

THE WEST SHORE.

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MINING DITCHES AND WATER RIGHTS.



WATER is king in a heaven to enable him to again resume mining camp. Cotton may wear the crown in the South; coal and iron may be joint monarchs of Pennsylvania; pork may be ruler in Chicago; the rampant steer may lord it over the plains; gold may be the deity in Wall street, and silver the "altogether lovely" of the West, but in the mining camps themselves the sovereign power of water is complete and undisputed. Without it nothing can be done. The richest deposits of placer gold, without water, would be a delusion and a snare; quartz ledges of fabulous value, would be but barren stone, without the presence of the beneficent spirit of the water to wave her wand over the rock and transmute it to golden treasure. No farmer, as day by day he has walked through his fields and seen his grain wither under the scorching rays of the sun, ever longed for the clouds to open and pour down their refreshing showers, with a deeper intensity of eagerness than the miner who has waited many weary weeks for this bounteous gift of

work in his dry and barren claim. On the other hand, no farmer ever saw the floodgates of heaven opened until his fields were drowned out, his grass and grain beaten to the ground, and his fences carried down the stream as a free gift to his most despised neighbor, without experiencing a sense of disgust and personal injury which has its counterpart in the emotions which fill the breast of the miner, who, for days at a time, sees his claim under water and the river "just a boomin'." Were we to return again to the age of popular superstition and universal belief in many gods and demigods, the spirit before whose altar would be placed the greatest offerings of propitiation, would be she who rules the waters. One would worship the god of gold, another bow down to the spirit of silver, and a third burn incense before the shrine of copper; but all would unite in bringing the most precious gifts to the fair goddess of the waters, without whose aid their labors would be in vain.

It is an ancient rule of common law, inherited from England, that the free and unobstructed flow of water in its natural channel, is the right of every owner of land along the course of a