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NO GOLD IN "LOST MINE"

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Stories of the fabulous wealth of the "lost mine" in the mountains back of Pitt Lake from which Slumach, the Indian murderer, was reported to obtain riches, are "picturesque but not true," says Capt. H.W.R. Moore, prominent Victoria barrister, war veteran, former journalist, miner and business executive.

Mr. Moore speaks with authority on the subject, for he is the last of a party of six men all with experience in mining, in the rugged terrain of Alaska who [ventured into the Stave area] and actually found the spot from which Slumach, and later a lone prospector, were reported to have found gold.

"In the fall of 1904," Mr. Moor relates, "I was bookkeeper and local manager for the Riverside Timber Company of Seattle, of which W.A. Macdonald was the principal owner. I had but recently returned from mining in Alaska and was naturally keen to investigate any newly reported finds of gold.

Mr. Macdonald in some way came into possession of a map depicting the spot from which the Indian killer—who had murdered Louis Bee, a half breed, as he fished on Lillooet Slough, Pitt River, in September 1890—was supposed to have obtained an abundance of huge nuggets. The story was that prospector, dying in California, gave the map to his nurse, and from her it passed into the possession of Macdonald."

Fired by the tale, Mr. Moore and Macdonald formed a party; four other gold miners from Alaska joining them. They secured a launch at New Westminster and started on the Pitt River. It was a most difficult trip, the upper river being jammed with logs and debris. "You can imagine what it was like," said the lawyer [a few words unreadable] we had to portage 40 times in two days."

Following the course laid down on the map, Mr. Moore says, the party turned off to follow a creek that came into the Pitt River from the left. "We named it Canyon Creek," he recalled, "as the greater length of it appeared to be between precipitous hills. But as this was shown on the map, we knew we were headed in the right direction. According to instruction we were to follow this stream to a point where we could take our bearings from three mountain peaks.

"We did so. We found the place. There was no doubt that the prospector had been to the spot and that his map was correctly drawn. But evidently the story of the gold was a

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figment of his imagination—probably induced by the illness that carried him off. In his delirium, I fancy, he pictured the spot as being rich.

“We spent a month in there, prospecting every inch of the locality and every stream and trickle without getting a single colour of gold. We did, however, locate a great ledge of bull quartz. This was barren of gold, but one portion of [a few words unreadable] quantities to justify us in staking it.

We staked six claims and named the location the Big Six Group. These were recorded in New Westminster later.”

Captain Moore says that he can well understand how men can disappear in the rugged country, and never re-appear.

“The country is much disturbed and seems to be standing on end,” he remarked. “Steep hillsides, covered with sallah bushes, are extremely slippery. One false step may easily result in injury with fatal consequences. I had personal experience of the dangers of the country. I slipped and slid and just managed to catch a projecting rock with my hand.

There is another factor that adds a further hazard to the country, Capt. Moore said. “It is that there is no edible game to be easily secured.”

His reason for telling of his experience at this time, the Victoria barrister asserts, is that of late years such highly coloured and fictional stories of “Slumach’s Gold” have been published, that they are liable to lure inexperienced adventurers into one of the most dangerous and difficult parts of B.C., where almost every [a few words unreadable] possibly death.

Official records show that Slumach, the Indian who [words unreadable] to obtain wealth from the “mine,” was hanged at New Westminster, January 16, 1891. Legend says it was for the killing of his squaw to prevent her divulging the source of his wealth.

Such a tale is pure fiction. He was executed for the unwarranted murder of Louis Bee, on the lower Pitt. He fled to the mountains and was tracked to his secluded cabin by William Moresby, governor of the jail, with a posse.

His cabin was burned and he was forced to surrender or starve—a gruesome corroboration of Captain Moore’s statement of the paucity of game.