

rage. It was no uncommon occurrence that a victim to these marauders would be found in the morning lying dead in front of his tent, with a pistol shot through his head or body. Sometimes it would be the reverse of this, the attacking falling dead at the hands of the attacked. The bodies of these men, when found, were removed by the officials and placed in an out-tent of the Government camp. There would be no inquest, simply a brief and superficial enquiry. In a few hours eighteen inches of earth covered the murdered corpses.

I was a witness, in the year 1853, to one of these interment grounds being pegged out into claims; for the gold led in that direction. To give the diggers due credit, they dug new holes at the ascent of a hill, where they deposited the bodies, now mere bones and rotting flesh. The piece of interment ground to which I refer yielded within three weeks to about forty miners thirteen thousand ounces of gold. At night, before the diggers' fires had ceased to flame and burn, no more curious sight could be looked upon. On the hills, along the winding valleys, on the flats, in the forests—everywhere did lights gleam, while the sky above was illumined with their reflection.

It was dangerous in those times to leave one's tent after dark, for there were thousands of prospectors' holes, into which the unwary or near-sighted might fall; holes filled with water, in which men would drown; holes from twenty to fifty feet deep, which men falling into would be drawn out with limbs dislocated or broken. In broad daylight the scene was altogether different. Standing on a high hill or elevated spot, and looking on to the digging-ground, it would present the appearance of a cloud of canvas resting on a sea of mud. Coming upon the claims rough men—Californians with red shirts and a bowie-knife stuck in the belt; foreigners with earrings pendant, Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, men from all climes and countries—were seen hurrying to and fro, hallooing and calling to their mates; some wheeling the wash dirt to the cradles, others "panning out," while earth everywhere forming mounds around the holes where the golden stores were being sought for. Women and men at fires cooking the mid-day meal. Men felling heavy trees, the crash of which would ever and again fall on the ear. The eye could not take in all it saw, nor separate one sight from another. Wild confusion reigned supreme. Yet every man knew his own hole, and the tent or the gunyah in which he and his mates cribbed in. Presently it might be that one of those sudden and deluging squalls of rain with crashing thunder would come on, when the sight of men running, pick and shovel in hand, might, comparing great things with small, be likened to an ant-hill which has been disturbed by a man's foot. The ants hasten out, and make off in all directions, and do not return till instinct has told them that danger has passed away. So with the diggers in a sudden thunder-storm and rainburst. They would be seen speeding in crowds—some to the hills, others to the gullies or the forest where they were located.

A huge mob of men hastening in the same direction to one common centre, will always draw the gaze of a mere on-looker; but thousands of shaggy men, bare-armed, bare-breasted, unwashed and unkempt, running in reverse directions, always struck me as one of the wildest sights which could be looked upon. Years after all this was changed. The alluvial ground became exhausted, and the capitalist stepped in, claiming the auriferous quartz as his own. The digger is now housed and wived. He works for wages, and if he is one of those who was "first on the ground," he is able to tell of many sights and scenes well worth the hearing.

No. XII. (By "SNYDER.") THE PROGRESS OF THE COLONY.—LAND SWINDLES.

It was just thirty years back from the date at which I now write when Melbourne presented a most cheerless and desolate aspect. It is a city now rich, populous, and prospering, having a strong dash of the Yankee element in it—a go-ahead city, a city of "rings," where men go in for big undertakings, where bubble companies are floated by bubble men at their head, men with brains, but wanting in honesty; men who have risen from a very low status, but who by daring speculations of a doubtful character have obtained to wealth and position and few enquiries made as to their origin and antecedents.

At the time I speak of, Melbourne was scattered with sparsely populated streets—here a shop and there a dwelling, and next to either a shanty of two or three

and studded with stumps of trees. Collins-street, now the Regent-street of the Southern Hemisphere, was during the winter months a bed of clay mud, from which bullock drays, wool or provision laden, had to be dug out. It is within my memory that two children were drowned in the waters at the end of Elizabeth-street, on a site where the land, if now offered for sale, would fetch £150 a foot on its frontage. The faces of the citizens as they met in the streets and thoroughfares were downcast, and with scarce a smile to be found among anyone one would come in contact with. A general gloom spread over the whole community. No jolly, rollicking, dare-devil, devil-may-care squatters were to be seen with their brandy and cigars, at the fronts of verandahs or hotel porticoes. Sheep were then selling at from two shillings to half-a-crown a head. Stations were mortgaged beyond hope of redemption, and those who were enabled to carry on without incurring a lien upon their flocks only did so at a loss. Wool had gone down to such a low figure that it hardly paid the expenses incurred for washing the carcasses and shearing the fleece.

