

LIFE AS A COPPER MINER

PRENTICE MULFORD DESCRIBES THE EXCITEMENT OF 1862.

A Fiercely Raging Fever—Search for a Lead—Sudden Development of Mineralogic and Geologic Wonders—Time, Labor, Health and Life Sunk in the Shafts.

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In 1862-3 a copper fever raged in California. A rich vein had been found in Stanislaus county. A "city" sprang up around it and was called Copperopolis. The city came and went inside of ten years. When first I visited Copperopolis it contained 3,000 people. When I last saw the place 100 would cover its entire population.

But the copper fever raged in the beginning. Gold was temporarily thrown in the shade. Miners became speedily learned in surface copper indications. The talk far and wide was of copper "carbonates," "oxides," "sulphurets," "gossion." Great was the demand for scientific works on copper. From many a miner's cabin was heard the clink of mortar and pestle pounding copper rock preparatory to testing it. The pulverized rock placed in a solution of diluted nitric acid, a knife blade plunged therein and coming out coated with a precipitation of copper was exhibited triumphantly as a prognosticator of coming fortune from the newly found lead. The fever flew from one remote camp to another. A green verdigris stain on the rocks would set the neighborhood copper crazy. On the strength of that one "surface indication" claims would be staked out for miles, companies formed, shafts in flinty rock sunk and cities planned. Nitric acid came in great demand. It was used. It yellowed our fingers and burned holes in our clothes, but we loved it for what it might prove to us. A swarm of men learned in copper soon came from San Francisco.

They told all about it, where the leads should commence, in what direction they should run, how they should "dip," what would be the character of the ore, and what it would yield. We, common miners, bowed to their superior knowledge. We worshipped them. We followed them. We watched their faces as they surveyed the ground wherein had been found a bit of sulphuret or a green stained ledge, to get at the secret of their superior insight under ground. It took many months, even years, for the knowledge slowly to filter through our brains that of these men nine-tenths had no practical knowledge of copper or any other mining. The normal calling of one of the most learned of them all I found out afterward to be that of a music teacher.

Old S—, the local geologist of Sonora, who had that peculiar universal genius for tinkering at anything and everything from a broken wheelbarrow to a clock, and whose shop was a museum of stones, bones and minerals collected from the vicinity, "classified" and named, some correctly and some possibly otherwise, took immediately on himself the mantle of a copper prophet, and saw the whole land resting on a basis of rich copper ore. He advised in season and out of season, in his shop and in the street, that all men, and especially young men, betake themselves to copper mining. It was, he said, a sure thing. It needed only pluck, patience and perseverance. "Sink," he said, "sink for copper. Sink shafts wherever indications are found. Sink deep. Don't be discouraged if the vein does not appear at twenty, thirty, sixty or a hundred feet."

And they did sink. For several years they sunk shafts all over our county, and in many another county. In remote gulches and canyons they sunk and blasted and lived on pork and beans week in and week out, and remained all day underground till the darkness bleached their faces. They sunk and sunk, and saw seldom the faces of others of their kind, and no womankind at all. They lived coarsely, dressed coarsely, and, no matter what they might have been, felt coarsely, and in accordance acted coarsely. They sunk time and money and years, and even health and strength, and in nineteen cases out of twenty found nothing but barren rock or rock bearing just enough mineral not to pay.

I took the copper fever with the rest. In a few weeks I became an "expert" in copper. I found two veins on my former gold claim at Sweet's Bar. I found veins everywhere. I really did imagine that I knew a good deal about copper mining, and being an honest enthusiast was all the more dangerous. The banks of the Tuolumne became at last too limited as my field for copper exploration and discovery. I left for the more thickly populated portion of the county, where there being more people there was liable to be more copper, and where the Halsey claim was located. The "Halsey" was having its day then as the king claim of the county. It had really produced a few sacks of ore, which was more than any other Tuolumne copper claim had done, and on the strength of this its value was for a few months peddled far up into high and airy realms of finance.

All some of my acquaintances in Sonora that I could find had "continuations" of the Halsey lead. They "staked" with a few dollars, in consideration

of which I was to make them shareholders in whatever I might find. Then I went forth into the chapparal to "prospect." The Halsey claim lay about a mile east of Table mountain, near Montemina, a mining camp then far in its decline. Table mountain is one of the geological curiosities, if not wonders, of Tuolumne and California. Through Tuolumne it is a veritable wall, from 250 to 600 feet in height, flat as a floor on the top. That top had an average width of 800 yards. The "table" is composed of what we miners call "lava." It is a honeycombed, metallic-looking rock, which on being struck with a sledge emits a sulphurous smell. The sides to the ungeological eye seem of a different kind of rock. But parts of the sides are not of rock at all—they are of gravel.

