

JEWELLERS' FRAUDS.

How Purchasers are Cheated in Watch Cases, Chains, and Other Gold-Wear.

New York Evening Post.

An article on frauds in jewellery lately published in *The Evening Post* having attracted considerable attention, a gentleman thoroughly familiar with the trade was applied to yesterday for further information on the subject. He said that the frauds in watch-chain making, caused by excessive competition, had now become so general that prices had been "cut" to an extent extremely damaging to all honest manufacturers. The jobbers were primarily responsible for the evil, those in Chicago having been the pioneers in this class of swindling, which was now confined in no city. They would demand that case-makers should furnish them with cases only twelve or fourteen carats fine, but stamp eighteen carats. Many small manufacturers would yield to this temptation rather than lose trade, and from this beginning they were ready to let on to make ten-carat cases, falsely stamped, and to introduce base metal in various parts of the case. Many of these so-called gold watches were not stamped at all with any mark of quality, and the sellers could not be held legally responsible for swindling, as gold was the component part of the watch. Yet large numbers of watches were sold as gold which contained a greater weight of steel and brass. A very thick steel spring, weighing twelve or fourteen pennyweights, was inserted in the rim, technically known as the "centre" of the watch; the crown and shank of the stem were hollowed out and filled with brass, and a brass wire was run through the ring by which the watch was attached to the chain. In fact, many cases were cut where the gold was so thin that it could be saved, and steel or brass was inserted.

The leading watch manufacturers of this city, this gentleman said, had recently formed a combination to protect themselves against this dishonest practice in the only way possible—by agreeing to subject themselves to heavy loss for a time by reducing the rates of genuine cases to those which were charged for the articles known as "skin cases." In order to do this they were obliged to sell the cases at a less increase on the value of the gold than the actual cost of workmanship, hoping thereby to break down the fraudulent rivalry which had been growing steadily for the last few years, until now it seemed to have reached its culmination.

In addition to the alleged gold watches which had been described, he said that quantities of "filled" watches were made many of which were undoubtedly sold as genuine articles. Such a watch-case was manufactured of very thin layers of gold, with a layer of base metal between, the whole being "swathed" together. Really it was simply a gilt watch, but it would last for years before the surface would wear through, and was innocent enough when sold for what it was. In the hands of unscrupulous dealers, however, it was very dangerous. An expert could readily detect its character by the color and weight, as well as the use of acids, but to an ordinary customer it would easily pass for gold. Such a watch case, worth some \$25, would in genuine gold be worth \$60 or \$70.

As there was no hope of getting any legislation in this country which would guard against the perpetration of the frauds in question, this gentleman declared that only one way remained for the public to protect itself in the matter. This was for every purchaser of a watch to demand a written certificate from the manufacturer that the case was "of solid eighteen carat gold throughout." When private customers generally insisted upon such certificates, the retail dealers and jobbers would require them from the makers, and would, of course, be held legally responsible for the correctness of the guaranty.

He said that frauds similar to those practised in watch-cases ran through every line of jewellery and gold-work. The falseness of watch-chains was in this country fourteen carats, being two carats less than in England, as the lower grade was harder and wore better. Yet it was now extremely difficult to find a genuine fourteen-carat chain in this country, nearly all the chains sold as such not assaying more than twelve carats. Frequently the swivels were stamped fourteen carats, thereby leading to the false belief that the chains were of the same fineness. He regretted to say that there were manufacturers and sold even by firms of good reputation, and that retailers who bought them from jobbers were often deceived as well as the customer. In this matter, as in regard to watch-cases, the falseness of an explicit guaranty was the only method of protecting the purchaser. Filled and plated chains were usually sold upon their merits, and chiefly in the retail parts of the country.

