

lay heaps of gold, but had been attacked by Indians, and was fortunate to escape with his life. A select company of thirty men was secretly organized, Mr. Rose being one of them, and under the leadership of the romancing Marks, set out in quest of the bonanza. They followed the divide between the Yuba and Feather, the same route pursued by Stoddard's dupes a few weeks later, until they reached the mouth of Nelson creek, when Marks informed them that he was completely bewildered, and they returned home in disgust.

Mr. Rose still believes that the Indian told a true story, and that Rich bar, on the Middle Feather, was the place where he obtained his specimens; also, that Marks, who had led them very near that place, was unable to find it, simply because he had never been there and did not know its exact location. Mr. Rose further believes that this was the foundation of Stoddard's Gold lake; that having heard of the Indian's tale and Marks' improvements upon it, he had been inspired to adopt the same tactics as the veracious Marks, and had invented Gold lake and the Indians for the purpose of securing followers, trusting to luck to strike something rich when he reached that region.

In 1858 the *Marysville News* printed what purported to be the bottom facts about Stoddard and his Gold lake adventure, the information being supplied by William C. Stokes, then one of the proprietors of the United States hotel in that city. It was to the effect that early in the spring of 1850 Mr. Stokes was employed at the cabin of a man named Ferrel, on Deer creek, when one day a stranger appeared with a large sack of gold dust and had a long consultation with Ferrel, which Stokes, who was lying in his bunk, overheard. The stranger said that he had gathered the dust on the banks of a lake somewhere northeast of the forks of Yuba river, since known as Downieville, where it existed in great quantities; that he had been taken to it by Indians, who had helped gather the dust; that he came away to procure a supply of provisions, and having broken faith with his Indian partners by not returning at the time promised, he was now afraid to go back without a strong party to protect him from their wrath. He wanted Ferrel to form a party to go with him, but for some reason unknown by Mr. Stokes his employer would have nothing to do with it. Only a few weeks later, in April, Mr. Stokes was mining at French corral, when a man came along who said his name was Stod-

dard, and that he was a miner from Frenchman's bar, on the Yuba. He took dinner with Stokes, and afterwards they engaged in an extended conversation, in which Stoddard said that he had once belonged to the English navy, and had been wounded in the bombardment of Acre, to prove which he exhibited a scar on one of his legs—the same scar, Mr. Stokes thought, which he a few weeks later displayed to the doubting Thomases who refused to credit his Gold lake adventure. It was then Mr. Stokes' turn to relate an exploit, so he rehearsed the tale he had overheard the stranger unfold to Ferrel, amplifying it sufficiently to make it spicy and interesting. This, he thought, was Stoddard's inspiration, for about the first of June, at which time he was keeping a public house at Deer-ville, twelve miles from Middle Yuba, Stoddard and his original party of Gold lake adventurers passed by. The leader of them refused to recognize Mr. Stokes when he entered the cabin. He tried in vain to persuade some of Stoddard's dupes to abandon the enterprise, but it was like talking against the north wind. The article concluded by saying that Stoddard was then living in Sierra county, "well to do in the world."

It is needless to recount the speculations and opinions of the surviving members of the first crusade; they are as various as the crusaders. Upon his return to the lower mines, Stoddard endeavored to form another company to search for the elusive lake, but he was considered crazy, laughed at by some, and listened to patronizingly by others, as one humors the vagaries of a lunatic. For several years he hung about the mines of North Yuba, boring everybody with incessant repetitions of his story, and spending his summers in zealous search for the lake, in the existence of which his confidence remained unshaken. What finally became of him I have never learned. There are still to be found men who believe implicitly in the truthfulness and sincerity of the man who led them on that wild invasion of the mountains, and who account for his inability to find the lake by the theory that one of the landslides, so frequent in the spring in that region, had buried it, or at least that part of it in which the gold had been found. Verily, not until the generation of '49 shall have passed away and joined "that innumerable throng," will belief entirely disappear in the golden pebbles of that mysterious lake.

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