On the eastern slope you may see from the old Sonora stage road two parallel lines, perhaps 200 feet apart, running along the mountain side. Mile after mile do these marks run, as level and exact as if laid there by the surveyor. Climb up to them and you find these lines enlarged to a sort of shelf or wave washed and indented bank of hard cement, like gravel. You may crawl under and sit in the shade of an overhanging roof of gravel, apparently in some former age scooped out by the action of waves. Not only on the Table mountain sides do you find these lines, but where Table mountain merges into the plains about Knight's ferry will you see these same water marks running around the many low conical hills.

A geological supposition. That's what water seems to have done outside of Table mountain. Were I a geologist I should say that here had been a lake—maybe a great lake—which at some other time had suddenly from the first mark been drained down to the level of the second, and from that had been drained off altogether. Perhaps there was a rise in the Sierra Nevada, and everything rising with it the lake went up too suddenly on one side and so the waters went down on the other. Inside of Table mountain there is an old river bed, smoothly washed by the currents of perhaps as many if not more centuries than any river now on earth has seen, and this forms a layer or core of gold bearing gravel. In some places it has paid richly, in more places it has not paid at all.

I said to myself, "This Halsey lead, like all the leads of this section, runs northeast and southwest." (N. B.—Three years afterward we found there were no leads at all in that section.) "The Halsey lead must run under Table mountain and come out somewhere on the other side." So I took the bearings of the Halsey lead, or what I then supposed were the bearings, for there wasn't any lead any way, with a compass. I aimed my compass at a point on the ledge of the flat summit of Table mountain. I hit it. Then I climbed up over the two water shelves or banks to that point. This was on the honeycombed lava crags. From these crags one could see afar north and south. South over Tuolumne into Mariposa, the eye following the great white quartz outcrop of the Mother or Mariposa lead. North was Bear mountain, the Stanislaus river and Stanislaus county.

This view always reminded me of the place where one very great and very bad historical personage of the past as well as the present showed another still greater and much better being all the kingdoms of the earth. For the earth wasn't all laid out, pre-empted and fenced in those days, and its kingdoms were small. Then I ran my lines over the flat top of Table mountain, southeast and northwest. So they said ran all the copper leads, commencing at Copperopolis. So then we believed, while tossing with the copper fever. Certainly they ran somewhere, and ran fast, too, for we never caught any paying copper vein in Tuolumne county; at least any that paid—except to sell.

I aimed my compass down the other side of the mountain. There, when the perpendicular lava rock stopped pitching straight up and down, sometimes fifty, sometimes two hundred feet, was a dense growth of chaparral—the kind of chaparral we called "chemical." I got into the chemical. Here the compass was of no more use than would be a certificate of Copperhead copper stock to pay a board bill. It was a fussy, prickly, blinding, bewildering, blundering, irritating growth, which sent a pang through a man's heart and a prickler into his skin at every step. At last, crawling down it on all fours, for I could not walk, dirty, dusty, thirsty and perspiring, I lit on a rock, an outcrop of ledge. It was gray and moss grown. It hid and guarded faithfully the treasure it concealed. Like Moses, I struck the rock with my little hatchet. The broken piece revealed underneath a rotten, sandy like, spongy formation of crumbling, bluish, greenish hue. It was copper! I had struck it! I rained down more blows! Red oxides, green carbonates, gray and blue sulphurets! I had found the Copperhead lead! I was rich. I got upon that rock and danced! Not a graceful, but an enthusiastic pas seul. I deemed my fortune made. I was at last out of the wilderness! But I wasn't.

PRENTICE MULFORD.

The Alligator Fad.

Quite a popular fad nowadays is a taste for live alligators. They are taken in the rivers of Florida by negroes when very young, placed in boxes and sent through the postoffice to friends in the north, and often emerge to find themselves in some very fashionable houses in New York. The alligator is not a cheerful companion, as he spends most of his time in sleep. It is only when he is hungry that he displays any social qualities or animation. The penchant for alligators is not likely to be a lasting one, for in the course of time they develop greatly in size, and then it is not safe to leave the baby in the immediate vicinity.—New York News.

"No person to be buried in this churchyard except those being in this parish; and those who wish to be buried are desired to apply to the parish clerk," was a notice given by an English parish clerk.



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COPPERHEAD CITY.

