

And now what are we to say of our general August gardening? It is a heavy month, this harvesting one, alike in the field, the flower, kitchen, and fruit garden, and we can therefore but make a wise selection of matters that must at once crowd on the memory of any gardener. The picotees must be layered this month, and this operation we cannot afford to postpone, since unless they and all our carnations get thoroughly well-rooted before they are cut off, the chances are that they will not come well through the winter. Then the budded rose stocks will require a constant examination, and every growth along the stock must be rubbed or pinched off, while, as the young buds advance, they should somehow be secured to a stick or to the stock itself, so that anything like a gust of wind does not break them off, or blow them bodily away from their point of junction.

But what shall we say of the kitchen garden? for in the month of August—though it is so, perhaps, all the year round in a well-ordered garden—seed-time and harvest would almost seem to shake hands; for if in August we are on one bed sowing cabbage seed on

good ground, and in a good, open situation, we are, perhaps, in the same month, and on the very next bed, drawing up and storing our onions, leaving them on the ground for a time to dry and to harden. Still, if it prove an August such as that of 1890 our onions must on no account be suffered to lie on the ground to rot in the rain, but must be housed where they can be kept dry for use. Celery and potatoes must, of course, in their turn be earthed up, and this is an operation which no gardener can ever afford to neglect or to postpone for too long a time. And, finally, to notice our fruit gardens, let us remember that it is an unwise act to think it necessary to strip any one tree when harvest time sets in. Even a cherry tree will endure some half-dozen different gatherings, and on this head we may follow the example set us by the blackbirds and thrushes, who always assist us in the harvest months, but who never dream of pecking at a green cherry or a hard gooseberry, merely because such unripened fruit happens to be side by side with fruit on the *same* tree that has been more fortunate in its exposure to a ripening sun-ray.

"FOSSIKING."

BY FREDERICK HASTINGS.



"HE WOULD ASSURE ME HE SAW PARTICLES OF GOLD" (p. 547).

FOSSIKER.' Well, what is that?"

"One who goes out prospecting."

"As an engineer?"

"No; hunting out places where gold, or silver, or tin, or talc, is likely to be found. Why, sir, I have been many and many a mile 'fossiking' for gold. 'Fossiking' is the Australian word for searching for treasure. I have walked hundreds of miles carrying my 'swag,' and had

the flesh came away with them. Ah! a man earns the gold he gets in prospecting or mining, I can tell you." So said one who, after all, had made somewhat of a pile, and then married and settled down in business in one of the principal streets of the charming city of Adelaide. Vivid were the descriptions I had from him and from others of disappointing searches, of wearing trudges in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. "I have been three days and nights without food or water," said one. "I have had to carry not only my own 'swag,' but to carry my brother's also. Poor fellow! he was so done up once, and I could not leave him to go for help, for he would have died. So I flung away my 'swag,' and carried him until we found help. I saved my brother. It is astonishing how you get used to burdens, and even to privation. I think the first day's hunger was worse than the third."

"The 'swag' itself must be heavy."

"Yes; a man must carry a rug to sleep under, and his kettle for his tea. Sometimes he carries also his pick and shovel. You roll up your belongings in your 'swag,' and swing it across your back, and away you tramp."

When talking with another "fossiker," who had trudged about eight hundred miles, from Adelaide to a place in Victoria, he said—"I heard there was a 'rush,' and as I had nothing to do, I determined to follow. Had no money. Knew there were plenty of people on the road who would give a fellow a bit of 'tucker.' 'Tucker' is grub, you know, and it is cheap enough here. Why, mutton is never much more than twopence a pound in the country."

very little for my pains. Once I walked fifty miles from a mine in one day. I wanted to catch the steamer from Melbourne to Adelaide. I was coming back, and had just enough to pay my passage. Ship had started. Had to walk down and get a boat, and pull off. On deck I threw myself down, utterly wearied. When I pulled off my boots they were worn through, and when I took off my stockings

