

The Golden Era
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A San Francisco Millionaire

They tell a story of M., a story which shows that once in his life, at any rate, he grew lavish and reckless, and squandered his money with a desperate prodigality.

He had loaned one S. (I cannot recollect his real name) a thousand dollars or so, at about five percent a month, and the man invested it in coal, expecting to make a profitable speculation out of it. But the price of coal took a downward track, and went falling, falling, falling, till it was not worth more than half the sum S. had borrowed of M. M. took the place of S.'s shadow, and haunted him day and night. At last the ruined speculator could stand it no longer, and he sought the privacy of his own chamber and blew out his brains. He left M. a heavy loser, and M. abandoned himself to frightful dissipation for a single hour. He was worried by his loss and bothered by the accusation that he was the prime cause of poor S.'s death. He took several friends into a cellar and treated them to a glass of lager apiece. They talked a while, and then got up to leave. The barkeeper reminded them that the beer was not paid for yet. The guests moved up to the counter—each with his hand in his pocket, but M. advanced with a wild light in his eye and waved them impressively aside. He said: "No, I pays for all dis myself! Vot I cares for anydings now? My friend is dead, shentlemen—my friend vot I lofed. Poor S., he's plode his prains out, and didn't pay me. Vot I cares for anydings now? I lif, now, after dis, shentlemen—I lif gay und spends my money—I safes no money to loan to people vot go und kill himself before he pay. No, I pays for dis peer myself—I vill be gay und regulus—dam de expensus!"

But that one fearful orgie was his first and his last. The reflections of a cooler moment showed him that the "expensus" were worthy of graver consideration.

(Source: *Twainquotes.com*, <http://www.twainquotes.com/Era/18660225b.html>)