyes, and I see you just as you are—an irresponsible cad caring only for yourself."

"Donna, cad that I am who wrecked your ambition to take a front seat among the world's few immortals. However, I am at a loss to know how you would have become famous."

"Blockhead, my plan was so simple it should be in a primer. Here it is: Every woman and girl in China and India would be lifted out of their degradation by elevating them on spike heel slippers!"

"Give me the kids," said Junior, and took one in each arm, head down. The clothes basket with the other two in it was tied to his back with a towel, and with a rattle in each hand he walked the hall, smiling imperially because he was the father of the only quadruplets in California. Finally the

colic had run its course or he had kidded the kids to sleep. Junior deserves our sympathy. First, he chose for helpmeet one who wore the breeches, and secondly the stork was over generous.

The sandstorm abated with sunset. Dust had filtered into Mr. Moore's palatial residence and all others of the kind, down to the day laborer's shanty, and a general house cleaning was done at once. Having had some experience as carpet beater, in days long gone by, for the next three days I beat carpets and shook rugs, assisted by Ah Ching. According to an occidental's way of reasoning this pigtail son of the nascent east, did everything backwards. He of the ancient civilization may have been in the right and I in the wrong. One of his strange acts was, when meeting a countryman he grasped his own left hand and shook it, and his friends did the same. A very good idea which should be adopted by us who deem the Chinese heathens, because it prevents the spread of seven year itch and other skin infections.

The house in order again, with every detail of an airplane trip worked out, Junior was not anxious to go. Donna and the quadruplets had suddenly eclipsed the glamor of an ace airplane flier. He dreamed of making a round-the-world flight in a airplane of his own manufacture—a non-refueling machine that was propelled by taking from the earth the atoms of energy it exerts spinning through space. He would so surpass Col. Charles A. Lindbergh that the Colonel would be only as a new cutdown dollar bill and he a ten thousand dollar bill of standard size. The trip was delayed another week on account of some irregularity in the domestic relations of Mr. Moore's daughter Mary and her Indian husband. The matter was strictly private and demanded Mr. Moore's presence at Tulare Lake Indian reservation. It must have been important for when he returned there was an I-want-to-die expression on his drawn features. I tried to cheer him by saying, "Old Pard, I feel it in my bones that Mary has wed an Indian Prince and in due season a princess will be born greater than Pocahontas. Illustrious men now away down the dim alley of the future will trace their noble descent from an Indian prince who wed a sturdy American gentleman's daughter, whose father you are."

"The rascal switched from eating horse flesh to billy goats, and a goat man almost got his goat for killing a thoroughbred Angora. If as you say he is a prince I am in the same boat with many civilized Americans who support and keep out of the penitentiary a titled son-in-law. The rascal does nothing but evil. He has as many bad traits as the old Tempter and not one that is good. He is the witch doctor of all California and Nevada, a position more coveted among the redskins than for a pale face to sit down for a term of four years in the chair which must have put corns on a certain part of George Washington's anatomy."

At sunrise, with Junior at the controls, the airplane was rolled from the hangar loaded with various articles for Mike Welch, a canteen of cold tea, several sandwiches, and a dozen oranges for our snack. Mr. Moore sat beside the pilot, while I crouched just behind, my heart in my mouth, and slumped in a corner. However, the depression was of short duration, and was succeeded by elation. The earth seemed to sink beneath us as we rose up and onward. It was a sensation we all must experience when our corporeality is left behind grovelling in the dust and mire of our mundane affairs. Often I wondered whether we were more than animals and like Job declared, "We shall all go to the same place we rise not again." The atmosphere through which we rushed sang out with a thousand mellifluous tongues "Though the worms destroy my flesh, yet in spirit I shall see God." I emerged from my posture half under the gas tank and sat on the trunk which contained clothes for Mr. Welch. I enjoyed the rare experience of being born aloft without physical exertions, and I thought of poor Icarus on his waxed wings, flapping, straining every nerve to remain in the air until he got so near the sun the wax melted from his wings, and like a singed moth flying around a candle he dropped into the sea, which ever since has borne his name.

The Tehachapi Mountains were beneath us, the very mountains where in years gone by I had ascended with great difficulty with two burros to prospect for precious metals. Weary to exhaustion I had been when reaching the summit. Now, the airplane ascent was grand without a drop of perspiration shed. There was only one drawback: my feet could not press

terra firma. Over the summit was a meadow of luxuriant grass, destroyed recently by flocks of sheep. A small cold stream, the purest in the range, ran through the center of the meadow, and where the stream gushed from the living rock was my old encampment. Occupying the site was the substantial dwelling of a homesteader; the proud possessor boasted of an alfalfa ranch of less than three acres. He was also a landscape gardener, and his imaginary garden included the whole east side of the mountains. He who called forth the everlasting hills eons ago set his seal of approval on the landscape, and no human hands can add to their grandeur.

The mountains were left behind, and a valley lay before us. The airplane began descending in graceful circles, and we espied Hot Springs Valley airport. The old Dick Palmer farm house was unchanged so far as we observed, except for a new metal roof. Landing, the airplane stopped almost in front of the door. Mr. Dick Palmer, some seven feet tall, who in his younger days had aspired to be the State's champion boxer, met us with words of welcome. Extending a long arm, he shook or nearly wrung off, each of our hands. His frame, spare in youth, was now rotund; his voice, once high-keyed, was now low and resonant. His demeanor was that of a successful rancher—no grouch pestering Congress for farm relief. Most of his large holdings were sowed to alfalfa which produced thousands of tons annually and which were sold to sheep men who wintered their flocks in Hot Springs Valley, where snow never falls. Besides ranching Mr. Palmer was interested in quartz and placer mines. He was seldom away from home, and then only as a juror when court convened at Bakersfield. To the credit of Hot Springs Valley residents there never have been but two law suits and one homicide, but there were almost two when an Eastern Knight of the fisticuff challenged Mr. Palmer for a sparring match. During the first round Dick knocked his opponent through the ropes among the reporters. Dick's opponent crawled back intending to foul him but Dick watched his chance. His long right leg shot upward, caught him under the chin, and sent him up in the air out of sight. So a fan told us. On the veranda we conversed with Mr. Palmer, who expected the prominent residents, Mike Welch and Thomas Moore, to arrive shortly.

When they were past due Junior suggested that he and I in the airplane circle over Mike's cucumber ranch a mile away. Mike must have known of our coming. Glad I would be to meet these prominent men but gladder to meet Ed Vaughn, a rancher of not much success, but the lure of hidden wealth made him a quartz and placer miner. We were ready to take off when a small roadster of vintage so ancient it could not sprout a steering wheel, but a tiller instead, came in view. The machine contained two graybeards longer than the Ancient Mariner's. With a phthysical wheeze the contraption stopped in front of us and the driver was first to stretch his long legs.

As he came in the veranda Mr. Palmer introduced his guests as Mr. Tom Moore, prospector miner, owner of the Russian Bear mine situated on Grizzly Bear Creek, the main tributary of Bodfish creek, a mine operated with good financial returns. Tom Moore, some eighty years old, was the best educated man of the community. He was scribe for those who could not take their pen in hand. Frequently he wrote legal documents. He was one of the few who had rounded Cape Horn during the height of the California gold rush. His native town was Boston, Mass. By trade a wool sorter, he should have followed his trade when California started to raising sheep, but the lure of searching and mining for precious metals enthralled him. From the old miner's home he was snatched by the skin of his teeth, as it were, by the discovery of the mine he operated.. When the pay ore becomes exhausted he will not worry; his hoardings will be ample to sustain him past the century mark. The other man was Mike Welch, who had turned prematurely grey and now prematurely young. So full of vigor and optimism was he that many declared his white hair and beard were exotic, and that he should use hairdye, but Mike let well enough alone. The cucumber ranch was his hobby. Next year he hoped to double the output but the irrigation ditch that watered the cukes could hardly be kept open, being clogged by tailings from the Russian Bear stamp mill. The mill owner would gladly have reimbursed him, but he as a true sport had looked upon the offer as too much in his favor. The next fall fortune favored Mike. A stranger with a mysterious contraption got off the stage at

Bodfish station and obtained permission from Tom Moore to work over the tailings from his stamp mill. He began working at the head of Mike's ditch and continued until he reached the sluices at the mill. By a secret process known as the cyanide the stranger recovered five dollars worth of gold for each dollar saved by the mill. In two years he became very wealthy. He hired an Indian to shovel the worked over tailings from the head of Mike's irrigating ditch. The Indian was only partly a success; he spent too much time at Mike's pickling works, and drained the life blood from every jar not under lock and key.

When the cukes theme was exhausted the next subject of conversation concerned the Havaliah Ananias Club of which Mike Welch was still president, although most of the old members had died off. Several younger members had recently been admitted but in every instance plagiarized their stories and when the goods were offered customers they fell as flat as so many dumbbells trying to imitate the claritude of Liberty Bell. Mr. Ed Vaughn, to my regret, was absent in Northern California transacting important business matters, the most important of which was building a bag factory to catch snipes. Enroute he stopped off at French Gulch, Shasta County, and met Mr. Lola W. Wheeler, a middle aged man of much ability, with a master storyteller imagination that would have surprised Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Vaughn assured Lola Wheeler of more than local fame if he became a member of the Havilah Ananias Club, and Mr. Wheeler agreed to give the matter profound consideration. Business finished, Mr. Vaughn had stopped to investigate the results of Mt. Larsen's recent eruption, the formation of a large hot water spring in the Pitt River country. The club would meet when he returned, and he was due the afternoon previous. I decided to await his return, while Mr. Moore and Junior decided to fly to San Francisco, and depart within an hour. Junior was grooming the engine when the faint droning of an airplane sounded from somewhere in the sky. We all rubbernecked until our necks ached and mine was sore and stiff as if wearing the connubial yoke for a half a century. Junior with super vision sighted the airplane to the north at a great altitude. In the distance it resembled a snowflake, then a white dove, and momentarily

it grew much larger until when directly overhead it resembled a white gander; beneath it a brown speck dangled, then shot downward with the great force of gravitation. Great Bull Moose! A man was falling from the sky—could he be Lucifer! With less than a thousand or so feet to fall the parachute opened and he landed as gently as a broomstick-riding witch, but the moment his feet touched terra firma, he collapsed. Mr. Palmer threw a bucket of water in his face and exclaimed in amazement, "Mr. Vaughn has made his maiden parachute jump, which I fear is his last." But Mr. Vaughn soon revived and staggered to his feet.

Said he, "My days! That was a close call; there was no rip to the ripcord until I nearly landed. Never shall I jump from an airplane again. I wouldn't even jump off a hay stack as low as Dick Palmer puts up. The pilot said the altitude was not five thousand feet but it was double that height."

"Who were you flying with?" asked Mr. Moore. "Lola Wheeler of French Gulch, whose name is to be voted on this evening. Never will the club receive a candidate with a more vivid imagination!"

Mr. Welch and Vaughn persuaded Mr. Moore and Junior to remain over night. Mr. Moore was not in favor of Junior's attending the club meeting, fearing he might obtain a false impression of life, for the life that lay before Junior was matter-of-fact. A vitriol-tongued, hairtrigger-tempered wife, and colicky quadruplets had knocked his imagination as flat as a hell-fire-and-brim-stone sermon is received by a present day congregation.

"Junior will need his imagination lifted higher than the sunken features of a nineteenth century belle," I remonstrated.

When Mr. Moore digested the purport of my assertion he was not adverse to his son attending. From Hot Springs Valley airport to Havilah, the former capital of Kern County, is three miles and a little more over a well kept turnpike with a four percent grade from Bodfish Creek. Havilah is situated on the crest of the much weathered foothills of the Tehachapi mountains which came into being during the Mesozoic age. The formation is mostly micaceous granite interspersed with slate and other metamorphic rocks. Gold bearing ores are in gush veins wholly in granite, and they pinch out at no

depth. A wagon can be driven almost anywhere over the hills; the only obstructions are second growth trees and brush grown since the white man's advent. The Indians burned over the ground annually so that game could be pursued with less difficulty. There is a species of oak known as Tehachapi that grows in this vicinity and nowhere else. It is noted for its hollow trunk and brash limbs, and outside of firewood it has no commercial value. Wild bees choose this tree in preference to all others for their hives, and there are many bee trees in and around Hot Springs Valley. Havilah's buildings of logs have about gone the way of all other pioneer buildings of the same material. The ones best preserved were the court house and calaboose combined. The room that once was resonant with oratory from Blackstone's disciples harkens to true stories told before the Havilah Ananias Club. This structure, barring destruction by fire, will last for decades. Recently the slate roof was replaced with 26-gauge copper bearing $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches corrugated steel roofing, warranted to last a lifetime providing the possessor of that life is not an inmate of an old soldiers' home. The calaboose housed a sow and board. The mines are nearly exhausted, but now and then a prospector from outside uncovers small but rich deposits of gold bearing ore called pockets, and in good faith believes he is a bonanza owner. A few strokes from the pick usually get all the "pay" quartz. Everything connected with Havilah seems predestined to disappointment. One of the most disappointed miners was a wag who wrote a song, "Havilah Blues."

At seven o'clock sharp Mr. Dick Palmer's buckboard buggy, drawn by a span of spirited mules and carrying Mr. Palmer, Junior and myself as honorary guests, set forth. The ancient auto with Mr. Tom Moore, Frank Moore, and Ed Vaughn was to depart half an hour afterwards. The buckboard buggy was the tortoise and the automobile the hare, for slowly but surely we traveled, arrived at the club house, trimmed the three smoky oil lamps, rid the floor of many tobacco quids and dark brown splotches where a member had over shot a spittoon, and swatted with a folded newspaper several house flies which were altogether too chummy. But the autoists did not come. Junior climbed to the top of a Tehachapi oak and said the head lights shone at Bodfish Creek crossing, but

presently they grew dim and faded out. Junior's young legs needed exercise, so he hurried down the turnpike expecting every minute to meet the auto. The minutes sped by as they have been doing since Creation's morning. The auto had balked in the middle of the creek, and water had entered the carburetor, whereupon the engine sputtered "good-night." Junior's father was disappointed that he did not come with the team, and Junior was surprised that they chose the creek to rest their horseless carriage. Junior divested himself of shoes and socks, rolled his pants above his knees, and pushed with all his strength; Mr. Vaughn pulled on a rope; but to no purpose. The auto was headed down stream; and the force of the current kept it moving until it reached back water from a small dam that Mike Welch had built to divert water into the irrigation ditch. So they proceeded on foot—except Mr. Moore whose injured lower limb would not permit his walking much. He sat down on a mash barrel which had been washed down during the spring rise from a moonshine still operated in a tunnel of the abandoned Sedan mine. Finally, Junior came with the team and they returned to the club house. The club was not a secret organization, and they were always glad to receive visitors, strangers especially. Many strangers and visitors had visited Havilah since Tom Scott discovered the White Mule mine. Havilah was discovered by inquisitive men called prospectors who are forever poking their noses in the bosom of mother nature hoping to obtain a whiff from Mammon's storehouse.

When the meeting was called to order there was a single strange visitor, unique of stature, word, and thought. What had led him there none but he himself knew. One good point about him was that he was not loquacious. He did not button-hole everybody to listen to some story first told by gestures and grunts before man obtained the power of speech. Often he shot at a spittoon and never missed it. He retired to the rear seat, folded his arms across his prominent stomach, and with hat shading his eyes, he was apparently oblivious to all happenings. Mr. Ed Vaughn, temporary President as Mike Welch had tried to pickle himself instead of cukes in a solution disapproved of by dry agents, called the meeting to order. He rapped on the speaker's table with a peculiar mallet, part

of a leg of General Sutter's bedstead. Six young members came in and threw themselves down on various benches, all too indolent to sit up. They seemed afflicted with curvature of the spine. Mr. Vaughn put Mr. Lola W. Wheeler's name before the august body as a prospective member. Those who favored the gifted stranger's becoming a member held up their right hands, and all concurred except the youngest.

"Brother Zoller, put your objection, please," demanded Mr. Vaughn; in his mild voice anybody could detect displeasure.

"Worthy President," Zoller replied, getting on his feet and holding on by a post supporting the roof, "it would be foolhardy, indeed almost open insult, to admit another member as long as this club corruscates and scintillates with such a galaxy of witty story tellers as these young members. Remember, Mr. President, we are young, our imagination has not yet kicked the bucket like that of a has-been. The candidate no doubt is an ignorant foreigner who has the effrontery to make himself appear as wise as any native son of the Golden West."

"Mr. Wheeler is a native son of the Golden West with the erudition of the Concord Sage."

"Without further chewing the rag then, I withdraw my objections."

"It is moved and seconded that Mr. Lola Wheeler be given the right hand of fellowship. Mr. Tom Moore is Mr. Wheeler's proxy." All except the stranger shook hands with Mr. Moore.

"Gentlemen," continued Mr. Vaughn, "I expected to tell a true story before this meeting, but business matters in Northern California prevented me from returning sooner. I had not time even to make a rough draft and submit it to my wife for correction. I submit all my speeches to her for consideration because she knows just the sort of dope the public will swallow. My pithy remarks might be as so much ipecac."

"Mr. Vaughn," said Mr. Frank Moore, leaning against a post, for his injured leg refused to bear any weight, "the quarter-century-old story Mike Welch told at Keeler has not faded from my memory. It rang true and I had it printed and intended to have it published in book form as one of the greatest true stories ever told. We do not care for high falutin' expressions which often destroy the meaning. Once I attended a grave diggers association meeting and a pompous elderly

digger, too large to dig anything else than an over-size grave, made a long talk extolling his staff of life spade, so worn it would not bury his egotism."

Mr. Vaughn nervously stroked his long grey beard, once the finest golden hirsute adornment, cleared his throat, looked up at the metal roof shining in the oil lamp's smoky rays, scratched his breastbone to make sure his heart would not jump out of his mouth, and ran his fingers through his hair until it looked fierce. Then a long silence ensued. Mr. Tom Moore reached for the gavel to dismiss the meeting.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Vaughn, in an ordinary tone, "the story I am to tell this evening concerns Mr. Lola Wheeler and his Gold Diggers. I place the story under the caption 'The Gold Diggers.' It was told me by Mr. Wheeler himself not a fortnight ago when I stopped over night at French Gulch. I put up at Fox Hotel, the best hostelry north of Redding to the Oregon line. Just a few words about French Gulch hotels: Besides Fox Hotel there is another almost as equally good—Wolf Hotel, owned and operated by Mr. John Wolf who came in a stranger with eyes open to business. He wed the eldest daughter of Pat Feeney, the former proprietor, built several additions for lodgers, and made money hand over fist. He is one of the wealthiest and most highly respected citizens of that obscure golden burg. This is Mr. Wheeler's story: On a certain day about two years ago while crevicing on bed rock of the old Lawton Brothers' placer mine on the left bank of Washington Run, close to where it empties into Clear Creek, his pick struck a bone which he thought was a shin bone from Mort Foster's slaughterhouse buried by some dog. But how could a dog bury a bone in a crevice filled with small stone firmly cemented together, and more difficult to break than the best artificial cement? Since old enough to read Lola had been interested in the extinct fauna and flora of Northern California. From such meager knowledge as he possessed on these important subjects, he knew that the bone was part of an extinct mammal or reptile. Carefully he dug the cement from around the bone, which was taken out after two days of strenuous toil. Removing the cement-encrusted bone from the crevice, he recovered a pound of nuggets all about the same size and shape as a five dollar gold piece. The attrition must

have been even to reduce them to the same size and shape. He said nothing about his find, but his zeal for toil roused the sleepy neighborhood, and many wondered why he continued to poke around abandoned placer diggings, as he had in a faint-hearted way for years. On such occasions old lady Lawton, widow of Pat Lawton, was his only friend. After she told him how her deceased husband had sluiced out the bones of a prehistoric animal in whose stomach cavity were two hundred pounds of nuggets about the size and shape of those he had just recovered, his zeal was almost limitless. There were the complete bones of three hind legs. Pat with his Irish wit knew that no animal living or extinct has three hind legs and two fore legs; it must have the same number of legs fore and aft. After Pat's brother, Mike, died Pat worked the mine at a loss hoping to discover the remains of the animal to which the extra leg belonged. 'Lola, my boy,' said the old lady Lawton when prospects of making an honest living ebbed lowest, 'somebody is bound to find that critter's remains. If he is a young man of good family I am sure that Miss Maggy, my niece, will tell him he is lucky—and she may say something else, who can tell?' Her hopes kept him going. Her one word of good cheer was worth more than all the combined efforts of the French Gulchers, each with a bucket of Clear Creek water, to souse his energy. Obsessed with the discovery of the shin bone and nuggets, he pitched his tent over the crevice and worked like a Trojan beaver at night and slept during the day. The crevice extended the length of his tent, which is seven feet. The bed rock did not slope toward the creek but back into the hill,—which Lawton's brother had failed to discover. They worked down to false bed rock four feet above the natural bed rock. On it they piled boulders eight feet high. The pile contained thousands of tons, more than a man could move by hand during a year. Lola repaired the old ditches and when the snow began to melt they were full to overflowing. He opened the head gates and within two days the pile of boulders was washed down into Clear Creek, except for a few that remained behind and blocked the public highway. Mr. Willie Franck, supervisor for French Gulch district, threatened legal proceedings against him for obstructing the highway which ran through his claim. The

original highway was laid out close to Clear Creek. The supervisor, one of the most reasonable men that ever lived, saw he was in the wrong, and pacified him with a ten-cent fish line and five cents worth of hooks. He told him to go fishing up the East Fork of Clear Creek and forget all about it. As the old saying goes, he had other fish to fry. When he turned the water off a six foot space was cut through the false bed rock. On the true bed rock lay many flat nuggets. He worked all night and by morning uncovered the skeleton to which the hind leg belonged; two hundred pounds of nuggets lay among the bones. In addition, there were eight eggs about the size and shape of Roy Chapman Andrews' dinosaur eggs discovered recently on the Mongolian desert. But Lola's eggs were not petrified, for by the aid of a magnifying glass he saw that the eggs were fertile, and all they needed was warmth to incubate them. What sort of mammal or reptile could it be that had laid them during the Mesozoic age more than five million years ago? Such was the vitality of these eggs, they had not gone stale. In the barn he had a workshop and crude laboratory where he worked on an airplane and assayed various quartz specimens hoping to find an auriferous ledge that would pay for working. In a strong box without lock and key he placed the eight eggs swathed with cotton batting, and let the sun shine through a window cut out for the purpose. One day he discovered two eggs were missing, but could not divine the cause. He asked his three brothers and sisters. They were surprisd and angry that he should suspect them, each one of whom would have died rather than tell a lie. Who was the culprit? At that time his stepfather, Mr. Lionel Collinswood, as fine an old gentleman as ever lived, had a weakness for eggnog. He kept a goose that laid daily during the laying season. Neighbor Jim Brown had a nephew named Herman Keitle who also liked eggnog. Herman would not trespass on his premises and steal a goose egg but inveigled the goose to enter the Brown barnyard and deposit an egg daily in a nice soft nest. He never thought a goose liked a soft nest. He noticed when father Collinswood drank eggnog a strange expression came over his benign countenance. He snarled, showed all the snags in his jaws, got down on all fours, and burrowed in the ground like a garden mole. He thought

nothing of these strange antics at first, but attributed the cause to the change of liquor, for bootleg products were coming into vogue. When his eggs had dwindled to two he got furious and declared that his stepfather was to blame. More mad than ever before or since he sought the old gentleman, who two hours before had been irrigating the garden. Now he was nowhere in sight. Beside the ditch was a hole large enough to admit a man of his stature, and the hole was full of water through which bubbles came up as if a man were drowning. He tried to stop the inflow but augmented it instead. Then he shouted to his mother, brothers, and sisters, to come help dig out the human mole. His appeal for help aroused the neighbors who came with every conceivable tool for digging in the ground. Mr. Charles Joseph, his best friend, sampled the bootleg product. He knew that his stepfather would come out of the ground safe and sound after getting his fill of Clear Creek water. Not one of them raised a hand to dig out the old gentleman. He sighted the direction where he thought Mr. Collinswood was burrowing, and dug for dear life, a hundred feet from where he had entered the ground. When tired out completely, the ground at the bottom of his three foot excavation suddenly began moving, and the next moment his stepfather's head and shoulders filled the hole.

"'Lola, my dear boy, you have saved my life,' he said, gasping for breath, 'you have saved my life.' What sort of eggs were those in your workshop? Every time I broke one to make eggnog I just had to dig in the ground.'

"'My dear father,' Lola replied, 'I do not know the species of mammal or reptile that laid them, but I call it Gold Digger. I am sure when the two remaining eggs hatch the little varmints will dig for gold, for with the old one I found my gold.'

"'Lola, cover me up, I am unworthy to live, after robbing you of a fortune!'

"'Father, do not despair. When the eggs hatch, gold will roll into our departed strong box.'

"The old gentleman emerged covered with mud, and a patent leather low cut shoe was missing from his right foot. His broadcloth suit was ruined and the bosom of his silk shirt torn to shreds.

"At the end of three months the eggs hatched out a mam-

mal or reptile such as no man ever saw before. The head resembled that of a rhynchocephalia. A double-barrel nose of horn-like substance projected over a cavernous mouth in which there were three rows of long, sharp teeth resembling pointed forty-penny spikes. Small, mole-like eyes were almost concealed by tufts of scaly hair or fish scales bisected. The most remarkable characteristic was the fore feet, midway between a garden mole and a miser's hand. There were five curved claws on each foot shaped like miniature spades. The scaly jaws were Rising Sun stove-polish color, the body coffin-varnish hue on the back and sides, while the belly was bright yellow, the color of burnished gold. When on all fours its nose touched the ground; when digging in the ground the hind legs collapsed. The prehensile tail was a reproduction of that which the naturalist Charles Darwin declared was once the high water mark of human perfection. The male, for there was a pair, had a peculiar cry, 'M-o-n-e-y,' while the female's cry was 'P-a-y.' Lola tried to feed them with a nursing bottle and followed to a T the directions of old lady Lawton who never had any children of her own but had raised three foundlings. The little Gold Diggers gave him to understand they were no Homo Sapiens but a breed by themselves. Each bit its nursing bottle in twain and spewed the fragments in his face, making several lacerations. Dr. Thompson of Deadwood took several stitches, and his clothes were damaged from their sharp claws beyond repair. In his wallet was about a pound of nuggets which he dropped in their box. They were on the square with each other; the gold was carefully divided, then each returned to a corner and swallowed the nuggets whole. They thrived on gold dust, and lived by the gold standard. Their box was never unsanitary and they were gold-scented darlings after his own heart. Three months old, they were two feet long, about eighteen inches tall, and weighed about fifty pounds each. But they grew restless. The male dug out the pen one night and was found by Shorty Richards, a prospector, a mile up the highway, burrowing in the hillside. Shorty was suspicious, because no rabbit ever ran across his mining claim that did not speed faster when his old Springfield musket boomed. The Gold Digger saved its bacon, and came out with its paws full of coarse gold-impregnated quartz

from a concealed chimney of ore. Shorty was confident his claim was a bonanza, and hoping to find the ore he tunneled the hillside, but in the wrong direction. With gold quartz in a gunny sack and the Gold Digger under his arm, he came to Lola's house. 'Mr. Richards,' said Lola, overjoyed to get the creature back again, 'how much am I indebted to you for returning my treasure?' 'Nothing at all, the varmint more than repaid me. See you later, so long,' and he cut across lots for Franck Brothers & Co.'s department store, the best stocked store north of Redding. Mr. Henry Franck, the elder partner, was opening up for the day's business, which promised to be no wise profitable. During the past week several mines had closed down with labor and supply bills unpaid. However, the Brunswick mine, owned and operated by Mr. Frank Rossi, was more fortunate. He remained on the job, drove a tunnel far into the mountainside, and discovered a chimney of fabulously rich gold-bearing ore. He paid his creditors, Franck Brothers & Co. being the largest, and sold out for a fortune. 'Morning, Shorty,' said Mr. Franck, pointing to a notice 'No Credit' on the wall, 'but that does not mean you, for you will stick by your claim until you strike it rich. What will you have? Here is a slab of bacon just right to make you slip through the small drifts you drive.'

"'You want that?' replied Shorty, taking out five pounds of gold dust from a buckskin bag and turning it over to Mr. Franck to settle a book account of two years' standing. The account took half of the gold dust, and the remainder was placed to his credit. Not a word did Shorty say about Lola Wheeler's gold digger. Henceforth Shorty Richards proclaimed himself as the champion prospector of Northern California, but if the facts were known his fame would have dwindled like a waning moon until it petered out.

"Lola and his stepfather, not long afterwards went hunting gold and deer up American Creek canyon. Mr. Collinswood in his younger days was a nimrod of exceptional skill, but his eyesight had failed gradually since having his eyes fitted with bifocal glasses. He had been the champion rifleman of French Gulch. Lola with his Gold Diggers followed the elderly Nimrod, and searched for gold. Presently the hunter's shoulders appeared above the brush. From his

elevated position standing on a large quartz boulder he had a clear view of the valley below, eighty rods or more. A buck in the shade was stamping at deerflies. At the crack of the rifle the buck sprang forward, summersaulted twice, and was lost from view. The hunter hastened down and found his game quite dead. Meanwhile the Gold Diggers began scratching at the mossy boulder on which the huntsman had stood, and soon one side glistened with coarse gold. The Gold Diggers ate their fill of gold and went to sleep in the shade cast by the boulder, but Lola took his bearings, and sighted a tree near the summit. To make the sight more accurate he rolled a newspaper around his pick-handle, making a rude telescope through which he sighted with the tree to the left. Every foot of the way had to be cut through manzanilla and chaparral thickets. Fortunately his hunting axe was in his belt. All day he labored in feverish haste and about sunset discovered an outcropping in the midst of the dense thicket on the mountain side. He named his discovery Gladstone Mine in honor of the great English statesman, William E. Gladstone. Lola, full of magnanimity, deeded the mine to his foster father for one dollar, and the recipient sold it for one hundred thousand dollars one year afterwards. The mine has produced millions in gold bullion and at this writing is the main source of French Gulch's prosperity. Coming home in the dark, Lola could not manage the Gold Diggers. They fought each other, and one of them turned on him. He ran home for Mr. Collinswood's assistance, but he sprained a knee trying to carry the buck home. For sprains, wounds, and contusions he had a bottle of arnica leaves preserved in the best spirits of alcohol and always applied the remedy internally. Next day Lola found his Gold Digger on the top of a mountain flanking American Gulch on the west. The critter had burrowed into a quartz ledge which was more than half gold, and from gormandizing on gold it had acute indigestion. It had to be locked up for six months, and with no gold in sight regained its normal health.

"Lola made me a proposition that I go with him into the Salmon River country up in Siskiyou County and put the Gold Diggers to work finding the Simon Jordan or Indian Gold mine. I could not very well be absent from home any longer

as my wife is in poor health and my eldest married daughter, Grace Brown, well, what of her?"

"Mr. Vaughn," said I, interrupting him, "Junior Moore can guess pretty accurately. Any man whom the stork favors with quadruplets the first rattle out the box is a pretty good stork-ologist."

"Brother," said Mr. Vaughn, addressing the stranger seated at the back of the room, apparently asleep, "we shall be pleased with any story you may tell. Mind what I say: not a story tinctured with the least doubt can be told in this sacred edifice, which is hallowed by the memory of those departed who in their magnanimity of spirit raised their voices in defense of the right. The judge, lawyers, and members of the jury no longer assemble here to mete out justice to all, but their shining example of upholding Truth and Justice continues to linger on, and will endure until these hills surrounding Havilah are worn down as flat as a skating rink. It is, and has been, during long years past my fond desire that a cherry grove be planted in the abandoned court house square and every young son of a club member given a hatchet. If every tree were tom-a-hawked by juvenile hatchet wielders, each would say, 'Dad, I can't tell a lie. I did it with my little hatchet.'"

CHAPTER IV.

MR. OXUS T. COW'S SUPPLEMENTAL STORY

When the applause, "Well done, Mr. Vaughn, you dealt out the truth strong," uttered by several including myself, had ceased the story teller inquired, "Has anybody something supplemental to add to my story, no matter how brief, as long as it is founded on fact?"

Silence ensued, broken only at short intervals by Mr. Cow's deep breathing. Then Mr. Vaughn continued, "As no one has anything to say it is up to me as president to dismiss this meeting, which will convene here again next Friday evening at eight o'clock. Next on the program is Mr. James W. U. Rane. It is the desire of the majority that the story be written."

"Just a moment, please," bellowed Mr. Cow, rising and supporting his bulky form against the back of a bench. "Mr. President, you can form no adequate conception of how I enjoyed your true story, for who among us all is more despised than a disciple of Ananias, or in plain English—liar? I am, as you are aware, an unassuming mortal devoid of any imagination whatever—an inherent failing inherited from my New England ancestors, who spent their lives of toil and penury on a sterile Vermont farm where stones only seem to grow. Would to the Lord I had been endowed with the imagination and business acumen of Mr. Man Tailored Coatsuit, a neighbor boy, who saw a sermon in every stone and a dollar in every sugar maple leaf. Many T., as we all called him, when but eighteen years old opened a marble quarry on his father's farm and leased for ninety-nine years the maple bush on my father's farm known as Cow's sugar bush. He went among the neighbors and requested that the family Bible be shown. We all thought he had a foreign mission scheme at the back of his head, but what he wanted was the death records. Then he began talking tombstones and blessed be my star of destiny!

every graveyard soon bore a top-notch crop of monuments and headstones. Early in the winter he had handbills printed at the Cow's Slaughter House, a flimsy weekly sheet, and posted them in town and along the country roads extolling the merit of Man Tailored Coatsuit's Pure maple sugar and syrup, to be delivered during the coming sugar season. The demand exceeded the supply, and the price soared skyward. Each maple leaf seemed worth a dollar to him, made so by blending seventy five percent New Orleans molasses with twenty-five percent maple sugar and syrup. I have digressed merely to show what imagination and foresight will do for the lucky possessor.

"The little incident I am to relate amounts to nothing outside of whiling away a few idle minutes. It happened a number of years ago; for just what year I must consult Father Time. The incident took place at Klamath Falls, Oregon. The early spring before this event occurred found me in Southern Oregon with the rainy season still on. I was sole owner and agent for Cow's Arch Support and Webfoot Protector. I offered to give one hundred of my devices to any person who would go among his neighbors and demonstrate the merit of my invention, but those flat-foot, web-foot louts had rather mush along with fallen arches and with webs as full of punctures as an automobile casing on the road to Hades. In all the territory covered I did not see a sound foot, or a shapely ankle among the fair sex. Flat feet and mill-post ankles were in evidence everywhere. In time I grew despondent, and my despondence increased as my pocketbook became thinner. No longer could I afford a bed. Invariably I slept in a large hollow tree by the roadside. The forest was full of hollow trees as hollow as my stomach most of the time. At length I grew weary of carrying my unprofitable wares, and, when no longer able to travel over the all but impossible roads, I traded twenty-five of my devices with a rancher for a double spring trap and breakfast to boot. My article was as useless to him as his was to me. However, an advantage consisted in a lighter load for me to tote, and I liked the vicious way the jaws snapped together. That put pep in my fagging energy. Several nights afterwards I set the trap in a hollow tree in which I had tarried for the night, and toward morning a

mangy deer hound got caught. It howled and snapped every time I tried to remove its forepaw from the trap. At day break I walked away leaving the brute to howl itself hoarse. About a mile away I met a poorly clad rancher mushing through the mud who inquired whether I had seen a deer hound. What would be my answer? I was in a quandary; finding the dog trapped meant serious trouble. I am a truthful man and can no more tell a lie than George Washington. The easiest way out of the dilemma was pretending to be deaf and dumb, so I pointed down at the ground, then up to the sky.

"'Confounded dummy!' he roared, 'if you know anything about my hound out with it, make signs, grunt it out of your carcass. Dummy, can you write?' He gave me a pencil stub and a used envelope.

"I bobbed my head up and down but was in no hurry to give a written answer. He said, 'Is this any inducement to put your thinking apparatus in order?'

"In the palm of his outstretched hand was a five dollar gold piece that shone no brighter than my avaricious cross eyes. I wrote as follows: 'Down the highway about a mile on the left hand side at the foot of a large hollow tree I saw a hound caught in a steel trap.'

"'That is the work of old, infernal Spoonbill who has had it in for my hound ever since his pet deer ran off with a herd of wild ones.'

"I went on my way with a lighter heart than I had known for many moons. The gold piece jingled merrily among the dimes, nickels, and pennies in my pocket. That evening I entered Upper Rogue River Valley, where, in years gone by, much attention was given horticulture. Many large orchards of peach, pear, apple, cherry, plum, and apricot trees were dead or in dying condition from the ravages of balloon caterpillars that long since had got beyond control. The pests even infested forest trees. The kind-hearted people were very indolent but managed to get along somehow or other. The payment of property and personal taxes was their greatest problem. The more energetic made an annual trip to the alfalfa fields of Northern California and pitched hay until money

enough was earned to satisfy the tax collector, with a few dollars over for living expenses.

"My first night was passed with an orchardist, named (if my memory serves me right) Erastus Heifer Blossom, who before the plague of caterpillars was the most prosperous and influential man of that locality. He was well along in years, and the loss of an only son from hay fever contracted while working in the alfalfa fields in Northern California broke his spirit, and his wife died soon after the son. He and I tried out many unsuccessful ways to get rid of the pest, and he came to the conclusion there was no way, but my ox-like brains got busy, and I said, 'Mr. Heifer Blossom, there must be a way; nothing in this world is impossible.'

"Replied he, 'Once I thought the word "Impossible" was coined by some chicken-hearted individual, but trying in vain for years to poison caterpillars has taught me its true significance.' I would not give the matter up, however; there must be a dead shot remedy, some simple ingredients mixed with the contents of an Egyptian phial I had carried for the past twenty years. There was a hamlet three miles down the valley from Mr. Heifer Blossom's place, and from the drug store, known as the Holy Moses Emporium, I bought a box of wagon grease and a quart of molasses. I hurried back and began mixing the ingredients, and to my dismay the Egyptian phial was missing. The dope glued the caterpillars to leaf and branch as securely as a Quaker's hat is glued to his head, but it did not kill them. Next morning while I was out in the backyard experimenting with poisonous chemicals to put a death kick in my dope, the druggist and proprietor of the Holy Moses Emporium drove up before the front gate in a rickety Democrat wagon.

"'Heifer Blossom, come here quick,' called the druggist, unaware of my presence. 'We, that is, Holy Moses and I, have discovered a dead shot remedy for destroying balloon caterpillars. We made the discovery last evening, and tried it out this morning with glowing results. It's just what I have been trying to accomplish for the past nine years.'

"'How did you make the discovery?' inquired Mr. Heifer Blossom.

"'Promise not to reveal a single word I say; it's strictly

confidential between you and me. Yesterday afternoon an ox-like giant with the gait of a grizzly bear bought a half pint of liquid glue from me. While making change he let an Egyptian phial slip through his clumsy fingers. As soon as he left I examined the phial and was astonished to find it contained Pharaoh's secret pest extermination remedy. The label was written in old Egyptian hieroglyphics in priest writing. When fifteen years old I had learned to decipher any sort of Egyptian hieroglyphics. I put Champallion wise to translating the Rosetta Stone. I worked forty years on a Babylonian caterpillar exterminator, recorded more than five thousand years before the birth of Christ, but obtained no results. The Egyptian formula calls for ten percent glue made of milk chard, a little ammonia added, seventy percent chariot grease, ten percent honey, and fifteen drops of Pharaoh's insect exterminator. Once more Rogue River Valley will be a second Garden of Eden flanked on sides and ends with Roses of Sharon.'

"My dreams of sudden wealth and fame as a balloon caterpillar exterminator vanished in gloom and despair, I left the Valley of Rogues and for the next three days traveled eastward. Occasionally I passed squatters' abandoned cabins. However, there was one inhabited cabin, the largest and best constructed. The owner had just arrived on mule back, leading a large young mule that bucked and almost pulled him from the saddle. The squatter was named Henry Ingletree, of whom I inquired the cause of the mule's strange antics. He replied, 'I have just returned from the Klamath Lake Reservation where I bought this mule for five dollars. The beast goes backwards as often as forwards, does not know how to shift its mental gears, just like its former owner, but a little of the white man's training will engender the right principle of mental gear shifting. It takes considerable time to break an Indian mule, but when broken he makes the best and toughest work animal; he can live off the bark of a ten-year-set-juniper fence post. There are hundreds of good mules, many better than this one, for sale at the Reservation, at the same price. I was offered a bangup good mule for splitting one thousand upland cedar rails. I declined the offer for I am not an expert rail splitter as was Abraham Lincoln.

The Reservation lies one day's ride to the southeast. Stranger, let me give you a pointer: we look with suspicion upon every stranger passing through our settlement a-foot. We are mostly from dear old Dixieland where a man, despite his financial or social condition, never goes afoot. I lived in the South all my life until I came here a few years ago.'

"I replied, 'I have traveled through every part of Dixie by various means of conveyance. Sometimes on foot, sometimes on horse back—in automobiles and trucks, in passenger cars and in freight cars. Once I was carried twenty miles by a cyclone.'

"'Stranger, take my advice, buy a cheap mule and travel like a gentleman. Seeking employment you would find it much sooner. At night every cabin door would be open to you.'

"With the intention of buying a mule I resumed my journey to Klamath Lake Indian Reservation and reached there next day close to sunset. All business was transacted through the chief, Shotatmissed Coyote. This native of the sage brush was sixty odd years old, very corpulent, with a greasy, brassy skin. He spoke good English and was well educated for a person of his race. He had ten wives, the eldest one year older than himself, the youngest fourteen years on the day of her marriage two weeks before my arrival.

"'A mule you want?' inquired the chief. 'I have more than five hundred head for sale, all about sixteen hands high. None over ten years old.'

"'Are the mules gentle?' I asked meekly.

"'As gentle as range mules might reasonably be expected but not one of them is bridle wise. My dear sir, may I ask your name? I disdain addressing a stranger as "See here, you."'

"'Oxus T. Cow,' recently of Los Angeles, California.

"'Mr. Cow,' continued Chief Coyote, 'my advice is that you tarry among us for a short time at least. If you possess little ready cash and are seeking employment you may go to work in the morning splitting fence rails. I pay five dollars a thousand, which is equivalent to one good range mule. A good worker as you seem to be can split one thousand and more upland cedar rails a day. Where else can you find good mule

flesh as easily acquired? After you have split ten thousand rails and like the Redman's ways, I will introduce you to one of my marriageable daughters and if agreeable to both parties you may have her in marriage. I would furnish you a good house to live in and back you to the limit in any honorable business. Recently ten young men from Utah, who called themselves Mormons, have taken advantage of my liberal offer. They like their wives so well that they put in an order for two more wives all around. Hurry! soon my stock of marriageable daughters will be exhausted. I believe the only way the Indian will continue to exist through coming ages is by intermarriage with the white race—a race that is prosperous in peace and war. As far as I have been able to ascertain a white man at war with his own kind emerges from the conflict more courageous and resourceful, whereas such few Indians as escape with their lives become slaves to the victor, and degraded and broken in spirit. Once my tribe held undisputed possession of a vast territory extending east to Snake River and west to the Pacific Ocean. It was wonderful country in which to develop a high state of civilization but we developed along the line of extermination.'

"'Chief Coyote,' I replied, 'I will think the matter over. If I can make proper arrangements with a certain multi-millionaire, I will contract for one hundred mules at five dollars per head to be delivered at Klamath Falls two weeks from to-day. If the money is not in sight within ten days I shall inform you through the mail that the trade is off. Do you want a written statement to that effect?'

"'No! I take it for granted a white man's word is as good as an Indian's.'

"I remained over night with Chief Coyote, who exhibited for my inspection all of his marriageable daughters. A splendid bunch of Indian maidens they were, but they did not interest me for I am a confirmed widower. However, I enjoyed smoking the pipe of peace with my exalted host of the sage brush, and to show my affection I presented him half a dozen collar buttons, that cost a nickel, and a box of celluloid collars.

"Next morning at dawn I left for Klamath Falls perplexed how to get possession of five hundred dollars within ten days. The day grew exceedingly warm; the hot granite sand blistered

the soles of my feet. In the far distance I espied a tall bull pine growing close to the highway. When I reached it the shade was welcome. A refreshing breeze blew and I dozed off to sleep but presently was waked by an unearthly scream, dying down to a hen-like cackle. Before me stood a rusty, stoop-shouldered old man with a powerful field glass which he held close to my face.

“‘An escaped lunatic,’ thought I, and the only assurance of safety was to honor his whims.

“‘Howdy, Solon,’ I exclaimed, extending my hand, which he shook briskly. ‘I have been expecting you a long time. How are all the home folk?’

“‘At last, at last,’ he cackled gleefully, ‘I have found a truthful man. Year after year I traveled this road in vain. I knew my yearning was realized at last the moment I saw you come around the bend afar off.. Now I can put up my field glass for keeps. Diogenes carried a lighted lantern through the streets of Athens in the broad open day looking for an honest man; likewise I have carried my field glass through the streets of Klamath Falls looking for a truthful man. Thanks be to all the Saints in Glory I have found him at last. Mr. Truthful Man, as I shall always call you, I am Jeremiah Schermerhorn. I will now introduce you to a friend and companion. Taraus. Come here, Taraus,’ he cackled. ‘Make acquaintance with Mr. Truthful Man.’

“From out a side gulch where bunch grass grew luxuriant came a monstrous snow-white bull that stopped before me, bellowed, and pawed sand.

“‘What think you of Taraus?’ Jerry cackled.

“‘Thoroughbred of the first water!’ I replied, viewing the animal with admiration.

“‘Right you are, Mr. Truthful Man. He is a direct descendant of the white heifer Priscilla Mullens rode through the streets of Plymouth the day of her marriage to John Alden. He was sired by a direct descendant of King Edward VII Poll Angus Bull. Mighty proud lineage has Taraus. Down, Taraus, let Mr. Truthful Man mount your back.’ Taraus knelt down obediently. With reluctance I mounted his broad back and Jerry sat astride his huge neck. Then went on a swinging trot to Klamath Falls, a place of some

four thousand and more inhabitants five miles distant from the pine tree. Jerry's cabin stood on a promontory overlooking the lake where we dismounted. 'Taraus,' admonished Jerry, 'keep away from the lake, that monster will get you sooner or later if you continue to act as you did yesterday. Take a swim in the river instead of the lake.' Jerry was an excellent cook and neat housekeeper, and after partaking a hearty meal we went out on the front gallery and lit our pipes.

"Jerry, when did you obtain Taraus, and who trained him?"

"Four years ago while hunting for a truthful man I ran across a little maverick calf almost dead of thirst and starvation. I saw it was thoroughbred and something worth while to get home alive. I got fresh cow's milk from that Irish Jew, Murphy, who demanded a day's work for each quart, so I worked hard to please Murphy and harder to raise the calf, but I have been paid one hundred fold. More than a dozen times Murphy has offered me one thousand dollars cash in hand for Taraus, but I told him that the combined wealth of all the Jews in the world and the golden streets of New Jerusalem thrown in for good measure would be no inducement.'

"Jerry,' said I, changing the subject, which was his obsession, 'is there really a monster in Klamath Lake. I heard you say something to that effect.'

