

and when his eyes rested upon this they swelled to wonderful proportions. He seized it and eagerly turned it over and over in his hand. It was a piece of rotten quartz, as large as a walnut, and threads of free gold were protruding from it on every side. He estimated its value at fully one hundred dollars. He opened the paper, and read, with deepened interest and astonishment, the following letter:

To the extremely curious and gentlemanly Citizens of Betsyville, at Johnson's assembled, GREETING:

Not in compliance with your extremely kind and urgent invitation, but because I have made enough in the past few weeks to last me the balance of my days, do I take my departure and leave you this farewell message. To you, jointly and severally, I present my ledge of decomposed quartz, which has made me rich, and which will make you all equally rich, if you find it. In witness whereof, I have hereunto affixed this specimen of its contents, and my name, on this, the third day of September, in the year of grace, 1854.

JAMES WATSON.

As soon as he fairly comprehended the import of the letter, Joe hastened, with all speed, to Johnson's, where he duly exhibited it and the specimen to the eager Betsyites. The excitement created was the greatest known in camp, and this was intensified when Johnson related his interview with the stranger, and it was discovered that the date of his appearance and departure toward Yreka, corresponded with the date of the letter, or deed of gift. For the next two weeks, the mountain in the vicinity of the demolished hut, echoed to the tread and shouts of the eager Betsyites; but their most diligent search met with no reward. No trace of the ledge of decomposed quartz could be found, and not the least sign of mining operations, other than those well known before, were to be seen within a radius of several miles. Inquiry at Yreka, by one of the agents

of Johnson, who visited that great mining center, developed the fact that about a week after the date of the stranger's departure, a man entered that city with a pack mule, which he sold at auction in the street. He then purchased a Wells, Fargo & Co. draft, on San Francisco, for \$70,000.00, and took his departure in the stage. The gold paid for the draft was coarse, and a portion of it was mixed with quartz, showing conclusively the character of the diggings from which it came. This, combined with the fact that no robbery was reported, and that no claim in the vicinity of Betsyville produced any such specimens as that the stranger had left as a witness to his deed of gift, was conclusive evidence, to the minds of many, that the ledge of decomposed quartz had an existence in reality, and that patient search would surely reveal its locality.

The most enthusiastic and persistent prospector was Wabash Joe, who retained possession of the specimen nugget as the perquisite of his literary genius, and who devoted his entire time to the work of discovery, until, at last, having exhausted all his means, lost his claim, and even been compelled to sell his talismanic specimen to procure the necessary "grub" upon which to live while prosecuting his search, he abandoned the camp in disgust, and was seen among the convivial crowd at Johnson's no more. From that day to this, not a year has passed that some one has not made an effort to discover the "hermit ledge," as it is known by "old-timers," yet, under the new order of affairs, and under the excitements of more recent events, the story of the hermit of the Siskiyou and his ledge of gold, finds but few to relate it, and fewer still to give it credence.

HENRY LAURENZ.