

would yield greater mines of wealth than the richest of goldfields. It was instanced that one man had grown ten acres of mangold wurtzel which had yielded eighty-two tons to the acre, and which he had disposed of at £5 per ton. With a good many others, I was bitten. I, too, planted ten acres of mangolds, and the yield was, something under one hundred-weight for every three hundred-weight of manure I had enriched the land with. The mangold wurtzels were very small, but the thready fibres which were attached to them were very long and very numerous. These mangold wurtzels, on a limited scale, were like the comet of 1864—very little head and a large amount of tail.

BY SNYDER.

No. VIII. 8.

THE PROGRESS OF THE DIGGINGS—THE RISE IN PRICES—RASH MARRIAGES—THE WILD LIFE OF THE DIGGER.

I have portrayed the dark side of digging life, but it would be strange indeed if the picture had not its reverse. In the last month of the year in which Ballarat, Clunes, and other rich fields were discovered, all kinds of labour which remained in the towns, went up to extraordinary rates. Carpenters demanded, and readily obtained, fifty shillings a day. A labouring man would refuse to give a momentary helping hand to remove as much as a case of goods from a dray unless half-a-crown at least was guaranteed to him. I remember once seeing a very wealthy merchant (who has since been knighted, in conjunction with his head clerk (the juniors having deserted him), engaged in unloading dray after dray of sugar which had come to hand. I remember him accost a sailor-looking man as he passed along, and offer him seven shillings an hour for his labour, and for as many hours as he chose to work. "Look here, governor," said the fellow, "your offer ain't bad, although, mind you, it might have been better. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll give you ten shillings if you will go down and carry up my chest from the cutter, and I'll give a hand at one of the grummetts, to save you from busting up. Which is the best offer, yours or mine?" "You see," the fellow went on to say, "you swells have been having it your own way too long, and too much and too strong. It's come round to Jack now. He's got a say for himself, and he's going to say it. It's his turn this time. What about my offer?" The merchant could only laugh, and the man walked on.

I was standing in a tradesman's shop one morning when a man, the owner of a water-cart, came in, and said, "Governor. I have filled your barrel in the yard, and I'll thank you for twelve-and-six for the same." "Why," says the tradesman, "the last load I had you charged me five shillings, and the load before only three, consequently, Joe, I don't quite see twelve-and-six." "Consequently," said Joe, "I do, and I don't see any less. Twelve-and-six is the figure now for a load of water." "Then," said the tradesman, "you can take your water back again,—I shan't pay for it." "Right you are, my hearty. I'll take the water back. I don't ask a man to take what he don't want." The man turned from the door, and drove round a corner with his water-cart. In less than ten minutes he returned, and said he had obeyed orders. And that was true for him—so he had; for knowing that he couldn't get the water out of the bungalow, he had taken the liberty of borrowing an axe from the wood heap, and had smashed the end of the barrel in, leaving the water making puddles in the backyard. The fellow, had, in fact, taken his revenge out by destroying the house water-cask.

As instancing the lightning-like advances tradesmen made upon former prices, I recollect a man coming into a shop where I was dealing, and asking for a knife "as would cut a bit o' bacca." A mate of the man was standing near the door, looking in at the window. The knife "to cut a bit o' bacca" was produced—a very common one-bladed affair, the selling price of which a few weeks previously would, perhaps, have been fifteen pence. "What's the figger of this?" asked the buyer. "The figure of that," said the trader, "is seven-and-sixpence; just that and neither more nor less; and it's altogether too good for the money." Taking up the knife and half opening the blade, the man ran his thumb along the edge. Then he opened it at full length

and went through a portion of the broadsword exercise. Having satisfied himself greatly, he walked to the door, and, holding the knife at full length to his mate, said, "Look here, Bill, One-bladed 'bacca knife only seven-and-six. Lord, Bill—seven-and-six. O Joseph, seven shillings and a little sixpence for a one-blader! I say Bill, write home to your mother and tell her you see me give seven-and-six for a one-blader. O Lord, Bill, it's like a dream, isn't it? Like a dream, Bill, for a one-blader." Then coming up to the counter, he said, "Governor, doesn't seven-and-six mean three half-crowns? and if it means that, here they are. If you had asked me five shillings I wouldn't have given it you; I should have said it was an imposition. If you had said six shillings, or even six-and-sixpence, I should have felt disappointed; but there's such a blessed lot of credit due to a fellow for giving seven-and-six for a one-blader, that he ought to look upon it as the proudest moment of his life.—I do." And the man joined his mate, and they went on their way rejoicing exceedingly much. "These knives," I said to the tradesman, taking one from the heap, "might stand you in—What shall we say? Sixpence a piece?" "Well," he said, "in a regular way that sort couldn't be placed under eight shillings a dozen; but I picked them up in an auction room, and deducting the rusty ones, I reckon they cost me something under threepence-half-penny. The figure they go off at leaves a fair margin of profit, but nothing more,

