

happened to see it, and he says, "Well, I'm — if ever the dog took to anybody like that before."

"I should hope it didn't," said the man. "He has a look in his eyes that makes me feel sick. What do you keep him for?"

So Bill tells him about Jagers' opal cliff, and how the dog had been twice there, and then Bill goes on with the old cry, "Money and another mate."

"Would I do?" asked the man.

"You look as if you would," said Bill, and then Bill brought him to me, and we had a big yarn together. He told us his name was Stephen Ord, and it was easy enough to see that he was an English swell. He totted down the things Bill said we should want, and then said: "If I find the whole outfit will you take me for a mate?"

"You bet we will," said Bill and me, for it was a good offer, and I was ready enough to go through half a dozen Devil-Devil countries for the sake of the fortune Jagers had tried to win, and I said so. Ord looked at me curiously and asked, "When could we make a start?"

"As soon as we get the horses and other things," said Bill. Ord wrote out a cheque for a hundred pounds, told us to get a pack team and some tucker, and said he would get the guns.

When he came up again he had half a coach load of luggage — rifles, revolvers, hunting knives, medicine, suits of flannel and some of the nattiest little cooking pots I ever saw, besides bags of meal, and provisions we never thought of.

We got six horses and packed them all, loaded three of them lightly, so that they could serve as hacks, and then we started. "You are not going to take that ugly dog with you," said Ord to Bill, for Vamp was trotting by Bill's horse.

"I am," said Bill. "He's been twice to the place already. He knows the way."

Bill was touchy about the dog, and Ord saw it, so he did not say any more.

We had lumped our old tents on top of the pack horses with other of the old gear, and looked like a party of miners shifting

camp; but when we got clear away from the diggings we threw away these things, donned the flannel suits and pith helmets Ord had brought up, and found the comfort of them.

Bill, of course, was head of the party because he alone knew the way. He led us across seemingly endless plains. There was plenty of salt bush for the first three hundred miles, and occasional water holes, so it was easy enough travelling; then the salt bush



"IF I FIND THE WHOLE OUTFIT WILL YOU TAKE ME FOR A MATE?"

got thinner and the water holes scarcer, our horses began to lag, and we moved but slowly. The heat was terrible. The blazing sun shone out of a cloudless sky. There was no wind, and the dust rose under our horses' hoofs, and enveloped us in a cloud that followed us wherever we went. I don't know how many days we rode over that desolate country. We left all signs of civilization behind us when we left the digging camp. We never pitched a tent all the time, but