



# THE OPAL CLIFF.

By F. CARR.

*Illustrated by H. P. Sealy.*

**T**HERE was nothing very striking about the dog. You had to know it, then you saw there was more than the ordinary dog devil lurking in its black green eyes. It was a mongrel of course, a cross between the native dingoe and some other snaky brute.

Lord! how it used to stare at one with a look that made one wonder what it meant! It belonged to Bill Hudson, and he stuck to the brute through thick and thin just because it had been on two expeditions to a place he knew, and was mad about.

Bill Hudson and me were old mates, and we came across one another again at Mt. Brown. He was working in Deep Gully, two miles off, but he and the dog used to come up to my tent every night, and no matter what conversation started, Bill always worked round to the story of opals in the Nebadaba country.

"Jagers, he saw 'em first whilst prospecting for gold. The big rains carried them across two deserts; but the same rains hemmed the party in with floods, and only Jagers came out alive: he and this dog. Jagers, Fred Conway, and me, after we'd worked out the 'Found by Night' claim for £700, went out by Numberoona. I tell you we were within coo-ee of that cliff, when Jagers he got a spear, and Fred he got seven, and me and the dog were stuck in that cave until the thunderstorm came. Three good men, with three good rifles, would be a match for any blacks, and we'd not be took unawares again, nor blaze away all our

shot on birds. Why, man, if I'd only had an old blunderbuss and plenty of ammunition, I could have killed every — — black-fellow in the ranges."

As soon as Bill got on this lay, that dog would lie on its stomach and look up as if it understood every word, and as soon as Bill came to "three good men," that dog would growl like mad.

"Three good men," Bill would say, "three good rifles, and three pack horses, why, what could stop us? And Jagers he reckoned as there was a million pounds worth of opals in one bit of cliff there. He had one piece that shined like fire, only a small piece mind you, and he sold it to a jeweller in Sydney for £22. Just one piece, and he might have filled his swag, so he said, and we must have been near the place when the blackfellows rushed our camp, for the dog came in just before with a piece of rag in its mouth, and Jagers swore it was part of a coat one of his mates used to wear, one of the three that were drowned."

"If I could only make a rise," he would say, "I'd be off like a shot, and you'd go, Jim."

"Yes, I'd go," I would reply.

"Well, you and me, old miners knowing how to travel. We want money first, and another mate."

Both the money and the man came. Came, strange to say, through the dog. The man was looking about him among the claims, and the dog ran up to him and fawned on him, and growled at the same time. Bill