Thousands of cheap rings, he said, were annually manufactured, filled with a brass wire run through the centre of the circle, and stamped with a device resembling an eighteen-carat quality mark, though in reality it signified nothing. There was no doubt that these were sold as real, and many of them at little less than the legitimate price of gold. In the manufacture of fancy gold neck-chains, for ladies' wear, it was necessary that the links should be made hollow in order to give them the proper degree of elasticity. Hence they were spun over a copper wire, which was afterwards, by honest makers, entirely destroyed by the use of a strong acid. It was now a common practice, however, to use a solution of acid which crumbled away the parts of the wire which left little segments of copper to increase the weight of the chains. Probably nine-tenths of the hollow-link chains, which were sold to dealers by weight, contained more or less of this copper filling. Games played with the adulterated gold were rarely obtained by purchasers, the practice being to run a brass wire through the "shank," or circle, and frequently to insert a thick piece of brass at the back of the stone, beneath a thin gold layer. Sleeve buttons, sold as gold, were also frequently backed with brass, or even of silver, with a gold veneer.

He mentioned one noted jewellery firm in this city, who, always closely watching the character and prices of the goods supplied to them, had samples of the articles assayed whenever any circumstances excited suspicion of their quality. If the slightest fraud was discovered, the goods were promptly returned to the maker, and his relations with the firm were permanently ended. The only safety for the public, apart from written guaranties, was the practice of dealing with firms of established high reputation, and consenting to pay the value of the articles desired. Buyers had better be slow to believe that they could get a gold dollar's worth for fifty-five cents, and the sooner they relinquished that delusion the better it would be for them and for honest trade.

Remarkable Theatrical Criticism.

Hamlet must have been a remarkable man not to have gone mad in the midst of such characters as his amiable mother, the insipid and dissipated Polonius, and the noisy empty Laertes, as they were presented on this stage. We confess to our secret satisfaction at the poisoning of the Queen, who, in roving her cheeks got a double dose on the end of her tongue, and we express a malicious joy in the unskillful stabbing of Laertes, who deserved death if for no other reason than for his unaccounted lamentations over the demise of a horse-fiddle sister, whose departure should have been to him a source of joy. The grave-digger did well, not only in his professional work, but in effectually burying the ill-dressed Ophelia. We never attended a funeral with more pleasure.

New parash handles are in the form of sword-bits or champagne corks. It is hard to tell which is the worst taste. Electricity has been applied to propel velocipedes. Mr. Trouve recently drove an English tricycle through the streets of Paris by means of electricity stored in a Plante secondary battery and a pair of Deprez electric motors. The weight of the apparatus was four hundred-weight and the speed was not great.

The House Wren as an Insect Destroyer.

Charles Aldrich, in the American Naturalist.

The observations I have been able to make during the residence of several years on a small farm, have convinced me that the common house wren is really one of the most valuable birds, not perhaps, for what they have done, but from the possibilities wrapped up in their diminutive bodies. They are quite as social as the purple martin or blue bird, and greatly surpass both of these in the rapidity with which they increase. I began several years ago to provide them with nesting places in the vicinity of my buildings. Sometimes I fastened the skulls of a mouse or a small box, in a tree top. But lately I have made it a practice every spring to obtain thirty or forty cigar boxes for this purpose. If the box is long or large, I put a partition across the middle and make a hole through into each apartment, and in very seldom that these boxes are not occupied by one of these little families. In most instances two broods are annually reared in each nesting place. One of my boxes last season turned out three broods of young wrens—six little birds each time, two, or eighteen in all. I think a cigar box never before did better duty. The lamented Robert Kennicott stated that a single pair of wrens carried to their young about a thousand insects in a single day. Like all young, rapidly growing birds, they are known to be most voracious eaters, living entirely upon insects. The point upon which most stress may be laid is this: That by providing them with nesting places, in our complete orchards or grounds, and not allowing them to be caught by cats or scared away by mischievous boys, we may have scores if not hundreds of them during most of the time in which insects are destructive. They undoubtedly return to the same localities to rear their young year after year. Last season I had up about thirty of these nesting boxes, and all but two or three, which were not favorably located, were occupied. My crop of wrens could scarcely have been less than one hundred and fifty, and the old birds filled the air with music when they were not on duty in building their nests or feeding their young. The coming spring I intend to put up at least a hundred of these nesting boxes in my orchards and groves, and I have no doubt I shall be repaid a hundred thousand fold for the little labor it costs. As long as they come back so regularly every year and in constantly increasing numbers, and serve me so well, I shall do all in my power to protect and encourage them. And I am of the opinion that when one species of social, useful birds can be made to congregate in such unusual numbers, others will come also. But the hardness, sociability, love of the locality where it was reared, and wonderful fecundity of the little house wren, render it, in my judgment, one of the most valuable of all insectivorous birds.