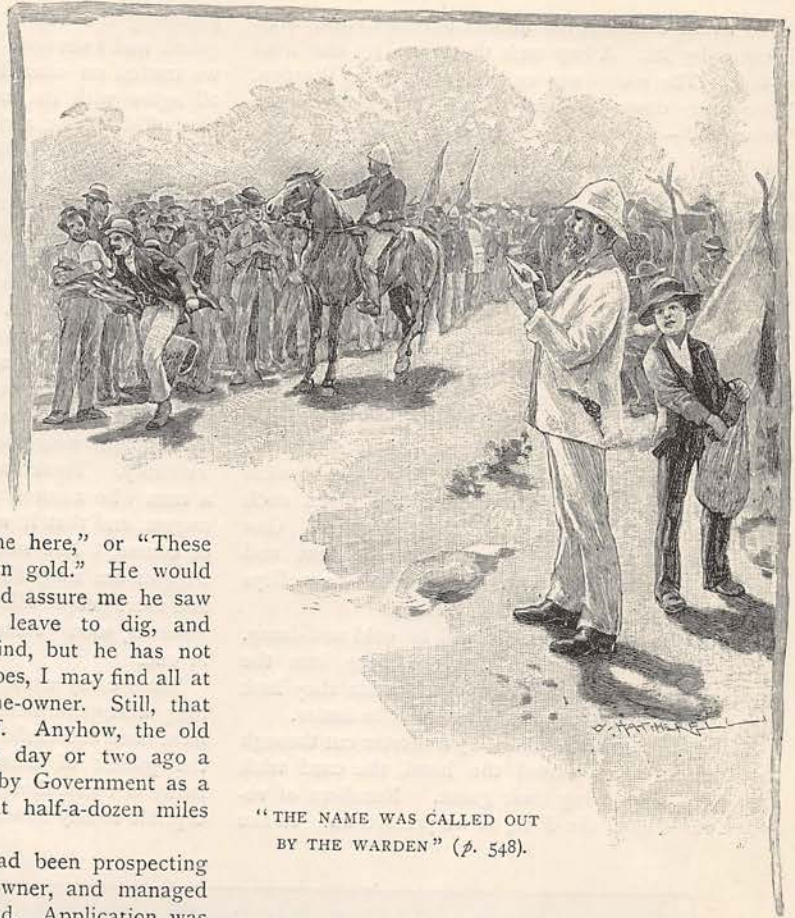
“But how did you get over the desert?”

“It is only flat scrub, not desert, like the Sahara. Anyhow, I went round about, and from ‘station’ to ‘station,’ as we call the sheep-farms, and so reached my destination. Alas! it was all a fluke. I had to get work in town, and have never done much good for myself.”

The “fossiker” is generally a restless, expectant man. One of them working at blasting some rock for me was always surprising me with such remarks as “I am sure there’s lots of silver here,” or “There’s a gold mine here,” or “These creeks must have washed down gold.” He would get a pail and wash the dirt, and assure me he saw particles of gold. He asked leave to dig, and promised me a share of his find, but he has not undertaken it yet. When he does, I may find all at once that I am a wealthy mine-owner. Still, that day is probably a long way off. Anyhow, the old man may be right, for only a day or two ago a district has been “proclaimed” by Government as a gold field, and it is only about half-a-dozen miles from my bit of land.

It seems that a “fossiker” had been prospecting slyly on the land of a private owner, and managed to get out several ounces of gold. Application was then made to Government, and the place was “proclaimed,” in the Gazette, as a gold field. The owner might object, but an Act of Parliament empowers the Government to issue mining licences. It is to be supposed the owner is recouped for any damage done to the land.

To see the formal issue and the “rush” was an attraction. I learned that at twelve o’clock on Thursday the red flag would be hoisted. This red flag is not Republican, but the colonial official indication of the opening of the mine. My nag was what is termed here “nuggety”—a solid, broad, good trotter. I covered the eighteen miles in a little over two hours. It was a most enjoyable scamper—two thousand feet uphill. The nag did uphill best, for the descents were too steep often for anything but a walk. Numbers of vehicles came on laden with prospectors, officials, or pressmen. Over “Norton’s Summit,” down Deep Creek—a romantic spot with a fine stone bridge—along under the steep overshadowing gum-tree-covered hills. The pinnacles of the governor’s costly summer residence on “Marble Hill” peep over that summit. How like some parts of Scotland or Switzerland! Here we pass an hotel with two fellows outside doing the “three card trick,” and “scooping” in the coin from the crowd; they have a gold mine in the folly of the fellows around them. Now a sharp turn at the



“THE NAME WAS CALLED OUT BY THE WARDEN” (p. 548).

seventeenth “mile-post.” What a road!—puddle; narrow; again uphill—vehicles sticking fast—swagmen in force. Another mile, and tents many are seen. They are small, and the fire-places at the end of each are made of long stiff strips of bark, filled in with clay from the gully, “wattle and dab” style. Two streams meet, and here the possible future township is located. I had better look out for the site for a church before land becomes too dear.

About a thousand people are on the ground. Only two hundred and fifty have taken out licences. These are patiently waiting, in front of the official tent, the hoisting of the red flag. Some delay occurs. A message has to be sent to town. The Warden announces that at two o’clock the licences will be issued. “Better go and get dinner.” Cheers from other than miners follow this, but all scatter. Here women are busy round great big fires made in the hollow of a tree. There men fill the frying-pan with chops. I find a lunch, kindly offered in the Government tent, most acceptable. Back come the men, some laden with bundles of pegs—these are about three feet long. A local ventriloquist, who combines with that the trade of publican, amuses gratuitously the waiting miners. He says, “You go, peg out the claims, get the gold, and I’ll take the profits.” A great laugh welcomes this bit of frankness.