"Monster! I should say there is one,' he replied, removing his pipe from his mouth to refill it. Two after dinner pipes was his custom. 'Murphy offers a reward of five hundred dollars, and all appliances within the bounds of reason gratis, to anybody who will rid the lake of the monster which is reported to be larger than ten whales combined. Murphy will give you full particulars any time.'

"Had a bolt of lightning descended out of the clear sky that moment it would not have astonished me more than the announcement of five hundred dollars reward pleased me. I lost no time in getting to Mr. Murphy's place of business, conducted in a dilapidated frame building on upper Main street. Mr. Murphy, a typical Irish Jew, was short of stature; unlike most Jews his teeth were poor, and like other Jews his nose was hooked. His small blue-black eyes blinked con-

stantly. He was conducting a give-away sale, selling one hundred percent below cost, so his posters announced.

"'Mr. Murphy,' said I, introducing myself, 'in response to the standing offer made by you for five hundred dollars cash in hand and appliances within the bounds of reason furnished gratis, I hereby present myself for ridding Klamath Lake of that monster.'

"'Ah, so I see,' replied Mr. Murphy, whose crafty eyes scrutinized me from head to foot. 'I am of the opinion you seem able to cope with the monster single handed.'

"'Sir, do you insinuate I am a monster? That is, if I construe your meaning rightly,' I asked, getting more angry each moment.

"'Ah, no; not exactly.'

"'Mr. Murphy,' I continued, warming to the subject, 'I am told the offer was made two years ago and is good for ten years providing the monster is not caught or dies of natural cause.'

"'I intended to withdraw the reward because as yet nobody except a tramp, who went swimming off the saw mill dock and was never heard of again, has been injured. For my part I deem the monster's presence in the lake is good for the community; it keeps young people from bathing there. As you see, my hands are full conducting this give-away sale out of charity for my friends and my foes alike. Buy five dollars worth of goods marked down one hundred percent and you are entitled to a ticket to my excursion tomorrow. The palatial steamer Flapper of Klamath Falls will depart for Saw Mill Pier No. 1 at eight o'clock tomorrow, Sunday morning. All Sunday schools will suspend for the occasion.'

"My wardrobe was much dilapidated. I spent my five dollar gold piece on clothes, shoddy, shop-worn stuff. With my ticket was a small lunch basket filled from Mr. Murphy's kitchen; such a lunch! The bread was made of bread fruit grown in the devil's orchard; the butter was so strong it rose up, grappled, and threw me to the floor; the pie crust of synthetic rubber was filled with ashes from Mt. Larsen. There was an apple of Sodom pickled in Dead Sea brine. A piece of skipper-infested cheese skipped out of sight the moment the lid was taken off. There was an ancient hen's egg that

should have been laid by a cockatrice. Next morning an hour before the appointed time of departure I went aboard the Flapper, a small, antiquated steamer of about one hundred tons burden. There was considerable water in the hold, and a hand pump was operated by two young men working their passage. No headway was made against the inflowing water, but another pump was manned which slowly drained the hold. Half an hour before the time of departure the boat was fully laden, and more than half the excursionists could not be accommodated. Many were in tears, while the men folk smoked and swore vengeance against Mr. Murphy for not chartering a larger boat. We cast loose from the wharf amid shouts of derision and anger from those left behind. The Captain on the bridge smiled and bowed imperially. In stentorian tones he rolled out nautical orders not understood by a layman. His voice was the same as that of my chum and school mate supposed drowned the year previous in Alaskan waters during the Klondike gold rush, and presently he gazed in my direction and I recognized him as Captain Charles Lix Morgan, so I lost no time gaining his presence. Among all those strangers it seemed doubly good to meet an old friend. We headed up the lake, but kept close to shore as the water was rough further out. The bank became less abrupt, and rounding a promontory there was a broad meadow extending down to the lake shore where a herd of milch cows grazed. Several cows stood flank deep in the water idly switching their tails to keep off flies. Suddenly there appeared to rise to the surface not far from the cows an islet a hundred feet long and fifty wide, covered with grass. A cow espied the grass and waded toward it. When beyond her depth she disappeared in an instant. The supposed islet bobbed up and down and soon became tranquil. Two cows endeavored to reach the floating grass. They disappeared as suddenly as the first one. Three more swam out a short distance only to disappear suddenly. The islet swayed forth and back, and the waves it engendered rocked the Flapper violently. 'That is strange,' remarked Captain Morgan. 'I have sailed over this course many times and never noticed that islet before; it must have had its origin from a subterranean disturbance. Now the island is no longer visible.'

"'Captain,' said I, 'the supposed islet was the back of the Klamath Lake monster.'

"'Oxus, you must be mistaken,' he replied.

"'I am positive, and to substantiate my assertion I saw a bloody streak in the water when the first cow was swallowed.'

"A young married woman sitting on the pilot house steps, nursing her six months old baby on a bottle, overheard our conversation.

"'Oh, Captain,' she wailed, 'that was surely the Klamath Lake monster. I saw it devour six of Dad's best cows. Turn back quick, before it gets us all.'

"A panic ensued, and the Flapper was nearly overturned by everybody rushing to port side as far as possible from the monster. When the panic somewhat subsided, the Flapper's prow pointed homeward. The Murphy picnic excursion came to a sudden end to the chagrin of those on board and to the joy of those left behind. As for myself I was heartily glad of the outcome which proved to the skeptic mayor, Judas Murphy, that the Klamath Lake monster was a source of danger and destruction. On the wharf many prominent citizens clasped my hand and wished me good luck in my attempt to capture the monster. Next morning at ten o'clock I was called to the mayor's office with the board of aldermen in session. The worthy mayor greeted me profusely and said, 'My dear Mr. Cows, please state your plans to the board of aldermen for capturing the Klamath Lake monster.'

"I replied as follows: 'Gentlemen, I want five hundred dollars cash in hand to buy one hundred mules from Chief Coyote. Then I want one thousand feet of two inch steel cable; fifty sets of harness like those worn by the wheelers of a twenty mule borax team; and for a fish hook the Flapper's anchor after some remodeling will do. If the monster is not caught the city of Klamath Falls will lose nothing on the investment. The mules will be broke to harness and any freighter would give ten times their original purchase price. The harness bought wholesale will net a handsome profit retailed.'

"'No doubt your plan will be successful,' said the alderman from the first ward.

"'Mr. Cows, there is a serious obstacle to overcome,' said the second alderman. 'All those who have bought mules from

Chief Coyote say they go in reverse gear.'

"'After I have doctored on them a while any one of them can change to three speeds forward at a crack of the whip. After I have landed the monster I shall ship the mules to Texas and sell them to cotton planters for one hundred dollars each.'

"Said the worthy Mayor, 'Go ahead with your monster catching operations. The money is deposited to your credit in the First National Bank.'

"Next day I despatched a courier to Chief Coyote asking him to deliver the mules as soon as possible. Three days afterwards, late in the afternoon, amid war whoops and shouts from ten Indians and five squaw men—that is, white men married to squaws—the mules were delivered at Stoutrope and Tallbarn's corral. I employed the Indians in preference to the squaw men to help break the mules. Try as I might to overcome the handicap those mules went backward more often than forward. The harness, wire cable, and sheave, arrived a few days after the mules. In the meantime I used a bankrupt freight company's harness stored at Stoutrope and Tallbarn's. The day after my new harness came I tried out the team by moving a large frame building several blocks up Main street. Crawfishing, going backward, my team was a success, but a failure going forward. The team was stronger backing than pulling. I had demonstrated just what it would do. On my shoulders I carried the Flapper's anchor, over three hundred pounds in weight, from Saw Mill Pier No. 1 to the only blacksmith shop in town, a mile distant. The smith riveted several long heavy barbs to the flukes. My fish hook on which to catch the monster. The hook was clamped securely to the cable which allowed two hundred feet or more to be cast into the lake and the same length at the pulling end. The remaining six hundred feet stretched between the center of Main street and the bluff's brink from which the baited hook was to be cast. All was ready except the bait.

"'What sort of bait are you going to use?' was asked more than a hundred times daily during my week's preparation. As soon as I had heard Jerry talk about the monster I decided to sacrifice Taraus to the aquatic monster, but how could I get possession of Taraus? Accidentally I learned that

Jerry possessed an insatiable appetite for cake and pies. I decided to take him to the best pie shop where he could gormandize to his heart's content at my expense. My Indian hands hitched the team to the cable, and the sheave was chained to the base of a large Madrone tree two blocks below Murphy's store. I took Jerry to the pie shop, and says I, 'Jerry, one good turn deserves another. Footsore and weary you gave me a lift to town on Taraus' back. Eat your fill, and when you are full don't move your chair from the table and say enough to the proprietor, but go to it again with vim. Show your old time pep!'

"I remained until he had begun on his second pie, and then left for the exciting event soon to occur. In the meantime my Indian hands had obtained possession of Taraus, strapped the anchor to his neck, the flukes pointed backward, for the monster swallowed its prey head first. Taraus was led to the bluff and forced over the brink. He made a big splash, and coming to the surface he gave a savage bellow and shook his head ominously. Right in front of him there opened a mouth as large as a railway tunnel. He was swallowed alive. Slowly the cable began moving from the shore. As the mules backed the cable grew taut. Inch by inch the monster was drawn toward shore, lashing its tail until the water was foam covered. It bellowed, and the ground on which I stood shook as if a mild earthquake had occurred. Suddenly an immense column of muddy water was belched from its mouth. Lower Main street was flooded, several rancher's wagons were overturned, a coop of chickens drowned; then another column of water was spewed, and demolished Murphy's emporium and ruined his shoddy goods. An extra large column of water destroyed the First National Bank building, a massive structure of brick. Many people were injured by the falling debris.

"'For God's sake, Cows, cut the cable or our beautiful city will be destroyed completely,' pleaded Mr. Murphy, whose personal appearance was that of a ducking stool victim.

"Another column of water was belched almost straight upward. It descended on the Grammar School building and smashed in the roof.

"'Man, alive! cut the cable. We will give you one thousand dollars in gold and elect you to any public office within our

gift, from Mayor down to Superintendent of our insane asylum,' pleaded Mr. Murphy.

"'My contract is to deliver the goods,' I replied, unconcerned.

"The next column of water went on a nearly level plane. It struck the Methodist church broadside, the building hurtled through the air three blocks, and when it struck ground there was a mass of kindling wood.

"The venerable minister approached me with one thousand dollars in gold in a shot sack, and implored me to cut the cable.

"'Your Reverence,' I replied, 'I want not your gold, which you will find valuable in rebuilding your church, but because of your pious request, I acquiesce.'

"So I dealt the cable a tremendous blow with the ax and severed it. The mules settled on their haunches. Regaining their feet, they began backing over the brink of the bluff. As the last span hovered on the brink, Jerry sprang on the off mule's back, yelling 'Taraus, oh, Taraus.' But soon his cries were silenced as he and my one hundred mule team disappeared down the throat of the Klamath Lake terrible monster."

CHAPTER V.

THE MILLER BROTHERS' CEMENT MINE

Mr. Ed Vaughn's story concerning Mr. Lola Wheeler and his Gold Diggers enthused me, but neither Mr. Frank Moore nor Junior was elated. Sordid business matters had sidetracked Mr. Moore's zeal for hidden wealth. Junior was never given to flights of imagination; he was as ungullible as a sea gull angled for by a bare ship's anchor. The domestic vista through which he must gaze during long years to come was shorn of every illusion. His wife and quadruplets filled his whole existence. The path if thorny must be followed and the thorns tramped under foot. He had no bad habits. His wants were few and simple. His wife, enraptured with her career, had settled down to the humdrum existence which Cupid adroitly hid behind her back so that she seemed to see the future through rosy glasses.

The most feasible route to San Francisco was to cross back over the Tehacapi mountains, and follow down the San Joaquin River to where it and the Sacramento empty in Suisun Bay; but Mike Welch wanted an airplane ride. He intended to go up in Inyo County on donkey back—a wearisome way of traveling, especially for a man of his age, eighty-six years old. Mr. Moore would change his route, and fly to Keeler, where there was no airport nor one in all Inyo County. However, several airplanes had landed and taken off from the east shore of Owens Lake where the beach was hard and smooth, and Junior could land and take off where many other pilots would crash.

Mike Welch was togged out in the latest wearing apparel which Mr. Moore had given him, when we took the air. Mike did not accept my rayon shirt. He said it would stretch friendship to the breaking point by taking the last shirt off a friend's back. I am thankful he showed the good sense which seemed never to desert him. We followed up the south ford of Kern River, and almost before we were aware of the fact

the Menacha meadows lay beneath us, about a thousand feet down. No grass nor flocks of sheep were visible, for years previous the sheep had destroyed the grass by eating it up by the roots and exposing the bare soil to erosion. There were many gullies worn down to bed rock, cut through soil more than ten feet deep. On the left lay the high Sierra mountains; Mt. Whitney topped them all. Moore suggested that we circle over Mt. Whitney and ascertain if there was any material change since our ascent a quarter of a century previous. There was no change except that the snow on the summit was deeper and the atmosphere much colder. Aloft in an airplane, supreme gift of the gods, looking down on the crest of the loftiest mountain in continental United States, riding in comfort, and without fatigue gaining such lofty altitude—could such a miracle be possible? It was made so by the genius of the Wright brothers. The airplane was turned south-easterly and half an hour later was landed on a smooth sandy tract mid-way between the water's edge and Keeler. The most noteworthy change was the condition of Owens Lake, shrunken to one half its former area. The diversion of Owens River from its natural course to supply Los Angeles with water two hundred and fifty miles away was the cause. Keeler was unchanged except the ligenous buildings were shabby for dearth of paint. The Dutch Painter Boy had not made his rounds during the last two decades. And the Dutch Grandmother was elsewhere batting out dust with her club. Entering Lake View Hotel I was disappointed not to be greeted by the old time genial landlord, Mr. John Barnes, and the landlady, Mrs. Barnes. "Where are they?" I asked the fish-eyed landlord. Mutely he pointed to the burying ground across the railroad track. Hat in hand I stood before two sunken graves, where markers of Inyo marble contained the single word "Barnes." On one grave was a spittoon that may once have served the purpose for which it was intended, but later contained cut flowers placed there by loving hands, watered to keep them fresh for a brief spell, only to wither in the fierce desert sunshine. On the other grave was a cracked water pitcher about as good as a sieve. In it was a bouquet of lizzards' skeletons. In my coat pocket was a small artificial-flower bouquet a lady had dropped on the train. I placed it

among the mummified lizzards and shed a charitable tear in remembrance of the departed pair who in life were almost as dear as my own parents. With parental affection often they had looked after many a homesick tenderfoot from the East. It is alleged that it matters not where our body reposes in the bosom of mother earth, but no desert burying ground for me after death, please. I returned to the only store in town, kept by Mr. John Fiehman whose life was old and decrepit and whose only son, Edward, was a resident of the Hawaiian Islands, married to a Japanese school-ma'am. There were many children born to this couple: some of them were good, others might be classed as "damaged goods." On the depot platform beneath the shelter of projecting eaves out of the sunshine an elderly man sat at his ease in a Morris chair. He had a patriarchal beard which he stroked constantly, trying to talk through it at the same time. My footsteps crunching gravel aroused him and he inquired, "Stranger, where are you from?"

I replied that I was a former Keelerite who had always tried to make an honest living working with both hands and toe nails.

"Then you must have known Tom Bowline, merchant prince of this petered out burg."

"I remember him distinctly, but I thought he died long ago, although I did not notice his gravestone in the burying ground."

"Sir," he replied, "during a terrible experience which happened several years ago I died so many times that I can never die again. Stranger, you may not have heard of the tragedy?"

I informed him I had not, and backed away; there was a sinister, insane look in his eyes.

"Stranger, tarry a moment," he demanded, grasping my arm with a Sandow grip. "I looked so long into the jaws of death on that dreadful event that it is strange I am here to tell it. In this little burg about a score of years ago I kept a store and ran a boarding house, at which I prospered. I intended to put John Fiehman over the wall and close up John Barnes' place of eats. I thought everybody was friendly disposed toward me, but when I openly boasted of what I intended to do everybody deserted me. They rallied around Fiehman and Barnes like so many niggers at a free fish fry. I had to close

up for keeps. I moved up Owens Valley to a nameless canyon in the White mountains opposite Bishop Creek. Near the head of the canyon there was considerable level ground, about a quarter section in extent, which I homesteaded. I named my holdings 'Tom Bowline's Million Dollar Ranch.' It was covered with rank grass and large boulders which were very light, being composed of volcanic ashes and other subterranean material, so light they floated—which you may deem preposterous and question my veracity. They were full of small air pockets sealed with an air tight substance. A stream of considerable volume flowed through the flat while the snow was melting on the mountainside higher up. Below my ranch was a natural bridge, beneath which during flood stage water rushed with tremendous force. I made a gate which held the water back. In the early spring when the snow began melting my ranch was flooded deeply and the boulders bobbed like so many corks of an Izaak Walton fishing club angling for black suckers. Within a week the water reached the top of the natural bridge, which was about to give away. I tried in vain to raise the flood gate, then I hurried to Bishop Creek and implored aid of several members of the Early Out of Bed Husband Lifters, who responded with alacrity. I returned leading my beauties, but when we were within a mile of the bridge we heard the roar of rushing water and the bridge gave way. We all sought safety on a large overhanging granite bluff and watched the boulder-filled torrent rush by. Every boulder went out, and the grass would have gone also but it was anchored to the ground by deeply penetrating roots more difficult to eradicate than Johnson grass. The submersion of my ranch greatly enriched the soil. Grass grew to twice the normal length, so thick that often my cattle got lost. Hunting a young calf once, I got lost and guided by the sun I cut a tunnel through the grass to my cabin. This tunnel became the main cattle trail, and there were no more lost bovines. I wintered my cattle there instead of driving them to a valley alfalfa ranch where they would eat their heads off. Every Bishop Creek rancher must have descended from the Light Brigade, for they are experts at charging.. Among my cattle was a stray sheep which would not hobnob with its own species. A roan steer was its foster father and guardian. After one

month the wool grew to be three times the length of an average fleece; at the end of the third month the sheep could not walk, its feet were so entangled in the wool. I clipped it with a pocket knife and continued to clip it every six weeks. I bought twenty-five sheep from a sheep man moving his flock up into Nevada, and pastured my cattle at Shaw's ranch where pasturage was reasonable. The sheep could hardly keep the cattle trail open, the grass grew so fast. Their fleece grew with the quickness of Jonah's gourd. The secret of the rapid growth of the grass was that it sprang from soil impregnated with nitrate of soda from a deposit up on the mountainside. The White mountains, once level ground, were the shore line of an ancient sea with lagoons full of sea weed. I could have made a fortune selling nitrate of soda but might have exhausted the deposit which seemed limited; above the deposit was a dike of limestone, undermined in several places by streams from melting snow during early spring. One large stone fell and destroyed a small portion of my meadow the last season the cattle were pastured there. Among the many stones ready to topple over was one larger than all the others combined. I named it Balanced Rock because it rested on two small black stones about the shape and size of an antebellum stove pipe hat. When the supports began to crumble beneath the enormous weight, I reinforced them with concrete, but it did not help matters. Sooner or later Balanced Rock would crash down and obliterate most of my ranch. I hoped it would not be in my day or generation. It had stood for untold ages, and even weathered the great earthquake of 1872. To allay my fears of probable disaster in the near future I contracted with Rudolph Shober, a contractor and builder who had won more than local fame by moving and remodeling an Indian wickiup for Mr. Bud Stolenborough, to place several tamarack props against the rock. When the job was finished the stone seemed so stable that no earthquake shock less intense than that which sank the island continent of Atlantis could dislodge it.

"My clip of wool was the wonder and envy of all Pacific Coast wool-growers and my mutton so palatable that any case hardened sinner would cast sheep eyes at our parson's wife which she would pretend not to notice. An Eastern woolen

mills owner offered me a bonus on my wool if I could furnish him a carload immediately. This was quite out of the question, but within two years I could do so from the natural increase of my flock and the extension of my ranch. At the upper end was ground comparatively more level, ten acres in extent, with larger boulders than I had floated off. Among them the grass grew tallest, but to clear a few acres yearly was more than one man's job. I hired several experienced hydraulic miners from Northern California familiar with dynamiting boulders to get them out of the way. The result of the work of these miners was entirely satisfactory, the cost per acre being about equal to that of removing stumps from the cut over land in the state of Washington. My prosperity was too great to endure long and my fame as a sheep man spread accordingly. A fortnight before Christmas I was besieged by letters from school children of various towns in Owens Valley and by a few in San Joaquin Valley for me to act as Santa Claus, a rôle I had filled with complete satisfaction for several years past. My long auburn hair was dyed snow white with flour from a Bishop Creek mill which ground the best white-whiskers dye. Annually I was given a twenty-four pound sack for that purpose. The residue was given to Piute Indians who complained not of hunger but of pains in the stomach. They had indigestion. The Keeler school children were delighted when I announced I would act as Santa Claus at the Christmas tree festivity held in the dining room of the Lake View Hotel. The tree was cut the week previous. It had to be cut down twice before it was short enough, as the top brushed the ceiling. There would be an overflow of presents. Even Poor Lo and John Chinaman would be remembered. I made arrangements with a most worthy Mexican named Ponce Leon Gonzales to tend my sheep during my absence. This high-toned greaser of Owens Valley had the grandiose bearing of a Simon pure Castilian. He was very superstitious. 'Si, senor, Christmas will not be a day of peace on earth and good will to all men. It will be a day of lamentation during which you will wish you were never born.'

"I replied, 'Old super-superstition-container, go howl to the coyotes, which are more numerous and bolder than for many years.'

“Senor, that is just it. Each coyote is the embodiment of an evil spirit whether that spirit formerly tenanted a white man, Indian or Chinaman who knows?”

“When the greaser ceased talking a pack of coyotes howled in my backyard. I thought nothing more of the prognostication of evil until about noon on the day preceding Christmas when I noticed the tamarack props against Balance Rock were giving way. Mr. Shober had made an insecure foundation for them to rest on. Returning from my inspection I heard a crunching of stone. Balance Rock swayed to and fro, accelerated by two bighorn rams on the top butting each other. When their horns came together a noise was produced that sounded through the canyon. The rock canted to a dangerous angle as one ram forced the other over the brink. There was more crunching of stone, and Balance Rock left its long resting place and hurtled through the air. It rolled over and over, and I was snapped up and taken along like a drop of water adhering to the surface of a fast revolving grindstone. A bighorn ram lay at my feet bleating, no longer pugnacious, but equally as frightened as myself. The rock sped onward and when over the center of the valley it rose gradually, taking a southwesterly course. Friction from passing through the air made the stone uncomfortably warm, and warmed the frosty atmosphere. If the stone kept getting hotter soon it would be sizzling hot. When there seemed no hope of escaping cremation there came a violent explosion. Through the steamy atmosphere I saw snowdrifts and a small stone monument beneath which marked the summit of Mt. Whitney. A gelid gale raged which almost blew me over the brink of a thousand foot precipice, but I was saved by clutching hold of the bighorn’s fleece. It crouched in the lee of the monument. Fragments of Table Rock began cooling; in a few minutes they were a frozen mass. It was mid-afternoon before I realized what had happened. At seven o’clock sharp I had promised to be present at the Christmas tree festivity and show the children there is a Santa Claus. I was more than thirty miles from Keeler and ten thousand feet higher. How was I ever to overcome such obstacles? I needed more than Aladdin’s magic carpet to carry me down to my destination. In the atmosphere there were sharp particles of ice driven

before the gale, which cut my face like so many safety razor blades. To remain there much longer meant death by freezing. As I lay on the snow, my clothes frozen stiff, I thought of my oilskin slicker, which fortunately was not torn when the stone burst asunder. I fashioned the sleeves in the shape of pung runners and filled them as well as the body with snow. Then I placed the bighorn's carcass on the sled. Flat on my stomach I kicked off down a gentle inclined plane. I went quite a distance, then came a perpendicular drop of three thousand feet. Over the brink I shot, the coat spread out like the skin of a flying squirrel. The descent was rapid, more rapid than I ever care to go again, and I brought up against a large boulder at the lower edge of the snow line. The bighorn's carcass as a bumper saved my life. The boulder rolled into the head of Cottonwood canyon, making a first rate course down which I slid into Cottonwood creek. The bighorn carcass was left behind, for it came to life and ran off. My oilskin slicker, no longer useful as a sled, was made into a canoe. I embarked on the rapid current and was soon out on the broad expanse of Owens Lake. A westerly gale raged, and engendered high waves, but somehow or other I managed to keep afloat and was cast high on Chinatown's back street of Keeler. The first Chinaman I met ran, pig-tail stuck out straight behind, grass slippers flying off his feet. There was evidently something in my aspect that frightened him. "That is strange," said I to myself, but as I stroked my long beard a hair came out, and behold! my golden beard had changed to snow white from the awful experience I had undergone. My lower limbs wobbled, I reeled and staggered like a guest at John Barleycorn's banquet, and when I sang a Christmas Carol my orotund voice was cracked. I cackled like a ducked setting hen. Two little sons of Major Oscar Dearborn gave vent to their merriment by saying, 'Old Santa Claus is on deck again.' When I entered Railroad street, Keeler's main thoroughfare, the first to greet me was Henry Marshall who with mule-kicking adroitness thrust his hobnail boot in juxtaposition with my pants seat and snarled, 'For shame, Santa Claus, venturing forth in broad daylight to show the kids you are a "sooner." Get somewhere out of sight; you are dirty enough to crawl into John Barnes' swill

barrel.' I slunk back to Mr. Barnes' corral, crawled between two bales of hay, and although my body from waist down was exposed to view, I supposed I was hidden securely as does an ostrich with its head poked into the sand. Lying there pondering over my great financial loss, I wanted to die on the spot, not on a bed of long drawn out sickness. Like the Greeks of old I hoped for euthanasia. I imagined I heard the roll called up yonder, and wondered why my name was not mentioned. So I yelled, or rather cackled, 'Here I am, Thomas Bowline.'

"'Close your trap!' was the rude rejoinder of a strong-armed man as he pulled me from concealment. 'Old Santa Claus,' continued the gruff voice, 'you are wanted at the Lake View Hotel dining room, where every Keelerite and many others from Owens Valley are assembled to celebrate as becomes every Jerry and Ike. That is what outsiders call us.'

"It had grown suddenly dark and I could distinguish nothing; it was like empty space before Creation's morning. Supported on each side by a strong man who almost carried me bodily, I entered the dining room amid loud acclaim and shouts. 'Hosanna to those white whiskers of Santa Claus!'"

His story told, Mr. Bowline rose from his chair on which the depot porter immediately slumped for his daily siesta. Hoping to occupy the chair and outdo Mr. Bowline telling a story was a middle-aged man who resembled Goliath cut down and who boomed with the resonance of a president's statue, "I have a true story, the only true story ever told in Keeler, to tell you."

Fingers to my ears, I replied, "Please excuse me; the airplane I came in is about to take off. Your story would so load me down with the *truth* that the airplane could not make the ascent." There was a chalk drawing of a negro on the depot waiting room wall before which the unknown stranger unbosomed himself. Not a loafer was there to hear a word.

On the lake shore about two hundred yards distant was the airplane, and beside it stood Mr. Moore frantically gesticulating and calling me. I had overstayed my time listening to Mr. Bowline's story.

Mr. Bowline extended a wasted, though once strong hand which still retained the scars of hard manual labor, and said,

"Friend, please embalm in printer's ink my story so that posterity will know I have not lived in vain."

"I would give you a written statement to that effect had I the time. So long, partner." I shook his hand and tears of gratitude fell from his eyes and moistened my hand. Mr. Moore, seated beside Junior in the airplane, beckoned me. I leaped forward, and clambered aboard out of breath.

We flew low over the surface of Owens Lake among myriads of wild fowl. Near the west shore the airplane seemed climbing stairs until it rose to the height of Mt. Williamson, which is a little lower than Mt. Whitney, then circled north up Owens Valley. Below us a sand storm raged. Around us the air was choppy and full of air pockets large enough to contain the combined wealth of the world. Suddenly the airplane dropped five hundred feet or more. An inexperienced pilot would have lost control of his machine. Over Owens Valley the air is always treacherous for aerial navigation. Arrived over the defunct mining town of Benton there were no more air pockets and the altitude was reduced to one thousand feet. A fresh tail wind helped waft us onward at a hundred mile clip. Below us and just ahead were many tiny objects resembling ants, running to and fro. Mr. Moore observed them with his field glass, and said to me in loud tones, for the engine was doing its best to break the desert's stillness, "They are escaped inmates of Napa insane asylum." To the pilot he shouted, "Junior, swing low." As we descended one half of our altitude we ascertained that the objects were not lunatics but rational men under intense excitement. They were picking up stones, large and small, no matter how large, and excitement gave them superhuman strength, and piled them one on top of the other. Were they native sons of the Golden West, Californians building a Chinese wall to keep back the sagebrush Nevadans? Soon, however, I comprehended the situation and shouted in Mr. Moore's ear, "They are prospectors making locations. The old, old story of Miller Brothers' cement mine has got their goat. It has been revamped by some skillful liar whose dope was swallowed as genuine." There were a few who did not make locations but slugged their neighbors, apparently trying to gain locations via armis. Suddenly they concentrated at

a large sagebrush and milled about till many were trampled under foot. We swung low over the hollow square. There lying in the sand almost concealed, head toward the west, clasping in its fleshless arms fifty pounds of cement about one half gold, was the skeleton of one of the Miller brothers who must have met a happy end—that is, if gold is comforting during a person's last hours. Abitub Swak, whose father spent a life time searching in vain for the deposit from which this fragment of cement came, found the skeleton. To the left was the bed of a long since dry lake, on which we landed. Junior remained with the airplane, while Mr. Moore and I joined those who milled around the skeleton.

"You are not wanted; begone!" said several.

"We are interested only in the story of the Miller Brothers' cement mine," replied Mr. Moore. "This guy," pointing to me, "is going to write up all the lost and mythical mines of the West including the Rocky Mountain regions."

"Nothing more to say, partners," said a grizzled prospector with a peg leg, thrusting his peg toward Mr. Moore's abdomen. The thrust was parried, and the belligerent deprived of his means of locomotion. The peg leg was hollow; in the cavity were several small bottles of moonshine hootch. Something unique,—a peg leg containing wet goods.

"Partner, how can I make an honest living without my artificial underpinning?" asked the cripple.

"To a three-leg stool add another leg, and sell it as the greatest invention of the age," replied Mr. Moore.

"The cement mine must lie to the east for the discoverer was headed west for Sacramento Valley," said one not over wrought with gold fever. With outstretched arm he pointed to a small basalt capped butte at the base of which ran the Carson and Colorado Railroad.

"You cannot come within ten miles, assuming the traveler may have made a detour," said a ragged unkempt prospector, as he wrested the peg leg from Mr. Moore's grasp and sighted through the hole. "Due east at the right of the butte a little left of the gap. Stands to reason that a man enfeebled from starvation and exposure, as was the unfortunate Miller brother whose mortal remains lie before us, was not given to mountain climbing for sport, but he passed through the gap and he

could not have carried his treasure far."

"The source is on the west side of the butte," declared the most intelligent and best dressed man of the motley crowd. There was a mad rush toward the butte, and Mr. Moore and I ran back to the airplane where the engine idled.

"Quick, Junior," said Mr. Moore. "He who reaches the butte first has the best chance of finding the cement mine."

For a man of his heavy weight and slowed down condition, Mr. Moore showed old time vigor as he sprang aboard the airplane. I followed after and almost exceeded his suppleness, but the airplane would not take off. It ran the distance of the dry lake bed and would have collided against a sage clump had not Junior shut off the power. Then Mr. Moore and I turned the machine round. On a straight down grade it took the air and flew with dragging tail that threatened a tail spin. We landed beside the railroad track on an abandoned switch bed, and the section foreman's only son crawled from beneath the airplane—a stowaway whose foolhardiness almost wrecked us. He ran down the railroad track and from the left hand side of a cut found a small piece of cement identical to that in the skeleton's arms, only minus gold. "I have found the treasure at last," he shouted, hugging the worthless cement. "I am greater than Dad, king of section foremen."

"Your optimism may be overcharged with hot air," said Mr. Moore.

"This is sufficient evidence," he replied, showing a corner of the cement.

"Sure thing, as far as cement goes!"

Close to the track, so close that the next train scattered the stones of the pile in which he put his notice of location, he built a small monument. "You thoughtless fool," Mr. Moore rebuked him, "you are on railroad property. The right of way extends one hundred feet on both sides from the center of the track. If you are determined to hold your location, buy the railroad. I am informed that the president, H. M. Yerington, is anxious to sell. He will really give the property away for seven million dollars."

"I shall close the deal with him just as soon as I reach Carson City. Take me there in your airplane."

"You must make a large cash payment as soon as you sign on the dotted line."

"That can be arranged on the spot by putting up part of my cement mine as collateral. At the lowest estimate the mine is worth a million dollars each running foot and there are fifteen hundred feet."

"Any more easy nuts to crack?"

He named his location the Miller Brothers Bonanza Cement mine. I hoped he would be rewarded with the full amount of the gold he thought his worthless claim to contain. He was normal on all other matters. The north bound freight and passenger train combined, which took on passengers anywhere along the line, on which the cement mine locator would return to his father's home ten miles up the track, was not due for an hour, so there was ample time for him to tell the story of the Miller Brothers Cement mine, which ran as follows.

During the first year of the California gold rush, among the thousands who went overland, was a German named Hans Miller, whose family consisted of a wife and three grown sons, the eldest named Luther; the second, Otto; and the third, Fritz. They journeyed with a caravan of about a hundred wagons, composed mostly of residents from Pennsylvania and Ohio. Crossing the Missouri River cholera broke out among them and about one fourth of their number died. Encamped at Mountain Meadows, Utah, afterwards the scene of the Mountain Meadows massacre of which John D. Lee, the renegade Mormon, was the instigator, the caravan was almost annihilated by Indians, assisted, it was alleged, by Mormons. The Miller brothers, instead of helping defend the encampment, ran for safety to the open desert. They lay hidden during the day, and traveled by night, avoiding all roads and trails, and kept on a westerly course. When they came in view of the Sierra Nevada mountains they stopped on the east edge of a desert valley, and kindled a fire to roast three horned toads, for their diet consisted of raw lizzards and toads. Stooping to kindle a fire, Luther from exhaustion fell over a stone and broke his left thigh bone. From the heated stone a quantity of yellow metal ran. The low melting temperature and high specific gravity told them the metal was gold. Two

more stones of like nature, more than half gold, lay close by. The smallest stone weighed about a hundred pounds. It was broken into three parts, and each brother took a piece. The other stone was buried near a large sage brush. The fire was extinguished before the toads were roasted, for on a mountain top in the early morning the smoke from an Indian signal fire was seen. By their footprints in the sand the Indians became aware of their presence and sought to slay them. They carried their disabled brother to an overhanging ledge close by, where they lay hid during that day. When darkness came Luther begged to be left behind with his cement fragments and melted gold. He was sure of holding out until rescued by men his brothers could bring from across the Sierras. When darkness came Otto and Fritz, encumbered with their gold cement, continued their journey; by morning they arrived at a large lake from which they drank and became critically ill. Otto died in agony on the lake shore. Fritz buried the body beneath a pile of yellow and white metalliferous boulders the out cropping of which was later the Bodie Standard gold mine. Fritz carried his brother's and his own cement blocks during the next day's travel. Next morning he left one of the blocks behind him, and became confused as to the right direction, as the sun was obscured by clouds. He retraced his footsteps and when near the scene of the accident found Luther crawling along in the hope of reaching civilization. He crawled no more, but became delirious, and wanted to die rich with his cement block in his arms. Fritz could not find the overhanging bluff where Luther had left his treasure behind, so Fritz broke a piece the size of his fist from his block and gave the remainder to Luther when he regained consciousness. He expired at sunset, and his last words were, "Fritz, when you reach civilization tell everybody I died happy, possessed of great wealth." Fritz continued on a northwesterly course to a gap in the Sierras. After continued hardship he reached Placerville, but remained on the brink of death for three months. Recovered sufficiently for work, he shunned the placer mines, the richest auriferous deposit known to that date, where gold diggers often made a thousand dollars a day, and instead found employment on a fruit farm for a wage little more than was paid

in his native state. The cement mine was an obsession, and he told the story in a different way each time he repeated it. He would not have been believed at all, but the piece of cement spoke for itself. Many wanted a specimen and as long as the cement lasted the request was granted. A map of the locality was asked for, but each map was entirely different, although Mono Lake always appeared in the lower left hand corner. He had no recollection as to just where Luther died in the sage brush valley.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEAUTIFUL SNOW

An easterly wind, alleged to blow nobody good, assisted us on our westerly flight toward San Francisco. A direct course was taken over the desert valleys, across several rivers, and to the summit of the high Sierras. When Alpine County lay beneath us the sky cleared after a heavy fall of snow. The engine functioned badly, but Junior hoped to keep going until an airport somewhere in San Joaquin Valley was reached.

It became apparent a forced landing or crash was inevitable. There was a broad expanse of comparatively level snow with the top of a single sequoia sempervirens extending above the surface. Close by it we landed and were almost smothered with snow from which I was the first to emerge. In the tree-top was a coatless, hatless man bellowing at the top of his voice something concerning the beautiful snow. The wind increased to a gale which wafted the snow into great drifts, the largest centered around the tree-top. In a few minutes the lone man was snowed under to his shoulders. He wallowed to where I stood back to the storm, on the edge of the fast filling hole the airplane made. I had great concern for the safety of my fellow travelers and implored the eccentric stranger for assistance to dig them out, but he was interested only in the new fallen snow which he averred was down from angels' wings preened for holiday flights.

The spume-like snow filtered down my shirt collar, and had the happy faculty of filling my low cut shoes which were not taken up by my over size feet. As far as my limited vision extended everything was snow white, enameled by the great storm king. Soon it grew much colder, and my condition was uncomfortable indeed. To the stranger's French mustache tiny icicles were anchored, and they tinkled as he lauded the beautiful snow. I told him he was a great artist, painting everything white, but I thought he had made a mistake, rather of

the head than heart, by not having an evergreen or two in the background. He ceased bawling and remarked that evergreens would appear in due season from beneath the snow. Their color would satisfy any greenhorn, but nature would be bored by them. He folded the sheet music he sang by note, and with fingers red from cold he combed the icicles from his Buffalo Bill locks. Hand over his mouth to create sufficient warmth to rid his mustache of icicles, he smiled benignly as I interrogated him about the average fall of snow in Alpine County. He mumbled something about the land of snow, which anybody not entirely *non compos mentis* could see, touch, taste, and enjoy if so inclined. Then he made several snowballs which he threw straight up, and caught when they descended. He twirled several over a high drift. This sport finished, he threw a soft snowball which filled my left ear. The insensate act made me wroth, and I remarked that such pranks ought to be indulged in only when weather conditions were more conducive to bodily comfort. So he laid aside his foolishness and in seriousness said, "Sir, as a Markleevilleite, a true denizen of Alpine County, I worship the beautiful snow, emblem of the eternal city not made with human hands. I hope you have come to pass the remainder of your days in Markleeville amid the superb scenery such as is to be found nowhere else in America or Europe. Where the air is ever redolent with ozone, where the redeemed of earth will ascend to glory! Those without ascension robes may sprinkle their linen dusters with snow. Here is nature's play ground, with sport to suit the grossest or the most fastidious hobby rider. You are a thoroughbred sport when you become a denizen of Markleeville." Tweaking my nose which was so cold as to be devoid of all sensation, he continued, "I am a real estate promoter. Our little city beautiful of one hundred and sixty inhabitants, ere long will be the city beautiful with a million or more denizens who will hitch their wagon to Pleasure's star and sit back contented to roll on forever."

His left index finger almost came in contact with my right eyeball, and I stepped back, describing a semi-circle in the snow. Then he put me on a straight course. His right thumb pointed downward, and he mumbled, "Danger!" as the snow gave way from beneath me. I rolled down an incline plane

tunneled through the solid snow, and landed on my head and shoulders before the open door of a warm dry room, brilliantly lighted by electricity, where an elderly man of serious mien was writing in a large tome. He was opposite in every form and manner to my conception of a recording angel. Instead of a quill he wrote with a man's size fountain pen on which was stamped in gold letters his name, K. Q. Marklee, Jr. Above the door was the stencilled announcement: Recorder's Office. All was plain now—I was in Markleeville under fifty feet of snow. I had rolled down the main exit and ingress inclined plane.

The real estate promoter, hatted and coated, came in the office and sat down in front of me. His fingers prodded at my knees, and said he, "Just before the first fall of snow I had a plot of one thousand acres surveyed and laid out in town lots. Many of them are a little above the level of where we sit and a few are quite a distance below which with little expense can be brought up to the level of Main street. I am going to dispose of a thousand dollars' worth of business lots for a bagatelle, one hundred dollars each, terms cash. However, on a certain day after the first of next month I shall rescind the scrap iron shortening restaurant pie-crust rule, and offer to exchange a lot for one hundred acres of land no matter where it is situated; tide lands and land submerged by the Pacific Ocean are out of consideration. What have you to exchange?"

"I have a section muskrat farm situated in Kemper County, Mississippi, where the rodents thrive as nowhere else. Recently a few moccasin snakes crept in, but they do no particular harm and are really a benefit, for they keep the rats confined to their burrows, where they sleep and grow to over size."

The fact is the reptiles preyed on the rats almost to extermination, and if Mother Nature had not come to their assistance and bedecked them with quills instead of hair they would have been exterminated. No ancient scribe had more quills on his writing desk than my muskrats. My fur farm would be sold for taxes soon and Kemper County would be encumbered with more worthless land. As a friend of the County I would search for a cheerful tax title buyer. So an exchange

for three town lots and one dollar to boot in my favor was arranged. Deeds were drawn up, and duly acknowledged before a notary public. Then I left the court house and began ascending the inclined plane down which I had fallen headlong, but was called back by the real estate promoter, whom I had told of my anxiety regarding the safety of my fellow travelers. He and I went down a long tunnel excavated in the snow; compression had made the snow almost as compact as ice. On either side were small stores of merchandise such as Western towns carry in stock. There seemed an over stock of snow shoes for Grandpa and also for fat old ladies with rheumatic lower limbs. On lower Main street were the abodes of old miners, each living by himself. An elderly miner and a hermit crab prefer solitude to round out their days in full. At the end of the street there was a large excavation where husband and wife thrashed out their inharmonious domestic sheaves with tongues as flails. An attorney-at-law was pleading an imaginary case, giving vent to piebald oratory. A disciple of Aesculapius was binding up a spavin-legged high chair. Part of the roof gave way suddenly, and a large slab of snow fell at my feet, and before I had fled to safety the airplane poked its nose through, suspended by the wings. Mr. Moore jumped or fell and landed uninjured on his feet. Junior remained with the airplane, and chopped frantically at the snow until a hole was made large enough for the machine to pass through. Mr. Moore, the real estate promoter, and I returned to the Recorder's office, where a deal was put over. Mr. Moore bought one thousand acres adjoining Markleeville on the north, to be known as the Frank Moore addition, for the valuable consideration of one thousand dollars. Owing to the heavy fall of snow he did not set foot on his possessions, but it was guaranteed to average as level land, which was the case. There was an elevation of fifteen hundred feet and a depression equally as great. My land stood on end, and would have taken the output of several dynamite factories to blast it level, but Mr. Moore and I intend to retain possession of our scenic Alpine County possessions until taxed out of existence, which seems impossible for Alpine County's motto is "Man wants but little here below nor wants that little long."

The cause of our forced landing was a cigarette stub in the

gas line, dropped in the tank by a careless refueler. Next morning the Markleevilleites drove a tunnel through the snow for the airplane to emerge. We took off down a gentle declivity, and within two hours of our departure from snow-bound Alpine County we landed at the San Francisco airport, known as Bungo Field in honor of the late U. Bungo, Mr. Frank Moore's father-in-law. It was a travesty, for the deceased was dead set against anything sprouting wings. His antipathy originated in early youth when he and a Chinese neighbor boy flew a large kite on a Sunday morning when his parents attended divine worship. He could not let go the string entangled around his wrist, and was dragged in front of the church crying for help. Before long he was crying louder for his father to spare the rod. Part of Bungo Field was Mr. Bungo's cow pasture and backyard. The Bungo residence, now more than forty years old, at the time of construction was the realization of a house builder's dream. Now it was sandwiched between two multi-millionaires' palaces—a paltry affair in a state of dissidence with aristocratic neighbors, like a snake that is unable to shed its skin but must ever retain the shabby one. It was occupied jointly by servants of the plutocrats. Various disagreeable odors permeated the atmosphere, the most pronounced being sauer kraut, limberger cheese, garlic, and opium. However, there were also the good American odors of home brew and Bull Durham tobacco smoke. It seemed a desecration that the Bungo home sheltered a rabble, and I asked Mr. Moore why he had not seized it through his wife. It seems that Mr. Bungo willed it to an only brother, of not sufficient thrift to acquire much worldly goods, but whose life partner was obsessed with the idea that she was fittest to wear the Knob Hill social tiara. Unstable was her crown, and without Mammon's support she lasted only as long as the money obtained from mortgaging the property. The mortgagee, an up-to-date Shylock, not only demanded a pound of flesh nearest the heart but the blood the flesh contained and blood to fill the cavity from which the flesh was taken. He transplanted flesh, skin, and hairs. An ex-dockhand, who had invested his savings in sand dune lots which in a short time became valuable, bought the property and built a palatial mansion on the right. An ex-fireman, now a coconut king,

built a royal palace on the left. His servants and the ex-dock-hand's servants lived at the Bungo residence. The coconut king had an only son, an aviation enthusiast who donated part of the landing field. On Knob Hill there seemed no end to millionaires' homes, and high priced automobiles were almost limitless—a vast contrast to Mr. Bungo's horseless carriage of a quarter century ago. None of Mr. Bungo's neighbors lived on the street. Those who had not taken up an eternal resting place in San Mateo County where San Francisco buries its dead were scattered by the great earthquake and fire of 1906 which reduced them to a common level. Mr. Moore's residence was on Van Ness Avenue under long lease to a worthy Italian trucker who had won financial independence growing cabbage which he usually disposed of for eight dollars a ton F.O.B. We did not pass by his residence but took a motor bus through Market street. I occupied a seat on the rubberneck deck for I wanted to observe the changes the earthquake and fire had made to the occidental metropolis. For its betterment there is no adequate expression. Phoenix-like, San Francisco witnessed the phenomenon of rising from its own ashes to be the realized conception of a modern city. The Market Street Ferry building alone remained unchanged. Once I had looked upon it as the second Taj Mahal; now it was shabby and cut down compared to other buildings flanking Market street. There Mr. Moore and I parted company, he to transact business matters involving millions of dollars, and I to take the train for Redding, the capital of Shasta County. The day passenger coaches were full to overflowing, as a cheap excursion rate was on for Seattle, Washington, and return. Seated between a Chinaman and a Digger Indian on their way to Chico to pick hops I hoped to escape the melting pot for which our country is famous, but my olfactory organ scented foreign bodily odors. Of course we will not mention the B.O. of our own race. Poor Lo was his usual self. He looked neither to the right, left, up, or down. His sombre eyes seemed to see nothing, his acute ears to hear nothing, and his body to feel nothing. Stretching for a little more room unintentionally, I thrust an elbow in his stomach, and expected an ear-splitting war whoop, but not even a horsefly was disturbed when it jaywalked across his compressed lips.

"Poor Lo," said I, "excuse me; really a misadventure. I hope you are not offended."