nothing more, when everything comes to be reckoned up." While he was uttering these words in a somewhat desponding tone, a man from the hills came in with several pairs of fowls. He wanted to sell them, and the tradesman's wife, entering from the room door, thought she would take a couple, and she took them at the rate of eight shillings a piece. The man thought that he would like two jew's harps to take home for his boys, and he took them at half-a-crown a piece. "You see," says the tradesman, when the man had gone out with the balance of the fowls slung over his arm, and trying a tune upon one of the instruments, "trade just now may be compared to the statement made by a London pickpocket. He had stolen a handkerchief and lost a knife. He said his luck had been awfully equal. If we get stiff prices for what we sell, we have to give stiff prices for what we buy. Still, upon the whole, the balance of trade, at the present moment appears to be in favour of everyone."

Those days which I am speaking of were the days of rash marriages. A digger would come down with a gold receipt for three or four hundred ounces, which he would dispose of to a gold buyer. He would rig out a girl from foot to head, the chief *piece de resistance* being a black satin gown, price fifteen pounds fifteen, and then he would marry her on the square, with a clergyman whose charge for the ceremony was two guineas, and in compensation for which he would accept and often got, from three to five ounces of gold.

When the knot was tied, a procession of hired vehicles followed upon the ceremony. Then came a long debauch at an hotel, where a room had been engaged at anything a day and night the landlady chose to ask. The drink score, before night closed over the scene, would reach perhaps ten, perhaps twenty, perhaps thirty pounds. I have known it a hundred and twenty, for champagne was a pound a bottle, and six bottles would, in those days, with a lucky digger, count a dozen—with a clever landlady, two dozen. When the proceeds of the gold had been disposed of, the happy husband would take his departure for the first rush, from which he did not return. The unhappy bride would mourn for three weeks. Afterwards she would throw herself into the marriage loop of some other lucky digger, who would do something nearly alike to what the first husband had done. He would go away when his money was used up, when, if he hit upon his luck, he would marry some one else, and the woman would do the same. Do I exaggerate? Here is the evidence given to the stipendiary Magistrate by the chief constable of the town I lived in before the time, at the time, and after the time of the great outbreak of the Ballarat goldfields.

Q. "Are double marriages common in this colony? I mean you to understand.—Do men marry, and then deserting a wife, go away, and marry some other woman?"

A. "It is quite common. Men within the space of twelve months have been known to marry from three to four wives, and desert them in succession."

Q. "Does the law take cognizance of this state of things?"

A. "The law does not. These women are generally of the lowest class, and never take steps to bring their husbands to account for bigamy."

Q. "Can you account for this?"

A. "I think I can. These women, for the most part, have been married to other men still living at the time they married again. The offence is much more common with the women than the men. My sergeant knows a case where a woman has been married to seven different men, all of whom he believes to be living, and the greater number of them probably remarried."

This, then, was the state of things matrimonial in the good old days of the rushes. And I learn this, that the most abandoned of women prefer to lead a married existence, even under conditions which may bring down the law upon them, than follow a life of self abasement. And so it was that a man then, as now, preferred a woman whom he might call his wife to one who is only his mistress.

One striking characteristic was observable in the digger of former days, which, I think, he has preserved to the present. He never robbed his mates of any portion of their gold when he was working with them as a mate. Share and share alike: a fair division of expenses and a fair share of gold was the motto. I have been on most of the goldfields in Victoria, at many of them in Otago and in Marlborough, and I do not know that I have ever heard, through a period of many years, of any digger cheating his mate. I know that where well-to-do men have taken up alluvial ground and have employed labour to work it that men have made it a virtue—almost a duty, I may say—to rob their employers. So it is the case, as we all know, that the wages labourers and miners engaged upon quartz reefs working for companies will steal and conceal with great art and cunning any rich specimens which may fall in their way. I heard a man once boast on a camping-ground, where I was bivouacking for the night, that he had robbed a bank; that he had helped to stick up an escort; and had done panel smashing, but so help him Heaven he had never cheated a mate out of a pennyweight of dust! And I believed this man to be speaking truth, although a greater ruffian to look at I never saw. I have known parties of diggers who, before they

