

**A FACETIOUS GOLD-HUNTER.**

**Mark Twain's Experience as Pocket Miner.**

**The Forgotten Claim—An Incident Which Probably Turned the Humorist from Mining to Literature.**

The position of the pocket-miner among the other inhabitants of a mining region very much resembles that of the bee-hunter among the people of the frontier settlements in agricultural regions. The business he follows also has several points of resemblance to that of the bee-hunter. The trail followed by one leads him to the tree stored with sweets, and that of the other ends in a pocket of sweetest gold. The man who becomes an expert bee-hunter is likely to remain a bee-hunter all his days, and the same may be said of the pocket miner.

Mark Twain's narrow escape from becoming a pocket miner has never been told. It is worth recording, as it gave him the story of the 'Jumping Frog,' and sent him off along the line of the literary road and set him to scratching therein for pockets of fun.

It 1865 Mark wearied of Bohemian life in San Francisco and went up into the mining regions of Calaveras county to rusticate with some old friends—Steve, Jim and Billy Gillis. Jim Gillis was, and still is, one of the most expert pocket miners in California. Although educated with a view eventually to fight the battle of life as a physician, and though still finding solace in his leisure moments in the works of Greek and Latin authors reposing on a shelf in his cabin, Jim Gillis is booked for life as a pocket miner. The business has charms for him that he cannot break away from—he is bound to it in chains of gold. Show him a particle of quartz gold on the side of a mountain, and if it came to where it was found through the process of accidents of nature undisturbed in any way by the interference of man, he will as unerringly trace it to its source as the bee hunter will follow the bee to its hoard of sweets.

Mark Twain found the Bohemian style of mining practiced by the 'Gillis boys' much more attractive than those more regular kinds which call for a large outlay of muscle. He and Jim Gillis took to the hills in search of gold pockets and spent some days in working up the undisturbed trail of an undisturbed deposit. They were on the golden 'bee line' and stuck to it faithfully, though it was necessary to carry each sample of dirt to a small stream, in the bed up a canyon in order to pan it out. Each step made sure by golden grains, they at last came upon the pocket which had thrown those grains off. It was a cold, dreary, drizzling day when the 'home deposit' was found. The sample carried to the stream and washed out yielded but a few cents. Although the right vein had been discovered, they had as yet not found the 'tail end' of the pocket. Returning to the vein, they dug a sample from a new place, and were about to carry it down to the rayne and test it when the rain began to pour down heavily. With chattering teeth Mark declared he would remain no longer. He said there was no sense in freezing to death, as in a day or two, when it was bright and warm, they could return and pursue their investigations in comfort. Yielding to Mark's entreaties, backed as they were by his blue nose, humped back, and generally miserable and dejected appearance, Jim emptied the sacks of dirt upon the ground, first having hastily written and posted up a notice of their claim to a certain number of feet on the vein, which notice would hold good for thirty days. Angels' camp being at no great distance from the spot, while their cabin was some miles away, Mark and Jim struck out for the place. The only hotel kept in the little mining camp was kept by one Coon Drayton, an old Mississippi river pilot, and at his house the pocket miners found shelter. Mark Twain having formerly followed the business of pilot on the Mississippi river, he and Coon were soon great friends, and swapped scores of yarns. It continued to rain for three days, and until the weather cleared up Mark and Jim remained at Coon's hotel.

The story of the 'jumping frog' was one of the yarns told Mark by Coon during the three days' session, and it struck him as being so comical that he determined to write it up. When he returned to the Gillis cabin, Mark set to work upon the frog story. He also wrote some sketches of life in the mountains and mines for some of the San Francisco papers.

Mark did not think much of the frog story, even after it had received the finishing touches. He gave the preference to some other sketches and sent them to the papers for which he was writing. Steve, Gillis, however, declared that the frog story was the best thing Mark had written, and advised him to say it for a book of sketches he was talking of publishing. A literary turn having been given to the thoughts of the inmates of the Gillis cabin, a month passed without a return to the business of pocket mining.

While the days were passed by Mark and his friends in discussing the merits of the 'Jumping Frog' and other literary matters, other prospectors were not idle. A trio of Austrian miners who were in search of gold-bearing quartz happened upon the spot where Mark and Jim had dug into their ledge. It was but a few days after Twain and Gillis had retreated from the place in the pouring rain. The Austrians were not a little astonished at seeing the ground glitter with gold.

Where the dirt emptied from the sacks had been dissolved and washed away by the rain, lay some three ounces of bright quartz gold. The foreigners were not long in gathering this, but the speedy discovery of the notice forbade their delving into the deposit whence it came. They could only wait and 'watch and pray.' This hope was that the parties who had posted up the notice would not return while it held good.

The sun that rose on the day after the Twain-Gillis notice expired saw the Austrians in possession of the ground, with a notice of their own conspicuously and defiantly posted. The new owners cleaned out the pocket, obtained from it, in a few days, a little over \$7,500.

Had Mark Twain's backbone held out a little longer the sacks of dirt would have been washed and the grand discovery made. He would not have then gone to Angels' camp and would probably never have heard or written the story of the 'Jumping Frog,' the story that gave him his first 'boost' in the literary world, as the 'Heathen Chinese' gave Bret Harte his first lift up the ladder. Had Mark found the gold that was captured by the Austrians, he would have settled down as a pocket miner. He would never have given up the chase, and till this day, gray as a badger, he would have been pounding quartz, with Jim Gillis as his 'pard' in a cabin somewhere in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

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Are you disturbed at night and broken of your rest by a sick child suffering and crying with pain of cutting teeth? If so, send at once and get a bottle of Mrs. Winslow's SORROWING SUFFERER'S REMEDY. Its value is incalculable. It will relieve the poor little sufferer immediately. Depend upon it, mothers, there is no mistake about it. It cures dysentery and diarrhoea, regulates the stomach and bowels, cures wind colic, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, gives tone and energy to the whole system. Mrs. Winslow's SORROWING SUFFERER'S REMEDY is pleasant to the taste, and is the prescription of one of the oldest and best female nurses and physicians in the United States, and is for sale by all druggists throughout the world. Price 25 cents a bottle.

**The Expressage of a Newspaper.**

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'Certainly,' replied the editor, 'I will express your thanks, but it will be necessary for you to advance about a dollar and a half to prepay the expressage.'

**Pronunciation of Afghan Words.**

Cabul is pronounced Kawble; Merv is pronounced Mahriv; Herat is pronounced Herat; Kurtachee is pronounced K'rahby; Peshawar is pronounced Peshawer. The accent on Afghanistan is on the second syllable. In such words as Bolan, Robat, etc., the accent is on the second syllable, and the 'a' is pronounced broad like 'ah.'—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

'Don't sit so near the window, darling,' said a spooney young bridegroom to his bride on their wedding tour; 'let us try to keep the ear to ourselves. Some crank is sure to get in if he sees your pretty face.' The same speaker, thirty years later: 'Move up to the window, old woman, so that we may have the ear to ourselves: you will frighten all the passengers away, you know.'

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A poet sings: 'I miss you, my darling; the embers burn low on the hearth.' Yes, it's an awful thing not to have a wife to attend to the fire.

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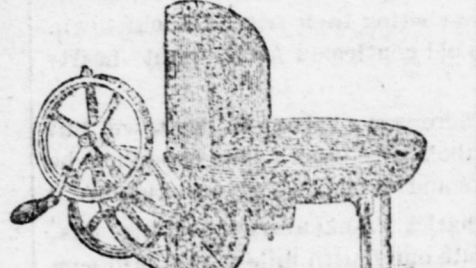
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