

KANSAS TOPICS.

Every day, on the streets of Topeka, may be seen a tall, long-bearded old man wearing farmer-like clothes and a broad-brimmed hat, selling apples out of a little "Democrat" wagon. The old man is Rev. John D. Knox, who, a dozen years ago, was counted next to the Mulvanes, the richest man in Kansas. He was the supposed financier of the Methodist church in Kansas and was loaded down with business, even as Elias was loaded down with the sky. Local preachers who had managed in their wanderings to save up a little stuff put it in the hands of Brother Knox to invest. Members of the laity who had, by humping early and late and practicing rigid economy, saved up a few thousand, placed in the hands of Brother Knox, and spent their evenings figuring how much the interest would amount to. The money which poured in on Brother Knox like water out of a hydrant when the cap is taken off, he loaned even from the banks of the arid Missouri to the sage brush pasture of Colorado. He loaned more money on town lots than they were worth, even in the boom, and took mortgages on sagebrush land that will not be worth the amount loaned between now and the time when the angel shall stand with one foot on the Gulf of Mexico and the other in the Arkansas valley and proclaim that time shall be no more. Brother Knox flourished in a way that would have made the green bay tree ashamed of itself. He built just outside the city limits the most expensive and noble mansion ever seen in or about Topeka. He also found time to write a 500 page book, profusely illustrated, on the subject "The Paths to Wealth."

This book, written in most pious style, gave voluminous and specific advice as to the way to pile up comfortable fortune. It was extensively circulated among both the ministers and laity, and became a sort of Methodist financial standard of authority. It helped advance the business of Brother Knox and monopolized in faster than ever. And then there came a frost. It was discovered that a large part of the people who had borrowed money from Brother Knox weren't paying interest or principal, and evidently never had intended to in the beginning. The fifty pastors and laity who had placed their money in Brother Knox's hands wanted and couldn't get it. His available assets amounted to only a few cents on the dollar of what he owed. To use a Western phrase, they grew exceedingly warm under their respective collars, and accused Brother Knox of being a swindler. They aimed that he had played a confidence game and robbed them under the gauze of church fellowship. They insisted that Brother Knox should be tried before an ecclesiastical court and summarily fired from the church. He was tried and acquitted after a long and hard fight, but the fact that he was acquitted, as it were, by the skin of his teeth, marred the satisfaction of the acquittal, while the people who had put their money still held the same opinion they had before the trial. Whether he buried his brethren and sisters or was simply the victim of bad judgment and over-confidence, the fact is that he lost their money and his own as well. John D. Knox still lives in his \$50,000 mansion, which he holds as a homestead, but he ekes out a meager living by peddling apples on the street.

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