

A FALSE SENTIMENTALITY.

The man Winters who tunneled into the smelting works at Vallejo, Cal., and stole \$330,000 in bars of gold, has been sentenced to serve fifteen years in the penitentiary, and some people are howling about the injustice of the sentence because the fellow was induced to confess his guilt and reveal the hiding place of the treasure by promises of leniency on the part of the detectives, says the Salem Statesman.

There is a good deal of false sentimentality about the idea that a criminal shall enjoy immunity from conviction if he has been induced by detectives' promises of leniency to confess his guilt. Especially is this false sentimentality in the case of the professional or highly accomplished thief or burglar. Such fellows make their plans a life study. Every chance for and against themselves is taken into calculation, and where large gains are the stake played for, the very emergency which has arisen in the Winters case is also reckoned. An index of that was given in the fact that Winters and his friends gave out the amount he was to receive from the manager of the smelting works for revealing the location of the gold, with the confident assurance that there would be no prosecution.

The minuteness with which the details of the "settlement" were given leaves the interference that in the robbery, Winters counted far more confidently upon receiving a bonus of \$25,000 and immunity from punishment than he did upon getting away with the \$330,000. In fact, to a man of Winters' shrewdness there could never have been a reasonable hope of being able to successfully handle that amount of gold bars. To such a man, working upon the plan with system and persistence, detection must have been an ever-present certainty. Consequently, he at all points in his scheme figured upon cajoling with the detectives, obtaining promises of leniency, no prosecution, etc., making arrangements with the owners of the gold for a "reward," and getting away to some distant land with a large competency.

Is it the duty of the law to give its approval to such a well-laid plot and to allow such an accomplished thief a premium upon his fine work? Is there an obligation upon the law to observe all the nice rules of honorable business dealing with the thief, the burglar and the robber in the effort to bring him to justice? Or should he be placed strictly under the rule of "caveat actor," which he is so well qualified by nature to observe?

If Winters were allowed to go unpunished and to receive a reward of \$25,000 for telling the location of the gold he had stolen, it would be a splendid encouragement for the young men of the country to go into the tunneling business and have arrangements made with friendly detectives on the outside to work the matter up after the robbery, obtain a confession by promise of immunity, patch up a settlement with the person or firm robbed and thus make a little fortune at one stroke.

We believe Winters was served exactly right, except that his punishment is too light. He is too "thrifty" a man to be allowed at large until he becomes too old for active operations.

It is claimed that woman is at the head of a gang of burglars in Westchester county, New York. Verily, the cherished domains of active operations for poor, downtrodden men are fast being invaded by petticoat domination, and the next thing we know the only places open to the sterner sex will be those of chambermaid and wet nurse.

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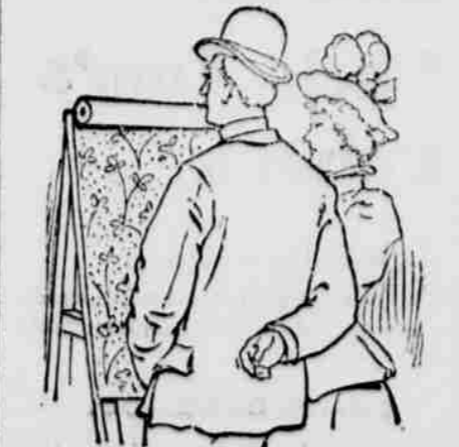
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