Land and houses were placed on the market for sale, but did not realise a tenth of their former value. I was the owner of a two-room shanty, in Little Collins Street, for which I paid £18. It had cost the owner £90. I thought my bargain so bad that I sold my interest in it for £10. The land upon which that shanty was built was years subsequently purchased by Mr Henry Miller, known afterwards as "Money Miller," for £3,400 and has now buildings upon it fetching in a rental amounting to somewhere between £800 and a £1000 per annum. As wool would not pay the expenses incurred in growing it, it was suggested that the squatters should convert their mutton into tallow. The "boiling-down" system offered the prospect of immediate, if only temporary relief. There were, at this time, over two millions of sheep on the plains and timbered lands between the Black Forest on the Melbourne side and the Colac plains in the western district of Geelong. Whole flocks were driven to the boiling-down establishment, where the carcasses were converted into tallow, and the skins, bones, and hoofs disposed of, at a price almost nominal, to men who afterwards made immense fortunes by embarking in this branch of trade. It was only about a year and a-half back when I read of a Melbourne man dying and leaving to his widow and family some three hundred thousand pounds in lands, houses, and hard cash. The foundation, and indeed the superstructure, of this large fortune, was due to the purchase of bones, hoofs, and sheepskins. Cattle in like manner were boiled down, and some attempt, not very successful, was made by Mr C. J. Dennys and others in curing beef. The boiling-down answered more than was expected of it, for tallow was in demand owing to short supplies coming from Russia, while wool was at a large and ruinous reduction. Sheep farmers and stock-owners recovered themselves, and were enabled to clear off their liabilities. This method of disposing of the carcasses of sheep and cattle in time brought a rise in the price of stock, and then boiling-down was only carried on by squatters, whose increase has become too large for their runs. Living in these times was almost nominal. Joints of the finest beef could be bought for a penny per pound, and a whole leg of mutton cost no more than sixpence; flour was eighteen shillings the two hundred pounds bag; tea, sixteen pence per pound; tobacco, two shillings, and the four-pound loaf five pence. But if living was low, so also were wages. Good mechanics could earn no more than thirty shillings a week, while labourers' wages did not exceed eighteen shillings. Bushmen, such as shepherds and hut-keepers, were paid at the rate of £20 to £22 per year, including rations, with hut accommodation either at the home or an out station. Good splitters and fencers, working by contract, would, however, earn as much as £3 per week, paying for their own rations, which would not cost more than five shillings per week per man.

In 1843-44 each squatter could hold any quantity of land by the payment of £20 annually, so that for such a nominal rental, the holdings of some of these men equalled a principality. Port Phillip (now Victoria) was governed at Sydney, Port Phillip being allowed to send six representatives to the New South Wales

Port Phillip from the territory of New South Wales, and its erection into a separate and independent colony. Of course New South Wales couldn't see it, wouldn't see it, and on all grounds declined to see it, but more especially upon the ground that the whole of the revenue of Port Phillip, derived from the sale of her lands, was paid into the treasury at Sydney and was spent in Sydney, little if any of it being allotted to Port Phillip. The New South Wales Legislature, however, had to see it whether they liked it or not, for the people of Port Phillip had determined that if the political concessions they asked for were not granted, there would something happen, and that something simply meant resistance to the knife. The Port Phillipians declared no more money should go to New South Wales, and there was no mistake about their being in earnest; they not only determined this, but declared that New South Wales should pay back to them the large sums of money due to the province. Well, the great change came about in this wise; the period of five years for which the Port Phillip representatives had been elected to serve in the Legislative Assembly at Sydney having expired, the writ for another election was issued. The bitter mockery of representation by which the six Port Phillip members were compelled to countenance the spoliation of so magnificent a country, eight hundred miles distant from the seat of its Government, and possessing nothing in common with it, had created such general dissatisfaction that the six members refused to stand their re-election. Meetings were held in Melbourne and Geelong, when it was decided that the writs to fill the new seats should be returned to Sydney without any name being endorsed on the back of them.

