

SICK-A-BED SOLILOQUIES.

Lying on one's back for some weeks may have this advantage—the only one I have been able to pick out so far; It effectually shuts a fellow off from lying otherwise. Indeed, it is questionable whether this is so much an advantage after all; in the case of one who has followed newspapering continually, law frequently and mining occasionally, may it not be a case of adding misfortune to misfortune? A fellow with an active temperament and a vivid imagination to be all at once put out of commission as to both is, one would think, liable to produce congestive short-circuiting, but no matter so far as the writer of these lines is concerned, for he has run the gauntlet of those generally successful census diminishers, grip and diabetes, and will see the angels later.

This occupancy of a couch, day in and day out, Sundays and holidays included, gives you a fine opportunity to think in spite of the discomforts, pains and penalties. And you don't have to wrestle so hard with your gray matter to make it produce as when it surmounts your whole physical being and spiritual enclosure. In fact, you don't have to labor at all—just let your thought foundry rest and spontaneous generation of ideas soon takes place.

All of which is not exactly what I started out to unfold. One of the things that was on the programme for presentation was the thought duly hatched out as previously suggested, that the remark of that Scriptural character about all men being liars was simply a truism so far as this day and age are concerned. It does not follow even then, though, that they are all alike, not by a great deal. Some are skillful while others are clumsy, some are voluminous while others are scattering, some are born that way, others acquire the habit and others still have it thrust upon them. There are a few who have acquired the art by means of all three of these methods; they constitute the 33 degree class and are distributed variously.

The most innocent and least harmful intentionally of all estrays from the path of living facts is the frontiersman in various callings but who is stocked up with mining stories and has had enough actual touch with the business to make him the ready receptacle of all the stock fake stories going, and which he passes off on listeners as willing as himself to hear, always taking care that the recital loses nothing in the process of continued repetition. The inventors of the Breyfogle yarn, which told of the discovery in Death Valley or thereabouts of a ledge that contained a cement carrying more gold in great gobs than anything else, and which became a kind of geological Lorelei in luring great numbers of men to destruction, have doubtless passed along to their reward, such as it is, as the story is itself quite venerable; but the following it has had and he yet will probably live long after Lydia Pinkham and Uncle Tom's Cabin are forgotten. The same as to the Pegleg mine, the Gunlock mine, and a large array of others. The fact that great finds have recently been made in the region where the phantoms were located has naturally added to the confidence of the believers therein and the golden idyls have naturally taken on a new lease of life.

Undoubtedly some of the finds of precious metals and stones have been under such circumstances of ignorance or privation as prevented them from becoming known to the world at large, but they must have been very rare. Sometimes, also, other circumstances have been the means of keeping geo-

logical wealth concealed from the gaze of mankind for long periods of time, and such may never be found, which means that they will never figure in the "lost" columns; to this may be added the other fact that very few of the "found" ones ever do. A great mine once found is like the Nevadian definition for an honest man—he is one that stays bought; the mine stays found.

The late William Van Dyke, of this city, had little if any experience in mining affairs. Yet he was a leading figure in an event which, had he been as well posted as he became later in life, might have made him a miner and a successful one too. In 1854 he was one of a party of young married men called by Brigham Young on a mission to what is now the eastern part of Nevada, but was then a thousand miles from anywhere in the loneliest and dreariest part of Utah, which is putting the case pretty strong; but the location itself was a semi-Paradise compared to the desert wastes they had to traverse in order to reach it. There are springs here and there, but so effectually are they concealed that a person not knowing their location might perish with thirst—as several have done—within a stone's throw of them, as the Van Dyke party would have done but for the aid of friendly Indians. The party constructed a fort, planted trees and shrubs and in a general way began at once making preparations for a permanent home. (The mission was recalled a year or two later). One day three or four of the men, Van Dyke included—went out along the adjacent mountains in search of stray horses, and while resting in a ravine which cut down through the foothills one of the party mechanically kicked a boulder with the heel of his boot, the rock breaking to pieces. Their attention was then drawn to some shining particles among the pieces and examination showed them to be what was either gold or a good imitation. The pieces were kept and in more recent years Van Dyke imparted the story of his experiences in the desert to the undersigned, together with a piece of the rock about as large as a pigeon's egg. It proved to be rose quartz in the last stages of decomposition, fragments being easily broken off with the thumb and finger, and fully one-fourth of it was gold in small particles. He could not be induced to undertake the trip to where the ore was picked up, but he gave as good a description as possible after so many intervening years, and contributed money for the writer to go and "try his luck," doing the same thing on a later occasion. I have been out there five times, not till the last succeeding in finding ground which fit the description given. It is in a region which has produced considerable gold and at a time when Southern Nevada was not known to have such a thing, or much of anything else of consequence. The nugget found by the missionaries was doubtless broken off from a ledge and floated by melting snows and occasional rains down to where they found it and where it had no doubt lain for ages. The ledge that it came from is there yet; at least I didn't bring it away and haven't heard of any one else doing so, although several have gone in quest of it. It is useless for any one to essay the task unless he is prepared for a campaign and then no doubt, like the many other great finds occurring almost every day in Nevada, the breeding place of what Van Dyke found could be exposed to the light of day. That it will be worth while when it does take place goes without saying.

