

out to us. 'T was lust for gold that inspired the first limping effort of the natives to scale the rough valley of the tumbling stream above Polu. Guided in part by the dead bodies of their predecessors, in part by the dizzy, man-made trail, the patient donkeys strive up and down the gorge, laden, downward, with the placer "concentrates," upward with bread and tea for the score or more of Turkestani toilers who do the bidding of their Chinese masters.

One group of gnome-like miners appealed to us, through Achbar, lamenting their enforced stay away from the village, and praying the sahibs to intervene with the Kitai (Chinese) in their behalf. But the men did not seem hungry or overworked, and we left them, absorbed as we were in trouble of our own. Their methods, compared with placer work which I had chanced to see in Mexico, California, and Alaska, appeared very crude. The number of worked-out pockets, multiplied by their evidently small rate of daily progress, attested long usage. The village *entrepôt* showed no sign of garnered wealth from the operations, which must be a strict government monopoly, let out, perhaps, on some royalty basis to the Amban, one hundred and twenty miles away in Khotan.

Looking back now upon the troubles which befell us after our departure from Polu, and which seemed to be born of treachery, I am reminded of similar troubles occurring when I chanced to stumble into a gold-bearing territory far in the interior of Abyssinia. As in the present case, I knew nothing of the gold until close upon it. But the local dignitary, a handsome, courtly Ras—or duke—fairly