The horsefly continued jaywalking, and I let well enough alone. My attention was turned toward our saffron-hued fellow traveler.

"John, where bound?" I asked him.

"Me no sava," was his smiling rejoinder.

"Now see here, John, we are on this train moving east, therefore we are going east. The train will arrive at its destination, and if we do not leave it the conductor will order us off."

"Ah! I sava, to Chico pick hops not much pay all same as wasy tramps clothes."

Chico, noted for its Chinese denizens, became hop headed, and depended entirely on growing hops—a policy which sooner or later will bring disaster to the growers. All over the Union the hop-growing industry has been tried out, and has been a failure in the end. John and I became friends. He told me of his life ambition to remain in this country until he accumulated six hundred dollars plus his passage back to China. There he would buy two acres of rice land, hire coolies to cultivate it, marry his best girl, and raise a family of many sons. He would not want a daughter. In his estimation woman was good only to propagate the race. No amount of logic could uproot his prejudice toward the women folk of his country, condemned to occupy a station in life inferior to domestic animals and made so by untold centuries of custom and usage. I would like to lay the matter before our foreign mission board, which seems to be sleeping on its rights. The train arrived on time at Sacramento where my fellow travelers and I would change cars, as we are not among the excursionists who had through cars. The train for the north would leave at 7:30 P. M., which gave me ample time to take in the sights. Sacramento grew fast during the last two decades and a half. The Wienstock and Lubin Building, pride of the old city, is now a dinky foundling, overtopped by sky scrapers which shut out the sunshine. Trolley cars, among the first operated in the world, have been superseded by motor buses of modern construction. I went out to the State Capitol building of white marble, built in the early fifties. The solons who made the edifice possible possessed a clear vision of the state's future greatness, long

since a reality. The capitol grounds of thirty-five acres are a vast flower garden where all manner of flowers and shrubs thrive, as there is no frost. Seated beneath the fronds of a palm, I could almost see Flora with loving hands attending to her charges. The eye could feast on the profusion of flowers, hands touch the petals, but one could not pluck a flower, bud, or leaf. I was more satisfied to gaze on the flowery field of Asphodel than gather a bouquet which after a brief spell would wither, be cast away, and trodden under foot.

On the train for the North I had a seat to myself. The Indian and Chinaman were in the smoker. It was a sober-minded lot of passengers. Those who were not boosting peanut growers and fruit raisers yawned over their newspapers. At a way station two young women of Spanish physique got aboard. They were whoopee boosters. Aided by John Barleycorn, they screamed ribald songs and shouted horsey jokes. They sat in front of an elderly man in a smart business suit, who was trying to commit to memory Plato's Treatise on the Soul's Immortality. He sat beside me, and his vacated seat was occupied by a commercial traveler, a he man whoopee. During the next hour the peanut vender and soft drink dispenser did a thriving business and when the girls left the car he slumped in a seat and went to sleep. Many passengers followed his example, and I must have catnapped, for I did not hear the stations, Red Bluff and Chico, called by the brakeman, whose vocal explosions resembled a howling thimble skein wagon wheel.

Redding was reached at 6:30 A. M. It showed great improvement; on Railroad Street in particular, where a street of shacks was overtopped by the old Paragon, a three-story, vermin-infested hotel. There were substantial business houses of brick with no saloons, which in pioneer days were so numerous the thoroughfare should have been named Saloon Street. It was alleged there were many speakeasies so outspoken that an unsophisticated water wagon rider could spot them.

From the Temple Hotel, conducted by Mr. Bismark Cline-smith, the Redding-French Gulch motor bus would depart at seven-thirty. In Redding I had an old time friend, Mr. George Grotofend, a dentist who had an annual income of ten thousand dollars from his profession.

I wanted to show him how well the bridge in my mouth had lasted. His old office in the Craddock Block was occupied by a shyster lawyer who eked out a precarious existence from divorce cases and defending mining claim jumpers. Mr. Grotofend, now the copper king of Northern California, had an office on the second floor of the Lorenz Hotel. Once he had guided the fickle goddess Fortune to my cabin door but I was not equal to grasp the opportunity which consisted of equal shares in five copper claims on the right hand bank of the Sacramento River providing I would do assessment work which would consume about three months' time. Then I considered my time too valuable to waste on copper prospects, for I was a gold prospector. "How much gold does the copper ore carry?" was my first interrogatory. "Only a trace, but the percent of copper is high. At present there is not much demand for copper, but the new age of electricity is just ushered in. In the near future the demand for copper will be almost limitless," he said.

"The demand for gold has been and ever will continue to be limitless as long as the human race has eyes to admire the luster. I am a gold bug. Mr. Grotofend, are you a copper kettle orphan?" I asked derisively, and Dame Fortune fled aghast.

Mr. Grotofend was absent with wife and daughter in Alaska, where he had valuable copper mines on the Copper River, and the motor bus had left for French Gulch while I hoped to find Mr. Grotofend in his office. There would be no other motor bus until the next morning. However, there was a freighter which would leave at noon, and he agreed to take my Gladstone bag as double first class freight. He lifted my bag and dropped it as though it contained something deadly, which made me huffy.

I blurted, "Sir, I am sure the additional weight of my luggage would stall your mangy mules or break your rickety old wagon down. Oh! well, I can tote it and never bat an eye."

Replied he, "The bag is so infernally light and empty that I am afraid it would rise up like a hot air balloon when the sun shines on it. Better fill it with brick bats and old tin cans to give it a metalliferous rattle."

Fearing my traveling bag would be inflated with California

hot air lying on a load of freight I decided to shoulder it and go afoot. In years gone by I had made better time afoot than the horse drawn stage, by taking several cut-offs on the mountain road. Encumbered with my luggage, with a grouch against myself for not accepting Mr. Grotfend's offer, I set forth up the Sacramento River for three miles to where the stage road entered the mouth of Middle Gulch, the scene of the richest placers in Northern California. There was no more mining activity. The Gulch was worked over several times by a few remaining old Argonauts, mostly from the Old Miners' Home, who still hoped to strike it rich. Midway up the gulch where a saloon once thrived was a filling station which sold gasoline at the same price as in Redding. There was soft drink and alleged hard drink, but Gulch water was good enough for me. The filling station owner wondered why I was afoot, and I was equally anxious to know why he was inquisitive. "Sir," said I, "there is much historical interest for every foot of this gulch. It is here that the famous Big Four, Stanford, Hopkins, Huntington, and Searles made locations but were too big to work them and left them for humble fry like your father and uncle, for instance, to bend their backs and get wet feet and sore hands wrangling with boulders which guarded the gold."

At the end of Middle Fork Gulch stands the town of old Shasta, built of brick during the palmy mining days of California. For many years it was the county seat of Shasta County until the Southern Pacific railroad was extended north to Portland, Oregon. Redding was laid out on the left bank of the Sacramento River, six miles distant from Shasta; the railroad could not be built into Shasta without enormous expense. It followed up the Sacramento River to the base of Mt. Shasta, then wound north among low foothills. Shasta declined as rapidly as Redding grew, for the rich placers were long since exhausted. The county seat was moved to Redding, headquarters for the mining men of Northern California, and the distributing point for the gold, silver, and copper mines for many miles around. Quite late in the afternoon I entered Shasta. Main street was deserted and likewise most of the buildings. The main entrance door of the court house stood open and I sauntered in and noticed how substantially the edifice was built. There were no cracks in the plastered walls,

as is usually the case when walls have stood for three-quarters of a century. No panes were missing from the windows, as is usually the case with an abandoned building. Broad stairs led up to the court room on the second floor. I had taken two steps when a voice from above thundered "Don't dare to take another step! you are trespassing on my property at the peril of your life."

To ascend further would gain me no material benefit, but the result might be deleterious, for when a madman imagines he is harmed he is about as companionable as a man-eating tiger. So I turned my back and was knocked sprawling on the floor by a cuspidor. My handbag rolled toward the door and I was on all fours scrambling after it out in the sunshine that shone dimly from the sky partly overcast by smoke and poisonous fumes from the Keswick smelters reducing copper ore three miles distant. Recently the smelters were moved to tide-water near Port Costa. There was not a green tree, but many dead ones—not a shrub, flower, or blade of grass. All had been "gassed" by the smelters. The old jail house with its ponderous iron bound door was transformed into a stable. Several bales of alfalfa hay were piled in the corridor. I entered and noticed the extra quality of the hay from Shorty Richards' ranch located two miles from French Gulch. Suddenly the door swung shut and the key in the lock was turned by a talon hand resembling a harpy's. I was locked in by somebody unknown who begrudged me my personal liberty—the reason why to be ascertained later.

Two letters were due the Madam who was waiting patiently for my return to Poverty Flop Plantation. I decided to answer the brief epistle with a long letter. My Duford Parker fountain pen, guaranteed to last a lifetime, had run its course and gone the way all fountain pens must go, but I had a reliable Esterbrook steel point and a home-made holder. There was part of a bottle of Sheaffer's Skrip Black ink in my coat pocket which I carried for several purposes: first for writing, as I predicted my fountain pen's fatal malady; secondly, to blacken my low cut shoes; thirdly—a confession—to make my hair and whiskers appear not quite as gray as if Jack Frost and I were out carousing all night and showing the young generation how their dads used to do things up brown in the good old

days. Seated on my Gladstone bag, leaning against a bale of hay, I began writing a letter to the home folks, and was so engrossed I did not notice an ancient wild-eyed gold digger leering at me through the grated door. The train of my thoughts had reached a terminal, and the end of the penholder went between my lips as if inspiration could be produced by such a childish act. Before a new train of thoughts was ready to leave, my attention was directed toward my captor, who snarled, "You shall stay where you are until you starve to death. In vain you may howl your S.O.S. calls for help. This is a one man's town. I own everything beneath the surface and everything above it. Shasta County was built on my placer claims from which I rocked out daily more than a hundred ounces of gold dust. Long ago I would have been wealthy and married a sweetheart I left behind me in good old Missouri. Maybe I would have begot many sons of the Golden West."

"Gentleman from Missouri," I replied, "granted you have waited too long already to set sail with your bride on Hymen's rock-girdled sea, but there is time yet, for your best girl is still there. I will help rock out enough gold dust for your wedding trip. I am not gold hungry, but have acute indigestion trying to assimilate several thousand acres of Mississippi plantation and cut-over timber land."

The door clanged open.

"Pard," said the ancient gold digger, "I like your looks and the way you talk. You are the only one who has given me a kind word or look during the past half century."

From a cell he took a rocker, pick, shovel, gold pan, and dipper to dip up the water for the rocker; at the rear of the court house square was a small gulch with fresh worked gravel cast to one side. I filled the rocker hopper with soft bed rock and rocked out several dollars worth of gold dust.

"What did I tell you?" he exclaimed, dancing around the rocker. "Nobody has any faith in me; everybody thinks I am mad. The County served papers on me—conjunctions, I think they were called. Anyhow, it was paper talk for me to hang up my rocker."

"Injunction," said I, correcting him.

"It matters little as to the nature of the papers. The officer

who served them told me with his own mouth I would be jailed if I entered court house square to rock out any gold dust."

The rocker was operated again, and instead of gold dust were several small quartz pebbles which carried free gold, indicating the source of Middle Creek placer gold was close by.

"The deposit is under the court house. To get at it I shall dynamite the old she-bang. For months I have intended to do so, but I do not know how to set off a blast."

"Do not attempt it; even a Fourth of July dynamite salute is dangerous. If you destroy Shasta County property you take a certain amount of money from your own pocket. Work the placers outside the square and let the quartz deposit go until such time as the county will give you a warrantee deed for a reasonable consideration."

But he would not harken to my advice, so for fear I might be implicated in a dynamiting plot I moved on to the deserted toll gate house on the grade above Shasta. I did not retire until quite late, and had the letter, begun in the jail, to finish. My letter writing done, an old timer, Charles Joseph, formerly of French Gulch, arrived by automobile enroute to Trinity County for a bear and deer hunt, and stopped over night. When we were sound asleep there came a violent detonation. The earth shook so that the foundation on the lower side of the toll gate house crumbled, and the house rolled over several times down the mountainside. It did not collapse for it was well built. Mr. Joseph was burned considerably about the head and face, for he and the hot box-stove were on too familiar terms.

"Another earthquake, a rare occurrence for Northern California," was my remark to Mr. Joseph when the building ceased rolling.

"That crazy old gold digger blew up the old court house if I am not mistaken," replied Mr. Joseph. "When I came by he asked me how to set off a dynamite blast. I promised to show him when next Fourth of July rolled around."

When daylight came the cupola and court house roof, which had been visible from the toll gate house, were seen no more. Mr. Joseph and I rushed in his automobile back to the scene of the explosion. On Main street in the fork of a large dead live oak was the old gold digger's head, severed from the body

as if by a guillotine. On the features was resignation, as if he had done a commendable act. A little further on, lying on the ground, was the victim's right hand full of chin whiskers, as though he had tried to keep his body intact. The court house was demolished completely; hardly one brick was left on top of another. All was scattered by the force of one hundred pounds of Number 1 dynamite. Where the building once stood there was a hole in the center ten feet deep and twice as many feet in diameter, yellow with gold around the rim and sides. Although County property, not a Shastaite could touch a penny's worth of it until the law said "Go to it." A guard was placed over the treasure, and the next day all miners over sixty from the Old Miners' Home and from outside were given a day to gather up golden nuggets. Redding speakeasies and dance halls did Days of '49 business. Cupid was on the job, too, for a young flapper wed an ancient gold digger. She was the most nimble of them all at gathering in the gold, and as long as the gold lasted there was harmony, but when it was exhausted love flew out of the window and the bride out of the door. Mr. Joseph's automobile balked when parked for us to view the havoc wrought by the blast. The owner, who was not an auto expert, turned the contraption over to me, and I diagnosed the ailment as leakage of the heart or flooding carburetor, on which I tinkered until it functioned quite satisfactorily. Mr. Joseph hoped we could reach French Gulch before it failed us entirely, as Lola Wheeler had a garage and general repair shop there and could make any gas or electric propelled machine run with factory precision. The engine began knocking with thumps like a cayuse I once owned. It kept on knocking until we reached Whisky Flat, where a connecting rod tore a great hole in the cylinder block. About that time the motor bus came along. The driver, an old friend of Mr. Joseph, threw out the life line and towed the auto into French Gulch, but Mr. Wheeler was out of town. Early that day he had gone with his gold diggers by airplane, to be absent from one to several days. His destination was unknown to anybody save himself, but he left word with his foreman that, should I arrive during his absence, I was to go to his home on Franck street and hang up my hat. I thought best not to do this, however, for I was not intimately acquainted

with his wife, Nee Mattie Kasner, one of the famous Kasner musicians.

There was considerable improvement noticeable in and around French Gulch. Entering town from the south I noticed the holy Catholic church building was moved to upper Franck street. Part of the site was occupied by the Wheeler airport. With a great deal of expenditure of muscular energy, Mr. Wheeler had leveled down old placer diggings, filled up several gulches, straightened the bed of Cedar Creek, and made the best airport in Northern California. Nearly all of the elderly folk I knew two decades and a half previous were at rest in the well-kept burying ground on a small mesa above the town. Among them were: Mrs. Pat Lawton, Mr. Dennis Foley, Mrs. Alphonse Morrell, Mrs. Charles Joseph, Mr. Lola W. Wheeler, Sr., and Mr. Fredrick Franck. I put up at Fox Hotel. The ex-bartender, Mort Foster, now conducted a ton-sorial parlor and soft drink stand in the bar room. Mr. Foster had made several strikes while mining for gold, but lost out trying to make greater wealth. He was a friend to the prospector and nearly always ready to grubstake any man who could distinguish gold from fool's gold. In short, he was a man with his heart in one hand and his purse in the other. During the past few years there had been considerable mining activity around this gold studded hamlet, mostly on the left bank of Clear Creek. Most noteworthy was the sale of the Brunswick mine to Chicago capitalists for sixty-five thousand dollars. Mr. Frank Rossi, a naturalized citizen from Northern Italy, was the fortunate recipient. He had worked many years developing his mine from a dubious prospect, and he must have descended direct from the old Romans as nothing ever daunted him. After a hard day's work in the mine he would go to French Gulch six miles distant and carry a quarter of beef on his shoulders up a steep trail. He alone had confidence in his mine when all others turned against him and dubbed him "Dago Frank." He plodded alone to success and wealth. Then the slogan became: "How do you do, Mr. Rossi? Can we be of service to you?" But wealth did not turn his head; he moved to San Francisco, engaged in merchandising, and soon doubled his wealth.

CHAPTER VII.

A GOLD DIGGER DISCOVERS A BONANZA

Mr. William Plum, a native of French Gulch and a recent graduate from the state school of mines, was home on a short visit preparatory to his departure to the Belgian Congo Country to examine valuable radium ore deposits for an English syndicate. He was also interested in fossils—fauna fossils especially. He deplored the fact that Mr. Lola Wheeler made no attempt to preserve the gold digger's skeleton found in the Lawton Brothers' abandoned placer mine. However, there were two living representatives of the pre-historic creature which would be preserved for posterity, and he would attend to the matter personally. More than once he broached the subject of purchase, but Lola turned him down, for Lola was fond of his gold diggers, more fond than an elderly millionaire is of his gold digger bride of less than twenty summers. Another reason was that they were lucrative and brought in larger dividends on the investment than Henry Ford's factory turning out Model A Fords.

At Mr. Plum's suggestion he and I called on Mr. Charles Wheeler, the discoverer of the Jennings Gulch bonanza. He was the eldest brother of Lola Wheeler, living at home on Foley street, the burg's avenue of aristocrats. Much persuasion brought Mr. Wheeler down from the second story chamber, darkened for the past ten days so that his injured eyeball would heal sooner. A gold digger had set the ball rolling by trying to gouge out the optic. Mr. Wheeler had on a court-plaster mask which concealed his benign features. The court-plaster straight-jacketed lower jaw was firmly set against the upper jaw. He was as silent as a first degree murderer whom his attorney has cautioned to be mum. Mr. Plum said that as the convalescent could not be interviewed orally he might be by other means—by the deaf mute's medium of communication, as he and Mr. Wheeler were familiar with the deaf and

dumb alphabet. In other days they sparked a deaf mute known as "Good Looker," the prettiest girl in Shasta County, to whom nature was lavish in every other way than hearing and speaking. They never quarreled as to who was her choice, but left the matter for her to decide, and she made a decision quite opposite to their expectations. She wed a widower whose defunct mate had worn herself out peddling petty gossip among the neighbors. With all sorts of finger motions they occupied several minutes while I leaned back in a comfortable rocker and let my mind wander way down the back alley of time when the human race was dumb during the dumb-bell age. Rather than have lived in that silent age with a mute life companion methinks I would now be blessed by having as many wives as Solomon even if each one had a hollow-ground Furies tongue.

"What did Mr. Wheeler say?" I asked Mr. Plum as soon as their wig-wagging fingers were still.

"Nothing much," replied Mr. Plum, "except that the gold digger is a diabolical animal and that he is more than repaid for the few love pats on his face given him by the brute which uncovered the source of gold searched for in vain by thousands of experienced prospectors." Inscrutable silence shone through the courtplaster mask. Mr. Plum and I wished him a quick recovery and hoped his face would heal without scar or blemish. Like Saul he was perfect from the crown of his head to the end of his great toes. The fairer sex admired his perfect physique more than himself. He was not at all vain of his good looks. We wished him much worldly success, greater than his stepfather, Mr. Collinswood, enjoyed living on easy street with multi-millionaires. Ascertaining we had called concerning his corporal instead of financial condition he shook our hand and his fingers wig-wagged "God Bless You."

On the right side of the front gate were reminders that Dobbin was still used, judging from the fresh gnawed hitching post and stone mounting block on which Mr. Plum sat, his long legs sprawled across the sidewalk. Around them pedestrians detoured. He was unconscious of the fact until the postmistress on her way to serve Uncle Sam remarked if Mr. Plum would close-reef his lower extremities the coast would be clear for pedestrians. Modest Mr. Plum tried to

murmur an excuse, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. The hitching post was a comfortable back support of which I took advantage as I listened to Mr. Plum's narrative based on hearsay evidence as to how Charles Wheeler discovered the source of the Jennings Gulch placer gold. Such evidence, we are told, is not admissible in a court of competent jurisdiction. For fear the truth might be distorted, the details will not be entered in this true story until such time as Mr. Charles Wheeler comes from behind his courtplaster mask. On the street little else was talked of than the fabulously rich goldstrike made a few days previous by Charles Wheeler who was more practical a miner than prospector. There were specimens from the strike such as Mr. Jennings had sluiced out from time to time more than three quarters of a century previous. It was the occasional finding of rich specimens that drove him to continue placer mining in the ice cold water coming from the melting snows along the summit of the Deadwood mountains, until he went to the Old Miners' Home at Weaverville, the capital of Trinity County. Occasionally in midsummer he made a visit to the scene of his great expectations and disappointment. Mr. Wheeler's gold discovery waked the mining somnolence of Eastern Trinity and Western Shasta Counties, and an old-time mining boom was on. Everybody went prospecting for gold, but nothing of importance was discovered in the hills which had been raked and combed by three generations of hardy gold hunters. I myself had no faith in bonanzas to be discovered. I called to memory other days when I had prospected and mined in Eastman's Gulch over a ridge two miles westerly from Jennings's Gulch. No other prospector ever had his hopes raised to the seventh heaven more than I when I uncovered rich gold-bearing ore on a claim named Belly Ache. I had two more claims, Sore Eyes and Hare Lip. I did not go in for bombastic names such as Sweet Marie, Morning Star, Last Chance, Dad's Favorite Hootch; but chose common sense names such as can be remembered by anybody at the top or bottom of civilization's ladder. I worked like a member of a young hung jury for a unanimous vote to clear a mugwump of filching campaign funds, and I nearly starved to death trying to make a paying mine out of Belly Ache claim. It amounted to nothing more than its

name designated, and at times I called it Tummy Ache. Sore Eyes was such a flop I got sore eyes before one half the assessment work was done. Fearing I might contract a hare lip, I wrote Frank Bighouse of Sawyer Bar of the potential wealth it contained, and he replied that he had a hare lip already which he had intended to have sewed up during the past two decades, and so declined my offer. From Redding to Weaver-ville I was known as the owner of Belly Ache mine. The mine was favorably thought of by Talc Rosequartz, a recent graduate of an Eastern school of mines. Mr. Rosequartz was located at Redding, and my prospect, out of hundreds he examined, was the only one he passed on favorably. This enabled me to put up at the old Paragon Hotel for a reasonable sum per diem on credit and to fight bedbugs gratis. I had credit at the Golden Luster tonsorial parlor for a haircut, shave, and shoeshine. I could have got manicured but needed my fingernails in the condition nature gave me, to scratch gravel. The manicurist declared she would not touch my bear paws for any valuable consideration, but as I left her presence I intimated her slim hands were just right to slip into a trouser pocket and extract a purse. It was not a case of love at first sight but of mistrust and antipathy. When I called again the tonsorial artist was not loquacious as was his wont, and his features were drawn as he pulled a perfect hair puller razor across my phiz.

Said I, "Sir, go slow; that instrument of torture has not been honed since Adam laid it aside when he decided to set the example of facial adornment."

Replied he, "I have a severe pain in the stomach; my vermiform appendix is out of order, and wants pepping up a little."

"Rats!" ejaculated the manicurist. "You have belly ache, caught from too close contact with the owner of Belly Ache mine, the guy you are shaving."

The razor fell to the floor. The barber would have fallen against the French mirror, but the manicurist caught him as he slumped.

"Go!" said she, pointing to the door.

Half shaved, I went on the street. A scattergood throwing away his inheritance of gold and silver would not have attracted more attention. I entered a tonsorial parlor conducted

by a barberette of sharp tongue and sharper razor. She had a poodle which was the pride of her existence. Petting the poodle, I won her esteem, and she shaved me with a non-hair-puller razor. I occupied her chair several times. One evening after a successful day's extraction of ore from my mine I resolved to be assistant to Dan Cupid and arrange, if all went well, a matrimonial alliance between Mr. Henry Slater and the non-safety-razor wielding barberette. Mr. Slater was the only miner in Eastman's Gulch where the wolf did not prowl before the door. I did not see Mr. Slater, as he was absent from his home; he was in Big Papoose Gulch nursing old Mr. Ned Norton who was at death's door from a third stroke. Next day Mr. Fredrick Franck delivered me a month's supply of provisions and dynamite. There was a copy of the Redding Searchlight which Mr. Henry Franck sent for my edification. On the front page in bold face type was the caption: "Lady Barber shaves too close." An inebriated hayseed had entered her shop for a haircut and shave. He kicked her poodle and she went at him with a razor and her finger nails, and shaved the flesh from his left jaw, barely missing the jugular vein; then she left for parts unknown. The hayseed left for a San Francisco hospital. So I let Dan Cupid attend to his own affairs until such time as I see my way clear to conduct a help-yourself matrimonial bureau.

Ten tons of the richest ore extracted from the Belly Ache mine was reduced on Joseph Gifford's arrasta, and netted three hundred dollars which was divided between Mr. Gifford and myself fifty-fifty, but I decided henceforth to reduce my ore on Slater Brothers' arrasta, operated by a forty-foot over-shot water wheel. However, another run was not made as the ore was too low grade. I had several fair offers to dispose of my mining claim while it was promising, and my credit in Redding was good for any reasonable amount, of which I took undue advantage. I ordered a tuxedo suit which I intended to wear at a mine owners' banquet given shortly in San Francisco. Returned to French Gulch, I remained there a week, and then went back to Eastman's Gulch. A day after arriving there Joseph Gifford brought me a special delivery stamped letter from attorney A. Felon Arson. Mr. Gifford remarked how fortunate I was to find a gold mine and sell out within

three months, while he had lived in the Gulch more than thirty years and had not made a decent living.

"Mr. Gifford," said I, "mining is like everything else. It requires more brains than brawn to be successful, and for that reason I have succeeded."

He went up the trail with a wheelbarrow to bring down two hundred pounds of quartz to keep his arrasta going for twenty-four hours.

Setting off a blast, which invariably I did at noon to permit the smoke time to clear from the drift, I decided not to work that afternoon, but returned to my cabin up on the mountainside and put on my Sunday togs to go to French Gulch. Then I opened the letter, which instead of containing a check for twenty thousand dollars from the sale of the mine to an eastern sucker, contained no end of duns. My disappointment could not have been more depressing were I in an airplane soaring over the celestial city with the landing field in sight only to have a fiery blast from perdition singe the airplane's wings like a belated moth flying around a Christmas candle and drive it down in a nose dive to land in hell. Belly Ache, Sore Eyes, and Hare Lip, my claims, might interest a gullible person but me no more. I did not close the cabin door but left it ajar. On a shoebox lid I scrawled, "Welcome Any Fool," nailed it to the cabin door, and turned my back on Eastman's Gulch, I hoped forever. The lapse of a quarter century, however, wore away my resolution. Often during my residence in Mississippi under malaria skies where each fire-fly seemed an inverted torch illuminating the way to eternal silence, I pondered whether I had given up too soon when a rich ore body was at my pick's point, for such cases are of frequent occurrence. The Iron Mountain Copper Mine near Redding was missed one foot by a miner who believed in spooks. The Brown Bear Mine at Deadwood was missed by old Mr. Ballow, who could not find the ledge that the float rock came from, while a Scandinavian bear hunter fleeing from a wounded bear found it. Charles Wheeler's recent gold discovery made everything glitter with the luster of burnished gold. Daily there was an almost endless procession of would-be mine owners from French Gulch to Jennings' Gulch ten miles distant. The auto bus road went to within five miles of

Jennings' Gulch, and the remainder of the way was over a good pack trail made by the Brown Bear mining company to pack cord wood to the stamp mill. As Mr. Lola Wheeler would not return home for several days, Mr. William Plum and I decided to go to the scene of the new bonanza and also to Eastman's Gulch. My Oregon cayuse pack horse still roamed among the hills, her progeny so numerous that cattle men threatened to exterminate them for devouring the grass. The horses were a benefit, as they chased bears and mountain lions from the range. Near the worked-out Highland mine I found my pack horse, too slowed down by old age to follow the herd. The beast remembered my voice and whinnied when I called. Mr. Plum borrowed a mount from Mr. Dennis Foley. The sorry equine had lived twice the time allotted for horse flesh, but it was pugnacious and bit at everything in the way. It devoured Mr. Plum's coat like so much fodder. The French Gulch-Weaverville motorbus left daily at seven o'clock from the Fox Hotel. Since the gold strike an extra bus had been put on as far as Deadwood; however, on certain days the bus made two trips at reduced fare. The bus went out full of optimistic fortune seekers, and returned with the dejected who blasphemed against everything—even Jonah's whale for being such a boob as to cast Jonah safe ashore. Neither Mr. Plum nor I was at all excited; we expected nothing more than befalls nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand dupes in a gold rush. When the bus departed, mounted on our ancient equines with a roll of blankets and a small supply of provisions in case we should decide to camp out for a day or two, we set forth and soon came to the old Washington gold mine where the first quartz mill was built on the Pacific coast by Mr. John Sims, now past being a centurian. The mine was in operation despite many shut-downs, and since a new mill had been built there had been fair dividends. Above the mine the bus road zigzagged up the steep mountainside. Near the summit was the Niagara Mine Quartz mill fallen in disuse which had stamped out more than a million dollars worth of gold and enriched its foreign owners, mostly Germans. One half mile further was the summit dividing line between Shasta and Trinity Counties. Mr. Plum and I followed the trail along the hog back four miles to the Deer Horn mine. There was no

other evidence of the mine than a large dump, which we crossed and descended by a broad trail to Jennings' Gulch, a descent of two thousand feet. The gold discovery was a small granite flat on both sides of which was slate and other metamorphic rock. Known to almost everybody was the fact that the granite flat contained many quartz stringers that carried considerable free gold. Many prospectors had examined the flat, and panned out a little gold so light it floated coming from the stringers. They called it "dead gold." A few shallow prospect holes were sunk on the flat, the deepest put down by myself. At the bottom of the hole I noticed the gold was less flaky and with fewer colors to the pan. Others had noticed it also.

Prior to discovering the bonanza in Jennings' Gulch, Mr. Charles Wheeler was up against it. He had not worked in the mines much during the past five years. He made a precarious living as a mine promoter as long as there was a promising prospect to promote, but there was a slump in mining activity with no slump in the price of food and clothes. In a half-hearted way he went out in the hills with pole, pick and shovel and loaded himself down with samples of barren quartz taken from a great many ledges. Often he asked his brother Lola to go with him, to which Lola would agree providing the gold diggers were taken along, but Charles had no confidence in the varmints; he considered them a detriment, for had not Lola fed them hundreds of dollars worth of gold nuggets? Besides, Lola was busy reducing radium-bearing ore. Recently he had discovered an element, protactinium, that would drive his airplane as he soared, above the earth's gravitation. Charles Wheeler had a gold digger sweetheart; to satisfy her insatiable thirst for the yellow metal would take the combined output of the Havilah, Ophir, and Golconda mines; his stepfather, Lionel Collinswood, offered him financial aid providing the aforesaid gold digger would limit her wants within the bounds of reason, for which she thought the gross income of Uncle Sam was fair and equitable. He walked his chamber floor many a night wringing his hands and moaning, "What shall I do to satisfy her modest wants?"

After his last night's floor walking he entered Lola's work shop and laid the case before his scientific brother, who replied,

"Charles, I have a large quantity of radium ore which I am sure will produce a pound of radium although it will be a month or six weeks before it is ready for market. Until then, go slow."

"You might as well tell the light coming from a planet a billion light years away to cease, as to curb her modest wants."

Lola continued, "As a last resort take the male gold digger, turn him loose in Jennings' Gulch, and if he does not find the source of that placer gold I will give you a quarter, a nickel, and a dime."

"Agreed," replied Charles in desperation.

The gold diggers, the male one especially, were in a savage mood from hunger and want of exercise. In Lola's work shop was a sheet-iron, air-tight heater in which Lola put the gold digger with the admonition to his brother Charles not to let it escape, for it would run for the nearest deposit of undiscovered gold ore and if disturbed would fight to the finish. Charles promised to use due precaution. There was a full moon which shone so uncommonly bright that artificial illumination was almost unnecessary. Charles set forth for Jennings' Gulch at midnight with the air-tight heater, in which was the male gold digger, on his shoulders. All went well until he reached the dump of the Deer Horn mine. There a round stone turned his ankle, and the stove with the gold digger inside rolled down the dump and brought up in a chinkapin thicket. He hobbled along as fast as his turned ankle would permit, but several minutes elapsed before he reached the now empty stove; the gold digger was nowhere in sight, but further down stones were rolling, set going by a bear perhaps, as several of them lived in the Gulch. Then he descended to the granite flat where he had the forlorn hope of finding the escaped animal, but nowhere was the creature visible, and he thought that it might not have arrived there yet, so he turned back and paused in front of the deepest prospect hole, at the bottom of which something resembling a gnome was moving. He struck a match, the last one he possessed, and lit up the hole. There he saw a hairless tail one yard long belonging to some creature burrowing out of sight. A crunching of stones from beneath told him the gold digger was doing its best. He grasped the tail, braced himself, and pulled with every ounce

his great strength was capable of developing. When he was exhausted the gold digger came out of the hole, climbed up its tail, and attacked him. In a jiffy the bridge work in his upper jaw was clawed out, the gold devoured, and the teeth spewed in his face with an almost shotgun violence. The gold digger clawed at his right eyeball, which was only saved by the victim throwing up his right hand. On the third finger was a valuable gold seal ring given him by his sweetheart. He does not know just what happened afterwards, but he was found in a dazed condition near the scene of the attack by a lone prospector who led him home. But it was lucky for him that he located the seemingly worthless granite flat. The gold digger, which Lola recovered a day afterwards, had burrowed down to a chimney of gold ore where many quartz stringers came together. Charles Wheeler's face, disfigured for a short time, was repugnant to his sweetheart who bestowed her affections on a Los Angeles oil operator cruising in Shasta County for potential oil deposits.

Mr. Plum and I did not stay long in Jennings' Gulch. He returned to French Gulch that evening. I should have returned also but was anxious to meet old time friends of Eastman's Gulch. Among them was Mr. Robert Hamilton, formerly of the United States Geodetic Survey; Mr. Joseph Gifford, a Civil War veteran, a guard on the funeral train that bore the body of the martyr president, Abraham Lincoln, back to Springfield, Illinois; and the Slater Brothers' mine and milling men. Mr. Hamilton, I found, was dead. He had died a few days previous, and was buried at Lewiston in Trinity County. The cemetery overlooks Trinity River. The spirits of the departed must be lulled by the music of running water during low stage and awed at flood stage. Joseph Gifford, old and infirm, lived on a pension granted him by indulgent Uncle Sam for his service toward crushing the rebellion, although it was in its last throes when he enlisted. His arrasta was fallen in disuse, the water wheel wrecked by the previous winter's unprecedented fall of snow. The garden where he used to grow vegetables was choked with weeds and briars. A mountain gooseberry bush that bore large spiked berries was crowding out weeds and brambles. The cabin home of the Union's staunch supporter leaned perilously toward the creek that

babbled by. Entering the cabin, I expected to be greeted by the Joseph Gifford of olden times, but a bent old man, the ghost of his former self, hand over his eyes to protect his failing sight from the sunshine streaming through the open door, said in quivering tones:

"Sir, I am ready to go."

"Joe, old comrade," said I, grasping his hand, "ready to go where?"

"To the old soldiers' home at Yountville. Little did I think I would ever come to this. Forty years and more I toiled in the mines hoping fortune would favor me with miner's wages so I would at least be independent in my old age."

"I am not connected with the old soldiers' home. I am your former comrade. I suppose you remember the stranger who came in the gulch and located three mining claims under your nose. The most promising claim was known as Belly Ache."

"Ah," replied Mr. Gifford, "I thought you died of belly ache long ago, and Bob Hamilton was of the same opinion." He assumed a soldier-like attitude and saluted. We talked over old times until the middle of the afternoon, when two men riding in a buckboard buggy hitched their team at the Deer Horn quartz mill within sight, as the wagon road extended no further. An army officer and a private had come for Mr. Gifford. The simple belongings he possessed, the result of forty years' gathering in the mines, were bundled on the buggy behind the seat. Tears coursing down his cheeks, he saluted the hills which had grudgingly given him a bare existence, and grasping my hand he tried to bear up as he said, "So long. Good luck to you always."

Looking back he saluted his old cabin home, and his rugged frame shook with convulsive sobs. Arriving at Yountville, he was treated as becomes a hero, which gave him no satisfaction. The loyal soldier and rugged miner pined for the hills. Less than three months after he arrived at the old soldiers' home, while he was reclining in the shade he saluted the mountains to the west and dropped into an everlasting, dreamless sleep. If his wish was granted his spirit has returned to Eastman's Gulch, where during the spring flowers bloom brightest, birds sing sweetest, the air is pure, the water clear and cool; where summer is the most companionable of seasons, to doze the

heat of the day away beneath wide spreading branches of Douglas firs; where autumn's skies are hazy with smoke from forest fires, and with the breath of winter in the air; where winter's storm king rides roughshod over valley and mountain, and trees toss their branches and shudder as to their fate.

Slater Brothers had left Eastman's Gulch years before. Rumors came back that Ed, the younger, was at Napa insane asylum as the result of an ungovernable temper. Henry, the older one, with a saint's make-up, could not be located, and was probably dead. I was the only inhabitant of Eastman's Gulch and took up my abode in Mr. Gifford's cabin. The first creature to object to my intrusion was the house cat, a patriarch of felines and as ferocious as any wild cat. Decrepitude kept it off my back until it knew I was a friend but I could never lay my hand on it. A bluejay scolded me from the top of a fir tree across the creek. A pet squirrel scampered across the cabin roof, came down the fire-place chimney, and ate peanuts from my hand. There were two more pets, but I did not care for their friendship. A large mountain rattlesnake entered the cabin daily, when the weather was warm, to catch mice; the cat at its best was never as good a mouser. The other animal was the one of mephitic odor unlike any other in the animal kingdom. How it acquired this odor it could not tell even if given the power of speech. It did not resent the fact that I was not on speaking terms but confined its energy to robbing quail nests and catching rats and mice, at which it skunked all other animals. But when it came in the cabin with six kittens, their eyes hardly open, I was skunked, and moved to the Deer Horn quartz mill which had been fitted up for the accommodation of former employees. The tunnel I drove in the mountainside to tap Belly Ache ledge had caved in. The claim had been located several times by a different person. The most energetic among them put in a set of timbers which did not stand, not being braced to withstand the pressure of settling ground. The top of a timber protruded above the debris. A lower tunnel driven to drain the drifts was in good order, except that the first set of timbers was lagging. Inspecting the claim, I concluded it would justify more development work. And returning to French Gulch for a month's supply of provisions, I dropped a letter in the post-

office for Lola Wheeler, requesting him when he arrived at his airport to fly out to Eastman's Gulch and when directly over Deer Horn quartz mill to drop me a reply. In one week's time I had put the workings of Belly Ache mine in good condition. The small chute of pay ore was about dug out by those who had decided whether the mine was worth the recording of a notice of relocation, which was a dollar. Behind a six inch talc casing I found the true ledge, which contained considerable free gold. Judging by horn spoon tests the ore would mill about forty dollars per ton. It was no bonanza, but should the ledge hold out the same amount of gold, a living was assured. I mined about ten tons of ore which I intended to have crushed by Deer Horn mill. The morning the quartz was to be hauled to the mill a stranger arrived on the scene armed with a sawed-off shotgun, a .45 caliber automatic army pistol, a bowie knife in his laced boot top, a Marble hunting axe slung from his belt, and brass knuckles on his left hand. He confronted me as I came from the tunnel with the last wheelbarrow of ore. He dropped behind a tree trunk from which I had cut timbers and lagging, and poked the barrel of the sawed-off shotgun over the top. Himself invisible, his voice of malediction and hatred thundered, "Hands up! or I shall put more holes through your carcass than the wheelbarrows of ore you stole from my mine."

"The ore is all there," I replied, pointing to the pile on the dump, "I did not know the claim was located. I discovered it a quarter of a century ago."

"I do not have to tell anybody my business affairs; begone!"

With alacrity I obeyed, and said, putting on my coat, "I hope the mine will be generous toward you. It has ever been unkind to me. It gave me the belly ache and so it has to everybody who monkeyed with it."

Disgusted that a desperado owned the mine, I returned to the quartz mill and told the workman the run would not be made. I prepared an early dinner, intending to return to French Gulch, and go fishing up the East Fork of Clear Creek. Besides, I could examine certain places which indicated pockets. In the doorway I stood for a breath of fresh air, as the kitchen range gave off great heat. I heard somebody calling for help as though in mortal agony, and I stood listening

on the ore platform in front of the mill and presently the call was repeated, and louder. "Help, help!" it shrieked and moaned dolefully. It must be my would-be assassin calling. Should I leave him to his fate? Long ago a Sunday school teacher taught me to forgive and pray for my enemies, and no better ethics has been given us mortals, so I hurried back to the mining claim. Crumpled, hands fast to his stomach, lying in the dust beside the trail, was my enemy, all animosity gone. The sawed-off shotgun had rolled down the dump and landed in the streamlet that gurgled by, the automatic pistol was almost hidden in the dust wherein he wallowed. The bowie knife had cut through his laced boot top. The marble hunting axe, edge up, was under him, and had cut through his corduroy coat and woolen shirt, inflicting a serious wound in the small of his back.

"My God!" he shrieked. "Belly Ache mine is a hoodoo. And I have the worst belly ache imaginable. Give me a moment free from pain and you may have the cursed mine. Don't let me die here in the dust like a snake."

He yelled himself hoarse as I got the wheelbarrow and bundled him into it. I wheeled him down to the quartz mill, but there was little I could do to alleviate his suffering. His symptoms indicated acute appendicitis, so I hurried to Deadwood on foot, six miles distant, for Dr. Thompson, who examined the patient and said my supposition was correct. The appendix had burst and there was nothing else to do but give him a shot of morphine. He raved almost all night, alternately cursing me and asking my forgiveness. At sunrise his soul departed—whether it went west with the dawn or east in the glad sunshine, who knows? It may have been a coincidence, but all those who relocated my mining claim were affected with intestinal trouble. I have not escaped scot free myself, but I deem the evil spell is broken forever. At this writing the claim has been open to location for three years; anybody wanting a potential gold mine and belly ache gratis, should go to Eastman's Gulch.

From a pile of hand-sorted ore that showed considerable free gold I selected four hundred pounds and put it into panniers to show the French Gulcherites I had a mine whose owner could hobnob with the merchants. My pack horse

had wandered down the gulch to Mr. Anther Blakemore's alfalfa ranch. The Blakemore children rode her. They were children of the children I knew twenty-five years before. Mighty fine folks are the Blakemores. As Mr. Fredrick Franck would be at the Blakemore's next day to deliver a large supply of groceries, Mr. Blakemore took me home in his buckboard buggy, I rolled my blankets with the supplies on hand and the panniers full of gold ore, and returned with Mr. Blakemore, and gave the children my pack horse. Mr. Franck came on time, but it was quite dark when Mr. Franck and I entered French Gulch. From an inside coat pocket I took a package, and in a hoarse whisper I asked if there were any gold scales in town. He had scales small enough to weigh a few cents worth of gold dust. I shook my head in the negative and muttered I was afraid the scales would break under the weight of gold dust I had mortared out while testing the ore. Mr. Franck remarked if the scales collapsed he would use his father's, which weighed up to five hundred pounds. False rumors had preceded me that I had struck it rich in Eastman's Gulch.

"How is Tummy Ache?" inquired a fair one, Mr. George Simon's granddaughter, the belle of French Gulch.

"Splendid," I replied, puffed up with pride and with the interest she took in me.

"Old Belly Ache, how is Belly Ache mine?" asked Mort Foster.

"Sir," I replied, "I am not given over to pains in the abdominal regions, and the mine will out-produce Charles Wheeler's dinky hole in the ground."

Mr. Henry Franck weighed my gold dust as carefully as I hope my soul will be weighed on Judgment Day.

"Ninety-five cents worth, a little shy," said he with undue solemnity.

There were prolonged cheers for me and the Belly Ache mine.

"Gentlemen," said I, assuming a bold front that was a sorry side show. "The stunt I am going to pull off is worthy of a ten-ring big top."

I emptied a pannier of gold ore on the counter and danced before it as I held up specimen after specimen. "In every one

of them there is free gold seen without a magnifying glass."

"We all imagined you had pure gold instead of low grade ore," said a miner who had worked for the past two decades in the Washington mine. "I threw thousands of tons of ore over the dump richer than your stuff. We are disappointed. Here is something more like it," he continued, as he showed a chunk of quartz as large as a goose egg, and nearly as much gold. "Here is the genuine article." He showed a small nugget of gold from the Wheeler mine.

As I lifted the other pannier from the delivery wagon the faint droning of an airplane came from the south.

"Lola Wheeler is returning home," said Charles Joseph who had returned the day previous from a successful bear and deer hunt west of Weaverville.

My pannier of ore fell to the ground. No other mortal would gladden my sight more than Lola Wheeler. Far to the east, high above the mountains there shone an airplane's headlight like a star. The droning grew more audible, and the light became brighter than a star of the first magnitude. Circling over his place of nativity, Lola Wheeler shut off the power and glided down to his landing field. The street was clear of automobiles and horse drawn vehicles except Mr. Franck's delivery wagon. Lola taxied in front of Franck Brothers store building and stopped suddenly. Then he jumped out with youthful agility, and said, "Will somebody please carry this stuff into the store?" I would have volunteered but younger and more supple hands than mine lifted the two packages from the airplane and deposited them on the counter close to my low grade ore.

"Something the gold diggers found in the desert," remarked Lola, unconcerned.

"Gold," said several in unison.

Mr. Henry Franck got his father's scales and weighed Lola's packages.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds, avoirdupois weight at that," said Mr. Franck.

I slipped out the back door unobserved.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHIRT TAIL GULCH DIGGINGS

During the remainder of my stay in French Gulch I put up at the Wolf Hotel and occupied the best suite of rooms on the ground floor facing the street. At the west end was an alley much traveled by down and outs on their way to the kitchen, where the bland Chinese cook, Ahe Eye See, directed by the altruistic landlord, never turned away the hungry, including not only the human species but canines and felines. It is rumored that the landlord when he was a prospector had more than once known the pangs of hunger. He would be no full-fledged chaser after Mammon's yellow ignis fatuus had he not known want and privation.

Men of wealth and prominence had occupied this room while they stayed for business or pleasure. The last prominent occupant was William Craddock, nephew of Wart Hog Craddock, the owner of the Craddock Block in Redding. William came to get better acquainted with the open-hearted denizens whose vote he solicited when he ran for supervisor for the northwest precinct of Shasta County. His only opponent was Willie Franck, native of French Gulch, never away from home over night except once when an intoxicated stage driver had tried to cut "cross lots" down the mountainside with the six horse stage, and brought up at the bottom of a dry wash. At the polls Mr. Franck's vote was solid except one which Mr. Craddock cast for himself. Another illustrious occupant was Captain White Black Powder Bigguns, an old time friend of General John J. Pershing. It was the captain's obsession to recite how he and the general once fought, not a foreign or domestic foe treading on Uncle Sam's toes, but between themselves during a day at school. The bone of contention was as to who had given Rosie Lee Lunken the largest piece of red apple. The noted general was proclaimed victor, and rose from one degree to another until he mounted the highest rung in Uncle Sam's

military ladder. Captain Biggins remained in French Gulch two weeks trying in vain to obtain possession of one Buck Clark, private, who had escaped from Alcatraz or Pelican Island military prison. Buck was more shy than a buck deer being shot and missed by more than a score of French Gulch nimrods. Buck, from his chaparral and manzanilla fortified stronghold in sight of Main street, openly defied the valourous Captain, who had not yet acquired the art of belly-crawling through an almost impenetrable jungle. Any French Gulcher has a blue racer snake beat at crawling through chaparral and manzanilla thickets. It is almost superfluous to state that Captain Biggins returned to his post without his prisoner. A generous reward was posted for Buck's capture, but he remained on the blind side of the military and civil authority until the World War broke out. Then he enlisted for overseas service. His mother was not a gold star mother but many of the enemy mothers had gold stars in their crowns mourning the loss of sons.

