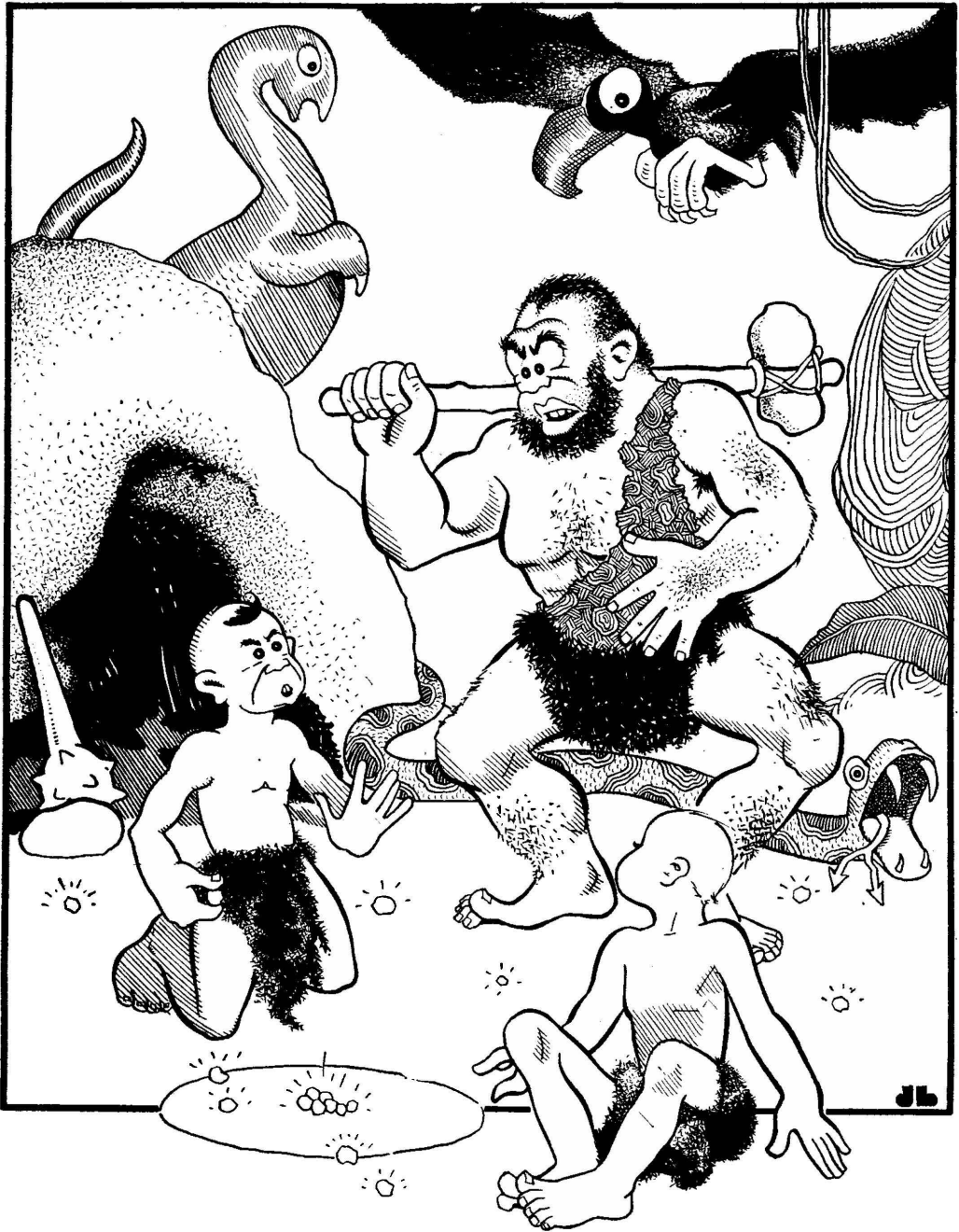


MYSTERIES OF MINING

This is the third in a series of features describing various interesting phases of mining and the mining industry.



"Why are you kids wasting your time with that yellow trash?" this prehistoric father is telling these youngsters—for at the dawn of civilization gold was considered of little or no value. Only children and women had any desire for the soft metal—for the men could not make weapons out of it, they couldn't eat it, and they couldn't build a house out of it! Gold—the worthless metal, might well have been what the ancients first called it.

MYSTERIES OF MINING

Gold! The very word excites the imagination. Since the dawn of civilization the search for the precious yellow metal has been one of the most driving impulses which mankind has felt.

The first discovery of gold, of course, is veiled in the dim past. It is known, however, that the ancients found glittering nuggets in stream beds. It was soon recognized that the beautiful yellow substance was of no practical value, it could not be used in the manufacture of weapons of war or of the chase because of its softness.

And so gold was first used as a plaything for children, and as ornaments for men and women. Not much attention was paid to the metal, and whatever store of it accumulated resulted entirely from accidental discoveries in stream beds.

The historians tell us that about 2000 B. C. gold first became an article of commerce. Even then it was used only for decorative purposes.

Asia, the center of early civilization, saw the first gold. The bill of lading of a ship that returned to the Persian Gulf in 2048 B. C. after an absence of two years shows a cargo of ivory, copper ore, and gold.

Gold was the first commodity mentioned in the Bible after the institution of the Garden of Eden, and six different words for the metal are found in the Old Testament alone.

The comparative rarity of gold soon impressed the ancients with its value, and it soon became the standard medium of exchange. In all the first writ-

ings that the world knows, the purchasing power of gold is mentioned, because, with the dawn of civilization, man realized that a means of barter would have to be adopted.

Because of its rarity, then, its durability and its fascinating luster, gold became the backbone of commerce. Most of the knowledge of the early trade routes that archeologists have today has been gathered by golden clues left by the first traders of this world of ours, back in the centuries before Christ.

The search for this precious metal has been going on with more and more skill and concentration with the years. It is estimated that from the discovery of America in 1492 to the end of 1935 the world had produced 1,194,913,216 ounces of gold—which if cast into a single mass would make a cube about 41 feet on each edge—about the volume of a two-story American home.

The use of copper, silver, and other alloying metals has made gold useful as well as ornamental. Today it is employed in dental construction, and in the manufacture of many delicate scientific instruments.

It is not its practical uses that have won for gold its supreme position, of course, but its early adoption as the foundation of the monetary system of the world and the basis of credit structure.

And so throughout the years the yellow indestructible metal has reigned supreme; and today gold plays a most vital part in the financial structure of the world.