mated together knew little or nothing of each other's antecedents, when they had made a good haul of gold sent one of their party into town to sell it to one or other of the banks, because a stiffer price could be got than was given on the ground. The man so sent could have cleared out and all trace of him been lost, but he would return and give a faithful account of himself, and divide the proceeds of the sale even to the last shilling. The man might be a drunkard or a profligate, but he would keep sober and preserve his character until he had done the work he had been deputed to do. I have known these men, after a fair division of their gains, go out upon a long debauch. They would quarrel and fight, and sometimes slay. They would separate to mate again in some other rush, and from the hour the arrangement was struck until another separation came about, they were as true and as honest to each other as if bound by oath which no man dare violate. The virtue of honesty out of so much that was otherwise vile has frequently struck me as something passing strange. Honesty was a necessity among diggers, and nature had so adapted their rough and uncultivated natures to see that the occupation could not be carried on without it. I have asked in my day, magistrates, Police Court clerks, inspectors of police and goldfields constables and troopers whether they ever remembered a charge being brought against any man for robbing his mates, and the answer has always been in the negative.

The nomadic, wild life, fraught with so many dangers, of a gold-digger, has improved the characters of thousands of men who would otherwise have been wandering as vagabonds over the face of the earth. It has taught them to endure hardships such as under few other conditions of life they would have borne up

against. It has taught them in their long journeyings how dependent they are upon the aid and sympathy of each other; it has taught them honesty; it has broken down any meanness of disposition which might have previously been innate. It has taught independence of spirit, for your true digger, excepting in times of very bad luck, cares not to serve any master. It taught them to be practical geologists, for a digger, now-a-days, seldom or never sinks a hole upon mere speculation or conjecture. He always can give a reason and a good reason for what he does even if he be unsuccessful. It has taught him to explore wild tracts of country to search for the precious metal, by which he has opened up the way to permanent settlement for the tiller of the soil. I will place a thousand gold diggers side by side—men who, from the early days of the pursuit, followed the pursuit from one rush to another—and challenge the world to shew me an equal number of men drawn from any other manual occupation which shall compare with them for pluck, endurance, honesty, tenderness of heart, and kindness of disposition. Have I not seen, have not others been witnesses when an accident has happened to a digger,—he has been accidentally struck with a pick and badly wounded, or he has fallen down a shaft and broken a limb, or he has been stricken down with fever, or ague, or dysentery,—have I not then seen how the diggers assembled around him; how they have formed a rough stretcher from forest saplings, made soft and easy with contributions of their blankets and rugs. Then have these men formed themselves into a party, and in relays of four have raised the sick and wounded man to their shoulders, and never once stopping, have, turn and turn about, carried him over steep and dangerous terraces, along narrow ledges of precipices, through snow-drifts, across creeks and over rough country, until he was received into the nearest hospital for treatment. Never were the ministrations of good and tender women more faithfully rendered. Should the man die his gold is accurately accounted for; should he be maimed for life, as too often he is, there are contributions levied throughout the district he worked in, and cheerfully and liberally responded to. I take the miners on the West Coast of the Middle Island and in Otago to be the finest set of men for physique and rough moral attributes against the world. They become so by the process of natural selection. Should weak or sickly, or only moderately-strong, men engage in such wild, inhospitable, cold, and wet country they either die at the outset or return to whence they came. The alluvial digger now is not the spendthrift of former days. He does not drop upon "jewellers' shops" or "pile claims" as was his wont. He earns his money hard; has learnt to bank it, and understands the value of interest. He is an altered man.

Reminiscences in the Life of a Colonial Journalist.

[By "SNYDER,"

No. IX.

THE SQUATTERS. Victoria.

I NEVER witnessed but two cases of Lynch law, and the first of these would have served me for a long life time. It will never be blotted from my memory. A more awful sight, with more terrible surroundings, I think could scarcely be witnessed. I am now speaking of a date which preceded the discovery of the Victorian gold-fields by some seven years.

It was towards the close of the summer of 1844, at which time I was formally keeping possession of a large tract of new country discovered by the late John Pascoe Fawkner. His intention was to make a sheep run of it, and in order to retain legal possession according to the squatting laws then in force, it required to be stocked with either sheep, horses, or cattle. How few or how many, the regulations made no mention. Mr. Fawkner stocked something like forty miles of a run, fifteen of which was rich grass land, with four working bullocks, until he was enabled to get the boundaries of his run duly defined and registered.

This piece of country I was in possession of was in a large glen, far down in the depths north of the Mount Macedon ranges, and formed a portion of the much dreaded Black Forest, where so many bloody murders were, between 1851 and '53, perpetrated upon diggers, and before which so many good bushmen perished by losing their way in the intricacies of a densely timbered