To avoid disorder, the miners agreed to take their licences by lot. A boy took them one by one from a bag. The name was called out by the Warden. Then away down the line of men—kept open by the "troopers"—went the pegger out. The first man called had forgotten his pegs, and came up nervous and flurried. The one who first prospected the spot and brought out a considerable amount of gold was rewarded by having first choice. He pegged out for himself and two mates two claims, of thirty feet square each. He has cradles ready for washing the soil; so have many others.

Some poor fellows are short of capital to take out claims. They cannot raise the twenty-five shillings necessary, and guarantee the two shillings per week royalty due to Government. Others come with swell attire and silver-headed cane to peg out claims. These are young fellows tired of desk work, who wish to "try their luck." Two minutes are given each man for selection, then another name is called. One after another they rush down from the tent, and soon the glen is filled with the sound of the volleys of blows on pegs given in all directions.

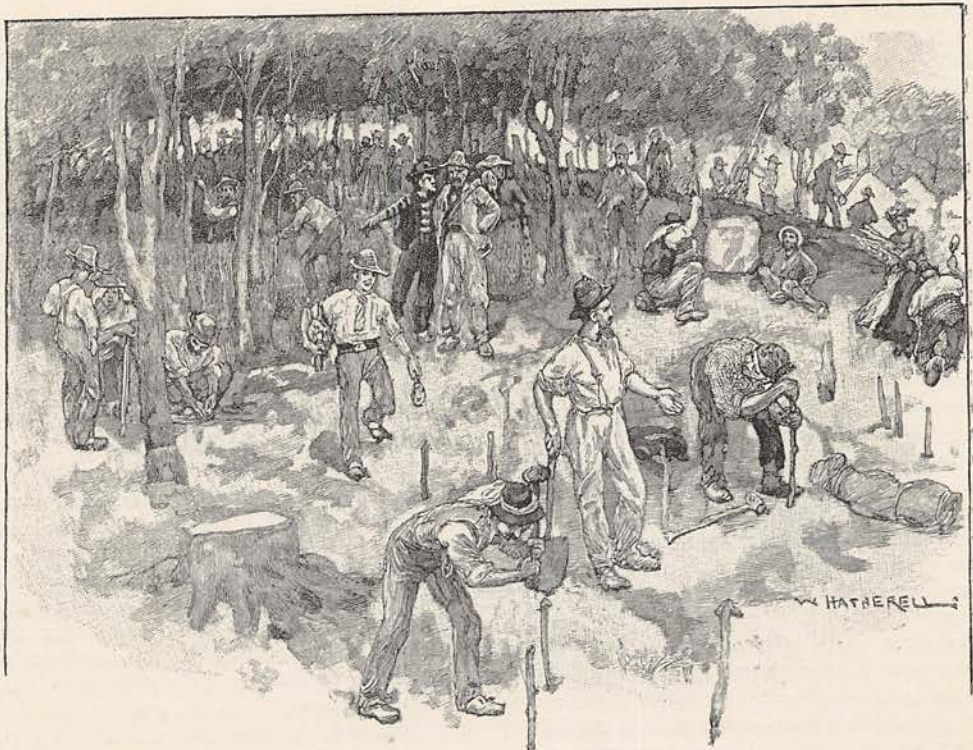
Evening is coming on. It will be cold and damp. There is no resting-place here. I peep into the various tents, and notice how comfortable they look with stretchers and rugs, but home will be better.

A fellow horseman leads me by a shorter cut through the bush. As we passed the hotel, the card trick men were still plying their game. Numbers of vehicles were round the door, so we pressed on. In the

gloaming the views along the Playford road were grand and awesome. Night came on suddenly, and we trotted on cheerfully until we saw our city lying all aglow with its numerous lights. My horse was glad of his stable, and I soon welcomed the couch.

The miners often have disputes over claims. Sometimes men will "jump" claims: that is, they remove the pegs of someone else, and insist on working where another has already toiled. At this Forest range field a dispute soon arose in consequence of several small nuggets being discovered in one spot by "Charlie the Pole" and his mates. He is an old hand, and stands his ground; he knows human nature. Speaking of the small nuggets weighing only 4-dwt. discovered about twelve feet down, he said they will soon be magnified into something great. He said "I once found a spec weighing twelve ounces in the Northern Territory. Travelling down to Port Darwin, I met a man who assured me that he had seen that same nugget, and that it weighed sixty ounces. After that, of course, I had nothing to say." So now the tiny nuggets are magnified into weighing several ounces, and more people will rush to the field. Old "fossickers," however, soon "clear" to other fields if not successful in one.

Some carry countenances very gloomy; marks of long disappointment tell. Others I have seen who have been successful "fossickers," and they are among the jolliest of men. They are open-hearted, and many of them, though apparently hard, are most susceptible to any honest appeal.



"SOON THE GLEN IS FILLED WITH THE SOUND."