

Profits of Hydraulic Mining.

In the late legal proceedings against the hydraulic miners, it was attempted by their opponents to show that this branch of mining had, as a general thing, proved unprofitable, a good deal of the testimony adduced on the part of the plaintiffs being destined to establish the affirmative of that proposition. Whatever may seem to have been the weight of testimony bearing on that point, as brought out during these trials, certain it is, no kind of mining, either here or elsewhere, has paid better on the whole than this. For 15 or 20 years large numbers of miners engaged in hydraulic operations, made good wages, washing the top stratum of gravel, which, being loose and free from pipe clay and large boulders, could be run off with comparatively little water, nor was much capital then required to open up and outfit their claims.

Gradually as this top gravel came to be disposed of, difficulties of various kinds developed themselves in connection with this class of operations, some of them so serious as to necessitate the employment of much engineering skill and the expenditure of large sums of money. Thus, long ditches had to be constructed over ragged districts of country; enormous reservoirs had to be built at great elevations in the mountains, costly bed-rock tunnels had to be driven and an expensive and powerful plant provided for washing purposes. In short, the whole business had to be reconstructed, learned anew and conducted on a gigantic scale. But there were found men of skill, nerve and large means ready to undertake the difficult task, which, in good time, was well accomplished.. During these years of heavy expenditure, construction and trial there inured to the investors, as a matter of course, no very large net revenues. Nevertheless, not more than a few of these enterprises failed to be self sustaining, nor were many of them without some profits from the start.

But just when this enlarged system of hydraulic mining had, through such persevering effort and the expenditure of enormous sums of money, been brought to perfection, and the investors had begun to reap the reward of their costly and hazardous ventures, the courts interpose and put a stop to further operations, inflicting terrible loss on the owners of these properties and involving many of them in irretrievable ruin. To call in question the profitability of hydraulic mining under circumstances like these is alike ridiculous and unjust. So far as the business has been permitted to go on unmolested it has proved not only remunerative, but extremely profitable, though stricken down just as it was escaping from its burdens and embarrassment and entering upon an era of assured success. Whether hydraulic mining shall be suffered to go on in the districts where it has been partially stopped or not, one thing is certain: It will be prosecuted very actively here-after in those sections of the State where it has not been interfered with, more especially along the Klamath river and some of its tributaries, where, by reason of the favorable conditions that there exist, it seems destined to undergo a rapid expansion. This industry is not dead, nor yet even crippled in more than a portion of the State, this northern field being not only well conditioned, but quite extensive. It has openings for capital that are worth looking after.

Mining and Scientific Press, V. 50, 2/7/1885, p. 92