I turned on an electric reading lamp, a recent innovation and a great improvement over the old smoky kerosene oil lamp, and tried to get interested in the latest issue of *The Searchlight*, a daily newspaper published in Redding. On the front page was a splendid wood cut of Charles Wheeler's mug down to the collar bone. Two full columns were taken up by his wonderful gold discovery in Jennings' Gulch. Not a word was there about the humble gold digger that had made the discovery. As to a successful military chieftain, to Mr. Wheeler was ascribed all the honor and glory. In despicable terms the newspaper commented on my unsuccessful mining operations in Eastman's Gulch, and ended with: "He did not put French Gulch on the map as promised." I laid the newspaper aside and listened to the merry crowd gathered in Franck Brothers' store rejoicing that prosperity would return again through Charles Wheeler's gold discovery. Many years previous the same *éclat* would have been accorded to me had I dug a prospect hole one yard deeper, and it would not have taken an hour longer as the decomposed granite yielded without a blow from the pick. Still, over joy might have resulted in my sudden demise, and others might have dug out the gold,

squandered it, and deprived the present generation of witnessing a genuine gold rush.

In the lobby footsteps sounded, like an undertaker's peculiar tread I was certain, for I had been an undertaker's helper in horse-drawn days long before a gasoline-propelled hearse set the pace which Dobbin could not match on a gallop. The knock on the door was similar to an absent-minded college professor's.

"Come in," I moaned, lifting my chin from my breast bone.

Cautiously the door opened and revealed a man six feet four inches tall in his stocking feet.

"Have a seat, Mr. Whiteplague Moribund," said I, as if in the presence of death. "Really, I am disappointed for the sake of my heirs and assigns that you called on me this evening. Soon I would have shrunk to fit an undersize or child's coffin, cheaper than an adult's. How is business at the T. B. Funeral Home? Are your services absolutely silent?"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the caller, open mouthed, exposing much gold dental work. "Don't you know me, Lola Wheeler?"

The funeral-like mists vanished away, I rushed to the door, grasped Lola's hand, and shook it with such vigor that he exclaimed "Ouch!"

On the street I would have passed him as a stranger. Gone were those boyish, carefree ways. Here was a man of serious mien, the result of much hard study and experimenting with mechanical devices pertaining to aviation. A close cropped sandy mustache took the place of a few sickly hairs that once seemed to spring from barren soil. On the right side of the upper jaw was a permanent bridge work, which had been temporary when I saw him last. Colored glasses helped his impaired eyesight, once so strong he could see through a stone wall which concealed mare's nests and other hocus-pocus from those of ordinary vision. The resonant voice was unchanged. I remarked he looked familiar. He replied I was the same old stick without knot or crook. Each knew he lied a white lie that left no bad taste in the mouth as a black lie does. He radiated optimism, and maybe I glowed with pessimism as I told him of my disappointment at not putting French Gulch on the map.

"Dear old pard," said he, taking a rocker on the opposite

side of the table, "perhaps *we* can do it. Gold is no longer the talisman of financial independence. Were everybody paid living wages who have prospected and mined for gold since the California gold rush there would not be gold enough in the world to go one fourth the way around. Gold as our monetary standard has been superseded by oil, as the financial world must recognize soon. Iron can also be declared as the basis of our monetary standard, and also copper, brass, pewter, zinc, lead, and barb wire, for we are a self-sustaining nation, and we own nearly one half of the world's gold. In other words, of the \$10,526,000,000 we own \$4,379,000,000. Were it not for oil the wheels of industry would slow down and almost cease to revolve except from the propulsion given by steam and water power. Recently I discovered the source, or rather two sources, of energy by which I hope to put French Gulch on the map."

We talked of various happenings that had occurred during the two decades and a half since we met last. Past midnight Lola left me, and my mind was at rest. No imaginary calamity dogged my footsteps. It was late in the morning when the affable clerk roused me, and the Chinese cook complained that my breakfast was over warm in the warming closet, while the chambermaid was hindered with her work. Lola was taking off from the Wheeler airport. The airplane had left the ground when he saw me. I motioned for him to go ahead and he gave the birdman's salute. Soon he was out of sight among strato-cumulus clouds which portended a rain soon, much needed as the dust was almost intolerable. The French Gulch-Weaver-ville motor bus was leaving with three mining men enroute to Weaverville to make close examination of old, partly worked out, hydraulic gravel beds, mined with more or less success since the invention of the hydraulic giant. Under modern methods of hydraulic mining it was decided the gravel beds would pay. In certain places gravel with several hundred dollars worth of gold dust to the pan, planted by an expert mine "salter," was found. In a widow's potato patch one hill yielded six hundred dollars in gold nuggets and a peck of spuds. It was a lucky potato hill, for the owner got a young husband, but he left for other diggings when the patch yielded spuds only. More than one hundred thousand dollars were

spent in modernizing the equipment to handle the gravel beds, which yielded no returns on the investment.

While Lola was on his morning spin I watched several men sacking black sand, rich in platinum, taken from the bed of Washington Creek near the highway crossing. The source of the platinum was somewhere on the side of Mt. Washington, hidden from view. Mr. Collinswood came for his morning's mail and also to have a gallon wicker-covered demijohn filled with gasoline for Lola's assay furnace; gasoline was used instead of charcoal. I did not converse with him, other than a cheery good morning. He returned home with his mail, Lola's gasoline, and several packages of groceries. The latter articles were part of the burden man bears on shoulders raw from the chafing of the connubial yoke. After an hour in the air Lola was back again; he did not put up his airplane, but left it at the upper end of the field preparatory for another flight. He had been over to the old Uncle Sam mine. He suggested that we take a holiday and go fishing up the East Fork of Clear Creek. On the mountain top above Last Chance mine he had a small landing field, on which not much work was ever done. Nature intended it for a landing field, swept it clean of stones, and discouraged trees and brush from growing there. The landing field was almost as far away from good fishing holes as French Gulch, but Lola must have his airplane to ride in like a modern business man going to his counting house or store in an automobile a few blocks distant. To the left of the pilot's seat sat a stylish young lady with a heavenly smile.

"We are pals," said Lola, pointing to the female figure.

"Your niece or cousin, I suppose."

"No; she sprang full grown from my head as did Minerva from Jupiter's."

"Ah, I see, but didn't I understand you to say you are childless? Permit me to say you showed good judgment in adopting a daughter."

"She wears my wife's old clothes and never complains that they are not up to the last minute's style. She is no society fiend, does not want the whole bridge at a bridge party, and she is her own natural self through rain and shine. Dolled up Sunday, meanly garbed on wash day, with as little clothes

on as possible in the kitchen on Saturday, it's all the same to her. She is of more than mortal birth."

"Lola, I am afraid she may object to my presence. Indigestion has imparted to my breath an unpleasant odor not carried in stock by any perfumery dealer."

"Here, take a chew. This is what I use when my breath goes bad. Halitosis, I think, is the high falutin' name for unsavory breath."

I declined the thick plug and asked him to take a chew in my stead.

"Pile in, she will keep mum. A few days ago I took a Redding butcher to Mort Foster's slaughterhouse, and she never sniffed. If mephitic odors amounted to anything that butcher was a traveling slaughterhouse."

Lifting my hat, said I, "Good morning, miss," which convulsed Lola with laughter. He shut off the motor and leaned against the joy stick. "Can't you see she is a dummy, a robot dressed in my wife's last year's duds?"

Peeved at my own stupidity, I entered the cabin, and sat down behind Lola and the robot. Lola retained possession of the controls until the desired altitude was reached; then he put the joy stick in the robot's hand, took a cigarette from his shirt pocket, and smoked at leisure. The robot kept the airplane more steady than an experienced pilot. There was no gas tank to blow us to Kingdom Come, if anything went wrong. The mechanism that drove the propeller resembled a small electric motor, with no wires visible. The speed did not diminish encountering a strong head wind, but speed was augmented by a tail wind, which soon supplanted the head wind. At the rate of one hundred miles an hour we flew westerly, and soon snow-clad Mt. Shasta lay beneath. The robot's hand moved to arrest the descent, for the air was pockety.

"See that?" Lola asked, referring to the robot's perfect control. "Air pockets are more frequent here than near sea level. I am using a new power to propel my airplane when beyond the earth's gravitational pull. During our school days it was known as the attraction of gravitation. The power is enormous and so cheap that steam and hydro-electric power plants ere long will be scrapped. The power is capable of heating every house, lighting up the whole world, doing the world's cooking

and baking. It could be used as an engine of destruction to consume the world by fire."

The airplane circled back, and at the end of two hours we landed at Last Chance airport. Fishing tackles fished from various sources, pick, shovel and gold pan over our shoulders, and a bounteous lunch in hand, we went down the mountain-side and followed a small tributary to the East Fork. The stream had gone dry except for a few shallow holes of stagnant water in which were many dead and dying trout. It was the supposition that the stream was rich in placer gold, but it was never thoroughly prospected as a large volume of rapid, flowing water invariably prevented. Several pans of gravel taken from bed rock were tested. Small wages might be made by ground sluicing. Where the stream emptied into the East Fork was the deserted cabin home of the late Walter Whitney, who chose to live out his last days solitary and alone. He had an eye for the beautiful, an ear attuned to melody—a true lover of Nature was he. He had moved there when his neighbors living at the mouth of East Fork cut down the gigantic fir trees and made them into cord wood to run the Gladstone mine quartz mill. He left a comfortable home, a dutiful wife, and obedient children for a spot of great natural beauty. He was buried on a knoll overlooking his cabin home.

One mile below the Whitney cabin was a deep hole in the creek which abounded with brook trout. I got the first bite and jerked the gills from a small trout. Getting ready for another cast, I hooked myself, and Lola cut out the fish hook. For many days afterwards when sitting down I assumed a lop-sided posture. We followed down the creek, hoping to find a hole in which trout had declared hunger strikes off, and came on a fishing party composed mostly of Smiths from Murders Gulch, whose grandfather discovered Shirt Tail Gulch placer diggings in the late fifties. Shirt Tail Gulch creek heads on the west slope of Boulder mountain and empties the East Fork of Clear Creek at Blakemore's Ranch. It was a record gold producer and yielded more gold than any other gulch in the French Gulch mining district. Nobody has yet found the source of the gold supposed to come from surface pockets eroded away entirely. Old Mr. Smith was as loquacious as ever. Buttonholing me, said he, "Stranger, did

you ever hear how Dad and I discovered the Shirt Tail Gulch diggings?"

I informed him I had not, but had heard so many conflicting stories that I doubted them all.

"Grandpap," admonished Maud Smith, an eighteen year old, ultra-flapper flapper, "you have told that shirt tail story so many times the shirt must have had a hundred tails. It would keep you mighty busy confining them all in your trousers."

"A child you are, and should be seen only by cataract eyes and heard through an ear trumpet," retorted Granddad Smith, and went on in drooling tones as follows: "On a cold morning in January in the year of our Lord 1858, we, that is I and Dad, set out to discover new diggings. Our old diggings on Clear Creek above French Gulch had petered out, and so had our credit. We could not lift a pound of bacon without the gold dust to plank down on the spot. It was a case of scratching gravel or die of starvation, so we went up a nameless gulch shunned by all other gold diggers, for chaparral and manzanilla were so infernally thick that a garter snake could hardly wiggle through them. I carried a pick, shovel, and pan, but Dad had nothing but his pot belly to occupy his attention. While negotiating the thickets Dad, in the lead, bent a chaparral bush forward and released it so that it flew back and yanked the shirt tail out of my paints. To thrust it back where it belonged I let the pick fall point down. It just missed my cowhide boot and struck in a metallic substance almost as soft as lead. I thought it was lead until I saw the pick point was yellow with gold. Then I pocketed the nugget, which was about as large as a pint measure, as I wanted to give Dad a big surprise and have a placer mine of my own. Dad grumbled at my slowness.

"'Dad,' said I, 'be hanged if I go a step further toting these tools, while you tote nothing, if your pot belly is not considered so much dead weight. Let us dig right here, for the bush that pulled my shirt tail out tells me that this is the spot to strike it rich.'

"Dad replied exceedingly wroth, because I made disparaging remarks concerning his pot belly. 'The same bush tells

me to give you the soundest flogging you ever had for making fun of your Dad.'

"He seized me by the shirt collar and spun me around until I got so dizzy that I keeled over. He cut the shirt-tail-pulling-out bush but when he was ready to lam me I scrambled to my feet and wailed, 'Dad, please don't beat me up. I will give you this to call it square,' showing my gold nugget. Dad's eyes could spot gold quicker than any other man's in California. He could figure out the exact amount of gold wasted on a gold plated brass monkey. The bush fell from his hand. He embraced me, the hug was genuine, and said he, 'My noble boy, where did you find that nugget?'

"He pranced around me almost beside himself with joy. He was sure now his pot belly would be filled with bacon and beans.

"'I found it under the leaves of the bush you intended to beat me up with, the bush that pulled my shirt tail out. It was right there, pointing to a small hole in the leaves. Dad, how does it strike you that we name the diggings Shirt Tail and the gulch shall bear the same name?'

"'All O. K.' replied Dad, patting his stomach, which sounded hollow.

"Dad made his first location, which was supposed to be the best, as the gulch was more level there than higher up. I made a location above Dad's which more than took in all of the auriferous ground. The upper part was barren completely and the lower part as rich as any logger's underclothes are vermin-infested. Lousy with gold does not express the richness of the lower part of my diggings. It was a miniature Klondike on American soil. The weather was cold and the water colder when Dad and I began mining in Shirt Tail Gulch. It was before the days of rubber boots. Cowhide boots, tallowed daily, were the best we had to work in water. They shed water fairly well. I never failed to tallow mine. Once Dad sort of got careless or he was too dog-gone stingy with his tallow, that cost one dollar a pound. Often during the night I woke up and said I, 'Dad, did you tallow your boots?' Dad took a severe cold from wet feet, and his lungs must have burst because he bled from the mouth. A doctor patched him up, but warned him never to work in water again unless he tal-

lowed his boots daily. Next Dad got mumps. He resembled a bovine with double lump-jaw. I laughed outright at his grotesque appearance, but he said if I did not like his looks I might lump it; he must have mumped it. When he worked again he tallowed his boots three times daily and himself all over bi-weekly. Before working his claim out he fell in the fireplace and caught on fire. I found him sitting in his easy chair, and a flame like that of a tallow candle burned on the top of his head where several straggling hairs were the wick. Of course he was dead. I never realized what Dad meant to me until he was gone to live evermore in that golden city where everybody has plenty of gold and no cowhide boots to tallow. There may be a white gulch up yonder but no Shirt Tail Gulch."

Grandad Smith was a good companion and I never tired of his loquacity. When the sun was low over Last Chance mountain Lola and I parted company with the Smiths. Miss Maud gave me her hand, as she said "So long." I stammered that I liked her for her Grandad's sake. I asked the Lord to bless all the Smiths, no matter what race or where they lived. The sun was about to set when we reached the airplane.

"My guardian angel," said Lola to the robot, "what say you we tarry a little while longer to take a peep at Mercury?"

From the cabin Lola got a home-made telescope. The barrel was made from a long leg rubberboot top; he himself ground the lens. He mounted the instrument on a surveyor's tripod and pointed it at a bright star close to where the sun went down. He began star gazing while I remained beside the airplane. The inanimate robot could not talk, prattle nonsense if nothing more. It was an ingenious mechanism, but so is an alarm clock; in the morning just when wily old Somnus makes us most dependent on him and fain would turn us over to the stern realities of every day life. While Lola gazed at the star through his crude telescope I recalled olden times when I had attended public school and paid a bagatelle stipend extra for lessons in astronomy taught by Charles W. Cliff, a young genius aged twenty-seven years but of greater erudition than the average college professor twice his age. His master mind was divorced from his frail body before two score years rolled by.

Mercury is nearest the sun of any planet of the solar system. Its diameter is 2270 miles, its mass $1/46$ of the earth's, and its density .056, which indicates a gaseous state. Its periodical time is 88 days. Like the moon it always exposes the same side to the sun. About $3/8$ of the planet's surface is always illumined. Owing to its close proximity to the sun, 35,000,000 miles (about two thirds nearer the sun than the earth) it is too hot to support life as we know life on the earth.

When Mercury disappeared from view in less than two hours, Lola folded his telescope and returned to the airplane. In the meantime I tried to read star lore by a flashlight.

"Anything new?" I asked.

"I tried to discover some tangible evidence on which to base the assumption that Mercury and all other planets of the solar system are inhabited by intelligent beings. Indeed it would make us too chesty with pride and aggrandize our importance if the earth, a million times smaller than the sun, is the only planet on which the Creative Force called forth a superior form of life. Some wisecracks are presumptuous enough to affirm that we are creatures of circumstance, and came on earth by accident when certain elements combined to form protoplasm which kept on evolving until man was the result. Far away in space is the planet Betelgeuse, a million times larger than the sun, which some telescope peepers say just loafs through space spying out an unlucky planet to collide with and create a great celestial fireworks. What I do believe is that man before long will communicate with the inhabitants of one or more planets of our solar system; for instance, Venus or Mars. The gravitational motor that propels this airplane will take me up as far as gravitational force exists some hundreds of miles. Then I shall use another form of energy to prevent being drawn to the moon. I have enough of the new element for an experimental trip, and I insist that you go along with me. You must have ample protection against the awful cold that prevails in the upper regions and against the rarefied atmosphere, or rather, no atmosphere at all. I have a large water olla that I found in the back room of an abandoned Bodie saloon kept by one Bodie Pete, who is alleged when he shot a man to have put the victim's body in a water olla and

pickled it in Rattlesnake Brand whiskey, which he later dispensed to his credit customers."

"Really, Lola, I cannot see a valid reason why you should go cruising about among the stars. Star gazing must have touched you in the head. My time is limited. Before now I should have returned home to Poverty Flop plantation, Mississippi. Madam and the children wonder what has become of the old man. I came to French Gulch to visit you briefly, and with your assistance shall try to find the Indian gold mine in the Salmon River country up in Siskiyou County, and possibly we may search for the Blue Bucket placer mine in Western Oregon. Those lost mines are immaterial to you as you have a rich placer mine in the desert, several good quartz mines in Summit Gulch, and an inexhaustible supply of radium ore somewhere in the Mojave desert. You are wealthy already. It is true, I own a large Mississippi plantation infested by cotton boll weevils, and am tormented by niggers too dishonest to make an honest living but are honest and trustworthy when they raid an empty smokehouse and aver they stole nothing."

I entered the airplane thankful to Lola for setting forth so many new ideas which verified my assumption that some day in the near future he would put French Gulch on the map. Returning to Wheeler airport, the atmosphere was hazy from fires on the mountainside east of town. The robot was at the controls, and we quite forgot that we were in an airplane, but talked over plans for a prospecting trip across Trinity River. Suddenly there came a crushing of wood and snapping of metal. The airplane would have gone into a nose dive had not the robot righted it. A hasty inspection showed the landing gear was torn off by contact with the American Mine hoisting works. In the cabin were two empty ten-gallon water kegs. Through the head of each Lola bored an inch hole and fitted in a leg of the surveyor's tripod. He lashed them in place, while I expected to be wrecked and probably killed. Then he took possession of the controls, shut off the power, and with the smoothness of an owl pouncing down on a hen we landed and rolled to the hangar door.

"Thank you, my dear," said Lola to the robot.

The affable postmistress, H. Laury Hubbard, was turning

the key in the outside door as I reached the postoffice building. She unlocked the door and gave me my mail, which included several duns and a letter mailed at Bakersfield, California, by Frank Moore. There was no letter from Scooba, Mississippi. I cast the duns in Clear Creek, folded Mr. Moore's letter in the right breast pocket of an army style overshirt, and buttoned the flap for fear I might lose it. I used precaution after losing several duns from people I passed daily on the street. I deem it no greater harm to ask a man who owes me to square his account pronto than ask him for his life. After supper several old time friends called on me. Among them was Mr. Pete Rossi, an Italian with ultra-modern American ways, yet un-American in one respect. He was the father of eight bright children. Before marriage he was a rabid anti-storkologist. The sight of a child made him nervous. Infantile squalls were worse than a peck of purgatorial colds in his head. He lived in San Francisco and worked in the Bank of Italy, and owned a large block of stock in that billion dollar institution. Peter had come to French Gulch for an outing. In other years he worked in the Brunswick mine owned by his uncle, Mr. Frank Rossi. It is said to be true in every instance that he who has lived in French Gulch finds his fondest desire is to return again. The little mountain town is my Mecca. One more pilgrimage and I can wear the scallop shell and dance my sarabande.

Peter was the same old boy. Girls were still his theme, but he was excusable for the girls were his own. He compared his girls to San Jose peaches, Santa Rosa roses, Ventura beans, Petaluma fryers, Tulsa jack rabbits, Los Angeles and Los Gatos felines.

I regretted very much that I was unable to visit him in his San Francisco home. Past midnight he left me to put up at the Fox Hotel. In the morning he took the motor bus for Redding. I should have left with him, and would have been spared many harrowing experiences, but it was fore-ordained I should tarry a while longer and add a few more chapters to this autobiography. With Peter Rossi uppermost in my mind, I forgot to read Frank Moore's letter. Sitting in a comfortable rocker, I dropped off to sleep and was waked by a man resembling Mr. Moore. The resemblance was so similar I

thought he must have a double or twin brother.

"What is wanted?" I asked, more asleep than awake, and rubbing my eyes.

"Did you get my letter?" he asked.

"I received a letter in Mr. Moore's handwriting. How does it concern you?"

"I am Frank Moore."

"I shall never believe it until you give me a certain sign. If you are he, drop your upper teeth."

The teeth dropped.

"I'll be d—d," I stammered. "What has brought you here?"

"Mary; or rather, her Indian dog of a husband. The letter gives full details. I am too frustrated for words other than saying to follow the instructions laid down in the letter, for which I will reward you handsomely."

"I want no other reward than your continued friendship."

Silently he clasped my hand, and went out in the early morning darkness. The exhaust from an airplane engine resounded among the hills. The noise was familiar; it was Junior Moore's airplane. Could it be that Mr. Moore had won a seat in Congress and chose me as his secretary? Or, maybe his pet measure of moving Napa Insane Asylum to the heart of the Mojave Desert had become a law, and he had selected me as superintendent. In the rocking chair I dropped off to sleep again, and this time my nap was dreamless. With the coming of day I waked, refreshed and fit for any arduous task. An hour intervened before breakfast, so I went for a stroll. At the lower end of the Lawton Brothers' abandoned placer mine I met a young Indian on pony back. He was chafed and very sore from riding. A blanket over his face left only one eye visible, while stuck in a crownless felt hat was a buzzard's tail-feather. He passed by me, stopped his pony, and turned round. In guttural tones he muttered, "How do, me want you heap."

"Good Brother of Buzzards, anything I can do for you?"

"Heap; me Pejudi, my white Mahala heap sick. She want you to come quick. Her father bad medicine."

"I shall see Lola Wheeler, maybe he will take us in his airplane. There will be room for you, Pejudi, are you afraid?"

"No! I go," said he, dismounting and stretching his legs.

I hurried to the Wheeler airport where Lola was tinkering with the propellor. In an hour we took off for Bakersfield.

CHAPTER IX.

A PRINCESS BORN TO THE HOUSE OF
PEJUDI HOPKINS

Mr. Frank Moore's letter was as follows:

"Bakersfield, California,
September 30, 1926.

Dear Old Pard:—

Can you induce Lola Wheeler to bring his gold diggers here by airplane? Mary's Indian dog husband has waked up to the fact that a piece of calico, whether a white woman or a squaw, cannot live on desert air and mountain scenery. I really believe there is hope of redemption. He has not stolen a cayuse, steer, sheep, goat, swine, or jackass for several months. He has ambition enough to search for the panniers of gold nuggets that Tom Scott lost miring down in the Malthas pool, but he cannot find them. A mighty flood swept down the gulch soon after Mr. Scott's tragic death. Scott's missing foot and leg severed at the knee were found not long ago by a Tar Heel rancher in the valley miles away. In all probability the gold is buried under the debris not far from the Malthas deposit. Mary would come home on a visit were she not so devilish poor. I would bury a thousand silver dollars at a certain place in the foothills and put the yellow dog wise, but he would mistrust it was my way of helping him. Our friendship, or rather antipathy, for each other is mutual. A white man prays for and forgives his enemy but an Indian never. When you receive this letter reply by long distance telephone at my expense. If I receive no message within twenty-four hours after posting the letter I shall come by airplane.

Sincerely, your friend,
FRANK MOORE."

I read the letter aloud to Lola Wheeler, who said it came just in time. He would have fed the gold diggers several pounds of gold dust and made them as lethargic as a bo

constrictor swallowing a kangaroo. Lola had intended to go to Bodie, more than half way to Bakersfield, for a water olla. He decided that he and I would explore the upper air and if possible attain to the height of a hundred miles. A hole was cut in an empty oil drum to admit the gold diggers. They were delivered at Wheeler's airport in a wheelbarrow pushed by William Brown, a lifelong friend of the Wheelers. Lola put on his flying togs, and I had comfortable clothes for high altitude. Pejudi was offered a heavy overcoat but he chose three thick, one fourth wool, English army blankets. To separate an Indian from his blankets is as difficult as to make the devil cease committing sin. A great gathering of home folks was at the airport to see us off. Lola was the cynosure of all eyes, the gold diggers came next, then the Indian. Interest in me died stillborn. The airplane loaded to capacity rose slowly and just cleared the stone wall at the lower end of the field. A wing brushed the cables of the Gladstone mine's transmission power line, and, when over Three Mile house we were at a safe altitude, Lola turned over the control to the robot and tried to engage the Indian in friendly conversation, but his stoicism was brass bound. A guttural grunt now and then was the only evidence that he lived. Blanketed from head to foot, he squatted on his heels behind the robot.

Suddenly clouds obscured the sky. A vivid flash of lightning and a heavy roll of thunder told us a storm was on, a rare occurrence at this season of the year. The storm from the northwest facilitated our flight as we were going southeast. After six hours of uneventful flying we landed at Junior's airport. The Indian threw aside his blanket and mounted a peddler's horse at the hitching post. The owner objected, but Mr. Moore with a handful of gold coin said, "I will pay you double value for the horse, wagon, and contents, to rid the yellow dog of my sight." The peddler received his pay and cut the traces. Pejudi on his sorry mount galloped toward the foothills at a speed of which the former owner thought the beast incapable.

On the front lawn Junior trundled his quadruplets in a made-to-order baby carriage. They were husky, and when one squealed the others joined the refrain as if all the unhap-
tized infants in perdition were crying for their neglectful

parents. The mother was somewhere about the premises rehearsing how to be a perfect scold. Junior was enslaved to her every whim and caprice. He should have imbibed a few of the manly qualities of his redskin brother-in-law. Mother Moore (Gentle Nellie) was perturbed, her cheeks tear stained, her eyes red from weeping. She called me to her presence, and said, "For Mary's sake, help her husband, who thinks the world of you. Encourage him in every way you can. Mr. Moore does everything in his power to bring their grist to the divorce mill. Son-in-law has a few good points and—"

"The devil has many," I interrupted, hoping the crack would waft the ominous clouds of sorrow from her mental sky, but it went counterclockwise and augmented her sorrow.

"You are just like all other men," she blurted.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Moore," said I, taking her hand. "Really it was not a censure but a jolly tonic that I meant my heartless remark for. All the while I thought you were free from those annoyances that beset us from the cradle to the grave. In me you have a real friend and your copper-hued son-in-law has a piano-wire-wound support in me to lean against."

"Thank you ever so much," said she, going to Junior's assistance, as he had tripped over the lawn hose and spilled the quadruplets. In unison they squalled from fright at being turned topsyturvy. In the carriage again they were none the worse for the mishap, and each tried to swallow a big toe or thumb. The mother came from the house and gave Junior a toe-and-thumb curtain-lecture, to which Lola listened convulsed with laughter. He was interested because it was something new, and he never hankered for the old. His mirth ended when Parnassus Plant Phane, more familiarly known as Hay Stack Needles, arrived. Searching for needles in a haystack lay next to his heart, and had overcome the lure of prospecting for gold. Haystack Needles was past middle age, elderly but not old, and resented it when classed with old folks. He was under size, square built, and as straight as a breech-loading shotgun barrel up to his neck of crook-neck squash shape, which brought his chin down on his breast bone. It seemed as though his head would topple from his shoulders. He had ferret eyes that saw everything, and a quizzical face. When out prospecting, no pebble was too small

to demand his attention. Going over the terrene once he could tell the different formation of rocks years afterwards, but what grew from the ground: trees, bushes, flowers, and grass, he never noticed. He had a smattering of geology which he tried to show to best advantage to a stranger. Toward friends he was close-mouthed for he knew his limitations. He accosted Lola Wheeler by saying, "Stranger, I reckon you have brought to these diggings two strange critters that knock the socks off all other Bakersfield prospectors except myself."

Replied Lola, "I have a pair of gold diggers, created for digging gold, like a monkey to do monkey shines. Every animated creature has its place in nature except man, who steps in where the devil will not venture and angels shun."

"I am here on a business proposition. If your varmints are worth a whoopee in Hades there's money in it for you and I. This is the proposition: On my premises known as Buck McGeeheehaw ranch a fortune is buried, consisting of gold coin and bullion salted down by the former owner, an alleged train robber. Since I abandoned the search for the White Mule mine twenty years ago, I have dug over hundreds of acres hoping to uncover the buried treasure with no other result than finding a perforated half-cent copper piece. I am willing to divide fifty-fifty providing you begin at once."

"I have other pressing engagements; will see you later."

"Now, or never more," he croaked in raven tones.

"Mr. Wheeler," said Mr. Moore, trembling with excitement, "my wife has had a fit—more than a duck fit. I just phoned to Professor Gall, a nerve specialist, and it is up to him how soon we can go."

In an imperial limousine chauffeured by a gigantic negro several shades darker than the darkest night in Hades, the professor arrived with Jonah's whale and Jumbo's gall so galled that he was a walking gall bladder. Viewing the patient lying on the living room divan, in the form of a letter S he said, "Madam, you need mental instead of physical treatment. It takes gall—often no end of it to rise superior to the exigencies of every day life."

"Daughter, Mary," moaned the patient.

"Nothing's the matter with her. She had the gall to wed the man of her choice and must keep her gall bladder fully

charged. When the gall descends to zero, then it is time for you to flop on the divan. What if your daughter Mary was in the predicament of my daughter Peggy Sue who wed a heathen Hindu rajah with a score of wives already to his credit. Gall keeps me from assuming the shape of a capital letter O with the space in the middle taken up by my five gallon demijohn. No, madam, my mouth waters not for the contents of that demijohn for I am full of gall."

"Professor, I feel better already," said Mrs. Moore, rising and looking sheepish for giving away to her emotions.

"One hundred dollars, madam, please. If that mental treatment was not worth the reasonable amount I ask I will subsist on gall bladders the remainder of my days."

And the professor, with purse full of gold coin, smiled benignly as the blackskin chauffeur blew his horn to pass an over-loaded Ford touring car of common people.

Mr. Moore, no longer shaky, considered it prudent to wait until the morrow, and get an early start, which Lola was just going to suggest, for the gold diggers must be given considerable time to find the gold filled panniers of unfortunate Tom Scott. Haystack Needles was overjoyed that circumstances were in his favor. He and Lola could take off at once by airplane, and the gold diggers would find the buried treasure if it were not a hoax. I had almost decided to stay with the Moores, write to the home folks, and add another chapter to this autobiography, but Lola insisted I should go. He would give me his part of the treasure. The Lord knows my financial condition was as taut as the bowstring that sped the fatal arrow to Achilles' heel, but I pretended to be unconcerned.

Said Lola, "Not only will you receive financial benefit but you may obtain valuable pointers on locating buried treasures."

So I decided to go, and sat on the steel oil drum containing the gold diggers. Haystack Needles' bent head straightened until his neck bone snapped and his ferret eyes were large with terror. It was his first airplane ride, and he said, "Let me out. I have never been ten feet off the ground; let me out, I say! If we fall will we be fatally injured?" he asked Lola, clinging to him in mortal terror.

"Let go me or I shall pitch you out head first," said Lola determinedly.

It was the first time I had known him to be so positive, as he replied, "If you fall we will fall together. Does that console you?"

"Much! If Lucifer had had company when he fell he would not have landed in the bottomless pit, for some coward with merits to his credit would have saved him."

"Just keep still, you are in no danger," admonished Lola. He brought the airplane up to five thousand feet altitude and gave the robot control. Over Bakersfield we circled several times and the inhabitants rubber-necked at us; they were adepts at shaking with chills and fever. After an hour in the air we landed on the McGeeheehaw ranch in a wheat-stubble field lying fallow that year, about forty rods from the dwelling house. At the west end under a stretched wagon cover was where Haystack Needles lived. At the other end was Shoat Swinegrunter's abode in an automobile tourist's tent. They were partners in several unpromising mining claims, and had been partners for two generations. Now they were no worse off financially, if much older than when they had begun. Their prospecting trips were outings. They lived in the open and tramped over the hills. When Mr. McGeeheehaw settled on his ranch, land was of little value. Bakersfield, then a hamlet, was on the map as the worst malaria hole along the course of the Southern Pacific Railroad. When the malaria was conquered Bakersfield began to grow and the surrounding land was occupied by sturdy ranchers of the McGeeheehaw type who raised wheat with success. The erstwhile oil boom made many of them wealthy, not including Mr. McGeeheehaw, who was known to have buried the money derived from growing wheat.

The gold diggers were turned loose. Lola led the male by a strong chain fastened to a leather collar about its neck. In an angry mood it cried "M-O-N-E-Y." The female followed after. As it lagged behind I was about to grasp its tail and drag it along, but Charles Wheeler's scarred face loomed before me and I deemed it not worth while to lay my hands on the vicious creature. I let Haystack Needles act as chaperone, much to his credit. Arrived at the haystack the male gold digger sniffed the ground on the east side and finding no gold-scented odor ran to the west side. Here it uttered a sharp cry

of delight and began burrowing in the ground, close to a stake; there were three stakes in a row, the dividing line between the holdings of Haystack Needles and Shoat Swinegrunter. Haystack Needles was elated that the gold digger remained within the bounds of his property, and Swinegrunter wroth that it did not begin digging on his side of the stakes. He grasped the female's tail and dragged it along to make it dig. Instead, it dug at his shins, and soon his forty-inch, inside seam, Sunday pants were torn to shreds. King of patches he was, but he could not mend them. His coat was of more different colors than Joseph's. The male gold digger burrowed out of sight except for his wagging tail, a sure indication that buried treasure was close at hand. So elated was Haystack Needles that he stamped the ground, clapped his hands together, and shouted in exultation. Dejected Swinegrunter cursed with the proficiency of an old salt. He was mollified somewhat when the gold digger's head appeared above the ground on his side of the stake. The animal came out, grasped Lola's pant leg, and tried to pull him toward the hole.

"A pick and shovel quick," said Lola, but neither of the old men moved to get the desired tools from the airplane. I went for them and when part way back, I heard maledictions and the thud of blows on human flesh. The old time comrades were now enemies fighting for possession of the supposed fabulous wealth.

"For shame, old men with one foot in the grave," said Lola, seizing one belligerent in each hand and bumping their heads together. "You are like poor babies in the woods of Dotage. The treasure about to be unearthed, I am sure, will more than satisfy your wants for the little time you are to remain."

"I want it all," each exclaimed at the same moment.

"Take this," said Lola, giving Haystack Needles the pick, "and this," tendering Swinegrunter the shovel, "and go to it as if you were throwing up breastworks to keep Satan out of the sheep fold."

Haystack Needles on his side of the stakes glared at Swinegrunter, and threw off his coat and rolled up his shirtsleeves. He reached a rust coated metallic object. More moving of dirt revealed a small, iron padlock office safe, upright, its top about eaten through by corrosion. Lola directed Haystack Needles

as he struck several blows with the pick which broke in the top. The old men threw down their tools and clawed at the safe's contents.

"Not quite so fast, you human fossils," admonished Lola.

"Haystack Needles, sir, you heard that young upstart calling us human fossils. I for one will not stand it," said Swinegrunter, and threw off his coat and rolled up his shirtsleeves."

"Nor I," declared Haystack Needles, rolling his shirtsleeves also.

Another bumping of heads together brought them to their senses. Then I stood guard over them while Lola emptied the safe. Securely wrapped in oil cloth was a small leather bag heavy with specie. Opened, it contained a heterogeneous mass of coin. Most valuable was a five-dollar gold piece, next were three silver dollars, then half dollars, quarters, dimes, nickels, and no end of copper pennies, many of ancient coinage. A hundred pound bar covered with verdigris told it was copper instead of gold, as Mr. Geeheehaw had supposed. In all there was not seventy-five dollars.

"Gentlemen," said Lola, "the treasure is all yours. Too bad it does not make millionaires of you both."

He left for the airplane, leading the male gold digger, and the female followed. The two disillusioned old prospectors followed us to the airplane carrying the tools and asked forgiveness. "Under the circumstances I will remember your iniquities no more," Lola replied, as he pressed the starter button and took off for Junior Moore's landing field, which we reached in fifteen minutes. Junior was practicing stunt flying against the wishes of his parents but by the tacit consent of his wife who had given up a career to be a wife and now hoped to be known as the wife of the California champion stunt flyer. Lola, never given over much to stunt flying, went aloft and out-stunted all the other flyers of his native state. Those who watched the marvelous birdman thought he was Junior Moore, and that evening Junior received an ovation shared equally by his wife. Happy in the limelight, Lola was too modest to right the wrong impression, fearing it would give the Bakersfielders chills and fever, but the time was in the near future when he would be immortal.

Mrs. Frank Moore was in good cheer, while Junior and his

wife billed and cooed like lovebirds. Lola and I were as thick as forty thieves, and the gold diggers, in fairly good humor, reduced their gold reserve by four pounds. With a bundle of clothes and a basket of goodies from the pantry, next morning at seven-thirty o'clock Junior Moore, Lola Wheeler, and I took off in Lola's airplane for the Indian encampment beyond Mt. Baker. One hour later we landed on a grassy flat in front of the Indian camp. Not an Indian was visible. They were sound asleep after the all-night prowling which indicates the human race was once nocturnal like raccoons and opossums, and as the American negro is today. There was a legion of dogs. The way they barked and howled, each one must have been sired by Cerberus, for no dog with one head could make so much noise. They tried to leap up to the airplane as we circled preparatory to landing. They snapped at us, then ran howling back to camp. A water hole was near camp and an hour afterwards several Indians got down on all fours and drank from it. Not one of them bathed face or hands. However, a portly old squaw got over-balanced and fell in head first. She was pulled out half drowned amid loud acclaim, the only merriment I noticed among the stoic savages. Pain and suffering, which excites our pity, is hilarity to them. An hour and a half later most of them squatted around the water hole. A few gnawed at bones from a slaughterhouse. After the bones were picked clean, they were cracked for the putrid marrow. Swarms of houseflies and other insects hitch-hiked across their faces, but their facial muscles twitched to no purpose to frighten them away. They had a powwow when several returned laden with offal from a Bakersfield slaughterhouse. At the head of the relief squad was a buck on a living-skeleton cayuse; gun over his shoulder and blanketed to the eyes, although the weather was mild. Behind on foot was a small procession of squaws, each loaded to full capacity. An over-ripe calf's head was left at Mary's "residence." A sage brush fire was kindled near the water hole and when it had burned to coals a steer's entrails were laid on. When hot, at a given signal from the chief, it was a free, help-yourself lunch counter over which they fought each other for scraps.

Disgusted watching the feasters, we finally entered the encampment. Aloof from other wickiups was Mary's, of sage

brush wattled between upright willow poles. A tattered bed spread served the purpose of a roof well as long as the weather was dry, and good weather would continue until about the first of December. The walls were low and the doorway still lower. A small person could enter on hands and knees, but one of average size must wiggle in on his stomach. Opposite the door, lying on a bed of pine needles and bunch grass covered by a ragged quilt, with a stone for pillow, lay Mary asleep. She moaned and talked incoherently in a troubled dream, evidently out of her head. Something in her arms stirred and cried like a young kitten. Three days previous a daughter had been born to the house of Pejudi. It lived because the father wanted it to die for not being a boy. The medicine man had come to kill or cure Mary. He was dressed as becomes a savage of the healing art. Murder was on his hideous painted face. He shook a gourd rattle and intoned, "Hi hi yoga ha," and jumped up and down, stiff legged. Lola knew the Piute language and told the medicine man his magic was too bum to cure a white woman, only just right for a sick dog. "So doctor that sick dog that has symptoms of hydrophobia." The old buck was furious and in a scalp-lifting mood. If it had been the days when white men were few and far between in the San Joaquin Valley, Lola would have lost his scalp.

Junior, silent since we had landed, bent over Mary, and said, "Sister, we want you to come home. We came to take you home."

A wasted hand was raised in protest. Tenderly Junior took her up in his strong arms and carried her to the airplane. Lola took the kid and fondled it although he had never had a child of his own. The baby laughed as he talked to it. It was my duty to stand off the Indians, made hostile by our kidnapping act. They made many threats, but I shook my fist at them and dared them to come half way. Had they come one third the way my gait to the airplane would have been little less than flying! After an absence of three hours we were back at Mr. Moore's again. Mary was taken to Junior's bedroom chamber, and a trained nurse ministered to her wants. Grandmother Moore took care of the kid, that soon grew robust and was of gentle disposition. Next morning Lola and I, in his air-

plane with the gold diggers, went to search for the lost panniers of gold nuggets. Behind Mt. Baker we landed on a flat where cattle were wallowing in the dust—it was a poor landing field, too short and uneven. About a mile to the west was the gulch in which Tom Scott had lost his life and his two panniers of gold nuggets. Gold nuggets are slow travelers, not created for speed but to lie buried from sight. The gold diggers were turned loose, but were soon exhausted and laid down in the shade of a large bull pine. In the top was a bad eagle's nest full of fledglings. The parent birds did not molest us, but one of them took wing and soared high in the cloudless sky, like an airplane. After a short rest the gold diggers went to the first water hole we encountered in the gulch and wallowed. Presently the male came out with a lump of quartz that showed free gold—quartz such as might have come from the out-cropping of the White Mule mine, supposed to be in this locality. I asked Lola to put the lump of quartz in the airplane while I watched the gold diggers, as I wanted to turn them up stream. They would not go. Instead, they ran down stream until they came to a "jump off" perpendicular precipice of more than three hundred feet. At the base as motionless as a statue stood Pejudi; he resembled the statue of Chief Black Hawk overlooking the Mississippi River from an Illinois bluff. Scrambling down through brush and over stones, Lola and I at length reached the bottom.

"Pejudi, old boy, your Mahala went home," said Lola.

"So so," Pejudi muttered. "Maybe so me catch 'em heap gold. Me go get her."

In silence he led the way down the gulch. Here and there were small pieces of malphas. Below was a flat thickly strewn with boulders and broken tree trunks, the result of a landslide. On the right was a bare bluff of clay and stone formed by the land breaking away from beneath. The conglomeration under foot had come from there not many years previous. The gold diggers, now very active, wanted to dig in several places. In a frenzy they began digging a hole and reached a flat boulder three feet beneath the surface, and exhausted themselves trying to scratch and gnaw through it. After two hours of hard work, pick points about worn out, Lola and I dug through. Beneath it was a small nugget of about one half

ounce. We dug in several places where the gold diggers scratched the surface, but were foiled from reaching through the debris by a large boulder or gigantic tree trunk. It was Lola's opinion that somewhere on the flat the panniers of gold nuggets were buried beneath the debris. Where we had landed was more than two miles away up over a rugged course. Valuable time would be lost coming down on the flat and returning to the airplane so we decided to make a landing place on the flat. We worked until almost sunset and made a safe landing place. We gave Pejudi such articles of food as were left over from too bountiful a lunch, and told him to be sure to be on hand early the next morning. Then we returned to Mr. Moore's for the night. Mary, still delirious, imagined the white race was at war with the Indians, and she tried to act as peacemaker. Finally she went to sleep, happy that her efforts were not in vain. The baby laughed instead of squalling, opposite to Junior's quadruplets.

Lola was asked to speak before the Bakersfield Aeronautics Club. He never spoke in public. When he attended public school he was always absent on speaking day, the fourth Friday afternoon of each month, but once he declaimed loudly "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck" and before taking his seat he said, "Teacher, why didn't the young geezer beat it to safety like a miner when he spits the fuse to a blast of dynamite?" The teacher replied that he would tell him the reason after school.

"Lola," said I, "attend the meeting and tell the members when they are pilots to seek an altitude no less than eight miles for long flights, to be above clouds and capricious winds. Southern California wants to dismember the Golden State and have North California and South California. The Southern Californian thinks himself right smart, for he catches the one-lung Eastern sucker and sells him Los Angeles city lots forty miles out in the Pacific Ocean. The Northern Californian has nothing to sell that is not of intrinsic value. We want no land or mining booms that would collapse and fill our jails and poorhouses with suckers."

Lola tried to get off by saying he did not have his evening suit, but I persuaded him to appear in his flying togs. In no other clothes did this manly man appear so manly. There was

something mysterious about him that reminded me of the Angel Gabriel as I have seen him depicted by the old masters.

Lola appeared on time, and I thought his long front hair which was combed back, must be standing straight up, but he said he was not at all afraid. He spoke as follows:

"Fellow Citizens and Birdmen:

"The time will come soon, if it is not here already, when we must shun low altitudes and reach an altitude of no less than eight miles to be above clouds and contrariwise winds. Fogs and sometimes clouds of smoke from forest fires or belched from a thousand smoke stacks, endanger us, dimming and polluting the atmosphere. Those upper regions are intensely cold, but no colder than certain places on the Northern hemisphere, where eighty degrees below zero has been recorded, with a gale of hurricane violence raging. But in the upper regions all is quiet—silence reigns supreme. To attain and maintain that high altitude airplane engines must be of different design. Magneto, carburetor, spark plugs, and wires, must be consigned to the limbo of tallow candles, snuff boxes, powdered wigs, and patriarchal beards. Gasoline will be used to heat water for milady poodle's bath. I have a new source of power, a molecule of energy which the world produces by spinning through space. Junior Moore also made the same discovery, but I am informed he has not developed it beyond the experimental stage. There is nothing to go wrong as long as the world stays right, and scientists tell us the world has stayed right for more than one billion years and they expect it to continue twice that time. The cost of my equipment is much less than Madam's yearly beauty shop bill. In the rarified air, or no atmosphere at all, artificial means of respiration must be resorted to, and my infallible method is to crawl into a large water olla and ram home the cock.

