

The Drift-Mining Interests.

The fact that mining auriferous gravel by the hydraulic method has practically ceased in this State, owing to legal complications, has evidently created an impression that gravel mining generally has stopped. This is by no means the case, for the ancient river channels of California have scarcely been touched, and drift mining is a growing and successful industry. Some of the old hydraulic mines are being worked by "drifting," and more of them will be in course of time.

The Stewart mining bill, which will be considered by Congress shortly, not only ignores the drift-mining industry of California but does it a positive injury by certain of its provisions. In another column is given a statement signed by prominent men interested in this branch of mining, in which the dangers that threaten drift mining are pointed out. Their views are indorsed by others who have seen the letter referred to after it was put in type.

The Forest Hill Divide, to which these gentlemen directly refer, has yielded something more than \$20,000,000 in gold, and this from the more accessible points only; the greater part is still undeveloped.

There are a great number of similar volcanic capped ridges, marking the courses of ancient gold-bearing channels in Placer, Nevada, Sierra, Plumas, Butte and other counties in this State. A few of these only have been developed, and it is apparent that the drift-mining industry is not only an important one at present but is destined to become still more so as new regions are opened by capital.

If the Stewart bill, as it now reads, should become a law, prospecting for new drift mines would virtually cease, and most of those now unpatented would have to be abandoned.

To avoid misunderstanding, we think the bill should define the maximum limit in the number of acres, or the number of 20-acre locations which may be included in a single "claim." As the bill now reads, many miners will be at a loss to know whether a "claim" under the proposed law will be limited to 20 acres, 80 acres or 160 acres.

There is also an apparent oversight in the bill which permits the assessment work for five adjoining claims to be done at one point and then limits a single application for patent to 80 acres.

If it is shown that a drift-mining property on one of these volcano-capped channels must contain 500 to 1000 acres in order to justify development—and experience shows this—it is plain that provision should be made for the working of that number of acres as one property; i.e., for doing the assessment work at one point (and the amount should not be unreasonable), and for obtaining patent under one application.

If the 80-acre limitation makes it necessary to do \$500 worth of labor on each 80-acre tract before applying for a patent, the drift miner will either have to go ahead without a patent or waste thousands of dollars in useless work.

These facts should be carefully considered by the Committee on Mines of the U. S. Senate, to prevent confusion in the future and to afford relief for the drift miners. As at present drawn, the bill relates mainly to quartz mines, the drift mines having been apparently overlooked. If the bill passes without being remodeled, it will, without doubt, work dire disaster to the important industry of drift-gravel mining in this and adjoining States,

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