

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.
BIG MONEY IN MINES.

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CRIPPLE CREEK, August 12th, 1896.



THOUSANDS FAIL IN mining. Hundreds make a living. Tens amass a competency, but it is only now and then one who by a lucky stroke of the pick, finds an enormous fortune and keeps it. David Moffat, the mining king, says the failures are not so great as in other businesses. It is certain that the successes are more phenomenal. I write today not of the failures, but of the successes, the millionaires of Cripple Creek. Out of this gold camp, within five years, has come \$13,000,000. The gold dug out last year was worth \$8,000,000, and this year the output promises to be fully as large. The stories I hear of gold dug out and gold in sight make my avaricious mouth water, and, like the hungry, ragged newsboy on the street outside the confectionery store, I press my nose against the glass and long for the riches within.

Take, for instance, W. S. Stratton, who owns the great Independence mine, which has been turning out nearly \$2,000 a day for the past year, and in which it is estimated there are from four to seven million dollars of gold in sight. How would you like to own that? It would be enough for yourself and your family for ages to come. It is one of the richest gold mines of the world, and the man who owns it was working five years ago at a carpenter's bench. Up to that time he would have been glad, I venture, to have netted from the work of his hands \$50 a month. His mine last year, it is said, produced \$960,000, at a cost of about 10 cents on the dollar, and the ore is so rich that he has to keep back his workmen for fear that he will not be able to invest the money which he receives from the gold which they get out. So far he has spent his surplus in buying other mines, and he has today properties which, I am told, make him the largest individual owner of gold mines in the world. I doubt whether he knows himself what he is worth. I know that no one can figure upon his possibilities. I am told that Marshall Field and other Chicago capitalists offered him \$7,000,000 for his Independence mine alone, and long ago he refused an offer of \$3,000,000 for it. He does not like to talk about it, and I doubt whether an offer of \$10,000,000 would tempt him. He says that the gold is in the mine and can't run away. It is safer there than in the safe deposit, and the best bank for him is Old Mother Earth.

And still I would not like to be Winfield Scott Stratton. I would not exchange places with him for all his millions. This thought came forcibly upon me at I sat with him in his little office over a bicycle store in Colorado Springs the other day and watched him closely as I listened to him. He is only forty-eight years of age, but he looks to be more than sixty. His hair is as white as the driven snow, and his naturally

dark complexion has been changed to a mahogany brown by the hardships of his laborious career and the anxiety of his hunt for gold. He is nervous in the extreme, and he has, I believe, little capacity for happiness. The story of his life is that of a man who has devoted himself to finding a mine, and who after twenty years of failure has at last succeeded. He has succeeded by luck and work more than by any special ability, and though he is a man of good common sense, I judge you might find ninety men quite as good out of any one hundred carpenters that you could select. Born in Indiana, having learned the carpenter's trade, he drifted out to Colorado Springs when he was along about twenty years of age. He began at once to prospect for gold. He worked at his trade in the winter to get the money necessary to keep him alive in the mountains in the summer, and day after day and year after year he climbed the rocks and wandered over the hills looking for mines. At one time he had saved three thousand dollars. He invested this in a mine and lost it. He is a man of few amusements and of little intellectual resource. He failed again and again, and up until 1891 he was worth practically nothing. He had at this time a house in Colorado Springs, which was mortgaged, and it was in May of that year that he, rendered almost desperate by his repeated failures, went to prospect about Cripple Creek. He realized that there was some gold in the boulders or float which lay upon the grazing lands of this region, but up to this time no one had considered the rock to be worth much.

As Stratton walked over the fields he noticed one stone, the corner of which some former prospector had chipped off. He picked up the broken piece and sent it to Denver to be assayed. It yielded over \$300 to the ton. This was a surprise to Stratton. He at once gathered a wagon load of other stones lying about the place and sent these to the assayer's. They told him that the last was worth only \$10 a ton. This, however, showed Stratton that there was gold there, and he staked out a claim about the big boulder, and went to work. It was the Fourth of July when he began to mine, and he named his property "The Independence," in honor of the day. He found gold almost from the grass roots. The ore grew richer as he dug down, and, after a short time, he found pockets and fissures filled with gold. The gold did not run regularly. Sometimes there would be a pocket as big as the average parlor, and sometimes the rock containing the rich ore would extend only to the size of a tumbler. He sunk his shaft, however, and ran out laterals from two to three hundred feet on either side. He soon began to find gold everywhere. Even the rock lying on the surface of the ground netted him a fortune. There were some great boulders near his shaft. He had these broken up with dynamite, and from them alone he got \$60,000. It was not, however, all clear sailing. At one time the gold seemed to have played out, and he offered to sell the mine for \$150,000. His offer was refused, and within a few days after this he made another rich strike, and for

twenty-five days he took out about \$1,000 a day. At present he has gone between six and seven hundred feet down into the earth, and there is no doubt whatever but that there are millions of dollars' worth of gold between the levels which have been already mined. The mine seems to be growing richer as it goes downward, and his refusal to sell it for \$7,000,000 was in the minds of many here a good business decision.

A man whose income has been about \$3 a day finds it hard to jump at once to the spending of from two to three thousand dollars a day. Mr. Stratton at present is not attempting to live up to his income. The little yellow cottage in which he lives in Colorado Springs, did not, I venture, cost more than \$500, and the servant girl, who, with her sleeves rolled up, came to the door when I called, looked as though she might find it hard anywhere to get more than \$10 a month. Just below his mine Stratton has another house. It has only five rooms, and it cost in the neighborhood of a thousand dollars. I am told that he is building a house at Colorado Springs which will cost him something like \$25,000. His offices are of the most unpretentious nature, and he secludes himself in order to keep off the beggars. For some weeks he had to have a policeman about his home at Cripple Creek to keep the crowd away from him, and his private secretary tells me that he receives about two hundred begging letters a day. He is not a mean man, but he has no idea of the possibilities nor the pleasure of giving. His charities so far have been purely individual, and in most cases to his friends. Not long ago his driver saved his life and that of his sister by keeping the horses in the road during an attempted run away. At the end of the drive Stratton gave the man a check for \$1,000. He has given his wife, who is separated from him, \$50,000, and I am told he frequently hands checks or bills to his sister, who lives with him. He is said to be very sensitive as to being asked for money, and a friend of his tells me that his sister never says a word about wanting a dollar. I have heard it suggested that if she did so it would not be forthcoming. She just waits and he gives her a check for one, two or five hundred dollars as the spirit moves him.

Stratton received more than \$12,000 last year in dividends from his stock in the Portland gold mine. This mine lies just back of the Independence, and its enormous frame buildings can be seen for miles about Cripple Creek. Its chief owners are three men, who were almost down on their uppers five years ago, but who, through it, are now enormously wealthy. Their mine produced last year more than \$2,000,000 worth of gold, and its president, James F. Burns, says that if it were worked to its full capacity it could turn out more than \$10,000,000 this year. At the time Stratton discovered the Independence mine Burns was working at his trade as a plumber. One of his partners, James Doyle, was then sawing and planing as a carpenter, and the third partner, John Harnan, was working on the road in Colorado Springs, holding a scraper for 15 cents an hour. It was Harnan who discovered the mine. His claim at the start was not bigger than the average city lot, but the property surrounding it, which has since been purchased by these