

The Treadwell mine, in Southern Alaska, is sure to give us a big lump of gold. This mine is one of the best mines of the world. It is merely a bluff on the edge of the sea, containing low-grade ore. The ore will not run over three dollars a ton, but the gold is so close to the water and so easily mined, that it costs only a dollar and a quarter a ton to get it out. The mine has already paid five or six million dollars, and it is worth a large fortune. It is operated, I am told, after the very best and most economical methods. It has one of the largest stamp mills in the world. It is lighted by electricity, and something like a million dollars have been spent on the works connected with it."

"What is being done in the Yukon district?"

"My information," said the director of the mint, "is that the people have been pouring into the Yukon region for some time, both on sledges and in boats. The mining season there is just beginning, for the men can work only in the summer. So far the only mining done on the Yukon is placer mining. The gold has to be washed out of the river bed, and the land along the streams. The soil is frozen the greater part of the year, and the only time that gold washing can be done is in the hot months of the summer. In the winter the men dig up the frozen earth and lay it in piles on the banks of the rivers, so that they can work the more quickly when the summer comes. It is very hard work, but you know men will do anything to get gold."

"You say, Mr. Preston, that this is all placer mining. I thought that placer mining was pretty well played out, the world over."

"That is a great mistake," said the director. "Gold is being washed out in almost all of the gold districts. There are many placer mines in the different islands of Alaska. They are washing out gold all along the Northern Pacific coast. There are placer mines at Cripple Creek, Colo.; you can find the miners washing out gold near Leadville, and the greater part of the gold which we get from Siberia is produced in this way. Much of the Russian gold is made up of dust and nuggets, washed out of the dirt and sand."

"Is there much gold left in South Dakota?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed, there is," replied Director Preston. "At least we get a lot from there every year. It comes from both the placer mines and the quartz mines. Some of the biggest stamp mills in the world are in South Dakota. The Homestead Mining company has a six hundred stamp mill which pounds away day and night, year in and year out. This mine is one of the most valuable of the world, and still its ore is of a low grade. I understand that the Rothschilds have tried to buy it time and again, but that the company which owns it will not sell."

"How about the Colorado mines?"

"Colorado is now one of the richest mining states of the Union. It is nearing California in its yearly output and its product is steadily increasing. The Cripple Creek miners claim that they are turning out a million dollars' worth of gold every month. I believe they over-estimate their output, and I doubt whether they are producing more than \$850,000 monthly. This, however, is an enormous product from a new region.

The big mines there seem to hold their own, and new ones are being discovered."

"Is Stratton still the owner of the Independence mine?"

"Yes," replied the director of the mint. "He is, I believe, working hard to keep his income down to \$100,000 a month."

"How about the Leadville mines?"

"The mines there are holding their own. The 'Little Johnny' of Leadville is one of the richest mines of the world. It keeps on producing vast amounts of gold every year. Just now a great deal of gold is being gotten from the Breckenridge district, which is about fifty miles from Leadville."

"How about the Utah mines?"

"They are very rich. There is a great deal of low-grade ore in them, which is being gotten out by the cyanide process. There has also been a decided increase in the gold product of Nevada. You had best keep your eyes on that state. It will come to the front in the near future. It produced last year nearly two million dollars' worth of gold, and a number of new mines are now being opened. Both Montana and Arizona will increase their product this year. We are getting a great deal of gold from Washington and Oregon, and, in fact, the gold is coming in from everywhere."

"What is the cause of this increase?"

"One reason is the low price of silver. Though I believe there is money in mining silver at the present prices. If not, why do they work the mines? One of the chief reasons for the increase in the product of gold is the new processes of reduction. Gold can be gotten out of the rock cheaper than ever before. The old dumps are being worked over, old mines are being reopened and there is an army of prospectors moving about and discovering new ones. It is a strange thing, but men walk right over good gold fields again and again when prospecting and it is sometimes years before a rich find is discovered. This was the case with the Cripple Creek district. The men who went to Pike's Peak years ago walked over the Cripple Creek fields and fortunes laid there undisturbed within a few miles of Denver for a generation notwithstanding they were surrounded by the best gold mines of the world."

"How about the Australian mines?"

"We get a vast amount of gold every year from Australasia," replied the director of the mint. "Some of the best managed mines of the world are in New Zealand. The gold is reduced there to some extent by the cyanide process. There are gold mines in Tasmania, and gold is now found in many different parts of Australia, which were for years considered worthless. Some of the best mines are now in western Australia. They are very difficult to reach, and what is known as the Coolgardie district is almost in the desert. Prospecting in this part of the world requires camels to carry the provisions and tools, and the camel there takes the place which the donkey has in the Rockies. The great trouble is the lack of water, which in some quarters is almost as costly as whisky."

"How about the African mines, Mr. Preston, what are they doing this year?"

"There is a great increase going on in the output of South Africa. We get returns from there every month, and the amount of the gold product is steadily rising. If the experts are to be believed,

there will be no falling off in the African supply for years to come."

"Speaking of experts, Mr. Preston, where do the best mining engineers come from?"

"The Americans lead the world today as mining experts and mining engineers," replied Mr. Preston. "You will find a large number of our mining engineers in South Africa. It was an American who first announced what is now believed to be the correct theory as to the South African gold formation. This man's name was Curtis. He was the son of George Ticknor Curtis, the literateur. Mr. Curtis held that the gold reefs of the Transvaal were in the shape of an immense basin, which had been turned up as it were by the forces of nature. He said that he thought that gold would be found to exist down to a great depth. This has since been ascertained to be the fact. Some of our best information concerning the gold fields of South Africa comes from Mr. Hamilton Smith, the mining expert of the Rothschilds. Hamilton Smith is a Kentucky man, who has acquired a high standing as a mining engineer. He estimates that we shall see the day when the Rand district will surpass the whole United States in its gold output, and that at no distant time it will turn out \$60,000,000 worth of gold and upwards a year. Mr. Smith was sent by the Rothschilds to Africa to report upon the gold there. He figures that the amount that probably exists exceeds one billion dollars. He has also been sent to report upon the gold at Cripple Creek and other parts of the United States."

"How about the English. Do they own many of our gold mines?"

"Yes," replied the director of the mint. "There is a great deal of English capital invested in American gold regions. They have mines in nearly all parts of the west, and are on the lookout for more."

"Would you advise a young man to go into mining, Mr. Preston?" I asked.

"Mining is like everything else," replied the director of the mint. "It requires capital and experience to succeed in it. The business grows more and more legitimate every year, and no man should think of putting money into the earth without he knows that there is some probability of getting it out. If a young man has but little capital, he should not invest before he has learned something of mining. He should study the business and seek the advice of experts and be sure that the experts are honest. None of the large companies ever put money into mines without sending out their experts. Take the London Exploration Company, for instance. They paid not long ago \$1,500,000 for the 'Tom-boy.' They had it tested for four months before they consented to the purchase. Such companies have a number of experts, and they never invest without the reports upon the property are very favorable. When they buy they usually pay according to the amount of gold in sight, expecting to make their money out of that which is yet to be discovered."

"Where would you advise a young man to start if he wanted to go into mining?"

"I would not like to say," replied Director Preston. "All of the gold states of the west have good properties and good prospects. Arizona and California are as good gold fields as any."