ALBANIANS.

The Albanians have always been a fierce and warlike race, and their Turkish conquerors were never able to bring them into complete subjection. Although the population of their country are Mohammedans, the rest being divided between the Greek and the Latin churches. The conversion of those who profess the religion of the Arabian Prophet has been very imperfect, and chiefly induced by political motives. Out of the same family, some will go to the mosque and others to the church; and, with the Turks, infidel and Albanian are terms nearly synonymous.

The Albanian is of middle stature; his face is oval, with high cheek-bones; his neck is long, and his chest full and broad. His hair is erect and majestic to a degree that never fails to strike the traveller. He goes constantly armed, and there are few Albanians who have not in the prime of their life, belonged to some of the numerous bands of robbers who invest the mountains of their native country, of Thessaly, and of Macedonia. The occupation carries with it no disgrace among the inhabitants, and it is common with the Albanian to mention circumstances which occurred when he "was a robber." When the business becomes dull, the Albanian robber generally takes to a military life, and it matters little to him whether he fight the Greeks or the Turks.

Unlike the Turks, the Albanian is gay, lively and active. Fond of amusements, and delighting in all kinds of entertainments. As a race, the men display a greater degree of contempt for women than is usual even among the most barbarous nations. They regard them as inferior animals, and treat them accordingly. But in the country of the Albanians the women are not confined or veiled, as is customary in strictly Mohammedan countries.

A Sad Scene.

Mr. Cheney, a farmer of Indiana, having a married daughter living in Nebraska, was shocked by a telegram from her husband saying that she had been murdered. The family was overcome with the sudden blow. Hurried preparations for mourning garments and the preliminaries to the funeral were made, and, on the dismal evening, dressed all in black, they went to the assembly, and as it stopped there was a respectful hush until the ceremony of receiving the corpse was concluded. But the train hands did not share this feeling. The baggage man pitched his trunk about and swore as he briskly ever and just as the hush of his load was not of a character to call for decorous behavior. The conductor came upon the platform laughing and trying to joke with the station agent's daughter, who told him he ought to be ashamed to carry on that way at such a time. In the meantime the long and narrow box which so quickly tells its story had not made its appearance, and after a painful delay, Mr. Cheney stepped forward and asked for the corpse. The baggage man started at him as if he were crazy and making no reply, went on overhauling the trunks, as if it might be under them somewhere. Suddenly Mr. Cheney felt an arm about his neck and a kiss imprinted upon his cheek. He looked up and saw his daughter. The female members of the family went into hysterics. There were shouts and tears and laughter. The daughter, appalled at the sombre dresses, the hearse and cortege, was frightened almost into a fainting fit. She could offer no explanation of the telegram. She could not say positively whether in a moment of absent-mindedness her husband had actually sent the dispatch as received, or whether he wrote it so blindly that the operator had been led at any rate to misread it in the hearse and took her place in the carriage with the chief mourners.

SUNBEAMS.

Count Louis Melkoff is taking much needed rest at Wiesbaden. The British Government will soon include a Minister Agriculture. The English "National Dress Society" has its model costume on view in London. "I never contracted habits," said Robinson to his wife. "No, dear, you generally expand them." Rosa Bonheur is at work on a grand study of some lions kept in her grounds last summer and then gave to the Paris "Zoo." Not many tourists go to shed tears on the tomb of Washington, and the managers of Mount Vernon propose to open a deer park as an attraction. It is said that the cheque given by the Pennsylvania Railway Company in payment for the Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore road, \$14,000,000, was the largest ever drawn in the country. An effort is being made to have the presence of Queen Victoria at the opening of the New Dock Works at Leith in July. The ground has been entirely reclaimed from the sea, and the extension, when completed, will have cost £375,000.

On Shipboard from Gibraltar to Tangier.