I have not entered very fully into particulars herein for the reason that this story—which tells of a deposit of wealth which was neither found nor lost and yet exists, and is no lie at all, is already long enough.

S. A. KENNER.

HOW INSURANCE INVESTIGATION BEGAN.

Life insurance troubles began almost exactly a year ago. The trivial occasion which set off the explosion was a fancy dress ball in February of 1905. What a contrast! Rejane, dancing, costumes, spectacular fun and wealth, the aggressive surpluse of prosperity. And now? The contrast is almost too dramatic. The priest with his sacrament hurries to one president, whose death was hastened by humiliation. Another lies broken in constitution, in a sanitarium. Another sells his goods and lands, preparing for exile. The giver of this ball is in voluntary exile. And—so ironical is Heaven—what started the mighty housecleaning was social and not business errors. Here is Fate's sequence: Hyde's ball; then Alexander's letter, very quotable, calling attention to Hyde's love for limelight, of display, of flattery, to a manner of life not conducive to public confidence. Then followed the contest between Hyde and Alexander, and the cat was out and jumping.

If anybody had been asked, a year ago, to name an invincible financial trinity, all of us know what the answer would have been. If so much can be done in a single year, and without panic or calamity, with stock-market prices steadily rising and unequaled commercial prosperity, it's a hopeful sign, with cheering inferences. The public is frequently pessimistic if reforms do not happen with sufficient speed. The excitement about postal frauds has passed, but Geo. W. Beavers has just gone to join Machen, Lorenz, the Goff brothers, McGregor, and Upton in the penitentiary, for a two years' visit. The outcome of the Slocum disaster was far from satisfactory, as the most guilty parties to the crime could not be reached, but one man at least suffered as an example. The public and the press have complained loudly about the deliberate procedure, in the insurance matter of District Attorney Jerome. Mr. Jerome is not a man to be coerced. He acts when he is ready. The problem which confronted him was complex. As there were many concerned in the misdoings, and only a limited number of convictions needed as a warning, it was his duty to consider many things; moral guilt, legal guilt, the influence on the public, the attitude of the companies, the effect on various companies and their business; for the penalties and loss to the companies should be as far as possible evenly distributed, since it is in reality a prevailing state of things that is being attacked, rather than the iniquity of individuals. Criminal action has from the early stages of the revelation been a necessity, but caution and a clear head have been necessary also. It is not hurry that we need, but wisdom, justice and the successful termination of prosecutions once begun.

Insurance corruption has its root in mistaken general ethics. When Judge Parker made his charge about the contributions of corporations to Republican campaign funds, just before the last Presidential election, Mr. Roosevelt denied with great indignation that immunity from unfavorable legislation was promised in return; the implication being that the party might in all virtue accept such contributions if no promise were implied or made. Now what does this distinction mean? The officers of an insurance company are forbidden, by law and by any sane conscience, to make such political contributions. They do make them, and the political party accepts them. The trustees take away the money of the beneficiaries, the politicians put it in their pockets, and the transaction is presumed to be right provided the policy-holders get nothing in return for the loss imposed on them. If they do receive any compensation, the abstrac-

tion of their funds immediately becomes a wrong. If a man who so nobly represents public opinion in America, and the better half of that opinion, can put forth reasoning such as this, surely the public must accept its full share of blame for conditions now prevailing in finance. Punishment will be instruction both to the victims and to the rest of us. Recovery from the officers of the companies is recommended by leaders of the bar. How about recovery from the coffers of party organization? If such a result were capable of accomplishment there would be no limit to the salutariness of the effect on political and general modes of thought.—Collier's.

THE TAX PAYERS WILL PAY THE PIPER.

The Big Cottonwood conduit affair is a mystery to the public. No two of the many engineers who have been consulted in regard to it agree as to what should be done. The main things to be decided are: First, whether cement six inches thick, as originally planned and on which plan very considerable of the work has been done, is sufficient or whether the cement should be increased to eight inches or more; second, whether or not it is necessary to plaster the conduit in addition to the cement of the thickness now being applied or with any additional thickness that may be decided upon; third, whether or not the conduit should be covered; fourth, whether or not the route of the conduit as originally planned should be changed?

Seeing that a large part of the construction has already been done it seems that the best plan would be to complete it on the original plan and trust to luck and the future for results. It's only a chance anyway, no two experts agreeing on any one vital point. We have no idea, however, that that will be done. The intention of the present administration is to go on spending money as long as a sou remains in the treasury or can be reached in any way without the spenders being sent to the penitentiary. All this fuss and consultation and efforts to arrive at a conclusion is mere clap-trap put forth for consumption by the public. All the money there is or that can be got hold of will be spent on the conduit. The present administration will, of course, throw the blame on its predecessor. It has a good chance to do so, because the late administration made all the political capital it could out of the conduit business. It rushed the letting of contracts with immoderate haste, put all the men to work in every direction possible in order to make votes to perpetuate itself in office. The plans and specifications were hurried and immature, if not exceedingly faulty. The present powers that be are in great measure out for graft themselves. They will work it to a finish and with a show of reason try to saddle the blame on their predecessors. There is only one thing certain about the whole business and that is that the taxpayers will get the worst of it and will have to pay the piper. They have little cause to complain either for by their own foolishness they brought the trouble upon themselves. It will be a real trouble, too, when the treasury is empty and the tax levy is increased 3 or 4 mills for the current year.

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