

**CRESSY. IN TWO  
VOLUME;  
VOLUME II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649377749

Cressy. In two volume; volume II by Bret Harte

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**BRET HARTE**

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# CRESSY

BY  
BRET HARTE

*IN TWO VOLUMES*

VOLUME II

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO  
AND NEW YORK  
1889

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RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,  
LONDON AND BENGAL.

WM. BADCOCK,  
BOOKSELLER,  
8, STATION ROAD,  
TAUNTON.

# CRESSY.

## CHAPTER I.

THE conversation which Johnny Filgee had overheard between Uncle Ben and the gorgeous stranger, although unintelligible to his infant mind, was fraught with some significance to the adult settlers of Indian Spring. The town itself, like most interior settlements, was originally a mining encampment, and as such its founders and settlers derived their possession of the soil under the mining laws that took precedence of all other titles. But although that title was held to be good even after the



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abandonment of their original occupation, and the establishment of shops, offices, and dwellings on the site of the deserted places, the suburbs of the town and outlying districts were more precariously held by squatters, under the presumption of their being public land open to preoccupation, or the settlement of school-land warrants upon them. Few of the squatters had taken the trouble to perfect even these easy titles, merely holding "possession" for agricultural or domiciliary purposes, and subject only to the invasion of "jumpers," a class of adventurers who, in the absence of recognized legal title, "jumped" or forcibly seized such portions of a squatter's domains as were not protected by fencing or superior force. It was therefore with some excitement that Indian Spring received the

news that a Mexican grant of three square leagues, which covered the whole district, had been lately confirmed by the Government, and that action would be taken to recover possession. It was understood that it would not affect the adverse possessions held by the town under the mining laws, but it would compel the adjacent squatters like McKinstry, Davis, Masters, and Filgee, and jumpers like the Harrisons, to buy the legal title, or defend a slow but losing lawsuit. The holders of the grant—rich capitalists of San Francisco—were open to compromise with those in actual possession, and in the benefits of this compromise the unscrupulous “jumper,” who had neither sown nor reaped, but simply dispossessed the squatter who had done both, shared equally with him.

A diversity of opinion as to the effect of the new claim naturally obtained; the older settlers still clung to their experiences of an easy aboriginal holding of the soil, and were sceptical both as to the validity and justice of these revived alien grants; but the newer arrivals hailed this certain tenure of legal titles as a guarantee to capital and an incentive to improvement. There was also a growing and influential party of eastern and northern men, who were not sorry to see a fruitful source of dissension and bloodshed removed. The feuds of the McKinstrys and Harrisons, kept alive over a boundary to which neither had any legal claim, would seem to bring them hereafter within the statute law regarding ordinary assaults without any ethical mystification. On the other hand Mc-