Subsequently, at a large public meeting, and in derision, Earl Grey (then Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies) together with a man by trade a carter and known as "Dick the Liar" were proposed as fit and proper persons to represent the interests of Port Phillip in the Sydney Legislature. Earl Grey was returned, but on the news being sent home to him, as was very well known would be the case, he declined the honour which had been conferred on him, when "Dick the Liar" put in a claim to take his seat, but, as might also have been expected, was not allowed. This man, whose name was Richards, was a great character at the time. Sober, industrious, and the possessor of two or three horses and drays, he had earned for himself, most deservedly it was admitted beyond all dispute, the unenviable title which has here been given him. There is nothing in Munchausen or out of America that could come up to him. He lied with an imperturbability that approached the miraculous. Having received a fatal kick from a favourite horse, he died within three days from the injury. Previous to his death he asked that Captain Addis, a justice of the peace, would visit him. The request was at once complied with; and when that gentleman went to his bed-side, Richards told him that he desired to make his will, Captain Addis recommended that a lawyer should be sent for; and in half-an-hour a legal practitioner, of the name of Gregory, was in attendance. When, having received his instructions, he proceeded to draw up Richards' last will and testament as directed. A mob of horses running on the Werribee Plains was ordered to be sold, and the proceeds to go to his wife. Six teams of bullocks, with chains, bows, and yokes were also to be disposed of to the best advantage, and the money to be handed over to the hospital. A section of land, comprised in 640 acres, just outside the town boundary, was to be set aside for a people's park. Numerous other bequests were made, showing that Richards had accumulated property to the extent of some three thousand five hundred pounds. During the writing out of this will Richards was suffering great torments, the injuries he had received being internal. Before Captain Addis had gone, or the signing of the will had been completed, the Rev. Mr Tuckfield, a devout missionary of the Wesleyan persuasion, who had devoted years of his life in converting the aboriginal natives to Christianity and ameliorating their social condition, this Mr Tuckfield, learning that Richards' illness was fatal, came to pray at his death-bed. Mr Gregory, the lawyer, and Captain Addis both joined in the good missionary's prayers for the eternal salvation of the dying man, when it might

please heaven in its mercy and wisdom to remove their brother from the world. Richards, to all appearance, was very devout and much affected. It is probable that he really was so. When the rev. missionary rose from his knees he took poor Dick's hand in his own, and spoke words calculated to soothe the troubled mind of the dying man.

"Do you think," asked Dick—"Do you think, parson, I am all right when I go?" "Are you sorry, Richards, for all that you have done amiss?"

"Do you repent of your sins, and do you easily submit to the Will of a Wise Dispensation?"

"If I have got to go, I must go, and I can't help myself. I don't know that I have ever done wrong. I always gave the horses fair play and plenty o' feed. I never l-used 'em, nor my wife, nor my children. Ask 'em if I did. The mare as kicked me in the bowels didn't mean it, and I'd rather the old woman shall keep her for the light dray. I know'd the mare wasn't herself at the time. She had got at the at-bag, and they had put too much life in

her. I don't owe anything except for half-a-ton of hay, and that will be made all right by the old woman; all but two trusses which has got to be returned because it ain't the right quality. Do you think I am right, parson? I should like to be right, you know. I am only an ignorant sort of a man, and I have never been taught much. When a man has been convicted and sent out of his country when he was young and kept in goal a lot o' years, it isn't much he learns of religion. But I hope it's all right for me, parson. Is it all right, do you think?"

"My poor man," said Mr Tuckfield, "I think it is all right; I am sure it is all right, if you will only pray and repent during the few hours remaining to you of your life."

"Well, then," turning his head in the direction of the lawyer, "I think, Mr Gregory, you had better put what Mr Tuckfield has told me down in writing. There'll be no getting out of it then. Put it all down in writing, Mr Gregory, and make the gentleman stand by his words."

What is here given is known to many of the early residents in Geelong who are now living to this day in that town or are scattered about the colonies. There are those now dwellers in the fair city of Auckland who knew this eccentric character well, and who will recollect with some amusement that when Richards died and had received a sort of public funeral, it was discovered that £50 in the bank, and three horses and two drays, worth about as much, constituted all the property he had in the world. The horses and drays the wife took possession of, but when all the formalities had been gone through for getting the £50 out of the bank, the balance that was handed to her amounted to £315s. The robbing of the widow and orphan in those days was quite as well understood as it is at the present time.

After a long struggle, Port Phillip was politically separated from New South Wales. The Act took effect on the 1st of July. A general election followed, and the Parliament met for the first time on the 11th November, 1851. During the previous month the Ballarat diggings had filled with astonishment and expectation the minds of all. Ten thousand men had gathered together on and in the vicinity of Golden Point. While the Council was assembling for the first time, reports came from Mount Alexander surpassing anything which had been stated of Ballarat. In one year the population had increased from 80,000 to 160,000. It was then that a series of the most gigantic land swindles were perpetrated which would have gladdened the hearts of many a Yankee speculator, and taught them a few wrinkles which might avail even at this present day.

By SNYDER. No. XII.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN HOW LAND SWINDLES WERE BROUGHT TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS.

It was towards the close of 1852 that land swindles in Victoria were at their height. Gigantic fortunes were made by the speculators and sharks, scarcely one of whom five years afterwards but had passed through the Insolvent Court or were utterly ruined. In 1857, and for that year only, the aggregate liabilities of insolvents amounted to close upon ten millions sterling, and "Through losses sustained

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