FOUNDED AND LAID OUT IN CALIFORNIA BY PRENTICE MULFORD.

The Majority of the Citizens Were, However, Skunks and Snakes, Not Men. Rapid Rise and Fall of the Stock—The Death of the Boom.

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XL



TRUDGED back nine miles to Sonora, my pockets full of "specimens" from the newly discovered claim, my head a cyclone of copper hued air castles. I saw the "boys." I was mysterious. I beckoned them to retired spots. I showed them the ore. I told them of the find. They were wild with excitement. They were half crazed with delight. And in ten minutes some of them went just as far into the domains of unrest and unhappiness for fear some one might find and jump the claim ere I got back to guard it. The Copperhead company was organized that night.

The "Enthusiast," a man who lived in the very top loft of copper insanity, was sent down with me to superintend the sinking of the shaft. The secret was soon out. Shares in the vein were eagerly coveted. I sold a few feet for \$500, and deemed I had conferred a great favor on the buyer in letting it go so cheaply. I lived up, way up, in tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars. The "company" in Sonora met almost every night to push things, while the Enthusiast and myself blasted and burrowed in the rock. By day they exhausted their spare cash in horse hire, riding down to the claim in hope of being on hand when the next blast should reveal a bed of ore immense in breadth and unfathomable in depth.

My company was made up chiefly of lawyers, doctors, politicians and editors. They never realized how much they were indebted to me. For four months I made them feel rich, and if a man feels rich what more should he want? For a millionaire can do no more than feel rich.

Feeling certain that the Copperhead was a very rich claim, and that other rich claims would be developed from the "extensions," and that a bustling town would be the result, I pre-empted a section of the land which I deemed most valuable, on which it was intended that "Copperhead City" should be built. This "city" I partly laid out. I think this was the third city I had laid out in California.

There is a sepulchral and post mortem suggestion in the term "laid out" which is peculiarly applicable to all the "cities" which I attempted to found, and which

"cities" invariably foundered. Actuated, also, at that time, by those business principles so largely prevalent in most Christian communities, I "claimed" the only spring of good drinking water in the neighborhood of my "city." My intent in this was in time to realize a profit from the indirect sale of this water to such of the future "city's" population as might want water—not to sell it by the glass or gallon, of course; but if there was to be a "city" it would need water works. The water works would necessarily lie on my land. I would not be guilty of the inhumanity of selling water to parched tongues people, but I proposed that the "city" should buy of me the ground out of which came the water.

But one house was ever erected in Copperhead City proper, and that had but one room. But three men ever lived in it. Yet the city was thickly populated. It was located in a regular jungle, so far as a jungle is ever attained in California, and seemed the lead center and trusting place of all the rattlesnakes, coons, skunks, owls and foxes on the west side of Table mountain. When the winter wore off and the warm California spring wore on and merged into the summer heat of May, and the pools made by the winter rains dried up, I think all the rattlesnakes and copperheads for miles around went for my pre-empted spring of pure water.

The "city"—I mean the house—was located within a few feet of the spring. Retiring thither at noon for dinner, I have started half a dozen snakes from the porches and suburbs of that spring. Snakes get dry like human beings. Snakes love water. Snakes, poor things, can't get anything else to drink, and must fill up on water. These were so-called snakes. When started at our approach they would not run away from our society. No. They preferred to remain in the "city," and so, in many instances, they ran under the house. It is not pleasant at night to feel that you are sleeping over a veteran rattler four feet long, with a crown of glory on his tail in the shape of fourteen or fifteen rattles. You won't crawl under your house to evict such a rattlesnake either. Skunks inhabited our "city" also. Skunks know their power—their peculiar power.

The evening gloaming seems the favorite time for the skunk to go abroad. He or she loves the twilight. There must be a vein of sentiment in these far smelling creatures. I have in the early evening traveled up the only street our "city" ever laid out—a trail—and ahead of me on that trail I have seen a skunk. I was willing he should precede me. In the matter of rankness I was perfectly willing to fall a long way behind him. Now, if you have studied skunks you

will know that it is far safer to remain in the skunk's rear than to get ahead of him, because when he attacks with his favorite aromatic means of offensive defence he projects himself forward (as it were). I have, then, in my city, had a skunk keep the trail about fifty feet ahead of me, at a pace which indicated little alarm at my presence, and, do my best, I could not frighten the animal, nor could I get ahead of him or her. If I ran he ran; if I walked he concurred in rapidity of pace. I dared not approach too near the animal. I would rather break in upon the "sacred divinity" which they say, "doth budge a king" than transgress the proper bounds to be observed with reference to a skunk. Let a king do his best, and he cannot punish an intruder as can a skunk.