"Gentlemen, you may desire to know how I can pilot my airplane corked up like a sour cucumber pickle among a quart of sweet gherkins. Well, my robot does the trick.

"I intend to ascend two thousand miles or more beyond the earth's gravitational sphere, loaf in No Man's Void for twenty-four hours, and travel around the world—or rather, the earth will make a complete revolution while I remain stationary. To venture beyond the earth's gravitational sphere would not

be safe with as small an object as an airplane, as it would be pulled to the moon by her attraction, and I am not moon struck. To prevent me from going there I have a new source of power—protactinium, the rarest metal known, which I discovered by reducing radium ore. Protactinium explodes with greater force than radium and has a life of fifty thousand years. Chemically protactinium is element ninety-one. Its existence was foretold sixty years ago by a Slav scientist, D. I. Mendeleeff, when he devised the periodic table of the elements. There is no limit to the use of this element in propelling airplanes beyond the earth's gravitational sphere. A trip to the moon is within the bounds of reason. We can approach the planet Venus and ascertain what lies behind those clouds that our most powerful telescope cannot penetrate. There is more reason for belief that Venus is inhabited by intelligent beings than Mars, although more than one hundred and forty million miles from the sun is so remote that the atmosphere must be about like that at the summit of Mt. Everest, twenty-nine thousand feet above sea level, too thin to support the form of life we represent. A tyro scientist affirms that the Martian has a large nose, resembling the bill of a duck-billed dinosaur, and elephantine ears. I am obsessed with the idea that it will be my good fortune to meet a Martian in No Man's Void and converse with him. Then I can ascertain why the canals, extending from the north polar ice cap to the equator, were dug, and why in spring the color changes from brown to green. A Martian must be made in the image of his Maker as we are. Old indeed must be Martian civilization, ours is as yesterday in comparison. Gentlemen, please do not ridicule my inventions or theories. With fear and trembling I appear before you. Many of you have a college education, with gold and silver handles to your names, while I of Northern California never had an opportunity of going through college except when I entered Leland Stanford Jr. University and asked a professor for a chew of tobacco, and he shoved me out the back door. Then I went through college all right."

Lola Wheeler's address was printed in all the California daily newspapers and also in many magazines. It made firms manufacturing airplanes build better machines, and induced the pilots to fly higher and be more resourceful. Lola could

have been at the head of a large airplane manufacturing plant, but he preferred to live an unostentatious life in his home town where almost everybody called him the "Hummer." Next morning after an eight o'clock breakfast I inquired of the nurse how Mary was getting along. Without an atom of originality she replied, "As well as could be expected." When I told her husband I sort of reconstructed the assertion: "Old Boy, she is doing bully."

"So, so," he replied, helping himself to the warm breakfast that mother-in-law Moore had prepared with her own hands. Wiping his mouth on his right, then on his left, coat sleeve, said he, "She's bully." The Indian son-in-law was traveling it fast down civilization's long cinder path and after a while he would be just another American. He had sunk several shallow holes in the debris, encountering material that only dynamite would shatter. The gold diggers were let out of their cage. The male was inactive. No doubt it felt as I did—how good it would be to lie in the shade, sprawled at ease, and nap. However, the lethargic state ended soon, and it ran toward the hill from which the landslide had come down on the flat. Where the stones were largest and thickest, it dug under a boulder that weighed several tons and was soon lost from view except for the tip of the tail that wagged as when gold was in sight. Lola reached in the hole, grasped the tail near the root, and pulled with all his strength until he made the tail snap; it seemed to stretch a foot. Pejudi helped him to pull. The gold digger got infuriated, snarled and growled, but would not yield an inch. I grabbed Lola's arms with both hands and said, "A long pull, a strong pull, pull together, boys!"

Lola repeated my command and set his jaw firmly against a large chaw of tobacco. Finally, the creature was dragged out with a pannier of gold nuggets clasped in its forepaws. It was spoiling for a fight, and began first on its master, who dodged deftly behind Pejudi. The latter stood his ground and did a war dance to prevent the animal from biting his legs. A series of war whoops frightened it away. Mouth wide open, it came at me and I legged it for the airplane, climbed on a wing, and remained there until Lola had replaced it in its cage. The pannier weighed the same as when Tom Scott had filled it. The moment the gold was found Pejudi was a changed man,

taciturn no more, but loquacious, telling over and over again what he intended to do for his wife and child. He sent his wife a curious letter of different colored threads of peculiar knots which she understood. She replied in English and he asked me to read the letter aloud, which I did, but he was not enthused. Dejectedly, he said, "She no say Bully!"

"Ah! let me read it again. My glasses, made for ornament, do not fit my eyes. 'Bully Boy, I am having a bully time visiting Pa and Ma. They act bully toward me. The kid is bully. Find the other bully pannier of gold nuggets and we will have a bully time together ever more. Your bully Mahala.'"

After that he called Lola, Bully Boy, and me, Bully Old Man. Finding the pannier of gold nuggets abated Mr. Moore's unreasonable animosity toward his Indian son-in-law, and he remarked if the other pannier of gold nuggets was found he would bury the hatchet and smoke the pipe of peace.

Next morning we did not start out very early. Mary was at the breakfast table, her baby laughing at the quadruplets who were screaming under a full head of steam, trying out their brass lungs. Donna was in the patio rehearsing a curtain lecture on infantile cussedness. Taking off, Lola ran into a shallow hole which came near wrecking the machine, but the damaged landing gear was repaired soon and we reached the flat at mid forenoon. Lola and I did our best to get the gold diggers to dig in the ground, but they squatted on their haunches up the gulch. Suddenly a piteous moaning seemed to rise up out of the ground where they squatted. Pejudi grasped the pick, and the copper color left his face till its hue was silver. I did not know why I trembled at the low noise, eerie, ghostly.

"Do you hear that cry?" asked Lola, crawling from beneath the airplane, "a mountain lion's cry. The beast is not ten rods away."

It cried again, considerably louder, from the direction of a large boulder resting on a gigantic tree trunk. Pejudi stood with his back against a boulder, his pick uplifted to ward off the ferocious beast should it attack him. With a shovel full of sand I stood ready to dash it in the beast's mouth and eyes. The gold diggers growled, shrieked, and ran behind the big

boulder to attack the feline. This was a battle royal but of short duration. Mephitic feline and gold digger odors greeted our nostrils. The deafening uproar ended as suddenly as it began. The gold diggers were not injured much, but the mountain lion's vitals were torn out. In its stomach was the other pannier of gold nuggets, swallowed more than sixty years previous, as the pannier would not pass nor come up. Lola made adjustments to the landing gear and as the other pannier of gold nuggets had been recovered proposed we return to Mr. Moore's.

"Ugh," Pejudi grunted. "Me no sava."

He led the way to a side gulch, where crude oil trickled down.

"Your fortune is made. Excluding the panniers of gold nuggets, you have the best oil well in the Bakersfield district," said Lola.

Acting on my advice, Pejudi located a section of land under the Desert Act which made him a millionaire several times over. He returned with us in the airplane. At the landing field Mr. Moore awaited our return.

"My noble boy," said Mr. Moore, embracing his Indian son-in-law, "the hatchet is buried forever. The pipe of peace is ready to smoke."

Everybody wanted to fondle Mary's baby and scold the quadruplets, which so angered Donna that she and Junior moved close to the Mexican border where people of her nationality were in the ascendency. Junior's patience was put to the test many times, but he never flunked.

With the oil boom came a soldier of fortune named John Hopkins from Winnemucca, Nevada. He was wed to a squaw, Princess Sara Winnemucca, who had had an only son by her present husband—number three. If living, the son would now be twenty-two years old.

The Hopkins and Pejudi met at Mr. Frank Moore's.

"My long lost son," cried Princess Sara, embracing Pejudi. "A prince royal you are, sole heir to the Winnemucca estate composing all its lands in Nevada and California. Besides, you are certain of many of Mark Hopkins' millions."

"Dear little princess," said Grandmother Moore, fondling Mary's baby.

CHAPTER X.

THE INDIAN GOLD MINE

Lola Wheeler was offered an almost fabulous amount for his gold diggers and a larger amount for patent rights on the mysterious motor that propelled his airplane, but neither was for sale. He would keep the gold diggers as long as they lived, and his motor, after being tried out under all conditions, would be presented to the Bakersfield Aviation Club for the benefit of commercial aviation. I suggested that he manufacture airplane motors of the same design and place them on the market, which would advance flying more than Colonel Lindbergh's epoch-making non-stop flight from New York to Paris, but he liked the quiet life in his home town too well ever to live anywhere else. Why not build a factory in French Gulch and make it a roaring city? Something would have to be done to make the somnolent town shed its ancient skin. He said he might found a Lotus club for the benefit of those who dreamed day and night dreams constantly.

Cold weather would come soon and snow fall deep in Siskiyou County; no longer could we put off searching for the Indian Gold Mine in the Salmon River country. A few squaws were living in and around French Gulch, who advised us to give up the undertaking, for no good would come of it. Many other white men had tried to find the mine and more than one half of them had met with misfortune from violent deaths or prolonged periods of sickness. During the past summer there had been much mining activity in Siskiyou County, especially in the Coffee Creek mining district. The Graves brothers discovered a pocket that produced twenty thousand dollars of gold. The gold was melted and run into molds borrowed from the Tip Top Mining Company. About that time the French Gulch-Weaverville motor bus was robbed of the same amount of gold coin. Detectives investigated and found that the gold from the pocket contained the same amount of alloy as the

gold coin—a coincidence unknown before or since. The Yellow Rose of Texas gold mine that yielded millions was discovered about that time. A hydraulic mining company operating in Coffee Creek at the mouth of Hickory Gulch uncovered a gold nugget of several thousand dollars value. It was described as a new Eldorado, yet men living there since the early fifties were poor. Many did not possess the means of paying for a slab of bacon or a sack of flour. Were they improvident or was luck against them? Mr. Charles Joseph, a prominent citizen of French Gulch, went there often on a bear and deer hunt. He stated while the county abounded in gold it was a matter of luck as to who was and was not successful. He stated the case of two young men, Stephen Ale and John Dale, who left Boston, Mass., with the first rush of gold seekers and were among the first to come into Salmon River County. They took up a placer mine on the East Fork, worked year in and year out in the same digging for fifty years, and each had hardly money enough to pay a local carpenter for a home-made coffin. Their shrouds were donated by fellow miners. They were buried on a knoll overlooking the scene of their half-century labors. The Abram brothers from Illinois came in the early days and mined at Horse Shoe Bend on South Fork. They took out more than fifty thousand dollars within a year. They opened a store at Big Flat near the head waters of Coffee Creek and lost out by trusting miners who were more prompt to squander their gold over a saloon bar than pay a supply bill. Mr. Lot Sightman accumulated a fortune operating a hydraulic mine, but lost out supplying other hydraulic miners. Simon Jordan, too white a man to be married to a squaw, wed the squaw hoping she would reveal to him the location of Indian Gold Mine. Many a time she pretended to guide him to it but went opposite. Jordan owned a good hydraulic mine which he worked. He raised a large family of half breeds. He died several years ago soon after his mine was worked out.

I doubted whether Indian Mine ever existed and decided to interview Mr. Charles Joseph, a noted nimrod, who as stated already had made several hunting expeditions to the Salmon River country. He always returned with a pack mule loaded with venison and another one with a bear or two. He lived

across Clear Creek at the old Joseph homestead. The dwelling house was the largest and best wooden structure in town, built in the early fifties. The Joseph possessions extended a mile up Clear Creek to American Gulch. There was a large alfalfa field, the product being sold to local livery men, but since the motor bus had superseded horse drawn vehicles hay was not in much demand. A small dairy herd was kept, and the town folks changed from oleomargarine to real butter eaters. Mr. Joseph had known Lola Wheeler ever since he entered upon his mundane existence. He never tired of telling how Lola as a tot tried to follow him, fell in the dust and got his mouth full, but without a whimper clawed the dust from his mouth and overtook Mr. Joseph, who "pussybacked" him to town, where he toddled into Franck Brothers store.

"Sonny, take this," said Mr. Henry Franck, offering him a stick of barber pole striped candy, but he refused this, and extended his arms toward an alarm clock ticking on the counter.

"Sonny, don't let it fall," was Mr. Franck's admonition.

Elated with the bright object, Lola was nonplussed whence the ticking came. He sat on the back doorstep and with a stick of kindling wood proceeded to find the wherefore. He battered the clock so that it never would run again. He wrapped it in an old newspaper and went out the front door.

"Sonny," said Mr. Franck, "I want the clock to tell me when to take some liver regulator."

Replied Lola, "Clock sick, I go to doger man (Doctor Theobald Quacker), he give it pills."

"Some day Lola will be a mechanical genius; already he tries to find out the wherefore of things," remarked Mr. Franck as he put the defunct clock on a shelf behind the counter.

Mr. Joseph was making preparations for a hunting and prospecting trip to the Cinnabar Creek country beyond the head waters of the Trinity River; while hunting there many years previous he had come across the outcropping of a metallic substance which he was sure was grey copper ore. Every fall during the last decade he had intended to go there and make locations on the lode, but something prevented. This time nothing would thwart him. He would go by a road cart, as

there was a fairly good wagon road all the way. It would require two days to make the journey, while an airplane would cover the distance in less than two hours, but there was no landing place. However, Mr. Joseph was of the opinion the saw mill log way, where logs were piled to be sawed into lumber for the Integral Quicksilver mine reduction works, would serve the purpose. He said the log way was about the size of the Wheeler airport, but was not quite sure whether it was clear of logs, so he telephoned his brother-in-law, Earl Porter, superintendent of the Iron Mountain copper mine. Mr. Porter had managed the Integral Quicksilver mine with success, until the cinnabar ore was so quick it would not hold quicksilver. He had left the Integral mine before the saw mill closed down, but instructed the sawyer to clean up the log way and supposed his orders had been complied with.

"Mr. Joseph," said Lola, "we go there by airplane. I want a stout rope no less than one hundred feet long, although I may have no use for it."

Neither Mr. Joseph nor I questioned Lola's motive. He brought the rope on his own hook and coiled it in the cockpit. It was a debatable question whether or not the gold diggers would be taken along. Mr. Joseph was of the opinion the locality was non-auriferous and the gold diggers would be dead-heads like our President and his party cruising with the Mayflower. I was asked for an opinion and said, "Never having been in the locality I do not know its potential auriferousness, but gold is where you find it." Finally it was decided the creatures were non-essential. They could be left behind to sleep the time away until Lola and I departed for the scene of the Indian Mine. Mr. Joseph laid in ammunition enough for an automatic shotgun and a high power rifle to stage miniature warfare along the Mexican border. There was also a two gallon wicker-covered demijohn full to the cork of anti-cold elixir. Lola, moderate in his luxuries, had a dozen packages of Camel cigarettes and six plugs of Grandad's Best chewing tobacco. I had a dozen weazened lemons and two bits' worth of "C" sugar to make lemonade about as palatable as the presence of an ancient maiden at a party of flappers.

On the morning we were to take off a dense fog blew in from the ocean by Trinity River, and it hung low over the moun-

tains. It came down so low that the upper part of the town flag pole was obscured, and with the visibility so poor it was foolhardy to attempt a flight. Toward sunset, however, the fog lifted and the sun went down in a haze, harbinger that autumn had come. The moon, of usual brightness, shone from a cloudless sky. Not long after sunrise we took off and ascended six thousand feet so as to be above the mountains we were to fly over. The temperature was below freezing and we shivered with cold. After two hours in the air we entered Cinnabar canyon above the crags and kept a bright lookout for the Integral mine buildings, which we observed soon. The main building had been crushed in by last winter's unusually heavy fall of snow. Part of the roof of the saw mill building collapsed and leaned toward the log way; almost any wind would topple it over. Several logs were on the log way. A wide space between them was taken up by three logs lying crosswise. Landing the airplane was inexpedient until the cross-wise logs were removed, so Lola uncoiled the rope, tied an end to the fusilage, and made a slip noose in the other end.

"Lola, you are not going to make a anchor of yourself, I hope?" inquired Mr. Joseph.

"A little log rolling," was his laconic reply.

With the robot at the control Lola stood on a wing, lassoed a projecting beam to the mill building, and pulled the whole over into the creek. Then he circled back and tried to drop the noose over the end of a cross-wise log. When the rope became taut the airplane wobbled like a tailless bird. Mr. Joseph was seized with a coughing fit, brought on no doubt by excessive fright from his harrowing suspense of snaking logs by airplane, and took a deep draught of cough medicine. I trembled, and fright had a strangle hold on my courage. I sucked at a lemon, but if my courage had to be thus bolstered I would enlist in the Grand Army of White Feathers, and be an abject slave of the tyrant, Cowardice!

"Gents, have no fears," came Lola's encouraging words between puffs on the cigarette.

The next log, which was considerably smaller, was snaked without any perceptible flutter of the airplane. The last log was punk; it parted in the middle and crumbled to vegetable mould. There Lola took possession of the controls and landed

on the log way. There was just room enough between two piles of logs. Mr. Joseph and I thanked him for bringing us down safely on terra firma. The saw mill log way is much improved now, and is used by airplane parties visiting the Craggs and environments.

Soon after landing a cold drizzling rain set in which changed to sleet, and sleet to snow that fell a foot deep. When it began storming a side of the boarding house was knocked out, and the airplane rolled in. In the spacious stone fireplace a roaring fire was kept going for the next three days and nights, when the snow had melted. On the fourth day the sun shone warm, a great contrast to the frosty snow-laden atmosphere of the three days previous. The altitude, more than five thousand feet above sea level, and the lateness of the season made snow storms of frequent occurrence. Rifle over shoulder, Mr. Joseph led the way to the supposed copper ore out cropping. Lola carried a pole, pick, and our snack in a world-war, gas mask container. I, at the rear, was encumbered with a writing tablet, pen, and a bottle of ink to write notices of location on the spot. Why I was chosen scribe must be because nobody can read my handwriting, which gives location notices an air of mystery. We ascended a steep dry gulch and about half way to the head Mr. Joseph stepped on something coiled up and rattlesnake color. From his shoulder came the rifle, and he cocked and aimed. As he was about to pull the trigger Lola unintentionally stumbled against him. Fortunately the rifle did not go off or there would have been a neat round hole through my lumbar regions. Lola bruised the snake's head with the heel of his hob-nailed hunting boots. "And his heel shall bruise the serpent's head," said he to Mr. Joseph. "Boot heels cost very little and are as deadly to serpents as high power rifle cartridges."

"On this expedition you are the serpent exterminator," replied Mr. Joseph, and led the way in silence. Near the summit we turned to the left and clambered over a tangled broken mass of timber brought down by a snow slide, which had its origin not forty rods above us. Just beyond, a result of the snow slide, Lola picked up a grey metallic substance that Mr. Joseph had not seen.

"Mr. Joseph, what is this?" he asked.

Mr. Joseph examined it through a magnifying glass and replied, "It is grey copper ore from the out cropping of the ledge we are looking for. I was of the opinion it was in the next gulch. Twenty-seven years have elapsed since I found the ledge. My memory must be good or I could never have led you here."

We went straight up the mountainside and soon came to the out cropping or blow out. Tons of ore were scattered over the ground. That nobody had molested it seemed strange, for a trail much used when the Integral Mine was operated followed along the ridge within a stone's throw.

"Iron Mountain copper mine is as nothing to what this will be when developed," said Mr. Joseph. "You as scribe," he continued, "write a notice of location: first for me, next for Lola Wheeler, and third for yourself. Should your claim be worthless it would sell like Apples of Sodom at a Redding speakeasy, for my claim would do the trick."

"Mr. Joseph," said Lola, "there are three elements that man will lay down his life for: women, gold and copper. For this copper claim of yours I would not lay down a cigarette stub. You have a good magnetic iron ore mine, good for those lacking personal magnetism."

The matter was referred to me. "Gentlemen," said I, "the ore resembles copper the same as a gold plated brick resembles gold bullion."

I wrote Mr. Joseph a notice of location, but my pen hand cramped and I could not have written myself a notice of location even if so inclined. We came down by the old trail to the Integral mine. The shaft had caved in and was full of water. There was little left to remind a person of the past great activity. Integral was the only paying quicksilver mine in Northern California, although small stringers of cinnabar are abundant along the Klamath River in Siskiyou County.

Sleeping in a damp room augmented Mr. Joseph's cold so severely that he was in bed three days, but the "cough medicine" warded off pneumonia, which might have been fatal for at that time he was in a run down condition. To all those who are not robust or are ailing I recommend plenty of "cough medicine." It was a perfect day when we returned to French Gulch. Mr. Joseph had several samples of his ore assayed by

the Gladstone mine assayer, who pronounced them as rich in magnetic iron; gold, silver, a trace; copper, no trace at all. I was sorry for Mr. Joseph, whose twenty-seven years of air-castle building had gone up in hot air from the assayer's furnace. As a hunter of big game he was unexcelled, but as a prospector none was such a failure. He believed the story of the Indian Mine located in the Salmon River country. The hills that surrounded the mine were pointed out to him by Haughty Jordan, eldest son of Simon Jordan, who promised to guide him to the mine. On purpose the search was postponed by Haughty until weather conditions were unfavorable. They started in a snow flurry, which Haughty said would cease shortly, but when snow fell in that locality the storm king is never skimpy, and sends more than full measure. They tramped through snow knee deep, and found shelter in a miner's abandoned cabin where there were two pairs of skis. Haughty, an expert skier, returned home for food to take Mr. Joseph who had tried to follow him on the skis. Mr. Joseph's head was buried in the snow and his feet up in the air when his rescuer returned. He was snow blind and had to be led to Simon Jordan's home three miles distant. In a week the snow was gone and so was Mr. Joseph, who had no further desire to search for the Indian Mine. Other residents of French Gulch had searched for the same mine and had met with minor accidents.

An unfrocked preacher from an Eastern state had helped himself too liberally to foreign missionary funds. His peculation was not large, a few thousand dollars, but he saw no immediate way of restoring it. He had a large growing family and a wife of millionaire desires, so he absconded to California hoping to recoup his defalcation by discovering a gold mine. The story of the Indian Gold Mine appealed to him strongest. Of course, he never considered the Indians' rights, but wanted to rob them—a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Tenderfoot that he was, he was used to a soft place where every fond woman wanted to make a mundane angel of him. Members of his flock who were shy of dough donated him pigs, chickens, potatoes, and Swede turnips. On one occasion a miserly member donated him some cast-off clothes which the dominie threw down, saying, "Thank you; I am not a second-hand fashion

plate. See Uncle Ike just around the corner."

Not heeding the advice from old timers he plunged into the wilderness just ahead of a snow storm that overtook him while camped for the night at Big Flat. At midnight when the storm raged hardest he set forth as he thought over a low divide, beyond which was the South Fork of Salmon River, but he went opposite, climbed a high hill, and fell exhausted in the snow. Knowing his end was close at hand, he hung his gold watch by the chain on a manzanilla bush, and in an attitude of prayer his spirit fled. Weeks afterwards his frozen remains were found and buried on the hill now known as Preacher's Peak.

"Lola," I asked, "can you trump up any more evidence affirming Indian Mine as a hoodoo?"

"Plenty," he replied. "I will get the old bear hunter, Sebastian, to tell his story, which will cinch the contention that the Indian Mine is a hoodoo."

"No more cold water on the subject, please."

But Mr. Sebastian came of his own accord to tell how he was nearly murdered by Salmon River Indians who supposed he was searching for their mine instead of hunting bears. I did not have time to listen as it was quite late. Instead, I went to the cobbler's, where I had a pair of long-legged rubber boots leather soled. But he told his story to Lola, who said he would repeat it when there were no more funerals to attend.

There were two ways to reach the Salmon River country. The most direct and shortest was by Trinity Center, a small placer mining town built on the left bank of Trinity River about forty miles from the river's source, thence to Trinity Junction, a single shack containing the postoffice. The worthy postmaster never complained of incompetent clerks nor of over work, for they were nonexistent. He was well paid for the volume of mail he handled. Thence the route led up Coffee Creek to Big Flat. At the upper end flows the South Fork of Salmon River. There was no landing field at Trinity Junction, hence that route was unfeasible. The other longer route was to follow approximately the old stage road up the Trinity River, cross the divide, and down the East Fork of Scott River as far as Callahan's, in olden days known as Callahan's Ranch. There was a good airport, the best in the Scott River

valley. The whole souled inhabitants were the most progressive in Northern California. Each denizen was a kingpin for the betterment of the community. Low voiced cops said to the Weary Willies, "Please move on."

Those who did not heed the admonition drew a heavy fine and were put to working it out in the Hair Oil placer mine, noted for its coarse gold and immense boulders. We flew to Callahan's and put up at Callahan's Hotel, more modern than those at French Gulch. The landlord, the youngest son of the original Callahan, was everything a landlord should be, and his hospitality was almost prodigality. We had the best suite of rooms, recently vacated by Shortchange St. Baily and C. W. Bunkum, who lived by jawbone and gall. We were introduced to Mr. Sam Barr of the Denny-Barr Parker Mercantile Company. The firm sold goods at prices much below French Gulch merchants. Each town was twenty-three miles from the railroad. Everybody spoke highly of the Salmon River country but considered Indian Mine a legend, except an aged Portuguese cattle raiser named Alvaresdo Condo who, many years previous, while hunting estray cattle in the wildest part of the Salmon River mountains between East Fork and South Fork, came on old mine workings. Scattered about were numerous bones; among them was a human skull crushed from the impact of a blunt instrument. The gruesome reminder of ever present death frightened him. He spurred his horse, who leaped into a chinkapin thicket and went down a shallow mine shaft well over his head. The horse, a noted mountain climber, climbed out the not quite perpendicular shaft, and the rider's left boot top brushed against an end of the shaft and filled with dirt which proved to be coarse gold worth several thousand dollars. But mysterious sounds came from down the gulch which he did not stop to investigate. The horse, more frightened than the rider, was unmanageable, and dashed through the underbrush, over rocks and rills, and when exhausted stopped on a mountain top overlooking Big Flat.

In the mad flight he had lost all sense of direction, and almost numberless times, so it seemed to him, he had tried to find his way back to the mine without success. The Portuguese story was the most reliable and convincing of any told us,

and as they say in law "rested our case." At the Denny-Barr-Parker store I met Mr. Frank Miller, a native of North Carolina, the only person so far I had met from Dixieland. He was a true product of below the Mason and Dixon line, and had ways of the Old South, generous, impulsive, quick to anger but quicker to forgive a wrong. His generosity, indeed, prevented him from laying by much for a rainy day. He placer-mined up the South Fork of Scott River just below where Jackson Creek empties in. The best part of his claim was worked in boom days. He ground-sluiced an upper bench which was not very rich, for then there was not sufficient erosion to wear away the rocks in which shallow gold pockets were formed. The lower bench and creek bed were very rich. He did not average one dollar a day—slender wages for a man working ten hours daily and in cold water most of the time. He had varicose veins in the left leg from lifting heavy boulders. His little hoard was going fast, and when gone, what then? He dared not look in the future. He would not appeal to the home folks, for he had written them more than once of his great success as a placer miner, and to bolster up his assertion had sent them a good-sized gold nugget which he affirmed were as thick in his diggings as fleas on a hound dog.

Above the Miller Mine was that of A. Tennyson Harrington, who bore the sobriquet "Duke." He was a native of Ireland and like many of his race disliked the English and everything pertaining to them. He was so parsimonious that he counted his tea leaves before brewing a cup of tea, and if there was one leaf too many, the dregs were steeped again. He invited me to dine, but I declined as I was sure he would count the mouthfuls of food I consumed, and to keep his grocery bill in black figures he would deprive himself accordingly. Rats and mice never molested him. There was nothing about his premises that attested "Help yourself." Above Jackson Creek on a flat was the cabin home of George Burns, a pioneer among the first of the Argonauts of '49. He hailed from Boston, Mass., and hoped to accumulate a quick fortune and finish his education at Yale, but the ungodly ways of the wild, rugged West broke down the bulwark of his resistance to sin and he became a votary of John Barleycorn. "Damn a man who can-

not spend fifty dollars over a bar on a Sunday," was his slogan. At one time he owned the best placer mine, good for six ounces a day, on Fox Creek. Sunday, instead of a day of rest and holy contemplation, he spent in profligacy, Monday morning, flat broke, found him at his mine to repeat the same ways over again. When his mine was exhausted he went to Wilmington, California, and enlisted in the Union Army, but never left the state. He got a pension from Uncle Sam on which he lived. He died good and drunk while celebrating his three fourths of a century residence in California, and was buried in Callahan cemetery with the pomp due a valorous Union soldier.

While I visited among the above named miners Lola was busy with his gold diggers. A rancher living a few miles up the East Fork had recently picked up a small piece of float rock that contained free gold visible to the naked eye. So he came with a wagon for Lola and the gold diggers. Within a few minutes after arriving where the float rock was found the female gold digger found the out cropping, not in quartz but in country rock which composed the hanging wall. The glassy quartz lode was barren even of black sand. That was the reason why the rancher had failed to find the source.

Said he, "That critter put me wise to a gold mine and I reckon a setting hen would be about the right pay for the trouble of you coming out here. Remember, it was a heap of trouble for me to go after you and it will be more trouble for me to take you back."

"Thank you, Mr. Hayseed," replied Lola. "I deem it a pleasure to lend my gold diggers to anybody interested in gold mining, which I consider a science. Anybody can be a hayseed indolent enough for moss to sprout on his back. Try to derive a better income from your mine than from your ranch, on which energy never plowed a furrow or pitched a fork of hay."

On the way back the Hayseed answered Lola's questions in monosyllables. He was miffed at being considered indolent and shiftless. At Callahan's Hotel I met a rancher from Siskiyou County, who while hunting cattle ran across some rich gold-bearing float rock. As he was no prospector, he could not find the out cropping of the ledge, and offered me an equal

interest if I would discover it. I sought the advice of Lola who asked the rancher if there were a landing field close to his ranch. He replied he had landed on his head more than once in his field when thrown from a bucking broncho. Lola could hardly convince him we had come to Callahan's by airplane and would use the same means of conveyance if we went to his ranch to prospect for the potential gold mine.

"Young man, that settles it," said he, turning pale behind his hayseed whiskers. "When people go sky larking through the air in one of those contraptions it's a sure sign the world is coming to an end. I want to outlive old man Grubbs from whom I borrowed the money to pay for my ranch."

A man who would flunk paying an honest debt was not safe to be hooked up with, so we decided not to have anything more to do with him, although he apologized by saying he was too hasty in forming an unfavorable opinion of us. Lola told him we regretted the circumstances but as we had a few lost mines to find and several prospects to relocate the scroll was rolled and sealed with a baker's dozen seals.

The landlord said we had done the proper thing as he was otherwise than honest and truthful. He gave us the names of several ranchers who had picked up gold-bearing float rock while hunting for horses and cattle in the mountains, all men of integrity who would carry out all they agreed to do. Unfortunately I lost the list, which might have been found by some other prospector, but nothing great was the outcome, for the Yreka Jay Walker, a weekly news sheet, made no mention of gold strikes in that locality. During the night before we left for the Salmon River country the gold diggers were restless, either from hunger or a coming change of weather. I attributed it to hunger and asked Lola when he had fed them last. He had fed each a pound of gold dust the evening before we left French Gulch; evidently they were not hungry. A storm was brewing. I decided to consult a human barometer in the person of Lepold Hillsmuth who kept a small store at French Flat three miles up the South Fork of Scott River, and whose sciatica was more painful before a storm. He said that a storm of considerable intensity would undoubtedly come within twenty-four hours. I asked if he was positive, but he replied, "No, sir; sometimes my pains are just liars."

Lola cast his weather-wise eyes skyward and said that if conditions were the same here as in Shasta County a long dry spell could be expected. That settled matters. The landlord served an early breakfast and presented us a basket full of everything good to appease the most fastidious appetite. At sunrise we took off, did some stunt flying over town to surprise the natives, then set our course north by west for Big Flat, which we reached in half an hour. We did not land but made wide circles to become familiar with the terrain from Bennett's store, where the East Fork and the South Fork converged, to Big Flat. We examined the terrain pretty closely and took several snapshots of the mountains where the ancient Portuguese cattleman claimed to have fallen in the shaft of a gold mine. The land was extremely rugged and overgrown with brush, and, as the Portuguese had said, not once did we see bare ground, for tall sugar pines, Douglas firs, and brush hid it from view. The camera saw no better than our naked eyes, but on one exposure was a blur which might have been a quartz mine dump. It proved to be a small hydraulic mine worked by a Mister Straight Rainbow who did not make a living out of it, as the gold was coarse, nuggets few and not often uncovered. After noon we landed on Big Flat; it was covered with close mowed grass stubble, the hay ranch of Abram brothers to feed cattle during the deep snows of winter. The weather was so mild and suave that the tarpaulin was not spread over the airplane for the night. Lola tinkered with the landing gear, while I went for a stroll along the upper end of Big Flat and noticed the South Fork had absorbed Coffee Creek by wearing down a small rocky divide long ages ago. The Coffee Creek miners sought to make the errant South Fork restore the water to its lawful owner, but ranchers and hydraulic miners below the fork filed an injunction, for the stolen waters of Coffee Creek were sweet. About midnight a strong westerly wind rose and souged through branches of gigantic trees growing on Big Flat below the Abram brothers' hay ranch. A sullen roar came from Preacher's Peak, and the storm king pounced down on us wholly unprepared. The airplane was lifted from the ground by swirling snow driven before a hurricane and vehemently dropped. It scudded before the blast and almost collided with a gigantic tree trunk, which

would have wrecked it, but Lola ran out on a wing and his weight swerved it. Then with his long rope he made it fast to a tree. We tried to spread the tarpaulin over the airplane but the gale prevented, and the canvas was blown from our hands. It skittled before the gale out of sight and was soon covered with snow. The swirling snow penetrated the most minute opening and the cabin was half full of snow before we were aware of the fact. Finally, the snow did not filter in so fast, and presently it ceased. The airplane was buried beneath the snow. It grew warmer inside. The snow in our quarters was heaped in a corner and we were quite comfortable considering the conditions outside. The snow shut out the sound of the roaring gale, for which we were glad. By the light from a storage battery lamp we tried to read until midnight; then we spread our blankets in the space behind the pilot's seat. Neither Lola nor I could lie full length. For once our long legs were a disadvantage. Out in the storm close by sounded a cry resembling a human being in mortal agony; I roused up and the cry sounded again and was answered by a like cry a little to the right.

"Imps of perdition are abroad to assist the storm king in his carousal," thought I to myself.

Two shrieks sounded at the airplane's tail.

"Did you hear that?" I asked Lola, who was sound asleep and snoring. The gold diggers in the oil drum were restless. They cried, not in anger, but from fright, for their ancient enemy, the feline, was abroad. I got the empty repeating shot gun and slipped a cartridge in the breech. Something was tearing a hole through the cabin roof. I should have fired but was afraid of accidentally shooting Lola. Suddenly a large cat's paw came through the hole, and with my Marble hunting knife I struck at it. The results were good—blood dropped on the robot—but a monstrous mountain lion's head squeezed through the aperture in the cabin roof, and the beast growled horribly, open mouthed. I seized the shot gun, thrust the barrel half the length down its throat, and said to myself, "Ready, aim, fire!" But when I pulled the trigger there was no explosion; I had forgotten to cock the gun. Accidentally I stepped on Lola, who woke and took in the desperate situation in an instant. From a shelf at his head he snatched his .45

caliber automatic army pistol and put a bullet through the beast's brain. It spit once and died. But the mate took up the fight and thrust its head through. Mouth wide open, it screamed horribly till I believe the blood curdled in my veins. I intended to do some fancy sharpshooting with the shotgun barrel thrust down its throat, but before I got in action Lola rested his automatic pistol on the back of the pilot's seat and placed a bullet square between the eyes: it died instantly.

"Lola," said I, recovering from buck fever, "you should have let me bag one of the felines."

"Reserve your fire," he answered, "until you reach home, then practice on tame felines, harmless old Tom cats."

We did not attempt to move the carcasses for snow would have come through the hole which was stuffed with the dead mountain lion. Lola dropped off to a dreamless sleep and did not wake until seven o'clock. My sleep was fitful; one moment I imagined I was being devoured by a mountain lion, and the next trying to swallow one whole. When I should have had my nap out I grew very sleepy and slept for an hour. Lola got up, went out and shoveled the snow from the airplane's cabin door, while he sang softly, "Were you there when they rolled away the stone?"

The snow, six feet deep, covered the airplane completely. He shoveled snow from the cabin top and dragged the pair of dead lions to one side. The male was very full stomached, but the female as slim as any flapper. Lola was as inquisitive as ever and must find out what was inside the male lion's stomach. I told him it would take quite a while to rip open the frozen carcass and if he felt as I did he had not an ounce of energy to spare. But he had his way; with my Marble hunting knife he carved with the despatch of an appendicitis specialist operating on a five stone patient, and in the open stomach was the mangled body of a Salmon River rural mail carrier. The right hand was missing but Lola recovered it from the other lion's stomach. He had been killed and devoured in sight of the Hickory Gulch hydraulic mine. The gloved hand still retained a letter taken up from Tumble Sillybug's mail box. The letter was a proposal of marriage from the aforesaid Tumble Sillybug to a fair French Gulcherite. To tell the rest of the story, the proposal went through Cupid's mill, and in

due season a girl baby, head the size of a Ben Davis apple, was born to the happy pair. Just before I left French Gulch for Dixieland Lola met the fond mother who held out the baby for him to kiss, which he did with affection. Said she, "Lola, old top, what if you had not killed those horrid lions? This innocent lamb would never have seen the light of day. Mr. Sillybugs, a man of his word, threatened to kill himself if I turned him down. Today he would be dead in his grave. My life-long gratitude can never repay you."

We shoveled the snow from around the airplane but a strong wind soon filled the excavation again, mostly with the snow we had shoveled. We decided to wait for the wind to abate. The airplane on the surface of the snow would be in no better condition for flying, as it could not take off. We would have to wait until the snow melted, and have our base at Callahan's. Like other Samon River inhabitants we would have to go in and out on skis. On the third day the wind ceased blowing and the snow melted a little, so we shoveled well from around the machine. This task finished we heard somebody singing down the creek, and listened attentively to make sure our ears did not deceive us. Fearing a mountain lion had camouflaged its voice to lure us to destruction, we gazed long in the direction whence the singing came. Each moment seemed to grow darker; we were going snow blind.

"I can no longer see anything," said I, utterly dejected.

"That is my fix," replied Lola. "The snow man will have a blind bridle on us if we do not use due precaution." He went in the cabin, took up the skillet, and scraping soot from the bottom made a wide black circle around his eyes. I followed his example and was relieved to find that I could see again. A man on skis with a heavy pack on his back glided over the snow. Observing us standing on a pile of shoveled snow he came by. He was Gordon Abrams, the rural mail carrier, and held the most arduous and dangerous job in Uncle Sam's postal department.

Tri-weekly he made a round trip of thirty miles from Cecilville on the South Fork to Trinity Junction on Trinity River, over rough mountain trails infested with mountain lions, encumbered with sixty pounds of mail. The perquisite was less than one thousand dollars yearly. An ace rural mail carrier

was he, never complaining there was no hard surfaced automobile highway cleared of snow during the winter for him to pass over. We asked him as to the likelihood of the snow melting. He replied there was no assurance it would melt before May and possibly not before the middle of June. He advised us to substitute skis for our present landing gear, and said he was a ski specialist. He could make skis large enough to hold up the airplane on any sort of snow. Next day was his day off, and he devoted most of the time to making airplane skis. With his assistance we removed the wheels from the landing gear, substituted skis, and tried them out with success. Mr. Abrams enjoyed his first airplane ride and became as sky minded as any sky pilot. During the brief spell we remained in the Salmon River country he had a daily ride when not carrying the mail. It was Lola's regret that there was no airport at Trinity Junction so he could carry Mr. Abrams back and forth. He overlooked a more important factor: Miners' letters must be taken up and their mail delivered along the route, and for that reason rural mail carriers will never turn their attention to airplanes but will ever remain Ford-car bugs. Next day Mr. Abrams came by and informed us he had made arrangements with William George, a cousin of the noted English statesman, Lloyd George, so we could use his alfalfa field below the snow line, to land and take off. We availed ourselves of the favor and lost no time changing from our semi-arctic surroundings to green fields and the serene atmosphere of Los Angeles. An altitude three thousand feet lower wrought the marvelous change. George airport, as we named the alfalfa field, will be an important landing place in the near future. The Salmon River country has a bright outlook: hydraulic quartz mining, stock raising, and ranching to a limited extent are on a boom. Hydro-electric power is potentially great.

William George, with three score years and a decade of man's allotted time on earth to his credit, was a unique personality. Bereft of book knowledge, he was a philosopher and as rugged as the mountains surrounding his homestead. In his younger days as a miner he had worked in the tin mines of Cornwall. He married when a stripling and at the age when most men prink up for a steady girl he was father of seven children, with

a consumptive helpmate whose continued ill health pushed him down grade to indigence. Hoping that she would find restored health and that he would find prosperity they came to America, and he found employment in the New Jersey iron mines. His wife died within a year after landing. With a motherless brood that needed a mother's care, and he a companion to cheer and comfort him, he dolled up and a first class widower's smile was on his face constantly. He could not marry his stenographer for the reason that he had none, but he did the next best thing—wed his housekeeper. Her first salutation was, "Mr. George, you are no longer an iron miner, be an iron man, and mine for gold. There is no gold in these iron-bound hills, but there is in the Golden West, the land of opportunity. I shall put my feet in the big road and if necessary walk all the way."

"My dear," remonstrated the second-hand bridegroom with a second honeymoon smile, "I am an iron miner; I know nothing about mining for gold."

"Be an iron bound gold miner," was her admonition.

And a hydraulic gold miner he had been ever since coming to California; with his wife as head of the financial department the George family became wealthy and much respected by their less fortunate neighbors. Mr. George from hearsay believed Indian Mine was located within six miles of his alfalfa farm, but that did not interest him as his mining activity was confined to auriferous gravel deposits more sure to yield financial returns than quartz mining. He gave illustrations of the fact that quartz mining in his locality was not a financial success. The Caribou mine owned and operated by Abrams Brothers went in the hole thirty thousand dollars, which broke their "nest egg." He believed the Indians had certain rights to be respected by their pale-face brothers. Indian Mine was for Indians, as America should be for Americans. Outside of granting us the free use of his alfalfa field as a landing place he would not concede us any other favor. Frank Abrams, father of Gordon Abrams, was Mr. George's nearest up river neighbor. The Abrams' home of logs had a rough exterior and an interior dolled up with old newspapers plastered on the walls. There was no ceiling, and the floor might as well have been nonexistent so far as keeping out the cold. During win-

ter weather the winds piped shrill through inch wide spaces between the floor boards. In the summer, also, the heat from the ground came through. In such a primitive home Mr. Abrams raised four children—two boys and two girls. The boys were still single but the girls married young. The eldest, Birdidee, wed James Camp, the merchant prince of Orleans Bar. The youngest, Passie, wed George McNeil, a freighter who owned several pack mule trains, and packed merchandise to Sawyer's Bar, the Forks of the Salmon River, and the New River mining district. There was a bachelor, Uncle George, who was more like a father to his brother's children. Abrams brothers believed in quartz mines, for the world's great gold producers had come from that source. They believed the Indian Mine was located within three miles of their home and was the source of the Salmon River Indians' livelihood. To take it from them would be robbery which might excite them to open hostility and to murder all the whites in the district, out numbered five to one. Mr. Abrams' sensible attitude toward the matter put a damper on my zeal to find the Indian Mine, and I told Lola it might be well to let it go by the board for all time. He did not care for the financial returns that it might bring in, but he wanted to find it to see what it was like, probably a hole in the ground as the Portuguese cattleman described it. We spent several days prospecting among the rugged hills between the forks of Salmon River. There were plenty of barren ledges, and in a few instances quartz from stringers carried a little free gold—just enough to make a prospector nearly work himself to a living skeleton hoping the stringers would widen to a paying mine. It was decided the gold diggers must try to find Indian Mine. Fortunately, they had been kept in the background. Next morning before daylight we tried to leave without waking a member of the George family, but Mr. George had had his breakfast, and we saw him leave by the garden gate with pick, shovel, and pan. He stopped at short intervals to see if anybody followed.

"He is on the trail of Indian Mine," said Lola, as he shouldered the oil drum containing the gold diggers and followed the skulker—who left the trail and dodged behind a manzanilla thicket.

"Wait, Lola," I called out of breath. The gold pan sus-

pended by a wire from the shovel handle over my shoulder came in contact with the pick and strummed a Rough Rider's tune. I pretended not to notice Mr. George who thought he had out-foxed Foxy Grandpa.

I overtook Lola, and we went on our way like sensible men and finally rested beside a stream of considerable volume, lazily flowing through a flat in semi-stagnant condition. A beaver dam long in disuse was further down stream. The industrious animals were trapped before the miners came. Presently Mr. George appeared, dug a pan of gravel from the creek's bed, and panned it out carefully. Through his spectacles he examined the pan's bottom as he turned it to the rising sunlight. The residue from the panning was not satisfactory, a single small color and a little black sand.

He tried several more pans of gravel with about the same result. Exasperated, he threw down the pan and muttered, "The little rascal salted that pan of gravel."

"Trying to find a salt mine, Mr. George?" asked Lola with a whimsical smile.

Mr. George jumped like an Indian brave with a bullet through his vitals, and stammered, "You here?"

"We heard this was a salt creek and thought possibly it might head in a salt mine."

"Last Sunday," continued Mr. George, "Grandson, Haughty Jordan's little boy, and I came here to catch bull-heads. I tested a pan of gravel and found this." He showed a gold nugget worth five dollars. "When my back was turned the little rascal must have dropped it in the pan." He left for home, out of humor—Lola lifted the oil drum on my shoulders and I staggered beneath the weight; presently my foot entangled a vine, and I sprawled full length amid ooze and slime that covered me completely. The gold diggers tried to escape from the almost submerged oil drum. Lola offered me first aid but I declined and told him to extend the courtesy to the gold diggers, so he rolled the oil drum to solid ground not far away.

"We are toting useless weight," said I, scraping the ooze and slime from my clothes. "The gold diggers have legs and must use them as we do ours."

They were liberated. Lola took possession of the male and

I the female. Sorry looking creatures they were, slime covered and shivering from their involuntary cold bath. The male tried to dig in but the formation was not favorable for gold. The creature was cold. It would have burrowed under a scrap heap of discarded golden chariots, blacksmith's worn out tongs, and lady's curling irons. Lola poked it with a stick, which made it angry and it ran growling up a steep hill covered with manzanilla thickets. A step or two behind, he tried in vain to grasp the short chain fastened to a leather collar. I kept in sight of him, and forgot all about the other gold digger left in my charge. Lola ran over a ridge and I heard an exultant shout, so I hurried to the crest of the ridge, and below was a large dump, mostly of boulders from a tunnel driven in the hillside.

"Indian Mine found at last!" I exclaimed, out of breath.

"Nothing of the sort," retorted Lola.

