

shan't need it. Lying at home in bed is the thing I am afraid of."

I have been looking into this matter. Last year I travelled 20,000 miles, almost entirely by rail; the year before I travelled over 25,000 miles, half by sea and half by rail; and the year before that I travelled in the neighbourhood of 10,000 miles, exclusively by rail. I suppose if I put in all the little odd journeys here and there, I may say I have travelled 60,000 miles during the three years I have mentioned. And never an accident.

For a good while I said to myself every morning, now I have escaped thus far, and so the chances are just that much increased that I shall catch it this time. I will be shrewd, and buy an accident ticket." And to a dead moral certainty

I DREW A BLANK

and went to bed that night without a joint started or a bone splintered. I got tired of that sort of daily bother, and fell to buying accident tickets that were good for a month. I said to myself, "A man can't buy thirty blanks in one bundle." But I was mistaken. There was never a prize in the lot. I could read of railway accidents every day—the newspaper atmosphere was foggy with them, but somehow they never came my way. I found I had spent a good deal of money in the accident business, and had nothing to show for it. My suspicions were aroused, and I began to hunt for somebody that had won in this lottery. I found plenty of people who had invested, but not an individual who had ever had an accident or made a cent. I stopped buying accident tickets and went to ciphering. The result was astounding. The peril lay not in travelling, but in staying at home.

I HUNTED UP STATISTICS

and was amazed to find that after all the glaring newspaper headings concerning railroad disasters less than 300 people had really lost their lives by those disasters in the preceding twelve months. The Erie road was set down as the most murderous in the list. It had killed forty-six—or twenty-six, I do not exactly remember which, but I know the number was double that of any other road. But the fact straightway suggested itself that the Erie was an immensely long road, and did more business than any other line in the country; so the

double number of killed ceased to be matter for surprise.

By further figuring, it appeared that between New York and Rochester the Erie ran eight passenger trains each way every day—sixteen altogether—and carried a daily average of 6,000 persons. This is about a million in six months, the population of New York city. Well, the Erie kills from thirteen to twenty-three persons out of its 1,000,000 in six months, and in the same time 15,000 out of New York's 1,000,000 die in their beds! My flesh crept; my hair stood on end. "This is appalling," I said, "The danger isn't in travelling by rail, but in trusting to those deadly beds. I will never sleep in a bed again."

I had figured on considerably less than one-half the length of the Erie road. It was plain that the entire road must transport at least 11,000 to 12,000 people every day. There are many short roads running out of Boston that do fully half as much; a great many such roads. There are many roads scattered about the Union that do

A PRODIGIOUS PASSENGER BUSINESS, therefore it was fair to presume that an average of 2,500 passengers a day for each road in the country would be about correct. There are 846 railways in our country, and 846 times 2,500 are 2,115,000. So the railways of America move more than 2,000,000 people every day—650,000,000 of people a year, without counting the Sundays. They do that, too—there is no question about it—though where they get the raw material is clear beyond the jurisdiction of my arithmetic; for I have hunted the census through and through, and I find that there are not that many people in the United States by a matter of 610,000,000 at the very least. They must use some of the same people over again, likely.

San Francisco is one-eighth as populous as New York; there are 60 deaths a week in the former and 500 a week in the latter—if they have luck. There are 3,120 deaths a year in San Francisco, and eight times as many in New York—say 25,000 or 26,000. The health of the two places is the same. So we will let it stand as a fair presumption that this will hold good all over the country, and that consequently 25,000 out of every million of people we have must die every year. That amounts to one-fortieth of our total population.

ONE MILLION OF US THEN, DIE ANNUALLY.

Out of this million ten or twelve thousand are stabbed, shot, drowned, hanged, poisoned or meet similarly violent death in some other popular way, such as perishing by kerosene, lamp and hoop-skirt conflagration, getting buried in coal mines, falling off housetops, breaking through church and lecture room floors, taking patent medicines, or committing suicide in other forms. The Erie railway kills from twenty-three to forty-six; the other 845 railroads kill an average of one-third of a man each; and the rest of that 1,000,000, amounting in the aggregate to the appalling figure of 987,631 corpses, die naturally in their beds!

You will excuse me from taking any chances on those beds. The railroads are good enough for me.

And my advice to all people is, don't stay home any more than you can help; but when you have got to stay home a while buy a package of those insurance tickets and sit up nights. You cannot be too cautious.

[One can see now why I answered that ticket agent in the manner recorded at the top of this sketch.]

The moral of this composition is, that thoughtless people grumble more than is fair about railroad management. When we consider that every day and night of the year full 14,000 railway trains of various kinds, freighted with life and armed with death, go thundering over the land, the marvel is, not that they kill 300 human beings in a twelvemonth, but that they do not kill 300 times 300.

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION.

With all the facts to show the possibility of the spontaneous ignition of certain substances under certain circumstances, there is a constant demand for more information. So it is well enough to cite instances of fires caused by spontaneous combustion, even though it may be that "line upon line, precept upon precept" should be the rule.

A pile of cloth—cotton—left in a heap just as it came from the loom, and probably more or less saturated with oil, blazed up and fired a building in which there never was a fire or light before. This fire was probably caused by the piling of cotton cloth in heaps, the fibres of the cotton being saturated with oil—in this instance sperm oil, the only lubricating oil then in use.

A stone warehouse filled with cotton