

## LOST MINE FAKE AGAIN BOBS UP.

### Favorite Theme of Eastern Writers Who Exploit it Annually.

The lost mine story makes its appearance in the press of the country every year. It is an interesting theme for eastern writers, one that appears to improve with age.

The Chicago Tribune of last week gave its readers the following version of an oft-repeated tale, the scene of which is laid in Montana:

For years gold hunters in Montana have been looking for a fabulous mine. At one time so many deaths resulted among the prospectors that it became a superstition that to seek the hidden wealth was to court death. The only man that knew its exact location was George Rea, a scout, guide and hunter, who died about a year ago, and was known to several Chicagoans.

Rea had revealed the mine to men who had been induced to put money in it, but the find did not equal their calculations—in fact, amounted to nothing. It is now a question in Montana whether Rea told the truth about the location, or whether the fatal gold seeking which went on for years was, after all a myth.

There are many who believe that Rea never disclosed the location and that the ledge which was worked was not the one he found. For that reason it is probable that the search for Rea's mine is not yet over.

Rea was hunting mountain sheep in the canyon of Madison river, in Montana, when the ledge was first discovered. He found a quartz-bearing seemingly rich ore, and not being a judge of metals, he loaded his pockets with it and took it to Virginia City for examination. The assay proved that it was rich in gold and copper.

Shortly afterwards Rea killed a man and stood in danger of his own life. He had little money, but Sam Ward, at that time one of the leading criminal lawyers, undertook the case on the condition that he should receive a share in the mine. Rea was sentenced to three years in the penitentiary, and he began his term without divulging the location of the mine. All he would say was that it was in the middle of the Madison canyon.

Now, Madison canyon is one of the wildest parts of Montana. It is 20 miles long, and peaks after peaks of rugged mountains are piled on one another. The watershed drained by the river on both sides is almost endless, and considering all this, it will be seen that the description given by the hunter was no description at all.

This did not deter numbers of prospectors from undertaking the search for the hidden gold. Within a short time three prospectors had met with violent deaths in the search, and the saying that to hunt for the mine meant death, became almost a tradition.

One of the gold hunters was drowned. He and a companion had endeavored to cross the Madison on a raft and were swept from the logs. The one managed to reach the shore, but on looking back he saw the body of his companion tossing about in the water. Running at full speed, he managed to get below the body, and wading into the river, dragged it out. He discovered that there was still some life, but after using all the means of resuscitation known to him, he was unable to revive the man. The burial was made in a snowbank and the living prospector pushed his way back to a settle-

ment. In the spring an exploring party found the body in the snowbank and buried it.

Another death was that of a prospector who was thrown from his horse and killed. He was missed and his friends tried to find him. After a while they discovered his horse standing as if tied to something immovable on the ground. This was found to be the dead body of the gold hunter, who had been killed instantly in the fall from his horse. The third death resulted from mountain fever and the skeleton of the prospector was found near his abandoned hut. A scrawl on a piece of paper told how he had died.

After Rea was released from prison he made no immediate effort to find his mine again. After about 20 years, during which time there were numerous other attempts made by prospectors, he interested two miners in the fabled wealth and conducted them to the location. They put thousands of dollars and two years of time in working the ledge. The first results seemed to substantiate the stories of the enormous value but afterwards it was found that there were but a few strings of the gold-bearing quartz and not a rich ledge.

If Rea told the truth when he conducted the miners to the spot, then the men who met their death and the men who wasted time and energy, were hunting a myth.

#### Timber on Unsurveyed Lands.

Unusual activity in the land department at Washington, D. C., has resulted in the seizure of a large amount of cord wood and mine timbers at Republic, in Washington. This timber has been cut on the unsurveyed lands in the northern part of the Colville reservation. The mining companies did not cut the timber, but as the men who did the cutting are poor and unable to pay for the trespass, the government agents are calling upon the mining companies for a settlement. The same thing has occurred many times in the past elsewhere, and in each case the government has shown a disposition to make the assessment as light as possible, as the fact is recognized that the timber is absolutely essential to the operation of the mines. The usual practice has been to fix a nominal price on the timber cut, as determined by the stumpage, without assessing additional charges as penalties. There is said to be no timber available other than that on the unsurveyed lands of the government, and should the authorities deal harshly with the mine owners it would probably result in a suspension of mining operations there. The timber lands of that section of the State cannot be taken up under any of the laws regarding timber lands, owing to the probability of its proving to be mineral land. In view of the circumstances, a satisfactory adjustment of the difficulty may be anticipated.—Mining and Scientific Press.

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