The skunk is really a pretty creature. Its tail droops over its back, like the

plumes of the Knight of Navarre. "It is an object which can really be admired visually at a distance. Do not be allured by him to too near approach. 'Beware! he's fooling thee!'"

At last it dawned upon the collective mind of the Copperhead company that their superintendent, the Enthusiast, was digging too much and getting down too little. They accepted his resignation. It mattered little to him, for by this time his mind was overwhelmed by another stupendous mining scheme, to which the Copperhead was barely a priming. He had the happy talent of living in these golden visions which, to him, were perfect realities. He held the philosophy that the idea, the hope, the anticipation of a thing is sometimes more "the thing" than the thing itself.

The Enthusiast's rich mines lay principally in his head, but his belief in them gave him as much pleasure as if they really existed. It was like marrying, sometimes. The long sought for, longed for, wished for wife or husband turns out, as a reality, a very different being from what he or she was deemed while in process of being longed and sought for. The long longed for may have been estimated an angel. The angel, after wedlock, may prove to have been a devil. The reality may be a devil, or within a few shades or degrees of a devil.

So the shaft was sunk, as they said, properly and scientifically, by the new superintendent. The rock got harder as we went down, the ore less, the vein narrower, the quantity of water greater, the progress slower, the weekly expenses first doubled and then trebled, the stock became less coveted, and as to reputed value, reached that fatal dead level which really means that it is on its downward descent. The shareholders' faces became longer and longer at their weekly Sunday afternoon meetings in the Sonora court house.

The Copperhead claim and Copperhead city subsided quietly. The shareholders became tired of mining for coin to pay assessments out of their own pockets. They came at last to doubt the ever glowing, hopeful assertion of the Enthusiast that from indications he knew the "ore was forming." The inevitable came. Copperhead city was deserted by its human inhabitants. The skunk, the snake, the squirrel, the woodpecker and the buzzard came again into full possession, and I bitterly regretted that I had not sold more at ten dollars a foot when I found the stock a drug at ten cents.

PRENTICE MULFORD.

How Tea Is Carried to Tibet.

The packages of tea, each about four feet long, six inches broad and three to four thick, and weighing from seventeen to twenty-three pounds, are placed horizontally one above the other, the upper ones projecting so as to come over the porter's head. They are held tightly together by four ropes and little bamboo stakes; straps, also, of plaited cow ropes, pass over the porter's shoulders, while a little string fastened to the top of the load helps to balance the huge structure, which it requires more knack than strength to carry, for its weight must bear on all the back and only slightly on the shoulders.

In their hands the porters carry a short crutch, which they place under the load when they wish to rest without removing it from their backs. The average load is nine packages, or from 150 to 200 pounds, but I passed a number of men carrying seventeen, and one had twenty-one. A man, I was told, had a few years ago brought an iron safe weighing 400 pounds for Mr. Biet from Ya-chou to Ta-chien-lu in twenty-two days. Old or decrepit people commonly travel along this road borne on the backs of porters. Many of the women porters carry seven packages of tea, nearly 200 pounds, and children of five and six trudge on behind their parents with one or two.

The price paid for the work is twenty-two cents (about twenty-five cents) a package, and it takes about seventeen days to make the trip from Ya-chou. So far as my knowledge goes, there are no porters in any other part of the world who carry such weights as these Ya-chou tea coolies; and, strange as it may appear, they are not very muscular, and over half of them are confirmed opium smokers.—Lieutenant Rockhill in Century.

Holland Dykes Along the Allegheny.

It is too late now to talk of street grades raised above high water level in Pittsburgh and Allegheny. It is hardly worth while to talk about a system of reservoirs to collect and hold the water which pours down the hill and mountain side to the Allegheny and Monongahela. Before that could be done this generation would be long gathered to its fathers. But is it not worth while to talk of some possible means of saving these cities from the frequently recurring losses by the floods?

Count up, however roughly, the losses in various forms due to this flood and the total would go far beyond the expense of a dyke or any similar means to confine high waters to the natural course of the river. It should be remembered that the floods will be increased in volume in proportion as the watershed is denuded of forest. These losses will not cease with lapses of time.—Pittsburgh Times.

Reconciling Old Enemies.

There may not be much in a name, but an item gatherer of the Palatka (Fla.) Herald found some fun in two names the other day, and went away reflecting on the beautiful impartialities of peace.