It was a prospect tunnel Mr. Rainbow had driven to tap an ancient river bed. He found the river bed all right, but the boulders bore mute testimony to the fact there was not gold enough to make a test run. It was the dump that had shown as a blur in the airplane photograph. The male gold digger ran in the tunnel and Lola after it, while my job was to find the other gold digger that had run down the creek. I traced it quite a distance by the ooze falling off its body but at length lost all trace, so I went to a small rise of ground free from brush, which had a good view of the creek a long way down stream. The creature was not in sight. "What would Lola think of my carelessness?" I mused during one of the darkest moments of my uneventful life. The female lost, the gold diggers would be extinct when the male died. If I were lost instead it would be much better, for the world contained but two gold diggers and about two billion of *homo sapiens*. Distracted, I paced back and forth across the limited clear space, and my body caught in a concealed wire resembling an iron telegraph wire tied to a stake. At the other end was a long-legged rubber boot with a mass of moulded paper in it. There was a printed mine location notice on which I deciphered "Indian Mine." A white man had located Indian Mine but had been apprehended by Indians, who staked him out by the wire tied around his rubber boot. Whether he lived through

the ordeal no one knows. At any rate, the famous Indian Mine was close by. I helloed to Lola to make haste and was answered by somebody down the creek. The voice was not Lola's but more like a re-echo of my own voice. I went down the opposite side of the hill from the creek to where there was a large spring of clear ice cold water. The ground was strewn with broken pottery, mostly of white man's make. "Made in Germany" was on the back of a broken plate with a piece missing about the size of a quarter of a pumpkin pie. "Made in United States of America" was on the back of a cracked saucer. A platter of Indian make was covered with pictographs which undoubtedly were made by original Americans. In the midst of a chaparral thicket an animal broke some twigs as it trod on them. I peered and behold! the lost gold digger was burrowing in the ground and soon disappeared from sight. The thud of a living creature landing on a stone quite a distance below sounded faintly. I crept into the thicket where it had disappeared and looked into the hole it had made. I saw nothing, but heard its jaws working as if eating gold. A few feet further, near the outer edge of the thicket, was a mine shaft covered over about twenty feet deep. I removed a small pine log to admit light and saw the gold digger at the bottom scratching coarse gold from the ledge. I descended on notched poles instead of ladders to recover the gold digger. Indian Mine was found by mere chance and somehow or other I was not as elated as I thought I should be. Rather, I was depressed. It was private property owned by the first inhabitants of America long before the coming of the white man to civilize and christianize the red children of the forest, plain, and sage brush. It was their treasury on which they drew when in need. The Indian is not a spendthrift outside of the acquisition of many squaws, herds of cayuses, packs of dogs, several dozen blankets, a United States bonded warehouse of fire water, and one hundred enemy scalps dangling from his belt. No, he is not extravagant.

Thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of gold dust was in sight. The three foot ledge gleamed as yellow with gold dust as the dome of Solomon's temple in a midsummer day. In the ledge was a drift about four yards long, at the face was a pile of quartz, or rather gold of several tons

weight, to be taken out when needed. An ancient deer horn pick and a modern miner's pick lay side by side. There was no shovel, a graniteware plate was used instead. The gold digger ate its fill of gold and curled up like an armadillo. I put it on my shoulder and started to climb the notched pole, when two faces peered over the edge of the shaft. One was that of an Indian named Guenko Sicksheep and the other that of a negro named Buster Nutter, more often known as Keen Kutter, for he always carried a Keen Kutter hunting knife and his keen hands were ever ready to use it. Keen Kutter was a native of the Salmon River country. It is said his mother was a squaw and his father a West Indian negro. He was found some twenty years previous on a cold midwinter day on the main trail from Etna Mills to Sawyer's Bar, wrapped in a tattered Indian blanket, sucking at a snowball a pack mule had cast from its hoof. Keen Kutter had no babyhood, very little childhood, and more than his share of villainous manhood. His artfulness kept him beyond the reach of the law's long arm. He preferred an Indian wickiup to a white man's mansion. Nothing was too low for him to stoop, nothing too high for him to reach up and try to get possession. His comrade, a full blood Digger Indian, was harmless except to worms, bugs, and roots on which his ancestors had subsided until the white man came with all sorts of high falutin' ways to tickle the palate.

"You want Indian Mine," said Keen Kutter using good English, and leering down at me, "and you shall have it as long as you live, but you cannot spend a short bit's worth of its gold."

"I do not want the mine," I replied weak in the knees. "My gold digger fell into the mine and I came down here to get it."

He guffawed and held a parley with his comrade and left. With my pole pick the Indian stood ready to knock me in the head should I climb the notched pole within his reach. I ascended part way and he cast a stone that made me let go the pole. I fell heavily on my back and might have been killed outright but the gold digger acted as a buffer. In the interim Keen Kutter returned with a six inch log to lay across the shaft. I was to be buried alive, for I could not subsist on gold like the gold digger. A few days would end it all. I called

at the top of my lungs until a shower of stone was cast down on me by my heartless captors, that bruised me all over. Then I speculated how long I might reasonably expect to live without food or water; eight to ten days would be the limit. Under no circumstances would I attempt to eat the gold digger, as it might be rank poison. Another log was laid over the shaft. I crawled into the drift to escape a shower of small stones let loose by fitting the log in place. There was gold enough in sight to save my neck from the hangman's noose or my body from the electric chair if I had committed a capital offense, but my captors were not to be bribed. Suddenly, as the last log of six all told was ready to put in place, a great commotion began above me. Lola's fists worked rapidly. He was an amateur pugilist of no mean ability and his tongue called out red-hot names that I omit recording. Keen Kutter's voice rose to keen shrieks, for the male gold digger was at him with a vengeance. He tried to flee but Lola knocked him down with the pick that the Indian stood ready to slay me with. Gold digger on my shoulder, I climbed the notched pole to the landing ten feet below the surface. Lola compelled Keen Kutter to cast aside the logs for me to emerge. Then both gold diggers attacked Keen Kutter, who to escape their fury jumped into the mine shaft. He landed on his head, but his thick skull saved him. The Indian jumped in after him. Lola and I replaced the logs over the shaft, but a small space was left between two logs to admit air and a little sunshine. We did not bury them alive and had no intention of doing so. Three days afterwards they were rescued by a band of Indians who had come for gold to settle their debts, but Keen Kutter succumbed to blood poison from the bites of the gold digger. When we returned to the George landing field late in the afternoon, we reported that Indian Mine was a hoax. We flew straight for French Gulch and were always nonchalant when questioned concerning Indian Mine.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYTHICAL BLUE BUCKET MINE

An airplane trip to Oregon to search for the Blue Bucket placer mine, alleged to have been discovered by Oregon trail blazers in 1830, was decided on by Lola Wheeler and myself. We decided to go just as soon as minor repairs were made on the airplane, which had been damaged considerably during the severe snow storm on Big Flat. The machine was put in excellent shape within a week. While Lola and the mechanics were making the repairs I occupied my time with hope of good financial results by prospecting for gold in Slaughter House Gulch about two miles from French Gulch. Considerable "coyoting" had been done there in the early days of quartz mining. Delving among the old diggings I found a strong trace of fine gold coming from a blind ledge, that is, a ledge with no out cropping. I panned the soil until I found the source, a three-inch wide stringer rich in free gold. It would never be another Indian Mine but had the advantage of being close to civilization and accessible every day of the year with no fear of perfidious redskins with murder in their hearts, who could not realize that a prospector wants a valuable gold mine more than they. I sunk an incline shaft on the stringer that sloped with the hill. A short tunnel tapped the stringer barren except in one spot about the size of a cow boy's hat brim. To my mind the prospect was going strong and would develop to a paying mine. It was my delight to button-hole every stranger whether he came to buy a gold mine or a gold brick, to rustle cattle, or hold up the French Gulch-Weaverville motor bus, and secure several thousand dollars in gold bullion. All these things took place when I lived at French Gulch. They were halcyon days that gave me a broad outlook on life although I saw through distorted glasses. I was satisfied with my toy mine and would have worked in it all fall, but Lola had his mind made up for that Oregon prospecting trip. Other

French Gulch denizens were making preparation to search for the same mine, and we wanted to be among the first to go as soon as I disposed of my mining claim. I found a buyer, victim rather, in the person of Tommy Staton, a practical English miner who knew mines better than any professor of a state school of mines. I sold the mine dirt cheap for twenty-five dollars.

Said Tommy, "As you are a stranger far from home I pity you, and my sympathy is backed up by twenty-five dollars in gold coin, but I do not consider your mine worth a squib."

He spent a great deal of time and money trying to find pay ore, but I had dug it out. I was the only person who came near breaking even who ever mined in Slaughter House Gulch although my compensation was but two short bits a day. Now, a turnip and cabbage grower named Ah Chin has established himself in the Gulch. The bland son of the land of dragons is not at all afraid of the white man's hoodoo numeral, 13, for on that date he bought his ranch.

Lola was undecided whether to equip the airplane's landing gear with wheels or skis. Some suggested the machine should be converted to a hydroplane, for we were going to Oregon, land of the web foot. Such feet are not adapted to desert traveling, where sand and gravel as hot as purgatorial coals constitute a large area of the state's dry land. More than two decades previous I was one of many gold rushers bound for Sumter, Baker County, Oregon, and no snow covered the ground until late in the season. We considered about eight weeks would be ample time to run down every Blue Bucketer who ever saw, heard, or read of the Blue Bucket placer mine. I had traveled across the state of Oregon by cayuse back. The beast out-bucked all other bucking equines, I encountered little snow, and conditions living out of doors were unsurpassed. Our airplane trip was planned with unusual care so there would be no misfiring. Many wanted to go with us. Some said if the gold diggers were not considered as members of the party two of the best citizens of French Gulch would plant their anatomy in the airplane and transplant it when auriferous soil was reached, but we declined all offers. My heart went out to a sixteen year old girl of Lady Heath valor who wanted to be a flying angel while in her corporeal state.

She declared Lola was a chump unworthy to button the lower button of her flappers and me a mean old thing who should be given a grizzly bear's den on the summit of Mt. Erebus in which to live the remainder of my days. Lola and I took her tirades as compliments and told her if fortune favored us we would buy her a classy airplane and a sport Ford coupe. She did not believe a word we said, but Lola intends to make the promise come true soon, as he has googoo eyes on her. The gold diggers had a more comfortable cage than the oil drum which had been left in the quagmire close to Indian Mine. It was a cut down monkey cage without the usual swing, and filled nearly all the space behind the robot. They grew fast. The male was four feet long, not including the tail, and weighed one hundred and fifty pounds; the female, of the same length, was a third lighter and willowy up to the last minute school-girl form. The short tail all the while was cold. Evolution decreed it should shed its tail. To many of our friends it seemed preposterous we should take the gold diggers along to discover placer gold in a creek bed, where nuggets were so plain in sight that a Blue Bucket full of them was picked up by a hayseed boy because they resembled potatoes. Where was that stream with a Henry Ford fortune in gold nuggets? The most authentic information I received was "Somewhere in Oregon," which is a large state and ranks ninth in size. It is of oblong form, about 275 miles from north to south, and 375 miles east to west with a total area of 96,399 square miles. Only about 1.13 percent of the surface of Oregon is occupied by lakes. As yet the state is sparsely settled. Not much attention is given to mining for precious metals. The web foot likes his half wild cayuse ponies, cattle, and sheep, and fruit trees, the care of which do not demand strenuous exertion like placer mining. Mr. Webfoot was represented to us Californians as truthful and reliable. One of them told me I owed him fifty cents for a night's lodging among his bales of hay. I thought the price exorbitant, when his sheep, goats, and swine cuddled between the bales gratis, but he said if the money was not forthcoming he would skin me alive. He went for his skinning knife, and I mounted my piebald cayuse and batted out of sight.

Flying conditions were excellent the morning we decided to

take off for Baker City. A mild southerly wind blew, and diaphanous clouds scudded, which during rainy season would portend falling weather. By mid-forenoon the wind abated and the clouds disappeared. At nine-forty-five the airplane ran down the landing field and took off amid hurrahs and waving of handkerchiefs, circled twice over town, and then took a bee line for our destination. The reconstructed airplane was more rigid and guided easier, so the robot was almost at her ease. The course westerly of Mt. Shasta was over Modoc County, a land of lava and desolation. We flew low over the scene of the Modoc Indian war in which many soldiers were killed, dislodging the Indians from their stronghold. There were no towns, no ranches; a few lean coyotes and jack rabbits were in possession of the land. There is little arable land in Modoc County. In a few isolated places cattle and sheep thrive on the succulent bunch grass. The seed is equal to so much corn or oats. In the upper part of the county sheep roamed at will. What few we saw seemed minded by faithful collie dogs more than by indolent unkept herders who have become adepts at making booze. They make it from any substance containing sugar; and there is a certain amount of sugar in old boots and sheep droppings. Herder's home brew may not be of the best quality, but it is made from cheap material and aftermath headaches come dear. The cattlemen were different from the sheen herders, more intelligent and better dressed. They had good mounts, whereas the herder was mounted on his legs that wobbled under the weight of his body. The cattlemen built fences, dug pools to catch water when winter rains came, and some of them had alfalfa ranches and fed their cattle when snow covered the range. The sheen men never put up any hay but drive their flocks south where snow never falls. Igneous rocks cover most of the surface of Modoc County. In the tertiary age it was an Inferno. The very earth seemed torn asunder. Torrents of lava burst from fissures on the plains and flowed like the mighty Columbia River of the present day. If any form of life, animal or vegetable, existed then it was over done in what we now term the "Land of the Devil's Bake Ovens." The same formation extended to Castle Butte, Baker County, fifty odd miles southwest of Baker City. Then the out cropping rocks were from the tertiary to the present age.

There was not much granite, mostly metamorphic rocks. Here and there a little limestone. When the ocean covered the land conditions were not favorable for much shell development. A small seam of bituminous coal too small to be of commercial value lies thirty miles west of Baker City. It was formed during the carboniferous period.

Baker City airport was small and exceedingly rough, little used except by home flyers. The doughty denizens saw more profit in a fleece than in a flock of birdmen. We put up at Baker's Oven Hotel, an up-to-date hostelry, electric lighted bath in every room, tonsorial parlor with a manicurist, cigar and news stand. A speakeasy dispensed coca cola, grape juice, nehi, and other soft drinks not too soft to offend the taste of anti-Volstead. Business was not brisk. The wool clip was marketed and the proceeds spent. The few surrounding ranches were small, owned mostly by sheepmen. There were no tenants; a man of that class was too wise to try to make a living when the owner, rent free, could not make both ends meet. None was interested in mining. The generation before them had tried mining, made a failure, and the son did not follow in dad's footsteps. The proprietor of Baker's Oven Hotel, before he became a landlord, worked a placer mine in a gulch not far distant from the Last Chance quartz mine. He worked his mine up to the source of gold which he named "White Swan." White Bilk would have been more appropriate. The mine was white with barren quartz and lacked the yellow luster of gold. It was idle and for sale cheap. Everybody was shy until it went by the board for non-assessment work. We were informed the locator never took out a dollar's worth of pay ore. Lola and I examined the White Swan mine on foot as it was open to location. It was so unpromising that it gave us a tired feeling and I had no energy to write a location notice had we been so disposed. We returned by way of Last Chance mine, discovered by a mail carrier in the early days. The mine was worked through a perpendicular shaft more than a thousand feet deep. There is a strong inflow of hot water which makes it difficult for mining. It is the only paying mine in the locality. There was a prospect, Best Chance, three miles toward Baker City, which on the surface indicated a bonanza. It was worked by a young man whose name I cannot

recall. He was willing to wager his life on it as a paying mine. Every foot it descended the ledge got poorer and at length pinched out. Some ore reduced at the Last Chance quartz mill did not go ten dollars a ton, which so disheartened the owner that he blew his brains out at midnight on a lonely highway. Any miner who cannot stand such slight misfortune should have no brains to blow out. The timbered shaft had caved in and we could not inspect the ledge which was about on a par with the White Swan mine.

Our airplane, left at a garage, had been tampered with by children and a nearly grown boy. Lola made pointed remarks to the boy, who replied that his Dad would put a head on him.

Said the garage owner to Lola, "You have put your foot into it. That kid's father is a scrapper known as Blue Bucket Smith, so named because he insists he found gold in a creek bed when the Oregon trail blazers passed through this locality. He declares he filled a blue bucket full of gold nuggets and carried the bucket to camp."

"No bigger lie was ever told. Consider the weight of a bucket full of gold, five hundred pounds at least. He does not heed the reason. I will attend to his ribs," remarked Lola with eyes for the militant old gentleman.

Pugnacious Mr. Smith came on the war path.

"Good day, Mr. Smith, I wish you as much good luck as the Blue Bucket mine should have brought you. Is there a way I can increase your bodily comfort?"

"I have not had a chew of tobacco since day before yesterday," replied the pacified old fire-eater.

"Why, Mr. Smith, how did you stand it? Take a chew and keep the plug," said Lola, as he cut a corner off an end. "If that is not enough of the cherished weed I will buy you a blue bucket full of the best tobacco on the market."

"Blue Bucket mine is yours if you can find it with my valuable assistance," he replied. "I searched for it fifty years and never found it. On the right bank of a creek from the bed of which I picked up a blue bucket full of gold nuggets was the front running gear of an iron axle wagon minus the wheels. The lynch pin and thimble skein was not invented until years afterwards."

"How large was the bucket you filled with gold?"

"A zinc water bucket of ordinary size; yes, sir, I filled that bucket to the brim with gold nuggets and toted it back to camp close by. It was heavy as you must allow, but my heart was light at finding so much sudden wealth."

"If, as you say, that bucket was full of gold you toted five hundred pounds or more. Cut that out!"

"But I am truthful, the only mortal named Smith ever known to tell the truth."

Lola gave way to laughter, but at length he asked, "Where is that creek?"

"Somewhere in Oregon. I cannot tell just where, I was a small boy then."

"You must have been Samson's own son to tote a water bucket full of gold nuggets."

"It was a blue water bucket of regular size, not a skimpy child's bucket."

"Mr. Smith," said I, "stand aside, you are excused."

"What do you think of Mr. Smith's story?" I asked Lola, who replied that Sinbad the sailor had nothing on him.

Mr. Smith's testimony was so direct I did not see why he should be cross-examined. As he left the garage I grasped his hand and said, "You told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"You bet," was his laconic reply.

It is possible he might have picked up a child's size bucket of gold nuggets and carried it back to camp, but outside of filling a blue bucket with gold nuggets his memory was a blank. An old placer miner living at Drewsy had said he was present in camp when the Smith boy came in with a bucket full of gold nuggets, so we decided to interview him shortly. That evening at Baker's Oven Hotel was a rehearsal by home folks of their part in an entertainment to be given the minister on the following Sabbath evening when he would be "pounded." As a donation to the worthy cause we were asked to give a pound of gold. Lola donated half a pound. My donation was a half dollar that possibly contained more lead than silver. The landlady and daughter played a duet on a piano. Two sons played saxophones, and a third on a horse fiddle. The Chinese cook performed on an instrument that resembled neither drum, fife, accordion, jew's harp, or banjo.

He made dissonances that would frighten a dragon. He was a band all by himself. The colored bell hop rattled bones and made a great racket on a banjo. Lola, with a new pair of twelve-dollar number ten Fosheirm shoes on that pinched his feet, sat in a rocker, feet elevated on the fireless heater, and sang, "My Little Footsteps Lead Me Up to Jesus."

Next morning we left for Drewsy, one hundred miles distant, in our airplane and landed on the town square or rather on what once was the town square. The town consisted of three small buildings in the last stage of dilapidation. In the most dilapidated building lived Wardell Liverwort, almost a centurian, bent nearly double with the infirmity of old age. His long nose and pointed chin had made agreement to be on friendly terms. They almost met over a gash in the face representing the mouth. In piping tones he answered our questions promptly. We supposed he would be hard of hearing, but his hearing was good.

Said Lola at length, "Uncle, tell us all you know about the Blue Bucket placer mine."

Replied he, "Blue Bucket Mine is fabulously rich. I would have been a millionaire long ago if I had remembered just where it is located. In those days of trail blazing there were no wagon roads. Indian trails were few and great distances apart. They branched in all directions and led nowhere. The sun by day and stars by night were our guideboards, and we seldom traveled after sunset. On Sunday we remained in camp and kept the day holy. On a certain cloudy Monday morning we got off the course and nearly doubled on our tracks. It was when the little Smith boy picked up a small tin bucket of gold nuggets from the bed of a creek almost gone dry. I do not remember the direction that the creek flowed. For years I carried the largest nugget the Smith boy picked up and paid it to the minister as his fee when I got married. There's plenty of gold yet in the hills east of Baker City. I was too old to work in the mines when I came here fifty years ago."

"How old are you, Uncle?" Lola asked him.

"One hundred and ten years, a long span, yet it seems short."

"Do you know anybody else familiar with the story of Blue Bucket mine?"

"There is Bandy Leatherdog who said he helped the Smith boy pick up the gold nuggets. I know it is so for I saw them fill the bucket."

The next person to interview would be Mr. Leatherdog who lived at Burns, the capital of Harney County.

We returned to Baker City for the night.

As far as we could ascertain there was no landing field at Burns but airplanes landed on the fair ground race track, a good landing place during dry weather, a mud hole when it was wet. No soaking rains had fallen yet and the race track was in good condition. The landlord of Baker's Oven Hotel did not think it possible for an airplane to land at Burns with any degree of safety for three pilots had been seriously injured landing there. However, that did not deter us. Next morning with the rising sun we took off. The sky was cloudless. The sun, shining over the distant mountain tops of the Seven Devils country, seemed as large as the push cart wheel of an Italian peddler. A gentle, northeast wind, as we were going southwesterly, made flying conditions ideal, as we left Baker City. The town of Burns was about two hundred miles, a distance we hoped to cover within two hours. As there were no high mountains to pass over we flew at a low altitude within a few hundred feet of the ground, that we might observe the terrain for possible auriferousness. From Drewsy on there was a vast lava cap, thousands of feet thick, elevated to high ridges and in some places eroded into gullies. If I wished my worst enemy a future life amid hell fire and brimstone I would give him free transportation to this part of Oregon and thrust him down into one of the great fissures that connect directly with the lower regions! An overflow of lava from a fissure many miles long deluged the land and heated the atmosphere to a blast furnace temperature. The lava flowed into the Columbia River and changed its course to that of the present. It was not all loss, for nature is never a wrecker but a builder. After countless ages some lava decomposed and bunch grass crept in and grew wherever a rootlet could penetrate the rocks; and this in time made soil. When man came to dominate the region with his live stock there was no better grazing ground.

There are several thermal springs; the largest and hottest is near the hamlet of Beulah where ranch women do their laundry work and town dwellers have squaws to do theirs. During hog-killing season swine are driven from each ranch, and slaughtered, and the carcass soused in the spring to make the hair slip off. Care must be taken not to let the carcass stay in too long, for the hair will set and be more difficult to remove than hair on the pig the barber shaved. A story was bruited about maybe for our benefit, about a stranger, supposed cattle rustler and sheep thief, who was taken to the spring to prove his guilt or innocence of charges preferred against him. Soused in the spring three times, if guilty he would be boiled as red as the cheeks of an ancient maiden when she responds to the door-bell rung by a month-old widower; if innocent, he would come out unharmed.

We circled over the hot spring where the ranch women were doing their laundry work. In the background was a drove of swine with neither guilt nor innocence to prove. All that was requested of them was to yield up their hams, spare ribs, and bacon. At our approach the women ran screaming. It was their first sight of an airplane. The men must have sworn for I noticed their jaws wagging, and their clinched fists were shook at us. The most bellicose among them unlimbered his side-arms and tried to pot us, and all the others got busy. During a discharge of leaden pellets Lola and I laid low. The robot was shot through the head but she never minded it in the least. That demonstrated the superiority of a robot at piloting an airplane, but it ended our interest in Beulah bipeds. A higher altitude was taken and kept for several miles, when I noticed a man on top of a jagged lava block waving a white cloth at us to attract our attention. Around him milled many small animals intent on destroying him.

"Lola," said I, "for heaven's sake fly low or the coyotes will have a feast."

Lola relieved the robot of control and brought the airplane as low as he dared. The man, a herder of old rams, was himself herded by his flock. He had fled to the top of the lava block to save himself from a butting contest. Lola gave me the controls, and with the rope he had snaked logs he climbed down on the landing gear and lassoed the most pugnacious ram.

Then he directed me to fly ten miles out in the desert where the butter was dropped. The operation was repeated until twenty pugnacious rams were scattered to the four winds of Heaven. The remainder took to their heels. The herder, a good shepherd, no more to be molested, begged to be taken aboard the airplane. Lola dropped a large open noose around his middle. If the rope had been around his neck he would have strangled to death. Lola pulled him up to the landing gear and he climbed up into the cabin. Recovering his wind, he said, "I am George Pickens, a native of South Carolina, and I am sixty-five years old. Never before in all my venture-some life did I pass through such a season of horror as last night. During every minute I thought my time had come."

"Did those Beulahites try you by the hot spring ordeal? Methinks any herder who got away with a flock of old rams should be classed A while all other herders are classed as Z."

"My land! you do not know me. I am of the famous Pickens family that moved to Alabama when that country was first settled and located in the county that bears my family name. I came West to find the Blue Bucket Mine. Got flat broke after searching for it ten years. Money gone, credit gone, I had to seek an honest means of acquiring a livelihood. Nobody would employ me, as my past record was against me. Ten years spent looking for a mine that never existed; they all declared I was hopelessly insane or a fool. I was on the point of starvation when I learned a herder was wanted.

"Your qualifications?' asked the owner.

"Ten years as a searcher for one mine.'

"The job is yours herding fifty old rams; no other person in all Oregon is so well qualified. Your pay is a dollar a month per ram. Supplies and pup tent are furnished at my expense. The whole of Oregon is your range. On the first of each month write B. S. (Blacksheep) Tupper, Pendleton, Oregon. I am a direct descendant of the English poet Tupper, and for that reason like a quiet, pastoral life which only a sheep herder enjoys to the full baker's dozen measure.' The first month was uneventful; I enjoyed it, with plenty of goodies to eat, and shelter over me at night. The wrinkles were out of my stomach in six weeks and I could digest gravel. There was not much walking while tending the flock, which was prone

to wander southerly and would soon reach the line that divides Oregon from California. It is an unwritten law among sheep herders and cattlemen living on each side of the state line, not to cross it. Last night I tried to turn my flock back and enter the Great Sandy Desert of Lake County which is ideal for sheep during the winter where sufficient rain falls to fill water holes that go dry as soon as warm weather comes.

"Yesterday I decided to turn my job over to another Blue Bucket mine hunter who has spent twenty years looking for the mine; not full time, mind you, as he had a side line branding his neighbors' mavericks with his own brand. The neighbors went into session and demanded that he restore each critter to its lawful owner and then herd sheep the remainder of his days. He knew his neighbors' mettle, so he sent word to get their property and he would fifty-fifty their other requirements. At sunset the divided house became united, and turned against me. My tent was torn to tatters, I would have been butted to where the roll is called up yonder, but I fled to safety on the block of lava you rescued me from."

"Is Blue Bucket mine a figment of some cheerful old liar's imagination, or is it a fact?" I asked Mr. Pickens, who replied that he believed the story.

He continued, "Proof of the mine's existence is in the hands of a livery keeper named Bob T. Hostler, called by everybody Bob Tail Hostler, living at Burns. Besides a paying livery he owns droves of cayuse ponies ranging on the Great Sandy Desert."

We did not want to manifest too much interest in Blue Bucket mine for Mr. Pickens might suspect us of being unduly interested. He thought he could sing like a cockatrice and sang, "I want to be an angel." We circled over Burns several times to pick out a safe landing, and came down on the right bank of Silver River, brackish and of considerable size, which flowed into Malhuer Lake. It was lucky for our airplane that we landed across the river, for almost everybody wanted a souvenir of it, but the river kept them at bay. More than a dozen wanted to ride at one take-off. Mr. Pickens and I waded the river waist deep and went to Mr. Hostler's livery stable. The owner unlocked his safe, took out a zinc bucket painted blue, full of a yellow substance too light for gold nuggets, and

set the bucket down on his desk. Then he stood on a soap box behind the desk and began a stereotyped harangue. "Gentlemen," said he, as wry faced as if he had been drinking Malhuer lake water, "see this bucket full to the brim of gold nuggets from the lost Blue Bucket mine! The original bucket and gold nuggets picked up by my lately deceased father when he was six years old is here on exhibition before you. He was the youngest member of the Oregon trail blazers. Wonder lad he was! He did not want the gold for his own selfish use, but gave it to the minister whose prayers and supplications brought the heroic band safely through the wilderness to the promised land of Willamette Valley."

"Mr. Hostler, a moment please! How could a six-year old boy carry a bucket of gold nuggets that weighed more than five hundred pounds?" I asked, interrupting him.

"By divine aid, sir. How did David, a sixteen-year old stripling, cut off Goliath's head with a sword weighing hundreds of pounds?" The motley crowd applauded long and loudly.

He continued, "The next gent who interrupts me, telling you all how to make a vast fortune quicker than a ram shakes its head, will be ducked in Beulah Hot Spring."

"That he will!" vociferated Hostler's fellow conspirators.

"Gentlemen, if it were not for that skunk butting in you would be on the way to acquire sudden wealth. This Blue Bucket of gold which has been in my possession for fifty years, was given me the day I attained my majority. It could have been converted into cash, and if I had placed the proceeds in a savings bank at four percent interest compounded annually, in sixteen years the principal would have doubled; but instead I kept it as prima facie evidence when a doubting Thomas yaps his doubts as to the mine's existence. The mine lies to the west over the Great Sandy Desert, just as the Klondike lay beyond Chil Koot Pass. The desert must be traversed in order to reach the mine that lies in the bed of a creek, which I have named Jordan. The best way reaching the new Eldorado is by pack horses, and in my stable there are many pack horses warranted to tote the two largest webfoots in the state of Oregon all day. They are for sale at the preposterous price of forty dollars each. If one half of the applicants pay up, my stable

will be empty at noon. Gentlemen, a little surprise for you all." He pointed to a gunny sack in the corner, full of something resembling potatoes. "That is the amount of gold nuggets my silent partner brought in last night as my share in a single day's mining."

"Potatoes," said I, falsetto.

"Potatoes means gold," retorted the speaker. "All you who want pack horses for transportation to the Jordan Creek gold diggings, select them from the herd in my corral."

There was a mad rush for the corral. I did not go, but looking Mr. Hostler in the eye I said, "Let me examine the Blue Bucket gold nuggets. They do not look like gold."

He was suspicious and put the bucket down behind the soap box on which he stood.

"Mr. Hostler," said I, in a small voice, "excuse me please for interrupting, but your gold is exotic to my idea of gold. My partner has two animals known as gold diggers and they can decide true gold from false gold."

He ridiculed the idea that beasts could have more sense than men, but I went to the river bank and told Lola to bring the gold diggers forthwith. He did not stop to take off his shoes, but rolled his pants to the top of the inside seam, and plunged into the water with the gold diggers after him. The animals were strong swimmers and reached the bank, on which I stood, encouraging them, by the time Lola was half way across. As usual he led the male and I the female. Mr. Hostler was afraid of them and reached in a drawer for a cap and ball six shooter, but I wrested the gun from his grasp and said, "Fair play for all." I stood on a chair to prevent the angry gold diggers from attacking me. They rooted the blue bucket over, and sent the contents, brass scraps and old iron in every direction. They tore the gunny sack open. Potatoes from the "Old Sod" could not be more perfect. They attacked Mr. Hostler, scratched, bit him severely, and tore a gold stud from his shirt bosom. He shrieked and took the name of God in vain in every way known to man, civilized or savage. When they finally ceased their mauling, Lola and I each shouldered one and beat it back to the airplane, satisfied that the Blue Bucket mine was a hoax.

CHAPTER XII.

LOLA WHEELER, AMATEUR SCIENTIST

There was no circling over Burns to gain altitude. The airplane's nose pointed straight up so it seemed to me, and any moment it was liable to go into a tail spin. Up and up we climbed, as if the Sierra mountains were to be crossed. When the desired altitude was reached, Lola turned the control over to the robot. Said he, "Those web foot people have mailed fists and unlimber their side arms at the slightest provocation. We left them at the jumping-off place for demonstration how to find Blue Bucket mine. What flabbergasts me is that people in this enlightened age are so credulous. Those hundreds of dupes outbound for Jordan Creek in the heart of Great Sandy Desert are victims of a shrewd old liar, B. T. Hostler, whom Ananias would worship as his supreme being."

"Lola," said I, ignoring his theme, "would it not be better to fly over the desert than go direct to French Gulch?"

Replied he, "We are not homeward bound but on a truth-seeking trip. Ever since you called my attention to the vast outflow of lava that began in Modoc County, California, a theory, not an idle speculation, entered my mind and I shall seek for proof."

I was pleased that we were not going back direct to French Gulch, for I was eager to watch the crowd of gold rushers to an imaginary Eldorado. Once I had rushed to a real Eldorado, the Klondike, and my sympathy was with the gold rushers. The airplane was brought down to a good view of the Great Sandy Desert. All along the trail gold rushers were scattered, every man for himself, each one trying to keep out the devil's clutches, even the hind most. Some were afoot, as their mounts had balked or given out. Lying along the trail were all sorts of discarded property: coats, high hats, boots, shoes, socks, some of wholesome laundry work, others smelled of toe itch and supurating bunions. There were slabs of home-cured

bacon and packing house hams, loaves of baker's bread, and pones of sour dough bread. A few rushers had given up, and laid down to die, wholly resigned to their fate; among them was an old man who should have had sufficient discretion not to be hoodwinked, but gold is a lodestone attracting all from the cradle to the grave. For his consolation we dropped a newspaper containing an article on the Blue Bucket mine alleged to be discovered in Willamette Valley. It might invigorate him, and turn his erring footsteps away from desert sands and rocks. A young man tried to wave us down as if we were in an automobile. Lola was interested in him and climbed down on the landing gear to lasso him, but he must have misunderstood Lola's good intentions, for he ran around in a wide circle as long as we were in sight. Within an hour we were over the center of the Great Sandy Desert that covers part of Harney County and the north half of Lake County. What Mr. Hostler had described as Jordan Creek was a dry arroyo gone dry ever since the land rose from the sea. A few stunted sage bushes half buried in sand were the only evidence of life. The dry law could be enforced there without protest from the wets. The desert was flown over in two hours and a half and then small mountains of black igneous rocks appeared. Presently we passed over a stream, its banks lined with scrub upland cedars. Beneath the branches of the largest tree were several Indians resting themselves from hunting cayuse ponies; we overtook the drove six miles further westward. We were over the Klamath Indian Reservation and Indians were as plentiful as jack rabbits. Men and beasts ran at our approach. To the west rose the small extinct volcano, Mt. Scott, which would hardly make a vest pocket edition of Mt. Shasta.

"Are the Hawaiian Islands your objective point?" I asked Lola, who replied he was no second Colonel Charles Lindbergh to have fame or a watery grave dangled before his eyes. We were going straight for Crater Lake National Park and would reach there in half an hour.

Good news. I wanted to visit Crater Lake and try to figure out how such a large hole was made in the ground. The airplane did not function well, and the propeller lagged, although the motor hummed as if working to full capacity. A sudden cry from the male gold digger warned us something unusual

had occurred. A part of the propeller had dropped off and the airplane settled. The animal's tail was severed at the root; it had gnawed its way out of the cage and got its tail entangled in the propeller. The airplane could not be sustained long in the air. To land on the rough rocky ground meant disaster, and to land on the lake we would sink as if loaded with mill stones, as there was no gas tank to buoy us up. My idea of safety was to cast the robot over board, then the gold diggers, but Lola would not sanction it. Lower we settled each moment and would crash soon if something providential did not come to our rescue. I braced myself for the expected shock and told Lola to follow my laudable example, but instead he tore the tarpaulin apart and asked if I had a needle and thread. I had plenty of needles but no thread, so from the propeller I disentangled the gold digger's severed tail in which were sinews of all sizes from coarse wrapping twine to finest silk thread. From the tail I pulled a sinew of the right size, threaded a needle, and gave it to Lola, who crossed his legs and began sewing on a piece of tarpaulin as if in a contest against a Singer sewing machine. He asked me to keep him supplied with thread, which was not tiresome. The airplane had settled so low that it nearly collided against a rock overhanging the lake's surface, one thousand feet down in the crater, and the water yearned to receive us.

"Can you sew?" Lola asked, seeming unmindful of the impending disaster.

"A little. I sewed knee pads on my overalls when I worked in a certain gold mine." He showed me how to run a seam in the other piece of tarpaulin. I pricked my finger with the needle and stopped sewing.

"Is that finger more important than your life or mine?" he asked, thoroughly roused.

"Well, no," I replied, scared because we were so near the lake's surface.

He stopped sewing, took up the two finished pieces of canvas, and when the airplane was within one hundred feet of the water crawled down on the landing gear. A splash! I supposed he had fallen into the lake. I jerked off my coat and looked over the side to see how high a dive I must take. Once I could dive ten feet from a spring board and styled myself

as champion high diver of Cowville where I lived with Uncle Nicodemus Carrot who promised to put me through high school. When I declared that Uncle Nick should be garroted for feeding me on carrots he flogged me and I ran away. Another splash! I wondered whether Lola had thrown himself in the lake one half at a time. The airplane rose a little at the second splash. Choppy, foam-covered waves were almost within reach. My first thought was to cast myself as far shoreward as possible, for I am not an expert swimmer, but I gave up that idea. The robot and the gold diggers must go over board. I took one step toward the articles to jettison them, when Lola called me. I saw him in the water some distance behind. A gigantic wave overwhelmed him. "My God!" I moaned, wringing my hands, "Lola Wheeler is gone, gone." Next moment, however, he rose on the crest of a wave and tried to keep up with the airplane. Blessed be the saints, he kept up, but I did not know the reason. He had hold of the tow rope. A gentle splash; then the airplane settled on the water. Shoes and outer garments cast off, I must make a supreme effort to reach shore when it sunk; but it did not sink, it skimmed over the waves as if about to take the air. Hand over hand by the tow rope Lola drew himself to the airplane, and I was surprised indeed when he stood before me not chilled at all by his immersion in the cold water.

"My canvas pontoons are a success," said he, emptying his low cut shoes. "This is a hydroplane made by pontoons of tarpaulin. The wheels that I cast off to replace them with pontoons are afloat somewhere on the lake. In the morning we will search for them along the west shore."

"Lola," said I, taking his hand, "you are grand, glorious, you saved my life, the gold diggers, the robot, for she is part of us, and the airplane. No other aviator could have done the trick."

"Don't flatter me, any other pilot not ace high could have done more."

He took control of the hydroplane that had drifted quite a distance from shore, as a strong wind was in the offing. The drift was just right to round a high, rugged promontory on the further side of which was a bight entered by a narrow channel not twice the span of the airplane wings. On the

tranquil surface rested flocks of aquatic fowls sheltered from the tumultuous waters without. They did not take wing and were loathe to get out of our way. The bight was shaped somewhat like letter V. At the point of the angles a stream of considerable size flowed through a small flat, once part of the lake bed when the lake was fuller. We crossed the river, which I named Peace, and moored our hydroplane to a large overhanging willow. Stepping ashore, I said, "How tranquil, almost holy ground."

In his matchless voice Lola sang the familiar hymn, "Shall We Meet Beyond the River?"

"Lola," said I, "we are met here beyond the river, and by Divine Grace let us meet beyond that river where sorrow never presses the soul."

The low sun in the west shone brightly on the spumy waves, and when he disappeared behind perpendicular crags that towered two thousand feet above the lake surface, twilight gathered around us. The gibbous moon, within forty-eight hours of fulling, shone cold in the cloudless sky. Here was solemn grandeur, scene of one of the greatest cataclysms of this terrestrial sphere. Where we sat in comfort at tea brewed over an electric heater, internal flames had raged, of such intensity that the most active volcano of today is as a cold storage plant. A few geologists advocate the theory that Crater Lake Mountain was an active volcano during the glacier period and was more than ten thousand feet above the lake's surface, which is 6177 feet above sea level. Soundings show the lake is 2001 feet deep. What became of the volcano? Many theories are advanced. I believe that Lola Wheeler's is the most matter of fact—and I shall explain it later.

It was past midnight before we retired. Lola worked on two large canteens to make landing wheels, which he would substitute in case the cast-off wheels were not recovered. When we rubbed the sleep from our eyes the sun shone on the lake's placid surface, more like a French mirror than water. Some distance from the opposite shore was a small red and white object, the upper part white, the lower red. Blue water completed the color scheme of our flag.

"It is a flag," said I, "that floated from the staff on top of Crater Lake Hotel."

The hotel was built on the brink of a sheer precipice midway of the lake's east shore. We were near the north end. The object on the water bobbed up and down. There were no waves and if there were the object would be driven shoreward instead of advancing. Lola looked attentively, and said, "It may be that another Klamath Lake monster, tired of piscatorial diet, is out looking for a tired business man tired of living. Crater Lake Hotel is full of that ilk.

"By Jove!" he added with enthusiasm, "it is a man walking on the water."

"Impossible!" I ejaculated.

"See for yourself; if your eyes are not strong, peep through my telescope."

He got the instrument and leveled it for me to take a peep. For an instant there was a blur; I saw nothing. He adjusted it. Sure enough, a tall man in a red woolen sweater and white linen pants, his long gray hair falling over his shoulders, was walking on the water with a clumsy swineherd's gait. Frequently he stretched out his long arms to balance himself. We would find out soon who held the monopoly of walking on water with the ease of an ostrich hot footing it over desert sand. Lola unmoored the hydroplane, pressed the starter button, and the motor hummed; the propeller functioned as good as new, with new spare parts. He headed for open water. Outside the bight the hydroplane took off and flew straight for the water walker. With the sun shining in his face, the aqueous pedestrian shaded his eyes with both hands and looked in our direction. He was afraid and turned to flee, and his over balanced body went under. He could not upright himself. A hand came above the surface, then his mouth spouted like a baby whale. A cry for help was hardly audible. Full power was turned on the motor and we reached the man just in time; his nose was above the surface; his jaws were set in a death grip. We dropped beside him with such violence that I nearly catapulted from the machine, and the pontoons shipped considerable water. Only excellent material and good workmanship saved us from sharing the depths of Crater Lake with rainbow trout. The machine was turned around close to the man, who had attempted to walk across Crater Lake with our landing-gear wheels on his feet. The pneumatic tires had great

buoyancy. He was pulled on board in an unconscious state and the wheels, fastened together by a short stick, rolled over. His vitality was good, and he responded readily to first aid treatment.

Ridding his stomach of much free ice water, said he, "I cannot comprehend how I got over balanced on those perfect water-walking shoes, or wheels. I have long tried to invent shoes by which people can walk on water as readily as on dry land. It is a desideratum, for the earth's surface is three fourths water, which all pedestrians shun. 'Seamen for the sea and landlubbers for the land' is today's slogan. I was on my way to Crater Lake Hotel to meet a tired business man and explain to him a sure winner with no stacked playing cards. Scarcity of money got my goat and sent me into the predicament you rescued me from, for which I am thankful. Now that I am still alive my great scheme can be consummated, while if I were dead worms would destroy my flesh. I suggest, gentlemen, that you return with me to my home, which is plain—even humble. However, when my plans are operative I shall have a palatial home. Compared to it Crater Lake Hotel would do for bootlickers hounding me even for a cuss word. You may wish to know who I am. Some call me Professor and others Doctor Hotair."

"Very well, we shall call you Doctor instead of Professor," replied Lola.

"Shall we go?" I asked Lola, as I did not like his wild fierce looks.

"He is all right. If he does not behave the gold diggers will attend to him," replied Lola.

The "Doctor" occupied considerable time wringing out his wet garments. By the time he ceased the hydroplane had reached the west shore and was tied to a large block of basalt.

Before us rose nearly perpendicular cliffs, almost one thousand feet high. On top of the highest was a rude stone cabin: the Doctor's home, reached by steps cut in the rock.

"It takes steady nerves to ascend those steps and he who is afraid can go up by the back stairs one mile long," said the Doctor.

"Doctor, I will follow you up the golden stairs," said Lola. "Come on," he said to me.

"No, thanks, the back way is good enough for me."

The Doctor started up the almost perpendicular stairs with Lola close behind him, so close he was admonished for stepping on the Doctor's heels. It was a long wearisome climb up the back stairs, and I rested several times to get my breath. The faint breeze stirring was like a leaky bellows and did not give my lungs sufficient oxygen. Far above me on the top stood Lola gesticulating to urge me upward, which was useless; I had given out. More than half way he descended, and with his arm around my shoulders he partly carried me up.

"As a climber I still have all my old pep," said I, breathing hard.

"Braggart," snapped the Doctor, "did you climb anywhere except out of your cradle? Just try the front steps."

"Thank you, the back steps gratify all my desires for easy climbing."

"He holds up well for an old timer," said Lola.

"He should be President of a Gnome Club in limbo," said the Doctor, "and the best way to humor an old man is to tell him he does not look a day older than when his forty-year-old grandson was born."

The Doctor's home was primitive—a stone lean-to built on the back side of a cliff. The doorway admitted light and plenty of fresh air, especially when the wind was westerly. There was little furniture—not enough to interest a tryo interior decorator, but he had a choice collection of scientific books, the majority of which dealt with volcanoes and earthquakes. He also took several magazines, among them *Scientific American*, *Science and Invention*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *World's Work*. He sat on a corner of the table covered with books, magazines, and several manuscripts in his peculiar hand writing which resembled the cuneiform characters of the ancient Persians. Said he, "I am writing a book from first hand evidence on blown up volcanoes, and on earthquakes. When that is finished I will write a book on the sunken continent of Atlantis. Right here during the jurassic period was the highest volcano on the earth, overtopping Mt. Aconcagua several thousand feet—in other words, more than twenty thousand feet high. The crater was correspondingly large. Crater Lake occupies the upper portion of the crater. The lake is six

miles long by four wide; its area, $20\frac{1}{4}$ square miles, larger than all other craters of the world combined. The roar of the volcano could be heard for hundreds of miles, but of course not by man, for he had not yet appeared. For countless ages it continued to be active and built the cone higher, and like the Tower of Babel had a good start toward heaven. However, it went mad, so mad it destroyed itself, and all that remained of the volcano is what we see today, not one fifth of the original height. A yawning chasm far down in the bowels of the earth afterwards filled up to the level of the lake's bottom, which is 2001 feet below the surface. The volcano was the vent for the whole igneous territory of northwestern United States."

"Doctor, I do not agree with you," replied Lola, referring to the vast lava fields of Eastern Oregon, Northeastern California, Northwestern Nevada, most of West Idaho, Eastern Washington, and a small portion of British Columbia. "Let us commence with Oregon, which began as two islands. The Siskiyou Island in the southwest formed the foundation of what is now the main ridge or backbone of the Klamath mountains. The Shoshone Island became the basis of the Blue and Wallowa mountains. These rose above the sea near the close of the carboniferous period. Then followed a long period of inactivity, and sedimentary deposits were laid down around these islands. In the tertiary period, great fissures opened in the sea floor and poured out oceans of lava which displaced the water and covered an area of 250,000 square miles, not all of which was confined to Oregon; California, Nevada, Idaho, Washington, and British Columbia got the remainder. The enormous lava outflow is very thick; at Columbia Gap the lava sheet is 3000 feet thick, at Stene's Mountain in Southeast Oregon it is 5000 feet thick. The aggregate is more than two thousand cubic miles. Such a vast amount of material could never have been ejected by a volcano on the job from creation's morning until today. In our school days we were taught that nature abhors a vacuum. There was a vacuum beneath the earth's surface from the outpouring of so great a quantity of lava, two hundred thousand square miles and one mile deep. To fill this cavity as much as possible the Crater Lake volcano caved in like a sponge cake when the oven had gone cold."

