

MAN WHO WANTS TO BUY A MINE

Something of the Tenderfoot In a Mining Camp.

Much has been said and written of the man who has a mining property for sale, of his tricks, of his persistency, of his successes and his failures. These stories are usually highly colored, some are based on fact, others are the product of the relator's imagination, entirely.

But of the man who comes out of the east to the mining camp for the purpose of buying a property, one hears and reads but little. Of the two, he is the more interesting study. The man who is selling the mine is at home, is pursuing his life work, is strictly within his own province and merely displays his own individual characteristics.

On the other hand, the buyer is a fish out of water; he is engaged in a task, nine times out of ten, altogether new to him and there could be written columnson his antics that would add vastly to the gaiety of nations. As a general thing, he represents conservative business men in some town or city east, who, having heard of the great fortunes made in mining and having money to invest, have decided to take a flyer at a gold proposition. They have also determined that they will go at the job in a business-like way; will take every precaution to protect themselves. With this idea in view, they select one of their number to make the trip out to the mining district, look over the ground himself and be sure that a gold brick, instead of a mine, is not unloaded on them. They choose a man reputed to be shrewd on a trade, considered a wise guy by his friends, generally a lawyer. Of course, he doesn't know a mine from a building stone quarry, the waste dump from a pile of concentrates.

He lands in Sumpter and loafs around town for a day or two, enveloped in mystery. He is a stranger and the local middlemen spot him. They throw themselves in his way, start a conversation and the chances are two to one that before the interview terminates he confides to his newly made acquaintance, in strictest confidence, that he has come here to buy a mine. This thing happens with a half dozen brokers in the course of a couple of days, and in another every mining man in town knows the object of his visit and is trying to unload on him. In a week, he doesn't know "where he is at."

He inspects a half dozen or more properties, listens to orations on their respective merits, is widely disappointed in his preconceived idea of what a mine looks like, and can't be convinced that a really promising prospect is not the rankest kind of a transparent fraud. In nine cases out of ten he becomes suspicious and imagines everyone is trying to "do" him. In the rare instances where he is willing to pay for the examination by and opinion of an expert, he brings one in here from some other state, who is not familiar with the district, knows nothing of local formations and conditions, inspects some one or two properties, is unable to form an intelligent estimate and, for fear that he will make a mistake sure to be detected, "turns down" the property and tries to steer the buyer against one on which his client partner has an option—over in Idaho, Utah or Nevada.

But the representative of the eastern syndicate looking for a mine usually considers the services of an expert a useless, expensive luxury. He thinks buying a mine is like digging for a farm. After carrying a candle through

a dozen damp tunnels, if he chanced to have seen clearly defined foot and hanging walls, smooth as glass, with the ledge matter between of strikingly different appearance, he imagines he is a pretty good judge, himself—when he begins to make all kinds of a fool of himself and furnishes amusement for a community. To record in detail incidents of this character that have come under the observation of the writer would fill a 12mo volume.

The tenderfoot is, of course, hampered with innumerable instructions. First and foremost of these is to be careful about the title. That is an important feature, of course, but only a chronic thickhead would be fooled on that score, where few locations are more than five years old, fewer still have passed from the hands of the original owner and not one per cent have been patented. One of these men who was here in July, a type of the smart Alec class, had been instructed to look for only a tunnel proposition and wouldn't get out of the buggy if the claim was on a hillside the top of which he could see without the aid of his field glasses.

Unless the stranger within our gates is endowed with more than the average share of common sense—the rarest human attribute—in which case he handles himself "wise" in whatever position he may be placed, the reputable brokers soon tire of him and he falls into the hands of the scalpers. They know their business, one of the axioms of which is that it is easier to swindle a fresh greenhorn than to close a square deal with

him. They move on the line of least resistance—and another combination of eastern gentlemen who pride themselves on their conservatism and who determined to apply business principles to mining, make a failure of the enterprise.

THE MINER knows it is not exactly fair, recognizes the fact that it is "telling tales out of school," but it can't resist the temptation to reveal one of the secret tricks of the mining trade, to expose a hook concealed in an alluring bait. After hearing one of these syndicate representatives repeat time and again the statement: "Of course, I may be mistaken, but I prefer to err on the side of caution and conservatism," the average mortal becomes a trifle weary, and should not be too harshly judged if he replies in this wise: "Look here, now. I can't sell this property for less than \$65,000—that is in the bond—but I am making a commission of \$25,000, and if you care to do business with me, I'll break it up even with you. I need the money to develop a claim of my own—that is not for sale. You are doing your principals no injury, for they can't buy it for less. If this proposition strikes you favorably, get in and drill before noon tomorrow. This is the last call." That bait has caught many a one.

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