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UNCLE SAM'S BIGGEST TREASURE VAULT.

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LEADVILLE, COLO., August 19, 1896.

EADVILLE IS ONE OF the great treasure vaults of the United States. Within the past seventeen years Uncle Sam has drawn upon it to the extent of more than \$200,000,000, but it has today more than one hundred producing mines and its undeveloped riches are incalculable. It contains some of the richest gold and some of the most wonderful silver mines of the world. The territory surrounding it is being reprospected, new mines are being opened and some of the old mines are so wonderful in their production that their owners do not want them mentioned in the newspapers. Such a one is the "Little Johnny," which now has an output of \$10,000 worth of gold a day, and which, I am told, could be made to produce, if the owners wished it, \$50,000 in gold daily for years to come. I met the president of this mine the other day and asked if I might visit it. He offered to grant the permission, but only on condition that I would say nothing about my trip in the newspapers. I replied that I was in Leadville to get the news and not to suppress it. The result was I did not visit the mine. There is no doubt, however, but that it is one of the most wonderful mines of the world. In one of the banks here there is about a peck of specimens of the pure gold which has been taken from it. The gold in the vein is in the shape of ordinary gold ore, but in places there are flakes and scales of pure metal, and every now and then a rich pocket is struck in which it lies in lumps. The daily output of the "Little Johnny" is now about 200 tons, and the average value of the ore is nearly \$50. There are now six shafts on the property, the two deepest of which are 750 feet. Gold is struck about 300 feet below the ground, and it is said that the whole area of more than 100 acres is mineralized.

Leadville is one of the greatest silver camps of the United States. Millions upon millions have been taken out of the earth back of the city and scattered broadcast over the world. Much of the money which Levi Z. Leiter is now spending in entertaining in Washington and gallivanting over Europe came from a silver mine here, which he bought for \$40,000, and which panned out more than a million. A great part of James G. Blaine's political expenses were paid

out of his silver mine in Leadville, and it is only a five minutes' walk from the heart of this city to the spot where Senator Tabor, by grub-staking a couple of miners, jumped at once from the position of a poor grocer to that of a mining millionaire. I think that Tabor made something like seven or eight million dollars out of his mines here, and though he is practically bankrupt today, there are others who have done almost as well and kept their money. Millions upon millions of dollars' worth of silver has been taken out of the hills back of the town, and there are vast quantities of dump and waste rock walled up almost on the edge of the houses. The city itself is underlaid with precious minerals. About a year ago Major A. V. Bohn struck a silver mine on the edge of the town, the ore of which averaged 100 ounces of silver, with now and then a jump to as high as from 800 to 1,000 ounces. It has been found that this vein extends right under Leadville, and it is a question now as to whether Leadville can hold its silver or whether it is to go to others. If Leadville gets it it will be the richest city in the world, and single pockets of ore under the streets will probably pay more than the city debt and leave a big surplus in the treasury. Leadville claims that the steets were dedicated to the municipality, and that all that is under them belongs to the city. The original owners of the land are now trying to pretend that they gave the ground only as a right of way, and so the question hangs in the courts.

Many of the silver mines of Leadville are so rich that they can be worked at a profit, notwithstanding the low price of silver. In the Moffat and Smith mines there are 550 men on the pay roll as miners, and it takes about three men to handle and care for the ore to each miner. There are 8,000 men at work in the Leadville mining district, and laborers get from \$2 to \$3 per day. The Wolfson mine has recently struck an immense body of ore, neither end of which has yet been found, but in which 108,000 tons of silver-bearing rock have been blocked out. This, it is estimated, will pay at least \$8 a ton above all expenses of handling and smelting, making the ore in this mine alone worth at least \$864,000. Mr. Moffat told me in my interview that his best mine had been the "Maid of Erin," for which he had paid about \$100,000, and out of which himself and his partners had made \$5,000,000. This mine is still being worked, and there are other great silver mines here which are shipping ore.

I paid a visit the other day to this five million-dollar maiden. The Maid of Erin silver mine lies on the hills just above Leadville. It is surrounded by

mountains of waste rock, and it has immense frame buildings, something like those of a great factory. A look at it gives you some idea of the enormous cost of silver mining. The engines which move its machinery have ten great boilers, and its furnaces are so large that ten men are constantly shoveling coal into them to keep the fires alive. They eat up from twenty-five to thirty tons of coal a day, and the coal bill for the furnaces alone amounts to \$150 daily. Five hundred dollars a day is paid for wages to the miners, and the machinery is of the most costly description. After dressing in miners' clothes I went down into the shaft. Stepping on the elevator I was dropped hundreds of feet, past tunnel after tunnel running off into the vein, until I was at last more than a thousand feet below the surface.

Running off from the shafts are these great pipes or tunnels, out of which have been cut the silver and lead. They are lighted by electricity. They are driven this way and that, so that they form a labyrinth like the avenues in the catacombs of Rome. You could lose yourself in this mine. It connects with the great Henrietta mine, and you might wander about from tunnel to tunnel without finding your way to the shaft.

The mine is a wet mine, and it takes an enormous amount of money to wall it with timbers. Many such mines contain forests of great logs, and it is estimated that there is more than \$7,000,000 worth of lumber and timber used in the mines of Leadville alone. Each of these tunnels is roofed and walled with big pine logs, and the stopes, or caves, cut away from the tunnels in order to get the silver out, have to be almost filled with timbers for fear their sides may cave in. No one who has not gone through a great mine can appreciate the amount of water which flows into it. In the bottom of the Maid of Erin streams of ice-cold water flow through the tunnels like so many mountain brooks. Overhead are pipes for steam and for compressed air to run the drills. There is a railroad track in each tunnel and boards upon which you can walk to keep out of the stream. The water is taken out of the mine by enormous steam pumps. Nine hundred feet below the surface of the ground I found an immense engine room, a large part of the machinery of which consisted of pumps, which work away there day and night. They carry out of the mine 900 gallons of water a minute, or 54,000 gallons an hour. If they were stopped for two or three hours the mine would be filled, and it would cost a fortune to open it again. As you go upward to other levels you find other pumps, and you are somewhat surprised to learn that a mine is now managed on