"Young man," answered the Doctor, "we have authentic records of volcanoes blown to pieces like the cataclysm of Krakatoa in 1883 and Pelée in 1902; and Skaptar Jokull during the great eruption of 1783 ejected a mass of lava and ashes equal to no less than four and three tenths cubic miles. This could not have been more than one hundredth part of the material that was thrown out by Temboro on the island of Sunbawa in 1815."

"Doctor, you are good at figures; please give me the number of cubic miles in a mass 250,000 square miles and 3,000 feet thick? All your volcano spouting does not amount to as much as one spittle of a Georgia cracker snuff dipper compared to the lava outflow I have cited. No wonder Crater Lake volcano shed crocodile tears mourning its own insignificance and those tears formed Crater Lake. I am no volcanoist but when you toss me edible nuts I shall crack them with a common sense nutcracker. You said something about the sunken continent of Atlantis; when and why did it sink?"

"More than one hundred thousand years ago Atlantis sunk beneath the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, destroyed by an earthquake. Plato does not state just when Atlantis sunk nor where it was located. I assert it is at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean—Greenland and Iceland at the north, the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn at the south."

"The continent of Atlantis never sank. When the moon, which is one fiftieth of the earth's volume, was thrown off from the earth from that part now covered by the central Pacific Ocean, threw the earth out of balance, and to right it the continent of Atlantis was pulled apart. The west portion floated away from the east part and became the American continent. The east part of Atlantis remained stationary; it contained the cradle of civilization, Egypt. There never can be any more great lava flows. The earth has passed its hot youth and now has the sedateness of mature manhood and our remote progeny will emigrate to the tropics to escape the cold; the earth is dying slowly of old age. What else, Doctor?"

"I have a great antipathy against the wealthy who come here to show the common fry what money will do for the fortunate possessor. I am dead tired of baking powder-raised biscuits and canned hot dogs. I want to put up at Crater Lake Hotel

and hobnob with plutocrats who must have master minds to make so many of the common people submissive to their will.

"The swine, whole hog or none, is developed in them to a superlative degree. Coercing them, cogitate, with several gulps of cognac, you would be cognate.

"I am going to plug up every volcano and blow up the world."

"Samson like, you would pull down the temple on your own head. Let the world smoke on; she enjoys it like a flapper with a Hautboy fag."

We left the Doctor in no good frame of mind, angry that Lola was more than his match at discussing volcanoes and terrestrial disturbances. To be outclassed by a young man of no scientific education was to the Doctor an unforgivable offense. At parting he did not extend his hand and say, "You were a source of exquisite pleasure, call again."

"So long, Doctor," was our rejoinder.

At my request Lola went with me down the back stairs,—so steep that I grew dizzy, and my legs wobbled. I shook like an apple tree branch laden with pie apples which the servant girl shakes to get fruit for a dozen pies. The stairs safely descended, we untied the hydroplane, pulled it on the shingle beach, and replaced the wheels. We could not take off from the narrow rough beach, so we replaced the pontoons and flew back to the bight where several guests of Crater Lake Hotel were angling for rainbow trout without much success. Lola leased a rod and line for a half interest in the catch. He caught more fish than all the rest, and there were thirteen. They asked Lola to call on them at Crater Lake Hotel and fill up on hot dogs; said they would have the Chinese cook kill and roast the Tom cat for my benefit, but I did not care to be mixed up with felines. Ever since my providential escape from them at Big Flat I tremble at sight of a cat. We made an airplane landing on the flat beyond Peace River and replaced the wheels on the landing gear, where they remained as long as the airplane was used. Lola flew to Crater Lake Hotel and landed on the front lawn. A middle-aged lady there was a bug on flying; she was not in the fat forties but in the lean fifties. A she-daredevil, the words "safety first" were not in her vocabulary, but she had a daughter as timid as she was

reckless. The two were good companions. My companions were the gold diggers, and the male was more temperamental than any Hollywood screen star. My tent, an inverted pontoon, was pitched in the shade of the willow tree overhanging the river, where I remained, and read books and folders pertaining to Crater Lake and the vicinity.

The first white man who saw Crater Lake was John Hillman in 1853. Leading a party of gold hunters searching for the Blue Bucket mine which they supposed to be in this locality, although none of the party ever found a "color." It was next visited by United States army officers and enlisted soldiers in 1865; who named it is not known. By 1885 the general public became interested in the solemn grandeur of the lake occupying the crater of the extinct volcano and the perpendicular cliffs that rise from five hundred to two thousand feet above the lake's surface. It became a national park known as Crater Lake Park by act of Congress approved May 22, 1902, with an area of 249 square miles. Crater Lake is the chief attraction. In 1913 there were two hotels in the park. Crater Lake Hotel is built on the crater's rim on one of the highest points. The other hotel, named Grouch, is five miles distant. There are good automobile roads and telephone communication with the outside world. Of greater interest to me than Crater Lake was the cost per diem at one of the hotels. Supper was all I could afford. A single meal more would have catapulted my exchequer into the red figures. All hunting is prohibited on the reservation, but I hunted for mice that scampered over my face during the night but never bagged one. There were no fish in the lake nor streams flowing into it until the United States Government planted rainbow trout, which are now so numerous as to be excellent angling, but only fish of a certain length and weight can be retained. In a week's angling I caught just one that the game warden said, owing to my poor luck, he guessed I could squeeze by. In a day Lola caught a week's allowance and gave them away to various fishless anglers.

Several airplanes came to Crater Lake Park and landed in an airport close to the Grouch Hotel. They flew over the lake and took snapshots from every angle. Our camera was left behind, as it had daylight leakage, a fatal camera disease.

The morning we intended to leave for French Gulch, the flying widow accompanied by her timid daughter came to the Peace River airport.

"Wheeler," said she, omitting Mr. or Lola, "you did not come yesterday as you promised. With me a broken promise is one hundred percent damage."

"I was inadvertently detained by an old gentleman who gave me some pointers on how and where to find the Blue Bucket mine. Since listening to his story my mind is half made up that there is such a mine."

"Tosh and fiddle sticks," she retorted. "Wheeler, on your knees, get down to brass tacks and tell me how much did you pay for the *valuable information*?"

"A half gold eagle or a five dollar piece."

"You got off mighty light. His customary charge is a yellow boy or a double eagle."

"Madam, he made a reduction, a going-out-of-business price. I am to turn the gold diggers loose when we arrive at Blue Bucket Creek, which he says is a tributary to Peace River, but he called it Truth River."

"That old rascal never hunted for gold mines, but he has a mint of coined gold extorted from suckers by his plausible stories. Each story he tells of the Blue Bucket mine is as different as sunshine and rain."

"I noticed there was a discrepancy which I attributed to a failing memory. He advised me to keep mum about the last story told. I did some rapid fire thinking. He began by saying he steered the boat that took George Washington across the Delaware River on that memorable Christmas evening and bagged a regiment of boches. Next he and General Sutter beat tan bark in a Delaware tan yard, long before Sutter thought of going to California. He blazed the Oregon trail for Lewis and Clark to reach the Pacific Ocean. "Sir," he continued, "you need not make me swear on a Bible to tell the truth, which I know better than my new shoes know how to pinch my corns and bunions."

"Wheeler, now for a spin far up in the ethereal blue," said she, interrupting him.

"Pard," said he to me, "we will not be gone long and—"

"We!" I interrupted, wondering what had broken loose

now. "Is your thinking-box short-circuited?"

"I am all right," he replied, sheepishly.

"Wheeler, I say a long spin—a high altitude, as high as when Lucifer began falling from heaven."

"So long," said he, as he pressed the starter button.

The airplane ran down the short course and took off as the wheels approached the river bank, infringing on safety less than a yard. The wheels impinged the river's surface so lightly as hardly to disturb the autumn leaves floating there and soon to be lost in the abysmal lake. Flying through the bight's entrance the airplane was not two yards above the lake's surface when it ascended rapidly. When over Doctor Hotair's cabin it was as much above the cabin as the lake was below. Circling back directly overhead, it resembled an aspen leaf quiet in the azure sky. I watched as long as the airplane was visible. Turning my back on the river I heard a splash, and looking over my shoulder I saw a long graybeard crawl-stroking across the river. When he emerged, his clothes seemed to turn water like a crude oil drum. His silver-fox beard reached his knees, and he squeezed water from his facial adornment, which he raised from his pigeon breast. He was not pigeon toed, and with the springy steps of youth he stood before me. "Stranger," said he, his booming voice re-echoed by a cliff some distance away, "right here is where you will find me when I am sad in mind and weary in body. This is the most restful spot on the face of the earth. I know, for I have traveled far and wide and been in many foreign lands. The same sun shines on them all. About the same problems confront each human being despite his race, color, or condition. Among the many nations where I lived during my long colorful life there was no other mortal who had sorrow akin to mine, be he as poor as Job's turkey stuffed with frosted prunes. A golden treasure surpassing Uncle Sam's just out of reach, John Hillman, discoverer of Crater Lake, was scout for the Oregon trail blazers, and led the first section of web foots to the promised land. One day he went too far in advance, an Indian shot his horse, and as the redskin supposed, killed him, but he feigned death, which saved his life. He was only leg bruised by the horse falling on him. Freed from the carcass, he limped back to camp and arrived there about midnight. The doughty

band of pioneers was encamped on the open plains free from any Indian ambushade. The band had been attacked a few miles back at a ford. Crossing the stream, a wagon broke down, the front axle and tongue were left behind. One Ike Smith, more thoughtful than anyone else, dipped a blue bucket in the water and got it full of gold nuggets."

"Partner, a moment please, allow me to stand with you on the burning deck. How could gold float?"

"Easy enough, sir; crossing the ford men, women, and children, horses and oxen, rushed pell mell, which so agitated the water that a lead statue of Brigham Young would float. Mr. Hillman, nearly dead of thirst, gulped down part of the gold nuggets before he was aware they were not water, but that did not satisfy his thirst for gold. Under cover of darkness he went back to the creek, filled the bucket with gold nuggets, and named the diggings Blue Bucket after the color of the bucket. He carried the wagon axle and tongue half a mile and dumped them in an arroyo for fear they might attract some other gold-hungry trail blazer's attention. His duty discharged as a scout, he intended to return to work his gold diggings, but he was taken captive by Klamath Indians. Their simple guileless way of living showed him the folly of the thirst for gold until he married a half breed squaw with an ultra-modern gold-digger's make up. She decided to find the mine if he had lost the urge to search for it. First, she sought not in the wilderness for virgin gold but in Portland for a wealthy man as hubby number two. At length she found him and, as recorded in shilling shockers, 'they lived happy ever afterwards.' Hillman's thirst for gold returned from a fractured skull, and none of us knew it made him a little looney and imagined the golden stream was in this locality. I was his partner on a fifty-fifty basis of all the gold mines we might discover, and was with him when he discovered Crater Lake. However, I saw the lake moments before he, and named it Abyss Lake, but somehow or other the name would not stick. My case and that of Christopher Columbus are almost identical, both bilked by not having their great discoveries named after them. The discovery of Crater Lake enthused Hillman, but stultified his desire to search for gold. On the summit of the high cliff where Crater Lake Hotel now stands he would sit

all day, shoulders elevated to his ears, soliloquizing whether it would be better to plunge over the brink or remain alive for Indians to make a captive of again. That Indians would capture him soon was his strongest hallucination. As his partner I favored putting him in ropes and sending him back to civilization. Ungrateful, you may say, when I assert I wanted a map of the golden creek more than his company. He had a crude map of his own drawing on a sheet of brown wrapping paper. He had it put away in a small salmon skin tied around his neck by a deer's sinew. The night before we planned to leave Crater Lake he flew off the handle. 'As crazy as a bed bug' is no comparison. A shrieking madman, he ran for the hobbled pack animals and laid his hands on a large jackass named Dan after Daniel Webster. Dan was not in a frolicsome mood, and kicked him over, which added to his ferocity; he rushed at Dan with a club; the beast let his heels fly and kicked a hole in the empty air. The maniac leaped on Dan's back backwards and beat him with the club. The donkey ran straight for the cliffs and every mother's son of us tried to head him off. I expected the rider and donkey to vanish over the brink but Dan stopped within a pace or two and the maniac was catapulted. He turned three back somersaults before disappearing from view. Horrified, I looked over the brink and by the light of an almost full moon I expected to see the mangled remains of Hillman lying on the shingle beach two thousand feet below, but to my joyful surprise he had lodged among the branches of a cedar growing horizontally from a cleft in the cliff about midway. He held to a limb with both hands and called for help in natural tones that attested his fit of insanity was over.

"'John,' said I, 'don't let go; we will pull you up soon. I want to know how many back somersaults you turned. I counted three in your descent of twenty feet.'

"'If I continued doing back flip flops in the same ratio, you may put me down for one hundred.'

"No big top tumbler ever came anywhere near equalling this feat. Hillman, although in no immediate danger, imagined he was, and implored to be rescued. I got together all our lariats and pack ropes, and tied them together, but the life line would reach only about half way down. Some proposed we

return to Grape Vine Spring about a day's travel and cut grape vines; though tenacious they were punky in places and not reliable. So I said, pointing to Dan, the source of the mischief, 'He must be the means of Hillman's rescue.'

"'How so?' demanded several in chorus.

"'Slip off his hide and cut it up in one continuous piece.' No sooner were my words spoken than the report of a .45 caliber cap and ball six shooter rang out. Dan was knocked sprawling and kicked furiously. A two weeks old donkey colt that wondered why Dan kicked so came within reach of his feet and was killed; I skinned the colt and cut the hide in small thongs, while my comrades made a wide continuous thong of Dan's hide that reached about one half of the required length; the hide from Hillman's saddle horse finished the rest. Who would descend on the rope and rescue Hillman, whose hands were almost paralyzed from lodging among the cedar's branches?

"'Not I,' everybody said. I as Hillman's partner called each one aside and explained the importance of rescuing him, but that did not change the matter one iota.

"'Comrades!' I thundered, throwing my coat and hat to the ground and stamping on them, 'you all are afraid to make that dinky descent. Remember Perdition is down in the center of the earth and you will have no rope to descend by.'

"'The rawhide may break; you are taking your life in your hands,' Sissy Pigfoot expostulated.

"'Not a bit more than to remain among you cowards.'

"Three of the strongest men lowered me over the precipice; the descent was perfect and I landed at the roots of the cedar. Hillman sat astride the trunk frightening sea gulls away who were intent to devour the fish skin containing the map. An old cock gull pulled it loose from around his neck. I broke one wing with a stone and it fluttered down to the water. Then I called for my comrades to drop the rope. They would do so when Hillman was ready to be pulled up. I tied the rope around his middle and he was drawn up to safety. I jerked the rope from them when for some reason they refused to drop it, tied an end fast to a limb of the cedar, and began descending. The rope was short about a hundred feet. I had on a light baggy woolen overshirt, took its caudal appendage

from my trousers, and spread it out, which acted as a parachute and landed me on the narrow beach with both legs nearly stove up. The gull that swallowed the fish skin was a wise old bird, dived the moment I landed, came up quite a distance away, and made for the lake's center. Thousands of gulls flew around me, and when two came within reach I tied their wings together with the donkey colt's hide thongs. I caught one hundred gulls and tied their wings together, pushed them off shore, mounted their backs and guided them toward the cock that had swallowed the fish skin containing the map. I overtook it not far from the west shore. I killed the cock, recovered the map, which was utterly worthless to any sane person. The gulls would not go ashore, but swam toward the lake's middle. I unfastened their wings, tied their feet together, and tossed one in the air. They all took to wing. I held on by a thong and went far over the west rim; not very high from the ground I let go and landed without a bruise or scratch. At dusk I reached camp, or rather, where camp had been, as my comrades had deserted me. Fortunately, I knew the way back to civilization, which I reached in three days. Many years later I found a gold mine right here and worked in it every day; however, the work is mental instead of manual. Come to my home, which is near Crater Lake Hotel, I will show you my treasures and no doubt like the Queen of Sheba you will exclaim 'Behold! one half was not told me.'

"Sir," I replied, "nothing would add more to my happiness than to remain longer in the company of so truthful a man as you seem, but those creatures," waving a hand toward the gold diggers, "are restless varmints, not to be trusted out of my sight. Mr. Wheeler expects me to stay here and watch them during his absence."

"Why not let them follow you? They need exercise."

It was a good idea, so I told him to hurry home, fearing the gold diggers would tackle him enroute, and I would follow him soon. He ran and I after him; the gold diggers were at my heels. I kept a few steps behind him and we arrived at the cabin simultaneously. The door was open. In the living room was a young man who resembled a French colporteur and a German Mormon missionary combined.

"Stick 'em up," said he, a bulldog gun thrust against the victim's solar plexus.

I was surprised that this meek-eyed, gentle-voiced, effeminate youth was a bandit, but no more so than the victim, who realized the seriousness of the situation when the gun barked to scare him. My hands went up to the ceiling that my head touched; an inch lower, and I would have crouched. The victim's hands clasped his long gray beard. He breathed hard. A knock on the head with the pistol's butt floored him. The bandit robbed him of a shot sack, part full of gold coin, and fled. The victim rose to his feet and followed after unmindful of the bandit's wild shooting. He could not run fast, as the blow on the head had made him groggy. The gold diggers ran after both, headed straight for the cliffs. The male gold digger tore the pants from the robber and bit his legs. He did not seem to care where he went, anywhere to get rid of the savage animal. He jumped over the precipice holding the sack of gold coin. He was mangled beyond recognition but the gold in the shot sack was intact. The female, less savage, took after the *truthful* old gentleman who seized the large sun umbrella of an artist painting a picture of Crater Lake and jumped after the bandit. No parachute jumper ever landed more safely and recovered his gold.

In a round-about way he climbed out of the Crater and returned to the artist his umbrella with a polite "Thank you." The gold diggers chased him back to his cabin and would have robbed him to the extent of their appetite but were prevented.

Lola and the Flying Widow were high overhead. With a white shirt taken from my back I waved it at them frantically. They came down low enough to grasp the situation and landed on the Crater Lake Hotel's front lawn. Lola helped catch the gold diggers, and each was confined in a chicken crate and taken back to Peace River landing field. There were two factors that did not meet with my approval: Lola sporting with the Flying Widow and I as the gold diggers' keeper. I had seen about all that was worth seeing concerning Crater Lake Park, had met a few unique personages, and concluded it was time to return to French Gulch. Lola, almost persuaded to return home, was bamboozled by the Flying Widow, but I

used many common sense arguments and he finally agreed to follow my instructions, namely, he should pay his respects to the timid daughter and I to the bold mother. Next morning when she and the daughter came to the river opposite our camp I crossed in a punt, and said, "Madam, there are two of you, yourself and daughter—one old and foolhardy; the other, young and timid. There are two of us, one old with horse sense; the other, young with a great future before him. Let the old folk be good companions and young folks good companions—a fair proposition all around."

"Sir," she replied, pointing at me a guide-board finger of scorn, "as an old dog you have had your day. Go to yonder hill and howl."

CHAPTER XIII.

FAR, FAR BEYOND THE CLOUDS

The Wolf Hotel dinner bell rang as Lola and I landed at the Wheeler airport, home from our wild goose chase to Oregon for a mine that never existed. The genial landlord's table was spread for several strange mining men; mostly of the shoestring class, come hither on the boom started by Charles Wheeler's gold discovery in Jennings' Gulch. At table Lola occupied the seat of honor. The appreciation of my presence was expressed by placing me at the foot. All hoped Lola would tell our experiences in the land of the Webfoots. A special correspondent of the Redding Search Light, cocked and primed with pencil and writing pad in his pocket, averred he would give us a good write-up as soon as dinner was served. Lola was silent beyond announcing: "Have nothing to say." Opposite him was a clerical man, who direct- and cross-examined him with the skill of a top notch lawyer, to which vocal bombardment he replied, "Pax vobiscum." If anybody ever needed peace with him it was that loquacious stranger. I aped Lola and wheezed pax vobiscum to a portly man sitting next to me. The newspaper correspondent denounced Lola and I, and said we were not quite as newsy as a bag of frozen turnips. He asked Lola if he would mind telling of his proposed flight around the world in twenty-four hours, and Lola was non-plussed as to how the secret of our proposed flight had leaked out.

During our absence a sudden violent wind blew down Clear Creek Valley that sent helter skelter old newspapers, letters—more or less of business—straw hats, and the lingerie of the fair sex hung out to dry. Among the waste paper was a letter in Lola's hand writing addressed to Miss Love Robot. Who was the mysterious young woman who would entammel Lola's feet in a web of domestic infidelity? All knew Lola was as staid as any benedict ready to celebrate his golden wedding. It

was left for Mrs. Grundy to find out and when the kernel was removed from the paper nutshell, the charming siren was the dummy that guided his airplane. Many said he was sentimental but not as much as a tyro Pegasus rider of Whiskey Flat who writes odes to dumb waiters and guideboards.

Two days after we came back, the first party of prospectors who left French Gulch ahead of us hoping to find Indian Mine, returned and reported that Lola and I had found the Indian Mine, sold it to D. M. Bennett, a merchant and hydraulic mine owner on Salmon Fork, for one million dollars, and received all his holdings as part payment. Nothing could have been further from the truth. In the first place Mr. Bennett had no desire to sell his lucrative property. No other man could make it pay. It took him years to mold the indolent Indian and habitually intoxicated white man into profit producers. Ananias to blow his own horn said we had discovered the Blue Bucket mine, sold it to a Mormon syndicate, and invested in Oregon lava lands to give the state relief from over-taxation. Had Ananias known I had parted with my last half dollar, a spurious one at that, when the Baker City minister was "pounded," he would have been less prone to exaggeration.

Before we attempted to fly far beyond the clouds considerable preparation must be made. The first consideration was obtaining a large water olla from the back room of Bodie Pete's abandoned saloon—to be used when the gelid, rarefied atmosphere did not contain oxygen enough to support life. Almost at the last moment, when we were to take off to secure the olla, I gave up my seat in the airplane to a diminutive miner named "Shorty" Richards, who had sold his mine located a mile from town to a strange mine operator for ten thousand dollars. The deed stated the consideration was one dollar, but Shorty affirmed he received ten thousand dollars in gold coin. The money was in a small leather bag. Certain men whose word was their bond had counted the coin. Shorty told me to count it and if there was a shortage he would double the amount and turn it over to me as a free will offering, but gold always stuck to my fingers so I decided to eschew temptation by leaving it alone. Several years previous Shorty had come from Bodie where he nearly lost his life in a mine disaster. He was rescued at death's door, his skull fractured

and brain injured, which many affirmed made him "nutty." Be it so or not, no other prospector, coming as a stranger to French Gulch and working so hopeless looking a prospect, made anything akin to his fortune. Shorty with his Tabby cat and half a dozen kittens as baggage, presented himself at the airport at an early morning hour. "Be on time always," was his motto. The airport was almost destitute of visitors to see Shorty off, for he was not of a good disposition, but more like an Italian greyhound among Saint Bernards ready to pick a quarrel. His diminutiveness kept him off the blackeye list many times.

I was there to see him and Lola off. Shorty was my friend when I mined in Slaughter House Gulch, half a mile from his prospect. Once when I had used the last of my fuse he let me have two yards length. Maybe he thought I wanted to commit suicide by a mine blast. At any rate under my nose a blast went off that Catherine-wheeled me from the short tunnel, more frightened than injured. I admonished him for giving me defective fuse, and he replied his motive was altruistic; he loved his fellow man and would lay down his life for him any time. He had obtained the fuse from a pretended friend who hoped to blow him to Kingdom Come, and the nefarious plan was passed on to me unintentionally.

Shorty had tried to win the smiles of a bean-pole young lady, head and shoulders taller than he. He found no favor in her eyes until he had the proceeds from the sale of his mine safe in a small leather bag. She agreed to see him off but overslept. His real friend was the tabby that climbed on his shoulder and rubbed her nose against his cheek. Sad indeed it is to state that tabby was not air minded and leaped from the airplane at a high altitude and was lost in the mist below. Shorty thought the kittens might be lonely and dropped them after Tabby's fatal leap.

Lola intended to be gone a day and a night. He would help Shorty to locate a few old mining claims, which had been located fifty different times and supposed worthless by all except Shorty, who had dug among them and found an extensive deposit of high grade, gold-bearing ore. During Lola's absence of several days' duration I prospected in Missouri Gulch across Clear Creek from Slaughter House Gulch. Mr.

Collinswood wanted me to take the gold diggers along. If there was a deposit of gold ore they would find it and no doubt devour most of the gold, as they were hungry and dangerously vicious. The female incubating her eggs in a corner spread out and hissed like a sitting goose. The baker's dozen of eggs were a little smaller than a duck-bill dinosaur's and larger than a dodo's, of cockatrice color. The nest of hair was pulled by the male from its own jowls. What if man pulled out his whiskers to make his viviparous mate a comfortable bed? Howls and curses would make the air over-resonant. "Gold and silver have I none, but such as I have I give freely," said I, dropping three nickels in the cage. The male was more angry than a minister of the gospel who preaches a sermon from the text, "The Lord loves a cheerful giver," and gets a hat full of suspender buttons. Mr. Collinswood pacified them with two twenty-dollar gold pieces and remarked he would charge Lola forty percent interest. I left, thankful I had not borrowed the gold diggers to go prospecting, but borrowed a pick, shovel, and gold pan. I attempted to cross by a log spanning Clear Creek about ten feet above the surface, but missed my step and fell, pick, shovel, and pan after me. On the rapid current, waist deep, the pan floated away, and the pick and shovel lay on the bottom. I recovered them and waded to the opposite shore. Near by was the cabin home of Jim Puke, but first known as Puke's Gulch. Everybody puked eyes. I hurried on and borrowed a bread pan of Mrs. Ivan Zyriam, a Russian peasant with seven small children. Her husband placer-mined in Missouri Gulch, named in honor of Jim Puke, but first known as Puke's Gulch. Every body puked at the name until the gulch was rechristened. I found a trace toward sunset and left pick and shovel at the last test hole to show the ground was claimed, so no miner would molest it.

Then I went down Clear Creek to a ford at American Gulch hoping to get a ride across. Presently Fredrick Franck came along from delivering supplies to the World Wonder mine and I rode with him to town. He told me the best way was to cross the wagon bridge back of the Franck Brothers' store and go up Clear Creek. So I went that way as long as I worked in Missouri Gulch. Next day I uncovered the source of the gold, a four-inch ledge of base ore. The ore would not yield

five dollars a ton by free milling process but a hundred dollars by smelting. I sank a perpendicular shaft ten feet deep that proved the prospect was of little value, so I sold it to Charles Joseph for twenty-five dollars—two dollars a day for a day's work, board, lodging, and washing not included. Everybody said it was a good sale and if luck favored me at that rate in time I would be wealthy, but that I must practice great economy. I wondered how I could be more economical and was told to imitate a woodpecker and live on suction—good advice to pass around to all gold miners.

On the seventh day Lola returned with the water olla cracked half the length. It might burst in rarefied atmosphere where the pressure was next to nothing, as it would be corked air tight. We wanted to retain the air taken in at French Gulch, where the pressure is about fourteen pounds to the square inch. So Lola enclosed the olla in a green bullock's hide which, when shrunk, was on very tight. The cork was made of rubber from several new auto casings. It fitted air tight and was hard to withdraw.

While Lola was extracting protactinium from radium-bearing ore I read books on imaginary voyages to the moon. Our master poet and fiction writer, Edgar Allan Poe, was the first to unlimber his imagination and journey to the moon in a balloon. He did not seem to meet with a very good reception from the moonites. Victor Hugo, France's ace fictionist, got there by a rocket as Opel intends to do in the near future. Why such men as Poe and Hugo stooped to plain lying convinces me that the one unpardonable sin is lying which I eschew; should a faint glow produced by my humble pen appear in the literary sky, it will be by adhering always to the naked truth!

Lola worked full time and half over time to get a sufficient amount of protactinium for our epoch-making flight. He exacted a solemn promise from his foster father that no gold digger's eggs would be made into eggnog. The old gentleman stated that to make such a promise hurt him like pulling an eye tooth, for a gold digger's egg imparted an exquisite flavor—an ostrich kick—to eggnog, but he as a man of honor would abide by his word. He also volunteered to care for the gold diggers during our absence.

Lola's limelight flickered as he worked in his reducing plant. Each day a few less visitors came, which gave him more time. I tried to absorb a little of his popularity for I was considered an unsnuffed candle with the snuffer lost forever. My duty was to meet callers at the door, and with the suavity of a department store floorwalker, conduct them to Lola's presence. A tip was not repugnant; the more tips, the greater was my security at Wolf Hotel, where even a squaw man with plenty of cash could throttle the worst wolf hound ever sent out by a collecting agency. Lola's wife, a second Madame Curie, worked side by side with him. She did not seek self-aggrandizement, for Lola's labor was one of love to advance aviation. In two weeks he had reduced the ore. The protactinium was placed in a nursing bottle, corked instead of nipples. Our outfit, clothes, and sleeping bag—one bag would do as we decided to sleep alternately—were made of bear skins given us by Charles Joseph. Perine Frogroquette, the French tailor, made the skins into up-to-date flying togs and a sleeping bag that would satisfy the most particular victim of sleeping sickness. Aviators follow his style as closely as a sugar-foot, alley-colored dandy apes a white dude. Lola's coat collar was of real fox skin; mine was imitation Jackrabbit skin. It was comfortable but more conducive to bodily comfort than to style. I wore second-hand Eskimo boots obtained in the Klondike. A German shoemaker named Fritz Von Hindenburg, no relation to the president of the German Republic, made Lola's boots which were patterned after mine. They were the only articles Lola ever took patterns from. He complained they hurt his feet as new boots do. I told him when we ascended into space not to get cold feet like Benedict Arnold when the British soldiers appeared before Fort Ticonderoga, for I would give him my boots. He would have accepted them but did not have time to solve the problem of putting on a boot two sizes too small.

Lola's wife prepared a basket of her culinary art as though we were going into the mountains a week to capture grizzly bears and mountain lions for the Golden Gate Park zoo. Henry Franck, with our bodily comfort uppermost in his mind, called us to his office in the store building, locked the door, plugged the keyhole with a used postcard to shut out the vision

of a peeping Tom dry-snooper, of which several were in town and gave us a wood-crated package marked Sour and Bitter root Lemon Extract. We accepted the gift with profuse thanks and Lola remarked that if we had no other use for the gift his wife could use it to make lemon pies. That evening several of Lola's friends met at the Wheeler residence on account of roominess, for Lola lived in a shack. A minister of the gospel from Redding was present; some said he was a reformed Mormon missionary. Whatever denomination he may have been, he spoke well and prayed as no other man I ever heard before. In a broad sense it was a religious meeting, the only form of divine service I attended while living in French Gulch. The inhabitants were not lip worshipers nor Sabbath Day desecrators but intensely religious and worshipped a Supreme Being after the dictates of their conscience. None when the dying scene came were outside the benefit of clergy.

The morning was not as the night sky had portended. A dense fog from the Pacific Ocean hung low on the mountain tops, and were this other than an altitude flight it would have been postponed. A cold drizzling rain changed to sleet would have ice coated the old time airplane's wings and brought the machine down, but Lola's airplane was fitted with electric wing warmers as potent as a bed warmer when a North Dakota blizzard rages. During one midwinter mush in Alaska my bed warmer was several huskies, so warm that fleas swarmed over me as though it were July.

The citizens of French Gulch were on hand to see us off. The most perturbed was Mr. Collinswood, who liked Lola as if he were his own son. His mother, though agitated, bore up with as much fortitude as Mrs. Eva Lindbergh when her son flew toward the rising sun and emblazoned his name among the immortals. She admonished her valorous son to out-do the lone eagle of the sky, which he declared he would do, as he cast aside a chaw of tobacco now preserved in a hair oil bottle. Charles Joseph was the only one among them who had eyes for me; maybe because I had sold him a dubious gold mine for a cheap-John price. He grasped my hand and warned me not to let my backbone slip out my body, for I was supine already. Lola was in a state of dissension with himself. He looked around for somebody not among the crowd, his toe to

the starter button, but he did not press it. Asked why, he replied that the man who spoke so forcibly and prayed like a Holy Roller deacon wanted to see him once more. The much desired person was in the Wolf Hotel dining room talking to three pretty hash slingers on the beatitudes of the faith he promulgated. The hypnotized girls were prone to follow him to the airport, but Mr. Wolf locked the doors and placed a guard before each window. When the spell left the dupes they had a good cry and wondered why they had listened to the tempter importuning them to forsake their Tom, Dick, and Harry and follow him. The stranger had a heart-to-heart talk with Lola, gave him many tracts of the Latter Day Saints Church, and told him to distribute them among the people he might meet in realms beyond the sky, for his religion had overrun the earth and the celestial planets must take care of the overflow. Lola, under a hypnotic spell stronger than the waitresses, promised to distribute the tracts. Then the airplane ran down the course at top speed, took off amid hurrahs and waving of handkerchiefs, and was seen dimly through the murky atmosphere.

I cast a longing, lingering look behind me. My head settled in my coat collar. Lola, cheerful as usual, sang "When the Roll is Called up Yonder." Several with frog-horn voices took up the refrain and kept it up as long as they heard Lola singing. In a few minutes the obfuscating clouds were less dense and precipitation ceased. The sun shone dimly. At a mile and one half altitude the sky was clear, the sun shone bright and cold. As we ascended our breath deposited frost on the fur coats. My nose tingled, for Jack Frost tweaked it. Lola watched the thermometer; the mercury descended as fast as we ascended. I watched the altimeter and when it recorded twenty-nine thousand feet we were as high as the summit of Mt. Everest, the loftiest point on the terrestrial sphere. It seemed impossible that any earthly force could upheave a mountain that high. Respiration was difficult and I inhaled oxygen that relieved me for the time being. We were now seven miles above the earth from sea level at the dividing line between Troposphere and Stratosphere. A strong wind was from the east, of which we did not take advantage, but circled upward through thin air seventy degrees below zero. Although

not as cold as the lowest recorded earthly temperature, I was about to crawl into my water olla to escape the awful cold but Lola called my attention to the thermometer which had risen five degrees. The wind ceased blowing, the silence was oppressive. The sky was of a weird blue, in which the sun resembled a full moon and give off a little more light. After ascending an hour we entered a sunny, fringed, mysterious region known as the upper Stratosphere, fourteen miles above the earth. The motor was speeded up to the limit. In the rarefied atmosphere the airplane was wobbly. If this condition continued the protactinium motor would be started but the airplane grew steady and the atmosphere no thinner or colder. Twenty miles above the earth the sky was of midnight blackness. The sun was surrounded with polar-like mist, resembling sun dogs, and shone dimly. The stars were brighter than any seen during midwinter from terra firma. My supply of oxygen was low. Lola, being brass lunged, used little oxygen, and gave me part of his on which I existed until an altitude of thirty miles was reached; then I gasped for breath and kicked like a steel-trapped kangaroo. My head came in contact with the olla stopper and let out a little fresh air taken near sea level. I drew many lungfulls of the life giving element at which we growl often for being too hot in summer or too cold in winter. My place was on the outside instead of inside the olla. I made an incision in the cork and breathed the contents until it suddenly blew up. Weakened by the old fracture it could hold together no longer. Fragments of the glass flew everywhere and the largest fell overboard. Fortunately neither Lola nor I was injured. The robot lost its nose and its mouth was increased to double size by a sharp fragment that had stuck between its lips. I crawled to Lola's olla and gulped down much fresh air. He was parsimonious of his air or could live on as little air as a moonite. At one hundred miles altitude the airplane was stable although the motor spluttered now and then. Lola put an ear to the casing just as an old time doctor placed an ear to his patients' back listening for symptoms of pneumonia. He was satisfied by the way it functioned. Turning the controls over to the robot he smoked a Lucky Strike cigarette. The smoke congealed and fell as droplets on my fur coat. The aroma was pleasant. In a fleet-

ing vision I saw a Kentucky tobacco field infested with worms. In a silence like that preceding Judgment Day there was naught to divert a person's attention and I could think of nothing in particular. I had Grandmother's headache for want of oxygen. However, the atmosphere contained more oxygen than lower down. The sun, as large as a juggernaut wheel, was less mist obscured, the sun dogs had quite vanished from the silent sky, stars twinkled as a South African diamond flashes at a New York automobile show. With speed upward of six hundred miles an hour the airplane flew steady; air pockets were left below at seventy thousand feet altitude. The airplane almost went into a nose dive and the robot let go the controls, as a loose screw in the wrist made her right hand useless. The wrist was set with a screw driver, and there was no more trouble during the remainder of the flight. At the expiration of another five hours the altitude was two thousand miles, on the dividing line where the earth's gravitational pull was so scant the motor hardly turned the propeller. The airplane fluttered and shuttled back and forth, so the protactinium motor was started. There was no limit to the power it would produce, especially when propelling an airplane around the earth at low altitude in twenty-four hours. After a brief try-out the motor was throttled down to ten miles an hour. The bullock hide that covered my destroyed water olla was cast overboard and floated. I stepped from the airplane and walked on air. The gravitational pull of the earth had ceased entirely; we were in the space Lola named No Man's Air. I ran under the airplane which descended on my shoulders and it was no heavier than a basket of pumpkins cut up to feed cows. Suddenly in the far distance a brilliant light shone; it resembled an airplane landing field's searchlight. The scintillation made it painful to look at. There were no green goggles in our outfit, but Lola got his telescope and peeped through it. "By Jove," he ejaculated, "Mt. Olympus must have blown up, for there is Jove on his favorite mountain top seated on his throne, while under it Vulcan is forging thunderbolts. Jove has the right of way and it is up to us to sidetrack."

He laid down the telescope and took the controls from the robot. He told me to pull out a small lever to give the protactinium motor more power but I pushed instead, which reversed

the motor. The airplane shot backwards directly in the way of the meteorite on which an old man was riding. Lola yelled for me to pull the lever forward but I was confused and did not understand him. He waved frantically at the man atop the mountainous mass, about to overwhelm us.

"Ship ahoy!" I yelled, to no use. The man did not intend to stop or he understood no English. "Old Tommy Rot," I bellowed, "Greek was the court language when you ruled over mundane gods, but now English is all the go."

Lola averted disaster by pulling the lever hard forward. He gave me the telescope and advised me to use it. I could do no harm other than injure my eyes by gazing on the glowing mass. It was a silver footed throne, that might have been the original throne Xerxes occupied on a rocky hill overlooking the bay of Salamis to witness his fleet annihilated. Atop the mass was a monstrosity, part human, part beast and reptile. Most conspicuous of his corporeality was a rufescent duck-bill dinosaur nose. His frog mouth had a double row of alligator teeth; gray haired as Saturn, the heavy locks fell over his shoulders; owl eyed. Like an owl his eyes were immovable, the reptilian head seemed mounted on roller bearings and turned with the precision of an automatic go-and-stop signal. Large elephantine ears of a dirty gray color were perforated at the lobes for several sleigh bells of jangling tintinnabulum, the only sound that broke the silence. A sixty-gallon-barrel body was covered with a thick coat of long bluish hair that curled around a middle that resembled a Venus girdle. Long arms came down to the soles of his feet. The delicate hands were unsoiled with manual labor and his brow unused to sweat earning daily bread. The long tapering fingers were ornamented by several bone rings. On one ring was engraved a human heart, on another a chicken's gizzard, on another a white mouse's liver, emblem of big hearted fearlessness. Nothing was more courageous than a chicken gizzard tusseling with a batch of gravel; he had little fear as a mouse amounts to not much in the animal kingdom. Legs short and bowed; knee joints ball and socket; the hips, strap-hinged; feet as flat as the head of a flat head Indian; he walked with shuffling gait. His bearclaw-tipped toes were well to avoid. He scratched his head and with a foot so comical I laughed outright and the

strange being got angry at my outburst of hilarity. The hair rose on his back and he stood straight up and gnashed his crocodile teeth. Lola warned me to stifle my mirth or I would incur the life long antipathy of this strange being. Lola extended his hand and said in ancient Greek, "Hello, old man, glad to meet you."

His brow clouded, in thunderous tones he replied, "Down on your knees, poor worm of earth."

"I am an American," ejaculated Lola, trying to widen and heighten his ample physique to make himself look more formidable. A .45 caliber automatic army pistol was clasped in his left hand but concealed in a coat pocket.

"Old man, if you have anything to say, my ear is cocked to listen."

Vulcan crept from under the throne and gave him a thunder bolt which he cast but Lola shot it to pieces in mid air and it fell in fragments. He grabbed Vulcan around the middle and by the noise he made he must have called him bad names. Lola understood a few words. Apparently he feared Lola, and our safety was assured. He motioned for us to tie the airplane fast to a rock resembling a petrified elephant tusk, and to confabulate with him; he left his throne, descended to a rock close to the airplane, and sat down. From somewhere about his person he drew forth a parchment on which were eight hieroglyphs; he pointed to the fourth from the largest and then to himself, and I wondered how it concerned us.

"Whoopee and hurrah," Lola shouted, as he jumped from the airplane and grasped the monstrosity's hand, which he nearly wrung off. "Whoopee, a live Martian. I am the only mundane dweller except yourself who ever met a man from Mars."

He returned to the airplane as I thought for his repeating shotgun to bag the rara avis, but was after the wood covered package labeled Sour Bitter Root's Lemon Extract.

"Don't you do it, Lola," I protested.

"He needs a stimulant; he is liable to collapse; he has had harrowing experiences too severe for a man of his age. If he were a mundaneite he would be a second Methuselah; anyhow it is the civilized way of expressing friendship."

With a pistol butt he knocked off the top and took out a

bottle of lemon extract in a pocket flask container. He uncorked and offered it to the Martian who sniffed it with his duck-bill dinosaur nose, inverted the bottle in his mouth, and, like Maxwell House coffee, it was good to the last drop. He motioned for another bottle and emptied it with greater haste. I took possession of the remainder for fear he might become intoxicated and be taken before a Martian magistrate and fined for violating an amendment to their constitution. The old man from Mars felt his bitters, and insisted that Lola climb the hill with him to sit on the throne as a nominal potentate, so Lola went to please him. Vulcan was pulled from under the throne again, kicked, cuffed, and sent forth disgraced. He disappeared over the hill opposite the airplane. A cry of horror rent the air as he plunged downward on his Luciferan fall, for we had descended many thousand feet and were again within the earth's gravitational pull. I was requested to come to the foot of the throne, but considered it best to remain by the airplane with the pump gun handy to do some fancy shooting should circumstances demand it. I observed the Martian through the telescope. The man from Mars pantomimed with his hands and duck-bill dinosaur nose. By his motions I ascertained he was a dethroned King of Mars. He had reigned from the date of his first shave until six months before. Then a revolution drove him from the throne. He did not explain how he escaped the wrath of his subjects. His family of many wives and numerous progeny were enslaved to the very people he had oppressed. He wanted Lola to help him regain his throne, but Lola told him he had some filibustering to do; he had to help annex Mexico to the United States as the greasers were incapable of self-government. He went into details concerning his pedigree which would interest a snob American only.

"Tell me what your land is like—about those canals, the existence of which some of we earthites doubt," said Lola.

"Long ago when the inhabitants of my home planet were running wild, naked and half starved, my august ancestor decided there would be no more lying abed in caves waiting for the sun to warm the atmosphere, but they must go to work early, fell forests, build houses, and till the soil. Mars has no rivers and few small streams. They go dry during the summer. At the poles, the north especially, a great deal of snow

falls during the winter. When it melted, the water used to flow in a hole resembling Syms hole, supposed to be located at the earth's north pole. We could not plug up our hole. Long canals were dug from the polar snow cap to the equator to conduct water from the melting snow to irrigate with. To complete the enormous undertaking took many millions of men for several generations, but it was worth the effort. Mars is over populated, with no outlet for its surplus population and some favorable planet must be found to which they can emigrate. I myself as a nonproducer was considered superfluous, and was sentenced to have my nose and ears cut off, our mode of capital punishment.

"And Martian will devour himself alive rather than endure such humiliation, but I was reprieved and allowed to go among other planets of the solar system to spy out suitable lands for our emigrants."

"How is education among your people?"

"All can read, write, and cipher, except a few feeble-minded that we keep to cut an arm or leg off when a normal minded person is badly injured and amputation of a limb is necessary. Arm and leg grafting began long before my day and generation. Heart and lung grafting is in the experimental stage. Bone grafting is partly a success. Part of a calf's brain was grafted on that of a feeble minded boy recently. All he did was to follow some milk creature and suck it dry. He wanted to pull at the breasts of my youngest married daughter. He was a nuisance and was cast among a herd of goats to butt for a living.

"We have many creeds of religion, completely confusing, and have fallen away from the simple faith of our forefathers. Swede turnips were once the basis of our monetary standard, then we flopped over to the Irish potato. Nobody is wealthy, nobody poor, but all perform their allotted tasks without complaint. We enjoy our hard life but regret that our planet is over populated; a Martian's greatest obligation is to beget a large family, a custom from time immemorial. There are a few extremists who advocate that a small family of four children is the ideal condition, but they were to have their noses and ears cut off the day I fled. I am homesick, can you take me home in your big bird?"

"How far away is it?" Lola asked him.

"Just a little ways, fifty-two million miles."

"Let me figure on it," said Lola, getting pencil and pad. After ciphering a few minutes he continued, "I would be dead of old age before I got there and returned. I want to be buried on the earth with a nice headstone over me telling who I was, and flowers in their season blooming over my remains. You may return with me and see how you like our country, a paradise compared to your cold, arid little planet."

"Agreed," replied the ex-Martian, taking up his silver-footed throne. He had almost reached the airplane when the ground on which he stood blew up from the impact of an Opel rocket plane. The collision occurred fifteen hundred miles above the wildest part of Siberia, and to this day the effect of the ultramundane collision can be seen. Another rocket plane might get us, so we flew west a long distance until the air was free from the dust engendered by the explosion, and then loafed. Lola pointed his telescope earthward and saw a city in which the inhabitants were having a free-for-all fight. "Dublin, Ireland," he remarked, helping himself from the lunch basket. In this no-man's space we loafed and Lola took another observation. He saw a mighty city: men and women rushed frantically to and fro in the streets but they were not combative; it was New York city staging a stock panic. When he looked again he saw another city, the streets full of cattle and hogs—Chicago, the world's meat-packing center. "It is time we returned home," said Lola, as he shut off the protactinium motor, and glided down below the troposphere. The gravitational motor was started. We landed at Wheeler airport twenty-three hours and fifty-nine minutes after taking off.

We had flown round the world within twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOLA WHEELER'S TRUE STORY TOLD BEFORE
THE HAVILAH ANANIAS CLUB

Descending the last thousand miles from No Man's Void, Lola Wheeler was undemonstrative but not puffed up with false pride like a great warrior who has reached his goal, through slaughter of his fellow man, a throne and appurtenances red with human bloodshed. The same sort of elation beamed from his benign face as from a bumpkin's when he has won the smiles of the village flapper. He was left to his happy contemplations, for my mind was busy also, pondering on the empty éclat of my fellow man for our record-breaking altitude flight. In a vision Lola and I were in the largest city of Uncle Sam's domains, treated royally, and we were at the head of a procession moving along the main thoroughfare. Everybody in their holiday togs shouted "Hosanna to the highest birdmen roosting in aviation's aviary." My thinking box was bound with golden wire to keep egotism from rending it asunder. Lola and I would be sought for as cynosures by theatrical and dime museum men. On the stage, in the side show, our august personages would make the eyes of the populace bulge like a rubberboot top in which the servant girl has emptied the dish water containing the Rogers-plated silver tableware.

