

Let it be understood that these rich lands count their acres by thousands upon thousands, that they are smothered under from five to twenty feet of barren sand, and the eternity of their extinction from the wealth of the State will be comprehended. The Sacramento River, though further removed and broader in its base, is not less notably being uplifted, and year by year its ever muddy waters are spreading over the flat and marshy land on its borders.

The greater part of this destruction comes from what are called hydraulic diggings. These are the richest lands for tillage in the undulating country of the gold ranges. They have a substratum of gravel which contains grains of native gold. To get a cheap separation of the gold from the gravel it is necessary to tear down the low elevations, varying from 500 to 200 feet, with the whole covering of rich top soil with the gardens and orchards, houses and fences, that are on them. The dry gold is found to be there; the farm is devoured, and in an incredibly short time the piping water-jets, under a pressure of 100 or 200 feet, have torn away the gracefully swelling landscape of 200 or 300 ornate acres, and left in its place a pond of dirty water, with a broad border of huge boulders of rock, with cobble stones and barren gravel—a picture of utter ruin. The devastation could not be more complete if it were the last day, and the demons of destruction had been let loose to desolate the earth, that not a green thing should grow on it thereafter for ever! The price of this awful ruin is probably some ten or twelve millions of gold dollars per annum, the product of this particular form of mining. It brings, for the present, a large equivalent for the sacrifice of the fine vineyard and orchard land it abstracts from the food-producing capacity of the State; but in the end it may be regarded as a poor compensation: the gold passes away, while the land, with wealthy homes it has raised, would have endured from generation to generation.—“New West,” by Charles L. Bruce.

---

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBUXY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1877.

Price 6d.]