

**FOLLOWING THE EQUATOR
A JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD
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THIS BOOK

Is affectionately inscribed to

MY YOUNG FRIEND HARRY ROGERS

WITH RECOGNITION OF WHAT HE IS, AND APPREHENSION OF WHAT HE
MAY BECOME UNLESS HE FORM HIMSELF A LITTLE MORE CLOSELY
UPON THE MODEL OF THE AUTHOR.

THE PUDD'NHEAD MAXIMS.

THESE WISDOMS ARE FOR THE LURING OF YOUTH TOWARD HIGH
MORAL ALTITUDES. THE AUTHOR DID NOT GATHER THEM FROM
PRACTICE, BUT FROM OBSERVATION. TO BE GOOD IS NOBLE; BUT TO
SHOW OTHERS HOW TO BE GOOD IS NOBLER AND NO TROUBLE.

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Following the Equator - Chapter 24

CHAPTER XXIV.

There is no such thing as "the Queen's English." The property has gone into the hands of a joint stock company and we own the bulk of the shares!

--Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar.

Frequently, in Australia, one has cloud-effects of an unfamiliar sort. We had this kind of scenery, finely staged, all the way to Ballarat. Consequently we saw more sky than country on that journey. At one time a great stretch of the vault was densely flecked with wee ragged-edged flakes of painfully white cloud-stuff, all of one shape and size, and equidistant apart, with narrow cracks of adorable blue showing between. The whole was suggestive of a hurricane of snow-flakes drifting across the skies. By and by these flakes fused themselves together in interminable lines, with shady faint hollows between the lines, the long satin-surfaced rollers following each other in simulated movement, and enchantingly counterfeiting the majestic march of a flowing sea. Later, the sea solidified itself; then gradually broke up its mass into innumerable lofty white pillars of about one size, and ranged these across the firmament, in receding and fading perspective, in the similitude of a stupendous colonnade--a mirage without a doubt flung from the far Gates of the Hereafter.

The approaches to Ballarat were beautiful. The features, great green expanses of rolling pasture-land, bisected by eye contenting hedges of commingled new-gold and old-gold gorse--and a lovely lake. One must put in the pause, there, to fetch the reader up with a slight jolt, and keep him from gliding by without noticing the lake. One must notice it; for a lovely lake is not as common a thing along the railways of Australia as are the dry places. Ninety-two in the shade again, but balmy and comfortable, fresh and bracing. A perfect climate.

Forty-five years ago the site now occupied by the City of Ballarat was a sylvan solitude as quiet as Eden and as lovely. Nobody had ever heard of it. On the 25th of August, 1851, the first great gold-strike made in Australia was made here. The wandering prospectors who made it scraped up two pounds and a half of gold the first day--worth \$600. A few days later the place was a hive--a town. The news of the strike spread everywhere in a sort of instantaneous way--spread like a flash to the very ends of the earth. A celebrity so prompt and so universal has hardly been paralleled in history, perhaps. It was as if the name BALLARAT had suddenly been written on the sky, where all the world could read it at once.

The smaller discoveries made in the colony of New South Wales three months before had already started emigrants toward Australia; they had been coming as a stream, but they came as a flood, now. A hundred thousand people poured into Melbourne from England and other countries in a single month, and flocked away to the mines. The crews of the ships that brought them flocked with them; the clerks in the government offices followed; so did the cooks, the maids, the coachmen, the butlers, and the other domestic servants; so did the carpenters, the smiths, the plumbers, the painters, the reporters, the editors, the lawyers, the clients, the barkeepers, the bummers, the blacklegs, the thieves, the loose women, the grocers, the butchers, the bakers, the doctors, the druggists, the nurses; so did the police; even officials of high and hitherto

envied place threw up their positions and joined the procession. This roaring avalanche swept out of Melbourne and left it desolate, Sunday-like, paralyzed, everything at a stand-still, the ships lying idle at anchor, all signs of life departed, all sounds stilled save the rasping of the cloud-shadows as they scraped across the vacant streets.

That grassy and leafy paradise at Ballarat was soon ripped open, and lacerated and scarified and gutted, in the feverish search for its hidden riches. There is nothing like surface-mining to snatch the graces and beauties and benignities out of a paradise, and make an odious and repulsive spectacle of it.

What fortunes were made! Immigrants got rich while the ship unloaded and reloaded--and went back home for good in the same cabin they had come out in! Not all of them. Only some. I saw the others in Ballarat myself, forty-five years later--what were left of them by time and death and the disposition to rove. They were young and gay, then; they are patriarchal and grave, now; and they do not get excited any more. They talk of the Past. They live in it. Their life is a dream, a retrospection.

Ballarat was a great region for "nuggets." No such nuggets were found in California as Ballarat produced. In fact, the Ballarat region has yielded the largest ones known to history. Two of them weighed about 180 pounds each, and together were worth \$90,000. They were offered to any poor person who would shoulder them and carry them away. Gold was so plentiful that it made people liberal like that.

Ballarat was a swarming city of tents in the early days. Everybody was happy, for a time, and apparently prosperous. Then came trouble. The government swooped down with a mining tax. And in its worst form, too; for it was not a tax upon what the miner had taken out, but upon what he was going to take out--if he could find it. It was a license-tax license to work his claim--and it had to be paid before he could begin digging.

Consider the situation. No business is so uncertain as surface-mining. Your claim may be good, and it may be worthless. It may make you well off in a month; and then again you may have to dig and slave for half a year, at heavy expense, only to find out at last that the gold is not there in cost-paying quantity, and that your time and your hard work have been thrown away. It might be wise policy to advance the miner a monthly sum to encourage him to develop the country's riches; but to tax him monthly in advance instead--why, such a thing was never dreamed of in America. There, neither the claim itself nor its products, howsoever rich or poor, were taxed.