On one side of one of the canvas pontoons Lola had made at Crater Lake I scrawled with a blue lumber marker, "Two thousand miles altitude." I tossed in such articles as could be dispensed with: the hand basket that had contained our lunch, a pocket knife that Lola unintentionally dropped at my feet, my Ingersoll dollar watch with the second, minute, and hour hands missing—the handless contraption never did keep good time according to the Washington horologe—, a few bent wire nails, and button hook, useful only to Satan who wears button shoes exclusively. I had the towrope ready to cast in, but

Lola objected, so I requested him to circle over town, which he intended doing anyway. Then I dropped the pontoon so as to land in front of the Wolf Hotel, but it lodged on top of the Odd Fellows building almost unnoticed. There was no whoopee crowd to meet us at the seemingly deserted airport. Our reception was of absolute zero coldness. A pitiful group stood near the hangar. Mr. Collinswood was the first to be aware of our presence. Silently he gave his hand bound in a handkerchief and crimson streaked. His disheveled hair was full of dust. On the back of the head it was matted with congealed blood from a scalp wound made by some blunt instrument. His clothes, rent almost to tatters, were the color of the dusty highway. He would have used my body as a weeping post but to see a strong man with more than three score years behind him giving way to tears aroused my resentment, and I said, "If this is the only way you have of greeting Lola Wheeler and me on our return from a flight near up to heaven you may use me as a whipping post."

He stepped to Lola's side, placed his trembling arms around the safely returned hero's neck, and blubbered, "Son, it was simply awful, harrowing beyond the power of speech to express it."

"Never mind, Dad," replied Lola, wiping the old man's face with a pocket handkerchief redolent with the aroma of Lucky Strike cigarettes, "the altitude I sought for was reached. I do not want you to pat me on the back and say 'well done, son,' but on Fame's handwagon I want you to toot your own horn loudest and attract world wide attention, for you never had an hour of vain glory and always had to remain among the humble and obscure."

Lola's mother greeted him, and said, "Son, Mr. Collinswood is so upset he forgot to tell you we were robbed last night by two bandits. They set your workshop on fire and stole the gold diggers and a pound of radium, and escaped in an airplane."

"Mother, don't worry. Perhaps the gold digger's eggs were not destroyed; they endure heat like salamander eggs."

"The rascals tried to get away with the eggs, but Mr. Collinswood fought them single-handed, and he shouted, 'I do not choose to run.' They dropped and tramped on the eggs and

broke open the leathery shells. I gathered up the contents in a paper bag, filled six empty shells, and sewed them up. I do not see why they should not hatch."

"Mother, we hope so," replied Lola.

His hopeful attitude toward the calamity so enthused the old folks that they forgot their tears and became interested in our flight far beyond the clouds. They returned home quite elated. Lola unloaded his pistol, oiled it carefully, and reloaded it. He intended to repeat the same operation on the shotgun, which was in my hands, but I legged it for the main street shouting, "Citizens, the dastardly robbery must be avenged. To arms, everybody!"

My tocsin of war brought Miss H. Laurie Hubbard from the postoffice building, and she remarked that the owner of the Belly Ache mine must be going to work his mine again, as nobody else would carry on like that except in a fit of stomach ache. Up Main street I ran, the shotgun ready for quick action, but no one followed me and I simmered down. I arrived on a dog trot at the smouldering ruins of Lola's workshop where several men were assembled. They talked in low deliberate tones. I could not get the purport of what they said, as I was evidently of as much importance in their estimation as a tumble bug rolling a ball of animal matter. One of them stood aside that the bug would not detour around his shoe. I discharged the shotgun. "Gentlemen, this dastardly robbery must be avenged; not only the robbery has been committed but arson also."

"A homicide might be added to this category of crime if you do not lay aside that gun," said a man, displaying a silver star fastened on his vest between the heart and liver. He was the county sheriff. With humility I gave him the gun and apologized, saying that I did not want to take the law in my own hands as he had been elected to the sheriffship by an overwhelming majority. From the close-mouthed crowd I ascertained that two corpulent men, of the style of tin horn gamblers, had put up at the Fox Hotel for the past two weeks, posing as mining men. They were always ready for a game at poker. When one of them played the game with a bumpkin, the other was outside peeping through a large auger hole at the bumpkin's cards and making signs to his confederate. By that

method of cheating they made their board and lodging, and paid their speakeasy bills. They were acquainted with a dissolute prospector recently from The Pas mining country up in Canada, where the muskeg concealed the out cropping of valuable gold ore deposits. The gold diggers would be of great value for they went by the sense of smell. The prospector was not implicated in the robbery. He knew of no such creatures as Lola's gold diggers and regretted that he had left the Canadian gold fields. Hereafter he would remain mum about prospecting. Not being an American citizen he could not locate a mining claim in the United States, and for that reason he drifted on to Mexico. At this writing we are informed he has found the Nigger Gold mine of the Big Bend country, always supposed to be on the American side of the Rio Grande River. A confederate had swooped down on French Gulch at midnight, landed on the public highway in front of Lola Wheeler's shack, stole the gold diggers and the radium, destroyed the eggs, and burned the workshop. According to Mrs. Collinswood the pilot was about as diminutive as Shorty Richards, whom he resembled.

The airplane of foreign design which roared like a maelstrom was lost soon in the black midnight sky. According to the sound a northeasterly course toward The Pas was taken. The destination should be reached within ten hours. Had not Lola's workshop been set on fire many would not have known what happened. The worthy sheriff was providentially present over night in French Gulch, called there to destroy a still located in a tunnel of Jack Riddall's mine. The still and barrel of mash were in the clutches of bats by the million. It is stated that the sheriff batted it from the tunnel in a way a he-man is not supposed to conduct himself when upholding law and order. Bitten severely by the filthy varmints, he was the most batty man in Redding. He did not have time to pursue the robbers but telegraphed to the proper authorities at The Pas. Lola Wheeler, who had intended to go with me to Hollywood for a moving picture, postponed the trip until such time as he had recovered the gold diggers and the radium. I offered to go with him to run down the robbers, but he declined my services with profuse thanks as he intended to fly light. It seemed to me he would fly heavy, judging from the

ammunition for shotgun, automatic pistol, fifty pounds of No. 1 dynamite, two coils of fuse, and three boxes of blasting caps, the aggregate being more than my weight. The dynamite was a non-essential, unless he intended to blast the muskeg to ascertain what lay beneath. I asked what his intentions were, and with a whimsical smile he replied that he intended to shell the woods. When he came on the robbers he would hover over them and drop dynamite with deadly effect. He could toss a stick of dynamite over the plate with the precision of an expert baseball twirler. He flew to his shack and landed in the highway at the same place the robbers had. He bade adieu to his aged mother, shook a clenched fist under Mr. Collinswood's nose, and said he, "Dad, single-handed I shall avenge the indignity to which you were subjected. They should have respected your grey hairs."

"Get your men, Lola," replied Mr. Collinswood, who had forgotten his ill treatment and smiled so blandly that the cavity of the last recently extracted molar tooth next to the left upper wisdom tooth showed perfectly.

"Get them, son," said the mother, kissing him on the cheek with fervor.

The constable, with Lola's shotgun ready for quick action, looked fierce. His red beard stuck out as straight as porcupine quills ready to be shot from the animal's back. At length he said, "Lola, I have decided to go with you. The presence of a courageous man such as I am would make the robbers surrender without an exchange of shots, but should my airplane sickness get too severe I can cure it by stepping over board."

"If you hanker for a leap, go to the old swimming hole and jump over the falls; you would fall your entire length."

"Lola," said I meekly, "let me go with you if only as your arsenal bearer."

"You're too handy fingering triggers when the exigency does not demand it," he replied.

Lola's wife came on the scene with a knitted worsted scarf she had just finished, and asked for the lunch basket that I had placed in the pontoon lodged on the roof of the Odd Fellows building. The only way to recover the basket was to ascend the fire escape which consisted of a large grape vine

supported by an ancient live oak from the main vine on the roof. Success depended on how near a person was related to monkeys. She told me not to go to all that trouble. If I fell and got broken bones there was no doctor in French Gulch to set them. She and Lola returned to their shack. Quite recovered from the shock of robbery and arson, he threw himself across the bed on his back and was lost soon in profound sleep. Friends and neighbors had gathered around the destroyed workshop, but quietly departed when she told them their presence was no longer needed since Lola had gone to sleep. A Mr. Boodheart offered me the use of his room at the Wolf Hotel gratis as soon as an old time friend got out of bed, but I declined the offer. Climbing aboard the airplane, in which was the unused sleeping bag, I crawled into it headfirst—not that the weather was cold, but to shut out the light of day. My nap was dreamless, akin to that when we have entered the hall of eternal silence beyond the River Styx. Late in the afternoon I was pulled from the bag by a middle-aged fat man with the jowls of a half-ton porker.

“Wake up, I say,” he wheezed.

Rubbing my sleep swelled eyes, I asked what was on tap.

“Are you one of the men who made an altitude flight of two thousand miles?”

I replied that I had accompanied Mr. Lola Wheeler when he broke the altitude record by more than one thousand, nine hundred and ninety miles.

“You played second fiddle. I am after the first fiddler.”

“You will find him at home, asleep no doubt.”

“I shall wake him. The proposition I shall put before him would wake a dead man moored to a Missouri River boat.”

He lumbered to the shack and pounded on the door, which was opened by Mrs. Wheeler.

“Please keep quiet, Mr. Wheeler is sound asleep,” she admonished him.

“I must see him and explain my proposition with millions in it. I would not ask him to look sensible; just show himself on the stage. He need not make a little hackney speech but must stand hands in his pockets, mouth open from ear to ear, and chuckle like a laughing jackass. Have his mug taken for the silent silver screen, that’s the proposition in a nut shell.”

"You might make the same proposition to the man who went with Mr. Wheeler."

"Second fiddlers are like a second class show, with which I never connect myself. I shall return at seven-thirty this evening and repeat the offer. In the meantime, inquire who W. H. Gabber is, theatrical producer, that's me."

At three o'clock P. M. Lola waked and was told of the great offer Mr. Gabber would make him, but he was not interested. At four o'clock, a small basket of victuals on one arm, and his wife holding the other, he came to the airplane. They talked in low tones in order not to wake me, as they supposed I was asleep. He gave me his hand and said, "So long, I shall be back in a fortnight or two. During my absence see Mr. Gabber and make some sort of arrangements with him that will bring you pecuniary reward and ascend a round or two on Fame's ladder by which everybody has to climb to a certain height before he is known to Who's Who."

I inspected his water olla to see whether it was air tight. He would occupy it during part of his flight to The Pas, capitol of the Hyperboneans. The water olla was in perfect condition. In the sleeping bag, corked in the olla, Lola could stand absolute zero temperature. Lola's wife outfitted the robot cap-à-pie with her last year's discarded clothes and said, "Be a good girl; bring Lola safely back to me."

I seemed to see the robot's head nod in the affirmative. I grasped Lola's hand and held on. "Lola," said I, "when you return I shall not be at French Gulch. I intend going to Hot Springs Valley, Kern County, and visit with Ed Vaughn and his family." Consulting a memorandum, I continued, "You are slated to speak before the Havilah Ananias Club four weeks from this evening. What will your story be about?"

"The capture and punishment of the robbers who stole the gold diggers and the pound of radium. So long." The gravitational motor was started, the airplane ran up the highway and took off opposite Shorty Richards' abandoned cabin. The angry pilot, driving a more angry airplane, went northerly more than five hundred miles an hour, and was soon lost from view among stratocumulus clouds. My interest in Northern California went with the disappearance of Lola Wheeler. From the roof of the Odd Fellows building I recovered the pontoon

and contents, and left them in the Franck Brothers ware house. The town was enjoying prosperity once more. A soft drink dispensary dispensed hard drinks to doughty old miners and to cordwood choppers. Miners declared soft drinks had no effect at clearing their lungs of the dynamite smoke inhaled far underground where gnomes never ventured. Their system surcharged with dynamite smoke, demanded the kick of Old Kentucky Bourbon. Fearless men were they who lived a hard life amid a thousand and one daily perils from the premature explosion of dynamite, caved in tunnels, and stopes almost asphyxiated from insufficient oxygen in the air, and to give the doughty men a thrill once in a while methinks the spirit of arch-dry-snooper, Andrew Volstead, would give his approval. The back room of the speakeasy was given over to games of chance. Each votary of fortune gave the password at the door; I overheard it and was admitted to the right hand of fellowship. At one table were two prominent citizens of French Gulch, a merchant and a mine owner playing poker with two professional gamblers from San Francisco.

Thirty thousand dollars in gold coin was in the pot, which the French Gulch men won to the chagrin of the gamblers who had lost their all. One of them, to get money to leave town, pawned his gold watch and a dubious diamond shirt stud. The other had nothing else but his upper false teeth to pawn. Big-hearted Mort Foster declared that to take the teeth out of a man's mouth was worse than taking the shirt from his back, and so he started a subscription and donated five dollars. Everybody chipped in. The hat was heavy, mostly with silver coin. I had no coin about my person but gave him some wholesome advice. Said I, "Sir, hereafter steer clear of French Gulch which has not a single gambler. When you want to make easy money emulate the example of a Dixieland denizen who filched the copper pennies of every one-eyed nigger dying of shotgun wounds received while robbing white men's chicken houses." He promised me he would go in cahoots with this genius.

Next morning the gamblers left on the motor bus. I intended to go afoot as far as Whiskey Flat, about half way to Redding, and meet an old-time friend who was placer mining over a gulch the fifth time. He did not complain of the

boulders to be moved but of the empty whiskey bottles cast in the gulch from early mining days until the state went dry. The old gold digger was recuperating from a severe laceration of the right hand from a broken bottle, and barely missed lock-jaw. Once recovered, he confined his mining activity to sniping along Clear Creek, that is, extracting gold nuggets from small crevices in bed rock, overlooked by the pioneer miners. The bus driver could not see very well. The night before he had come in contact with a barb wire clothes-line stretched in Mr. Thugg's backyard. He met with the misfortune going cross lots from the residence of his sweetheart to Fox Hotel. I drove the motor bus to Redding and could have held down the job indefinitely. Many said I was a first rate bus driver and wanted to know where I had qualified. I told them I once drove Grandad's jaunting cart over the rocky road to Dublin. I boarded the south bound train with the gamblers. We were as strangers, oblivious of each other's presence. Twenty-four hours later I arrived at Bakersfield. The train welcomers assembled on the depot platform had doubled during the past year. Among them all I knew but one person, Junior Moore, no longer a carefree boy but a man with life's full responsibilities resting on his shoulders. He greeted me close-mouthed, and did not show the points of his perfect front teeth, concealed by his trap-door upper lip. I held out my hand, which he grasped without enthusiasm, as he mumbled, "Dad and Ma will be gad to see you."

Parked across the street was his father's Ford roadster, which he entered and drove close to where I stood on the platform watching workmen wheel brick on a twelve-inch plank twenty stories from the ground, which tried out the strongest nerves. In a humble way they were heroes greater than he who goes aloft in an airplane to attempt a non-stop flight from San Francisco to Hong Kong, China. "Get in," said grouchy Junior. As I got in the automobile I realized my Gladstone bag was missing. I had left it on the train. I telegraphed ahead to the conductor who took care of it and next day it was delivered on payment of two dollars for my carelessness. Mr. and Mrs. Moore were pleased that I had called before returning home to Dixie. The Hopkins, Mary and Pejudi, lived across the street in the best house of Bakersfield. They spent

the evening with the Moores. Never was mortal man more changed for the better than Pejudi Hopkins, dressed in the latest style of made-to-order suit, a large diamond on his shirt bosom the only evidence of ostentation. He was no braggart and took his fortune as a matter of course. He remarked he was well satisfied with the millions he derived from his oil wells and more millions from the Mark Hopkins estate. He did not care a fig about his lawful inheritance, the whole of Nevada and California. Mary was taciturn no longer, but her mantle of silence rested on Junior's shoulders, which reversed their case. Junior never belittled nor praised his brother-in-law, who continued the same lukewarm attitude with Mr. Moore. Nothing could make amends for the indignities he had heaped on his son-in-law, a victim of environment. It was rumored the son-in-law had saved the father-in-law from going to the wall in a Wall Street stock market crash. At the supper table Donna Moore was not present. Asked concerning her absence, Mr. Moore replied that she was listed as missing on life's battle field. Not satisfied by the enigmatical answer I determined to find out after dinner. I would interview the Chinese cook. Suddenly, I was chilly, my bones ached, and I went out in the sunshine. An attack of Bakersfield ague came over me, I shook as if old King Malaria had all his victims in a monstrous corn popper, held alternately over the polar regions and then over the fires of perdition. The quadruplets waked, and everybody was aware of their presence, even a crusty old man living on the remotest block. Junior bundled them in a toy wagon, and trundled them across the front lawn and down a back street. The Chinese cook took one under each arm and told them dragon fairy tales which did not pacify them.

"Get their mother," said I.

"No sava where she go, ran off with no milican man, with a greaser man," thus the Chinese cook unsolicited imparted the information I wished to obtain. Donna had met a Mexican gambler at Tia Juana and eloped with him to Mexico City. As a reminder of her womanly attention she left Junior the quadruplets. She was thwarted in her career by her marriage to Junior and hoped he would make good as California's champion

stunt flyer, but he was only mediocre, and for that reason she left him.

Next day there came to Bakersfield an old friend, John Walker from near Kernville, with two nieces from Texas on their way home. In the afternoon Mr. Walker and I went to Calienta ten miles down the track, where the wagon road goes to the Kern River country. He had blankets and supplies along, so we cooked our supper over a freighter's fire and spread the blankets in the wagon body on some alfalfa hay. Cooking and sleeping in the open reminded me of old times, too enjoyable to last always. We traveled leisurely and reached Havilah shortly after noon. The new steel roof of the Havilah Ananias clubhouse gleamed in the chilly sunshine. Mr. Walker had been a member of the club since it was organized and told many true stories relating to his journey from Missouri to the California gold diggings in the early fifties, when he was but fourteen years old. The story told so many times had become stale. To revamp it he resorted to exaggeration and was reprimanded severely. His sensitive nature could not brook reproof, and of late years his habitual absence merited expulsion but he got by by sending his youngest son as proxy. Young Walker considered himself a swift runner on True Story's cinder path, and told over and over again Dad's journey from Missouri to California. Dad's and son's minds followed the same rut.

A mile and a half further, at the foot of a well kept pike, flowed Bodfish Creek where Mike Welch had a cucumber ranch, lying fallow the past season. Infirmities of old age, long held in abeyance by a vigorous constitution, came on him suddenly and he bowed before the inevitable. Crutch, cane, and roller chair were his means of locomotion; with him, ever more decrepit, was Tom Moore, organizer of the Havilah Ananias Club. He was bowed down with grief from the loss of an only sister, Mrs. Andrew Andrews, who with her husband had rounded Cape Horn during the second year of the California gold rush. After many vicissitudes, wealthy one day but poor the next, they came on the crest of the Havilah gold excitement and worked hard, but with the closing of Mr. Andrews' life little remained for the widow, who lived with her brother in her declining years. This courageous pioneer woman

led the way for those to follow after clad in sealskin coats, mounted on spike heel slippers, whose rouged faces would wear a death mark were a dishrag flaunted them with the behest "Go to it, wash that stack of dirty dishes!"

I gave the two old miners my sympathy, which I hoped would be a panacea for their empty stomachs, but I suggested they go to the Old Miners' Home, which they scorned. I ran outdoors to escape a crutch and caning and climbed in Mr. Walker's wagon, and said I, "Young man, eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you may die."

"That's the dope I like to swallow," said Mike Welch. "Come, Tom, what say we retimber the Young American mine shaft, take out some ore, and celebrate our coming of age?"

"Wait until tomorrow," replied Tom Moore, who sat in the sunshine reading the San Francisco Examiner. The two old boys were left in good humor, and I arrived at Ed Vaughn's home, Hot Springs Valley resort. Mrs. Vaughn's eyes were red from weeping.

"Grace," asked Mr. Walker, "anything serious? Old Billy goat dead?"

"No," she replied, drying her eyes. "The doctor who just passed by stated that Dick Palmer breathed his last less than an hour ago. Mr. Palmer was more like a brother than a neighbor."

That Dick Palmer, a man of iron constitution, had been called suddenly by death, was quite beyond the bounds of logical thinking.

Mrs. Vaughn continued, "Yesterday the doctor washed out his stomach to give him relief from catarrh and warned him not to drink any cold water. Almost delirious with fever he drank a pitcher of ice water that should have been excluded from the sick room, and he expired soon, conscious to the last. He said, "Tell everybody that I, Dick Palmer, moderate drinker all my life, was killed by drinking cold water."

The Vaughns were prosperous. They owned a rich quartz mine and reduced the ore with an arrastra operated by water power. There were several potential mines on Bodfish Ranch which they owned. Quite a large herd of cattle branded E. V. (Ed Vaughn), without a maverick, roamed among the hills, and a flock of sheep would be added soon. On lower

Erskin Creek was the Vaughn hog ranch, which a son-in-law intended to look after but had rather herd sheep. The porkers and brown bears were ever at war for possession of Tula Flat until Mr. Vaughn in the role of Nimrod exterminated most of the bears and drove the remainder far back in the hills. For a short time I acted as swine herd; that is, when out prospecting for gold I kept a bright outlook for swine and their spoor. My compensation was my board and lodging. I preferred sleeping in the corral to a stuffy room on the second floor of the Resort House. Sufficient to state, I discovered many good prospects that turned barren of gold a few feet below the surface, an unfortunate characteristic of the Bodfish mining district. From a dozen or more prospects I took out about a ton of pay ore, and carried it down on my back to the wagon road. Bill Morris, the freighter, hauled it to Mr. Vaughn's arrastra. The clean-up amounted to one hundred dollars, which left me seventy-five dollars after paying the freighter and arrastra man. I did not take into consideration shoes worn out on sharp stones nor work clothes rent by thorny brush that grew in profusion on hills and flats. It is the only *easy* money I made during my sojourn in California.

By now the time was nearly expired when Lola Wheeler had agreed to return home. Twice each week I talked over the long distance phone to Lola's wife at French Gulch. To me the phone service was free; Mrs. Wheeler footed the bill. It was always the same reply: "Nothing from Lola yet." She was not at all uneasy; she knew that her illustrious husband was back in the wilderness, perhaps hundreds of miles from telephone communication.

On the evening of his expected presence at the Havilah Ananias Club, when the meeting was called to order everybody was on the qui vive to see the famous aviator. I remained outdoors, ears attuned to hear the whirr of the airplane's propeller. There was no noisy gas engine when aloft to break the contemplation of angels. Now when near the ground for a pillar saint to leave his post would put him down as being in league with the devil. After being in session an hour each young member was called on to tell a true story. All averred they had nothing to say. The Walker boy was restless; his thinking box was in a ferment and would boil over soon.

Thrusting my thumb in his ribs, I said, "Go to it, son."

Rising and standing on one foot he said, "I am going to tell about Dad's hike from Missouri to California, but if he does not look out mighty sharp there will be a story to tell of his free ride from Kernville to Folsom rock pile. Dad says he puts up all his peaches in Mason half gallon and quart fruit jars, which is a damned lie. He makes brandy of them so strong that the hogs get drunk eating the parings and pits. When Dad went to Bakersfield to take my sissy cousins to the train he took along a barrel of the dope and brought home a wagon load of groceries. I wanted him to buy me a flivver, any sort of tin lizzy, something to take my best girl out riding, but Dad said I could go afoot; that's the way he went when he sparked Ma. Mr. President, who was the greatest ass, he going afoot to spark Ma or she to be taken in by such a lout?"

"The answer is you," replied a young member.

"It's a damned lie," retorted young Walker, clearing the deck for action.

Another young member, a disciple of Blakstone reading law in a Bakersfield local office, said, "Mr. President, I aver the story told by one Juvenile Walker be stricken from the minutes of this meeting as incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial. It is moved and seconded that the story be stricken out. Take your walking papers; go home, Walker." The Walker boy was barred one year from attending any meeting.

Next day after the meeting I received a message over the phone that Lola Wheeler had been heard from. He was in The Pas country beset with many obstacles over which he hoped to triumph. If all went well he would attend the club's next meeting. Mr. Vaughn's flock of sheep at the Hot Springs Valley Resort corral awaited the arrival of his son-in-law somewhere in the Tehachapi Mountains cutting bee trees.

The sheep bleated incessantly but I must herd them until the bee tree hunter arrived. On a frosty morning a little after sunrise, a shepherd's crook over my shoulder and a collie dog at my heels, I started the flock toward the foothills a mile away. After nearly running my legs off, I gave up in despair. The collie dog's tongue lolled from its mouth so far I feared it would drop out and lie down exhausted. The sheep scattered

as if there were a thousand winds blowing from heaven instead of four; every sheep tried to be a leader and bleated in vain for a single follower. They milled, separated, and bleated. The most insensate animal is a sheep. Why was it chosen as a lamb as the symbol of innocence? It must be that some sheep-faced, sheep-minded herder got up the gag and tossed it to his sheepish cowards. A lion's whelp is more appropriate. Playful and harmless as a house cat, it has its own perspicacious individuality. One day of herding sheep convinced me I would never make a fourth-class herder. Resting a day, the lure of hidden gold called me and I decided to go to the White River placer diggings across Kern River to the west. I intended to be absent a week and phoned Lola's wife to that effect and for him to leave The Pas not later than noon of the club's meeting day and fly direct to Havilah. She replied she would forward my request to Lola, with whom she was in daily communication. That evening I borrowed a pack mule from the Dick Palmer estate and next morning started at sunrise. Ascending the river near the forks, I met two men in the highway, both exceedingly angry. The smaller man, James Burton, had a loaded Winchester rifle which he pointed at his adversary, John Gibson, and dared him to advance another step.

Gibson, who had always seemed inoffensive and almost cowardly, walked straight toward Burton, who yelled for him to throw up his hands. Excited, Burton pulled on the trigger guard instead of the trigger. Gibson wrenched the rifle from his grasp and shot him down. The victim fell on his back, his heels pounded the ground and he thrashed with his hands. A miniature dust storm was raised by the man's dying agony. I stood horrified and unable to move. My lower jaw must have dropped, for Gibson's first admonition was "Stranger, shut your mouth. Tell me as you would the magistrate how you saw this homicide." He warned me to stick by what I said, and I did so. The magistrate decided the homicide was justifiable. That ended my last attempt to search for gold. The tragedy threw the community in a turmoil. There was talk of open hostility against me for telling just how the homicide occurred. I remained close at Hot Springs Valley Resort. Years previous Mr. Vaughn had prophesied that James Burton

would die with his boots on, but none regretted the homicide more than Mr. Vaughn, a man of peace, a noble Christian. On the sixth evening after the murder, Mr. Vaughn hitched his best mule team to a farm wagon, and he, his wife, his eldest daughter, Mrs. Grace Brown, and I started for the Havilah clubhouse. At the cuke ranch Tom Moore and Mike Welch were put in the wagon. Mike in his roller chair, and Tom on a cot on which he sat upright with my assistance. On the way to the clubhouse not a word did those old pioneers say regarding their decrepitude. Each affirmed this was a good old world to live in and wondered why man created in the image of his Maker was not endowed with as long life as the Phoenix, which when half a thousand years had rolled by went to the Mojave desert, burned himself alive, and rose from his own ashes more perfect than before; and could repeat the phenomenon as long as the world lasted. From a paper bag Mike took a pickle and gave it to Tom Moore, who fell on it with the two remaining teeth he possessed. Mike mouthed a pickle and gummed it. Each was as hilarious as a young school boy with home-made molasses candy. A dry snooper would have arrested those old men for eating cukes that contained ten times the amount of alcohol sanctioned by the law.

A meteorite flamed in the sky, and the brilliance startled us all. The team lunged forward and Mr. Moore would have pitched out backwards had I not restrained him. Righting himself, he said, "I wonder if that was sister Lib's spirit descending to earth and denied admittance to the golden city because she belonged to no religious organization. She never paraded down the church aisle on a Sunday morning as so much hypocrisy encompassed in the human skin."

Mike replied, "I believe what a white preacher said at a black man's funeral, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' Mrs. Andrews was pure in heart. Her soul is with her Maker up yonder. The meteorite was so much dust from stellar space."

The evening air was at the frost line. Cheerful fires glowed in the two heaters. Our little group sat around one heater, while the other heater warmed the remainder of the members. There was a wager that Lola Wheeler would not come and if he came would tell nothing worth listening to, and that was the

unanimous opinion of the party seated around the second heater. One of them, with more ego than the others combined, told a fish story more stale than a Cape Cod fish cast high and dry on the beach to decay in the midsummer sunshine. It was now time to call the meeting to order. Tom Moore would preside as President. I persuaded him to wait fifteen minutes over time; at the expiration I requested him to wait another fifteen minutes, which was granted because Lola Wheeler was to fly a great distance—more than two thousand miles. In the meantime a bonfire was built in a corner of the old court house square as a beacon to show Lola where to land. Mr. Moore was carried to the President's chair and called the meeting to order. In sonorous tones not impaired by bodily infirmities, he said, "Fellow members of the Havilah Ananias Club. Our illustrious member, Lola Wheeler, who was to tell a true story at this meeting, has not arrived, and it is doubtful whether he will. He was to start at noon from The Pas up in Manitoba. Barring incidents he will have to make record-breaking time. None regrets his non-appearance more than I. The brief time it has been my pleasure to be acquainted with him I know him to be truthful, reliable, and worthy of every trust; while waiting his coming we shall be edified by a true story from Sister Vaughn."

"What! Me?" gasped Mrs. Vaughn aghast. "I am no storyteller such as you men folks are. Ever since I can remember until I left home in Vermont to come to California it was dinned in my ears that it is a shame for women to speak in public. My life is so humdrum; nothing out of the ordinary has ever happened."

"Grace," said Mr. Vaughn in his mildest tones, "tell about the supposed burglar you thought was about to kill you in bed."

"It was nothing but an old Billy goat that tried to butt me out of bed one night. Really, I was disappointed it was not a burglar. I could have reasoned with him to go elsewhere as I had nothing of value. That is all I have to say."

"Mike Welch, anything new concerning your cuke ranch?" asked a young member.

"Yes, the ranch does not pan out a living any more; therefore, it is adjourned sine die."

Mr. Moore, gavel in hand, rapped once to demand attention. Two more raps at short intervals would announce that no story would be told and the meeting dismissed. The gavel descended the second time and raised for the final rap.

"Mr. President, stop rapping, tapping on your table like a woodpecker on a Mormon church steeple, for Lola Wheeler or a comet is coming to destroy the world," said the young member, elated that he could tell something original.

We all rushed outdoors. In the northern sky close to the horizon a bright light shone that seemed stationary, then suddenly grew larger. Before we were aware of the fact an airplane landed in the square close to the bonfire. The cabin door swung open, and Lola Wheeler, rather stiff in the knee joints, stepped out. He shook Mrs. Vaughn's hand first, and bent low as if to kiss it. Mr. Vaughn was greeted next. Then Tom Moore, Mike Welch, and myself. I was mighty glad he did not single me out as the first.

"Just in time," said Mr. Moore nervously; anything out of the ordinary frayed his nerves. I helped Mr. Vaughn to reseal him in the President's chair. Lola took off his goggles and fur cap, and tried to smooth down his hair by passing his hand over it without success. Mrs. Vaughn gave him a small hand mirror and comb, and he combed his hair. It had a pronounced tendency to stand on end. He stood on one foot, then the other, and at length became quiet with one foot resting on a chair round, and said, "I got their goat, or rather the gold diggers got the rascals' goat, and everything is now O. K."

He reached for a chair to sit down. I rushed to where he stood, pulled the chair back, and tapped his knee with my left hand. "Lola Wheeler," said I in consternation, "any kindergarten kid can spiel better than that. We are met here this evening to hear from your own lips every detail concerning the capture and punishment of those robbers, from the time you took the air opposite Shorty Richards' abandoned cabin to the time you got their goat, as you say."

"It is quite a long story; I do not want to tire out anybody's patience listening to a commonplace adventure."

"Lola Wheeler, that is what we are here for. It's just like waiting for a luscious watermelon to ripen or for the wishbone

of a Thanksgiving turkey to wish our hostess good fortune. We are here, all here."

Lola's true story was as follows:

"I left the ground opposite Shorty Richards' cabin, fearful of the poor visibility as nimbus clouds hung low, and I could not see the end of the airplane's nose. If I were to crash on the mountainside I wanted to have it over with at once. With both motors functioning, the speed was more than five hundred miles an hour. My course was northeasterly. In a few minutes I was above the clouds, well above the Troposphere, about ten miles altitude. In the meantime I had resorted to oxygen to keep me alive. Turning control over to the robot, I crawled into my sleeping bag inside the water olla, pulled the cock fast, and speeded up the airplane to about six hundred miles an hour. After four hours and a half flying by dead reckoning I was over The Pas. The temperature was 70 degrees below zero. Descending to an altitude of six miles, I encountered a fitful wind from the northwest which necessitated the operation of both motors; however, descending to within two thousand feet of the earth the wind lulled; the protactinium motor was shut off, and the gravitational motor throttled to about ten miles an hour as I searched for a landing place.

Lower and lower I circled in the midst of a sudden, violent snow storm. I heard several dogs howling and a man shouted to attract my attention. Directly beneath me was The Pas winter landing field, on a large, deeply frozen lake, where I landed in front of a Canadian trapper's snow house in which he lived with a squaw as his common-law wife. Several small children, fur-clad like Teddy bears, romped in the snow. The Canadian spoke imperfect English, so imperfect I could not understand him. It was a camouflage. He was jealous of me and supposed I wanted his squaw for my inamorata. By a series of grunts and gestures he gave me to understand The Pas was two miles distant to the west. Everybody agrees with me that my dead reckoning was almost perfect, more accurate than Col. Chas. Lindbergh's on his trans-ocean flight. He missed a certain point of the Old Sod almost three miles. No other airplane than mine had landed during the last three days on account of the severe weather conditions. With the Canadian's help three walls of snow were built to shelter my

airplane. There was no wall to the lee end, and the nose pointed toward the opening. A heavy, water proof tarpaulin served as the roof. The shelter was almost as comfortable as a wooden hangar as long as the snow lasted; but after six months the snow would melt in the long June sunshine. The Canadian would not take any money for his services, but anything I had to give away he would accept. I had part of the lemon extract with which I had treated the Martian, so I gave him two bottles; he consumed the contents in as many gulps. He wanted four more bottles; instead, I gave him a lemon extract bottle of cylinder oil, and to my regret he sucked it dry as if it were life's elixir. He went in his snow hut and came forth with his wife; each begged for a bottle of the cherished oil. Before I got rid of them they consumed more oil than both motors running full tilt for a week. I had no more oil to give away and hid the remainder in the robot's stomach, where it was safe, for my oily company thought she was a living person. They slipped back into their hut, and I saw nothing of them the next day. They were evidently physicked to perfection. I could not leave my airplane to go to town to learn the latest airplane news. That night a blizzard of hurricane intensity raged, which sent the temperature down to seventy-two degrees below zero. I was well protected against the terrible cold.

The storm raged for forty-eight hours. During the height of the storm came the droning of an airplane from overhead. I went out and was blown off my feet and could hardly find my way back again. On the third running I dug myself out of ten feet of snow. My camp was safe as long as my neighbors were snowed under fifteen feet of snow, which had drifted deeper over them than me. I put on skis and went to town, which was not dug out yet from the snow storm. In a saloon were several miners and prospectors who had gone there for refuge when the storm began. The joint was run by an affable bartender who reminded me of Mort Foster but did not have Mort's innocent eyes or gentle expression. The two owners, twin brothers, were absent in California to run down a rumor that a mining man had two strange animals, gold diggers, that located hidden gold by their sense of smell. They were to have returned during the first night of the snow. Watchful

waiting on my part might recover my gold diggers and my pound of radium, so I hurried back to camp. On a drift above the buried snow but sat my neighbor, both hands to his stomach, looking up in the air. I saw nothing in particular, but got out my telescope, mounted it on the tripod, and looked. Behold! almost directly over my head at four miles altitude was an airplane as idle as a painted ship on a painted ocean. I lost no time shoveling the snow from the tarpaulin, and with my neighbor's assistance rolled the airplane from the snowy hangar, and took off, intending to ascend above the silent airplane and bombard it with dynamite, not to wreck it but to scare the pilot into making a landing. Within a thousand feet of the mysterious airplane I could ascend no higher, but butted against a solid sheet of frozen atmosphere turned to ice and held in suspension. The ice sheet moved back and forth, according to the wind's velocity. Next day I flew well out over the Pacific Ocean, hoping to reach an end of the ice sheet, which was a thousand feet higher than at the place where the airplane was frozen in. The warm air from the Japanese gulf stream had a considerable effect on the ice sheet, and I flew east until the ice sheet extended down close to the ground. Then I flew south to the international boundary line, and directly over it the ice sheet ended as if cut off by a gigantic ice saw. Through my telescope I saw that the ice sheet extended upward to No Man's Void. I did not fly to the north for I saw that the ice sheet almost touched the ground. Several mushers were bent almost double trying to keep their heads whole while mushing north. My gold diggers must be frozen to death, as well as the gamblers and pilot. I would have left everything behind had it not been for the radium, my only means of raising quick money. It might be April before the weather moderated sufficiently to thaw the extramundane ice sheet. Next day the frozen airplane drifted over town and beyond to a densely wooded tract embracing ten sections designated by surveyors as The Devil's Stink Pot. If the forest could be set on fire the air would be heated sufficiently to thaw out the airplane. Many tree trunks were lying on the ground. A few burned well when snow was removed from around them, so I decided to hire all the men in The Pas not too proud to bend their backs at shoveling snow from around the fallen timber. The

first man I sought was my Canadian neighbor, who did not feel first rate after the cylinder oil joy-jag. He knew where the fallen timber was thickest. His idea was to dig out one tree trunk, set it on fire, and the heat, he thought, would be sufficient to melt the snow from around the other tree trunks: I had a small amount of oxygen, a first rate fire kindler, which I took along. We tramped among the timber and stumbled over fallen tree trunks, and I got bogged in a concealed thermal spring that thawed the muskeg within a radius of one hundred feet. I was soaking wet to the waist and would freeze to death soon, but the Canadian urged me onward, saying the ground was bare of snow just ahead. Clothes frozen stiff, all sensation gone from my legs, I stumbled along and fell headlong on the outer rim of a clear plot some ten acres in extent. The ground was almost uncomfortably warm from the effects of blind thermal springs. The Canadian pulled off my frozen boots; standing astride of my leg while I pushed right hard against the rear of his anatomy with my disengaged foot, it was a tug of war before the boots were pulled off. Then I removed my socks and warmed my chilled feet by covering them with warm earth, and presently the sensation of feeling returned to my lower limbs. In a small depression I noticed bones of prehistoric monsters that covered the ground. Some bones were petrified, others in a natural state ready to crumble to dust from exposure for untold ages to the elements. I was speculating as to the sort of monsters the bones once belonged to, but the Canadian interrupted my train of thought by saying, "Indians tell me a mighty bird, rather a pair, once had their nest in these woods. They were so large when they flew that their wings covered the whole visible sky. When they squawked the earth trembled. Loudest thunder was as nothing to those birds squawking. No trees in the forest were large or strong enough to support their weight. They broke down many trees, the trunks of which you see lying around us. They were compelled to build their nests on the ground. They lived on reptiles, some of them one hundred feet long.

"Have a drink of oil?" I interrupted, offering a small bottle of gun oil, the residue after oiling the shotgun and automatic pistol. He drained the bottle to the last drop; as he sat down on a tree trunk hard by he broke the bottle and licked the

inside with avidity. I examined the complete skeleton of a diplodocus nearly one hundred feet long. Beside it was the skeleton of a brontosaurus some eighty feet long. I cannot be exact in stating the length, for it lay in a semicircle, and several bones were missing. Between the two monster skeletons were the complete remains of a stegosaurus with an absurd frilled back. Among the branches of a standing petrified tree was the petrified body of an Archeopteryx, the earliest known bird. I listened for it to sing a petrified song. This was a graveyard of reptiles that had flourished during the Mesozoic age, when the earth from pole to pole was covered with lush vegetation thriving in an aqueous atmosphere when the hot sun poured down his fierce rays, when a deluge of warm rains fell daily, when great tidal strains terminated in mighty earthquakes, when the day was not half as long as the present, for the earth was then young and had not cast off the moon yet. It was an age in which no human being could live. The atmosphere was laden with carbon dioxide like that of a garage with doors and windows sealed air tight and dozens of automobile engines racing. As I pulled a Tyrannosaurus' hindleg bone from the muck there was a disagreeable odor of rotten eggs and decomposing fish combined, which attested the presence of phosphorus. Let us examine the nature of phosphorus; it is one of the non-metallic chemical elements, discovered by Brandt, a German alchemist, in 1669 while experimenting with waste animal matter with the view of making a liquid for the transformation of silver into gold, lead into silver, and iron into copper. (He did not get as far as making whiskey from old boots.) The existence of phosphorus in bones was discovered by Gahn about ten years before our Declaration of Independence was written. The elementary nature of phosphorus is P., its atomic weight is 31.04.

"I was satisfied I had discovered a valuable deposit of phosphorus and would have commercialized it, but I was in great perturbation over the safety of my gold diggers, more valuable than anything else I possessed outside the pound of radium. All of a sudden it occurred to me I could set the phosphorus on fire and so melt the ice sheet sufficiently to bring down the frozen airplane. I told the Canadian to beat it back to The Pas, for I, as a rapid fire prophet, prophesied the world would

be destroyed by fire pronto. He looked at me as if doubting my assertion and began jabbering. 'Ma Des,' was all I understood.

"'Au revoir, vamoose, skedaddle, hit the grit,' said I.

"He replied, 'au revoir,' and legged it toward The Pas. I poured a little oxygen in the hole made by pulling out the Tyrannosaurus' leg bone. It sizzled a little and died away despite the fact that I emptied the container. I turned my back to leave the spot forever, when suddenly there was a hissing like a blow torch and a flame ten feet high shot up from the hole. Momentarily it increased in volume and the heat was intense, such as consuming phosphorus gives out. My clothes almost caught fire. I ran toward The Pas for safety. Reaching there, I tried to walk down Main street wholly unconcerned. But like Lot's wife curiosity got the best of me and I looked back, expecting to be turned to a pillar of salt. Instead, I was a pillar of awe and reverence to the frightened citizens, who regretted my prophecy of so rapid a fire, and asked if it would be any good to call out the home fire-brigade. I replied, 'Brethren, let not your hearts be troubled,' and then demanded the presence of the bartender who approached me like a stricken deer and said, 'Oh, sir! I am a good bartender, never got drunk, always on the job, minding my own affairs, let my employers do the carousing and drinking while I stayed sober and filled the coffers with yellow boys.'

"'My friend, I have not a jot or tittle against you but you must act as their agent and give me complete possession of the airplane and its contents frozen in the ice sheet up yonder. Those three men must be frozen stiffer than Jonah's gourd vine would have been if left outdoors during The Pas' mid-winter's night.'

"'Everything is yours; not one of the men has a single living relation. Besides they left not a penny behind them.' Many of the best citizens said that the bartender did the proper thing. With a sullen roar the phosphorous fed flames shot heavenwards many hundreds of feet. The ice sheet began to thaw and fell as hail—some of the stones weighed a talent and were deadly, killing several citizens. Considerable property was destroyed, including the robbers' saloon building. Fortunately no wind blew, the hailstones fell perpendicularly and

were easy to dodge. As the flames increased in volume the roar increased likewise, louder than the volcano, Karakatoa, just before it blew up in 1883. Many were much afraid but I quieted them by saying the flames were of local origin and if they really thought the earth would go up in flames there was ample time for them to repent of their misdeeds. The airplane, frozen in the ice sheet, stirred and I ran to my airplane; around it were gathered the Canadian, his squaw, and children. The parents counted their beads. I did not interrupt their religious meditations otherwise than to request them to please stand aside, but I had to carry them bodily out of the airplane's way, and took off in a violent hailstorm, although the stones were not large enough to do any material damage. I flew away from the hail area and waited for the results that would shortly come to pass. I landed several miles eastward on a frozen river, and watched the flames, which toward sunset began to die down and by next morning were extinguished. For miles around The Pas the snow was melted, tree-buds began to swell, frogs croaked in the muskeg, butterflies and houseflies gathered around an empty booze barrel, and a solitary topper was drawn there also. Shortly after sunrise I went aloft and approached within a few hundred feet of the frozen airplane. The ice was melting fast from behind the tail, but no sign of life was aboard, and of course nothing else could be expected. When the airplane's tail was free of ice I lassoed it, and when the whole was free, I flew away with it as it hung nose downward and landed at the lower end of the timber on the smoothly frozen muskeg. Then I broke open the airplane's cabin door. Oh, what a sight met my astonished eyes that could hardly take in the grewsome details! The bloody floor was littered with human hearts, lungs, and livers, and there seemed no end of intestines! The robbers lay prone on their backs unmitigated consternation on their sin-hardened countenances. Their blood-smearred, buttoned coats were ready to burst. The whereabouts of the gold diggers was a mystery until I turned the body of a robber on its side and a gold digger's leg protruded from the vest. My radium was in his hind pocket. When the gold diggers got cold they had attacked the robbers, disemboweled them, and crawled in the cavity where they froze solid like a cone of ice cream. I sent

for the bartender who came with the undertaker. Two plain over-sized coffins were brought along, and a double grave was dug in the local cemetery. The bartender sang 'Nearer My God to Thee.' How I wanted to be nearer my God than ever before! The coffins were lowered and the grave filled up by an apathetic giant. Thus were the robbers buried without the benefit of clergy. The pilot must have leaped overboard when the gold diggers attacked the robbers.

"On the ground that was burned over were untold millions of dollars in gold nuggets and reefs of free milling gold ore. I filed my claim to the ten sections as discoverer and decided to lay my case before the Prince of Wales, who was wintering at his Alberta cattle ranch. His Royal Highness came at my request. If the people of The Pas would render unto our Savior one half the homage the Prince received it would be good for their souls! How should I greet His Royal Nibs? Like any other normal being. They wanted to deck me out in a Prince Albert suit and a lot of gewgaws, which I spurned. The Prince came by airplane, and as soon as he landed I stalked through a fawning, boot-licking crowd waiting the pleasure of his Royal Highness.

"'Hello, Eddie, how do you feel?' said I, extending my hand, which he shook in a friendly way, as he replied, 'First rate!'

"'Eddie, you must have had a mighty fine ancestor for Americans to name good smoking tobacco after him!'

"'You bet, he was a fine old gentleman, so let us step up his memory a little by smoking a pipe of P. A.' I filled my pipe from his package. We sat down on a log and smoked and talked over our business matters. Then he gave me a deed to the ten sections, the best mineral land in The Pas mining district; besides the gold, there is an inexhaustible supply of phosphorus. Near the center of the tract there is a large oil spring. Of course my good fortune is due to the gold diggers. In The Pas cemetery is an imposing monument which I erected over the remains of the two robbers. It bears the laconic inscription:

"'Sacred to the Memory of Lola W. Wheeler's Gold Diggers.'"

THE END