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EDITORIAL

BANANA ANNA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MRS. ANNA A. STURLA, once a boarding house keeper at Hazlet, N.J., changed her residence to New York, and also her occupation. The lady's new pursuit was original. She carried a banana skin or an apple core in a handbag wherever she went. She managed to drop either skin or core at a railway station without attracting attention. It was her custom to fall loudly, but she always retained enough presence of mind to indicate to witnesses that her fall had been caused by stepping on a skin or core. The rest followed of itself. She collected by this process from one railroad company after another sums ranging from \$100 to \$1,000,

until her career was brought to a full stop by the Alliance for the Prevention of Accident Fraud.

The feat of the Alliance for the Prevention of Accident Fraud is hailed as a distinctive feature of "American public spirit." Is it?



Anna, now named Banana, was a

fraud to be sure. Hers was a case of raising money under false pretenses—a criminal offense. But how much money did she raise, or does all her breed put together? Surely not a tithe of the money annually raised under false pretenses on the community by any one of the railroads whom she cheated. She took in an occasional \$100, on one occasion even \$1,000. These railroads, however, by means of their watered stock and multiple other devices scoop in \$50,000, or \$500,000, and even \$5,000,000. The little sinner is caught in the web of the law; the big sinners escape the meshes with impunity. The boasted "American public spirit" does not seem to be

public; that is, broad enough to run down the big felons.

This circumstance illumines a fact that deprives the aforementioned “public spirit” both of its name and its pretenses. Who makes up the Alliance in question? Who sets it up, inspires and maintains it? Oh, cruel hand of Fact that teareth all myth? The Alliance in question is the creature of the very railroad Interests that are daily guilty of mammoth frauds. It is they who appoint and select the membership of the Alliance, and who finance that “public spirited” concern.

Anna Banana did not succumb to “public spirit.” A public that is cheated, knows that it is cheated, and yet remains prone is not going to exert itself against fraud—accident or other. Anna Banana succumbed to a decidedly private spirit—a spirit so private that it considers the exercise of fraud its private privilege, and will tolerate no trespassers, whether of the Banana, or any other botanical, zoological, astronomical, or other variety.

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