The Ballarat miners protested, petitioned, complained--it was of no use; the government held its ground, and went on collecting the tax. And not by pleasant methods, but by ways which must have been very galling to free people. The rumblings of a coming storm began to be audible.

By and by there was a result; and I think it may be called the finest thing in Australasian history. It was a revolution--small in size; but great politically; it was a strike for liberty, a struggle for a principle, a stand against injustice and oppression. It was the Barons and John, over again; it was Hampden and Ship-Money; it was Concord and Lexington; small beginnings, all of them, but all of them great in

political results, all of them epoch-making. It is another instance of a victory won by a lost battle. It adds an honorable page to history; the people know it and are proud of it. They keep green the memory of the men who fell at the Eureka Stockade, and Peter Lalor has his monument.

The surface-soil of Ballarat was full of gold. This soil the miners ripped and tore and trenched and harried and disembowled, and made it yield up its immense treasure. Then they went down into the earth with deep shafts, seeking the gravelly beds of ancient rivers and brooks--and found them. They followed the courses of these streams, and gutted them, sending the gravel up in buckets to the upper world, and washing out of it its enormous deposits of gold. The next biggest of the two monster nuggets mentioned above came from an old river-channel 180 feet under ground.

Finally the quartz lodes were attacked. That is not poor-man's mining. Quartz-mining and milling require capital, and staying-power, and patience. Big companies were formed, and for several decades, now, the lodes have been successfully worked, and have yielded great wealth. Since the gold discovery in 1853 the Ballarat mines--taking the three kinds of mining together--have contributed to the world's pocket something over three hundred millions of dollars, which is to say that this nearly invisible little spot on the earth's surface has yielded about one-fourth as much gold in forty-four years as all California has yielded in forty-seven. The Californian aggregate, from 1848 to 1895, inclusive, as reported by the Statistician of the United States Mint, is \$1,265,215,217.

A citizen told me a curious thing about those mines. With all my experience of mining I had never heard of anything of the sort before. The main gold reef runs about north and south--of course for that is the custom of a rich gold reef. At Ballarat its course is between walls of slate. Now the citizen told me that throughout a stretch of twelve miles along the reef, the reef is crossed at intervals by a straight black streak of a carbonaceous nature--a streak in the slate; a streak no thicker than a pencil--and that wherever it crosses the reef you will certainly find gold at the junction. It is called the Indicator. Thirty feet on each side of the Indicator (and down in the slate, of course) is a still finer streak--a streak as fine as a pencil mark; and indeed, that is its name Pencil Mark. Whenever you find the Pencil Mark you know that thirty feet from it is the Indicator; you measure the distance, excavate, find the Indicator, trace it straight to the reef, and sink your shaft; your fortune is made, for certain. If that is true, it is curious. And it is curious anyway.

Ballarat is a town of only 40,000 population; and yet, since it is in Australia, it has every essential of an advanced and enlightened big city. This is pure matter of course. I must stop dwelling upon these things. It is hard to keep from dwelling upon them, though; for it is difficult to get away from the surprise of it. I will let the other details go, this time, but I must allow myself to mention that this little town has a park of 326 acres; a flower garden of 83 acres, with an elaborate and expensive fernery in it and some costly and unusually fine statuary; and an artificial lake covering 600 acres, equipped with a fleet of 200 shells, small sail boats, and little steam yachts.

At this point I strike out some other praiseful things which I was tempted to add. I do not strike them out because they were not true or not well said, but because I find them better said by another man--and a man more competent to testify, too, because

he belongs on the ground, and knows. I clip them from a chatty speech delivered some years ago by Mr. William Little, who was at that time mayor of Ballarat:

"The language of our citizens, in this as in other parts of Australasia, is mostly healthy Anglo-Saxon, free from Americanisms, vulgarisms, and the conflicting dialects of our Fatherland, and is pure enough to suit a Trench or a Latham. Our youth, aided by climatic influence, are in point of physique and comeliness unsurpassed in the Sunny South. Our young men are well ordered; and our maidens, 'not stepping over the bounds of modesty,' are as fair as Psyches, dispensing smiles as charming as November flowers."

The closing clause has the seeming of a rather frosty compliment, but that is apparent only, not real. November is summer-time there.

His compliment to the local purity of the language is warranted. It is quite free from impurities; this is acknowledged far and wide. As in the German Empire all cultivated people claim to speak Hanovarian German, so in Australasia all cultivated people claim to speak Ballarat English. Even in England this cult has made considerable progress, and now that it is favored by the two great Universities, the time is not far away when Ballarat English will come into general use among the educated classes of Great Britain at large. Its great merit is, that it is shorter than ordinary English--that is, it is more compressed. At first you have some difficulty in understanding it when it is spoken as rapidly as the orator whom I have quoted speaks it. An illustration will show what I mean. When he called and I handed him a chair, he bowed and said:

"Q."

Presently, when we were lighting our cigars, he held a match to mine and I said:

"Thank you," and he said:

"Km."

Then I saw. 'Q' is the end of the phrase "I thank you" 'Km' is the end of the phrase "You are welcome." Mr. Little puts no emphasis upon either of them, but delivers them so reduced that they hardly have a sound. All Ballarat English is like that, and the effect is very soft and pleasant; it takes all the hardness and harshness out of our tongue and gives to it a delicate whispery and vanishing cadence which charms the ear like the faint rustling of the forest leaves.