An old colored woman stood at the station waiting for the Jacksonville train. Beside her stood two little pickaninnies with faces as black as the inside of a stovepipe. When the old mammy's train arrived she exclaimed, "Bress do Lor!" and then, looking down at her children, remarked, "Here, you Abraham Lincoln, take hold of Jeff Davis' hand, and come along head, quick!" And the namesakes of the two great statesmen of the war joined hands and walked away, as though the names had not expressed such a dissimilarity of purpose.



How to Raise the Body of a Drowned Person.

A French-Canadian proceeded in this fashion: He supplied himself with glass gallon jars and a quantity of slacked lime and went in a boat to a place where the man was sunk down. One of the jars was half filled with lime and then filled with water and tightly corked. It was then placed overboard, and soon after exploded the bottom of the river with a loud port. After the third trial, each in a different place, the body rose to surface.

How to Remove Mildew from Cloth.

Put a teaspoonful of chloride of lime into a quart of water, strain it and dip the mildewed places in solution. Lay in the sun to dry. The mildew has not disappeared.

How to Obtain a Letter of Credit.

Any first class bank will issue a letter of credit upon the receipt of the amount of the credit and a small commission. This letter enables you to draw any amount up to the amount of the credit from the bank's correspondents abroad. List of those correspondents is printed upon the back of the letter.

How to Make a Welsh Rarebit.

The following is the old English recipe: Melt a tablespoonful of good butter in a saucepan and add about half a pound of rich crumbly cheese cut in half inch slices. Stir the mass over the fire, and when the cheese melts pour in a gill of milk. When thoroughly mixed add a pinch of cayenne pepper. Lay slices of toast moistened with boiled milk on a platter, pour the melted cheese over them, and serve hot.

How to Tell Steel from Iron.

Aquaforis applied to the surface of steel produces a black spot; on iron metal remains clean. The slightest of iron or steel can be readily detected by this method.

How to Degrease That Iron Nail.

Two pieces of ice can be quickly melted in a room cooled below the freezing point by rubbing them against each other.

How to Estimate What a Horse Can Do.

A horse can draw on metal rails and two-thirds as much as on an ordinary pavement. Three and one-third times as much as on good Belgian blocks. Seven times as much as on ordinary cobble stones, thirteen times as much as on ordinary cobble stones, twenty times as much as on earth road, and forty times as much as on sand.

How to Transplant Large Shrubs.

In the autumn, before the frost sets in, dig a trench around the tree to be moved, but not too near the roots. In the winter when the ground is frozen, raise the tree with the best earth adhering to the roots. The mass is easily raised with levers or strong sled, when it can be drawn by horses or oxen. Trees moved this way will grow in the spring.

How to Cleanse the Mouth.

There are few things more offensive than foul breath. This occurs in its offensive form from decayed teeth, from mucus adhering to the wall of mouth and throat, which has been composed by the gases and acids of system. A simple and effective remedy is to drop a few crystals of permanganate of potash into a tumbler of water, and gargle the throat and the mouth well with it after each meal or before going to bed and in the morning. This solution is a perfect odorizer of all organic decay, and neutralizes the offensive odor arising from the decaying particles of food which remain in the cavities of or between teeth, etc. It is harmless.

How to Clean Marble.

A strong preparation for cleaning marble is fine pumice stone, newly washed and freed from all oil, mixed with soft soap. Dip a woollen rag in the compound, and rub the stains out. Then wash off with soap and water. Other excellent preparation is made of two parts of common soda, one part of pumice stone and one of finely powdered chalk, which should be sifted through fine sieve and mixed with water. Used in the same manner. Iron can be usually removed by rubbing with lemon juice.

How to Render Fabrics Incombustible.

Many deaths would be prevented if ladies engaged in household work wore incombustible or non-inflammable gowns. The process of so treating the goods is a very simple. Dissolve the goods in a 7 per cent. solution of plate of ammonia, or a 20 per cent. solution of tungstate of soda and then wash them. If they are now held in the hand of a candle or gas lamp they will not burn. That portion of the fabric which was in contact with the light will come charred, but it will not ignite and hence the burning state will spread to the rest of the garment. Soaking in borax and hot water will have similar effect.

How to Restore Faded Writing.

Often the writing upon letters or other documents becomes faded and almost illegible. If they are of importance the writing can be easily restored by first covering it with a solution of potassium permanganate, and then adding the prussiate, some diluted hydrochloric acid. By this means the faded ink will assume a permanent and beautiful dark blue color.