

moved forward on blind chance. Suddenly I heard a savage cat-like growl, and turning saw a sight I shall never forget. Bill and Ord were lying on their backs, and Vamp, transformed into some fiendish creature, was mowing, snarling, and champing in its teeth flesh—human flesh. It had torn at the faces of my friends, and left only bone and stringy muscle. Hideous sight! The dog's tail swelled when I approached. The hair stood up on its back, it writhed like a mad thing. I went

dog crawled on its belly towards me moaning all the time. I fired: it gave an awful cry, and spun round and round in a circle. I fired at it again and again, and so stern was my hate that every shot told. Bullet after bullet went into the brute, yet each one only seemed to rouse it to madder antics, and every moment it drew nearer to me. I struck at it with the clubbed rifle, beat it until the rifle stock was shattered and the breech twisted and broken, and yet the dog leaped up as if it would tear my face. At last, in blind fury, I seized the brute by the throat and gripped its windpipe. I felt its claws tearing my wrists, but I hung on until a sudden blindness came over me. I suppose I fainted. When I came to my senses again I was lying by the side of the dog, but it was dead. As soon as I could move I heaped great stones on the horrible brute determined that it should never move again, then I turned to my friends.

I could not find out how they had died. There was no mark on their bodies, no wounds. But their faces. Who could guess what they might have shown? I examined the surrounding ground. There were no marks of a struggle. I saw in the shade of a rock the rifles my friends had carried. I went forward to examine them, and there before me was the Opal Cliff. A smooth surface of deep red matrix, and, running through it, fiery veins of precious—nay, I will not mention the cursed sight, I will not lure other men to their death. I do not know whether the strain I had undergone had touched my brain, but I know that when I looked at the gleaming veins that strange loathing and fear came over me that had come over me that night in the tent. I stayed just long enough to bury my friends, then hurried back to the valley, caught two of the best horses, and rode southward as fast as I could. I do not know how I crossed the desert, for I remember nothing about the journey. A party of prospectors came across me in the Grey Ranges, and took me to the camp at Millewarra, and it was weeks before I could recall even my own name.



“AT LAST, IN BLIND FURY, I SEIZED THE BRUTE BY THE THROAT AND GRIPPED HIS WIND-PIPE.”

nearer, and the dog showed its great fangs. It seemed like a devil dog, and the same sickening fear that had haunted me through the night thrilled me again. It was some infernal creature guardian of the opals. I remembered that there had been three expeditions to these ranges, and from two of them only the dog and a man had come back. All sorts of horrid thoughts crowded in my mind, and with them a furious hatred of the dog. I raised my rifle and took a steady aim. The