H. B. Aldrich, in Harper's Magazine for July.

I do not believe there is a dirtier little steamer in the world than the one that I found between Gibraltar and Morocco, and I am positive that since Noah's ark no vessel ever put to sea with a more variegated and incongruous lot of passengers than saluted my eyes as I stepped on board the *Jordan* one April afternoon. I have never before seen a ship on deck so full of people. Here were the sailor and the soldier and the glitter of the Orient—the solemn dusky faces that look out on the reader from the pages of the *Arabian Nights*, and the queerest assortment of European and American which that fascinating chronicle makes no mention. Such a chattering in Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, and Arabic! Such queer brown-legged figures in pointed hoods and yellow slippers! Though there were first and second class fares, there appeared to be no distinction in the matter of accommodation. From stem to stern the long narrow deck was crowded with Moors, Arabs, negroes, Jews, and half-breeds, intricately mingled, and all with a more or less frank, open, and unassuming expression of face. I speculated as to what would become of all that loose luggage if we were to encounter a blow outside, for this placid-looking summer sea was a way of leading to a very different result. The only thing perceptible provocation. In case of wet weather there was no shelter except a staid cabin between-decks, where the thirty were waited upon by a few-crowned man carved out of ebony, who dispensed a thin soup from a gourd skin, which he carried under his arm like a bag-pipe. Not liking the look of the water-tank midships, I tested this thing early in the voyage, and came to the conclusion that death by thirst was not without its advantages.

The steamer had slipped her moorings, and was gliding out of the bay before I noticed the movement, so absorbed had I been in studying the costumes and manners of my fellow-voyagers. The deck was a gay and lively place, and the air was filled with the sound of a hundred voices. It was as if some mad masquerade party had burst from the bounds of a ball-room and run away to sea. Here was a Tangier merchant, in sky-blue galabie, with a Persian shawl twisted about his waist, and a black velvet cap set on the back of his head; there was a Moor, in snowy turban and fleecy caftan, with a jewel-encrusted, crescent-bladed knife at his girdle. Tall, slim Arabs, in dirty white robes like those worn by the pilgrims, and a few old sailors, with their weathered faces and old salt, something stirred protestingly under the hood of a burmose. Everywhere was some strange shape. In the bow of the vessel a fat, round, white-bellied, old sailor, counting his money, which he arranged in piles on a rug, the silver on one side and the copper on the other. He looked like a Hindu idol, with his heavy-lidded eyes and baggy cheeks, the latter sagging all over his face. He was a Moor, and his triple chin, those rings of the human neck, near him, but not watching him, and evidently not caring for anything, stood a bare-headed, emaciated old man. His cranium, as polished and yellow as ancient ivory, was topped with a deerskin cap, which he wore and resembled a geographical globe. At his girdle hung a leather pouch, apparently containing a few coins. Both this person and the negro, as well as the majority of the other passengers, were dressed in the most luxurious—with palms and tree-purshias, the arbutus, or Natal plum (a delicious wild-fruit), the erythrina, or Kaffir-bloom (coral-tree), exquisite lilies and ferns in great variety, the picturesque clumps of wild bananas, and, as there is no pleasure quite unmixed with evil, a great many thorn-bearing trees and shrubs. The road, as it winds round hills, through forest or valley, reveals beautiful little bits of the coast, but what strikes the eye is the newcomer perhaps with as much admiration as all this natural richness, is the energy and enterprise of the European inhabitants of this coast region. The climate is eminently suited to the cultivation of sugar, cotton, and other tropical crops. Of these industries the most popular, and vast plantations, with their large mills worked by powerful steam-engines, are constantly met with, besides hundreds of smaller fields of cane grown by people of small means, who do not manage to secure their own sugar, but carry it to the "Central Mill." Upon the sunny hills may still be seen the rich green of the ornamental coffee-tree, but for some reason this has not been cultivated much lately. The white people, however, who do not manage to secure their own sugar, but carry it to the "Central Mill." Upon the sunny hills may still be seen the rich green of the ornamental coffee-tree, but for some reason this has not been cultivated much lately. The white people, however, who do not manage to secure their own sugar, but carry it to the "Central Mill." Upon the sunny hills may still be seen the rich green of the ornamental coffee-tree, but for some reason this has not been cultivated much lately. 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