

ROYALTIES MAGIC JEWELS

WOULDN'T PART WITH THEM FOR WORLDS.

Nicholas I. of Russia Wore a Ring Which Assured Happiness And Prosperity.

Kings and Queens are evidently as great believers in talismans as are the humblest of their subjects. Indeed, perhaps more so, for in Europe, at any rate, nearly every crowned head, without exception, possesses some precious ornament or another to which he or she attributes a more or less supernatural power.

Nicholas I. of Russia is a case in point. Up to the day of his death he wore a ring which, according to the legend attached to it by tradition, assured happiness and definite prosperity to its owner for the time being. It came to the Tsar as a betrothal present from Princess Charlotte of Prussia, the daughter of Frederick William III.

Madame Wildermuth, the latter's Swiss governess, was its first known possessor; till one day, when rummaging with the princess, among her collection of curios, the ring was especially noticed and admired.

"This must be a very antique piece," observed the princess, putting it on her finger, "it has such a peculiar shape, that it reminds one of some ancient talisman." Endeavouring, by-and-by, to draw off the ring, with a view to its return, she found herself unable to remove it. Madame Wildermuth then offered it as a keepsake to her royal pupil, who accepted it.

Later on, the princess succeeded in getting it off. It was a curious little ring, very simple, and made in Gothic fashion. Closer examination revealed, engraved within it, words which, though very much worn, when carefully deciphered, read: "Russia's Tsarina." Madame Wildermuth and her charge were highly amused with this discovery, laughingly attributing a not unnatural significance to the inscription.

In the course of years a marriage was arranged between the Princess Charlotte and the Archduke Nicholas, who, at that time was not in the near succession; his brother Alexander I., the reigning Tsar, having as his heir-apparent the Archduke Constantine.

HIS SECOND BROTHER.

It was at a court dinner in Berlin, where Nicholas had come in order to meet his prospective bride, that the ring for the second time changed hands. Briefly, the Archduke fell really and desperately in love with the princess, told her so, as they sat side by side at table, and craved some little token as a sign that his love was returned.

"Give me that tiny ring?" he urged, in a whisper, pointing to it.

"But not here! before every body?" said Charlotte.

"No one will notice it; bury it in a piece of bread, drop the latter on the table, and I will manage to take it unnoticed."

The manoeuvre was successfully accomplished, Nicholas securing the ring—the same the princess had received from her governess years before.

Most people know of the happy wedded life of these two, but fewer, perhaps, the prophetic connection between the crowning, after eight years, of Charlotte as Russia's Tsarina, and the words engraved within the ring. Nicholas, it is said, never, until in late years it became too small for him, removed the ring from his finger.

Ultimately, he had it attached to a gold chain, and wore it continually round his neck.

The Empress Eugenie at one time possessed a certain breast-pin, shaped like a clover leaf, and formed of closely-set diamonds and emeralds, which she regarded in the light of a lucky jewel, or talisman. Nothing would persuade her but that the little ornament had a direct influence upon her happiness, so she wore it continually. She had won it at a Court raffle arranged by Napoleon III., and when her husband died, she forthwith put it away out of sight, never once wearing it during

ALL HER MOURNING YEARS.

The Prince Imperial, however, went to Zululand, and his departure for the seat of war was the signal for her to don it again. When news came of her son's untimely death she took it off once more—and for ever. Eventually she gave it to the Princess Mondy, the daughter of Murat, ex-titular King of Naples.

The Rajah of Mattau, in Borneo, is the happy possessor of the largest known diamond in the world. As a royal ornament the jewel is 120 years old. It is pear-shaped, and has a small hole drilled through it. Were this all, however, about it, there would be nothing peculiar to chronicle. It is the romance attached to it; the legendary properties attributed to it, which give it a foremost claim to be included in the somewhat limited list of royal precious talismans.

Many battles have at various times been fought for its possession; but in spite of every known dodge on the political board, it still remains in the Rajah of Mattau's family, a prized heirloom, and venerated mystery stone.

The Dutch Governor of Batavia for the time being, once offered the sum of \$150,000 for it, with, in addition, two men-of-war, fully equipped with guns and ammunition.

It is said that the Rajah's refusal to part with the diamond on any terms was couched in language more forcible than polite. It being in Malay, the Governor, fortunately for everybody, did not get the full benefit of it. The Rajah's final word on the subject was that he regarded it as a talisman, upon the possession of which both his and his family's happiness and success depended.

RULERS OF THE EMPIRE.

THE MEN WHO STAND AT THE HELM OF AFFAIRS.

The Permanent Officers.—Change of Government Doesn't Affect Them.

We naturally associate the running of the Empire with the men who figure in the House of Commons and in the Lords in office, says Pearson's Weekly.

But they are merely representative of departments, and so far as their "material" goes are dependent upon the permanent officials who control the complex machinery by which the State is governed. When an office in the Government is filled by a genius and a statesman, he gets a grasp of his department which compels the admiration of the permanent officials, but generally speaking, even the successful statesman is often a theorist, and the permanent official has to do the "filling in" with facts and figures in support.

The British Empire is well served in its permanent officials, and her statesmen of all parties very properly place great confidence and reliance in these gentlemen.

Our system of Government has, not inaptly, been compared to a limited liability company. In the British Empire Ltd., all British citizens are shareholders. The Cabinet for the time-being are the directors, who define the policy of the company but it is the permanent officials who carry it out. Very few of the shareholders know these heads of departments even by name, and the work of their office is generally associated with the member of the Government for the time-being who presides over the official in question.

We hear a great deal in these days about the Navy and Army. The Permanent Secretary to the Admiralty is

SIR EVAN MACGREGOR, K.C.B., who is in his fifty-ninth year. This is the man who knows whether the navy is equal to its work or not; for he has had chief permanent control of this department for seventeen years. His mother was a daughter of the late Admiral Sir T. M. Hardy, and he married the daughter of Colonel W. A. Middleton, C.B., the year he was appointed to his present office. He was educated at Charterhouse, as also was Sir Courtney Boyle.

The office of Permanent Under Secretary to the War Office is filled by Sir Ralph Henry Knox, K.C.B. He was born in 1836, educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and at the age of twenty he made his first acquaintance with the War Office. He ascended the ladder step by step, and in 1882 was appointed Accountant-General, which post he held until 1897, when he was placed in his present position, which has by no means been a sinecure. His salary is \$10,000 per annum.

The Board of Education which has displaced the old Education Department has charge of the third line of national defence, and its task is to develop and utilize the brain power of the nation. The man at the wheel in this department is one of the most valuable of our public servants—Sir George Wm. Kekewich, K.C.B., D.C.L. He succeeded to the office of secretary to the Education Department in 1890, and since 1899 he has also been secretary of the Science and Art Department. He is a thorough believer in this department, and is a true friend of education. He is the fourth son, and his late father was M.P. for South Devon. Sir George married the daughter of Mr. L. W. Buck, the M.P. for North Devon. He was educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, where he came off with flying colors.

THE TREASURY.

has been very much called upon since the war broke out in 1899. It is a department which makes the rank and file shareholder's mouth water when he scans the salary list. The First Lord and the Chancellor of the Exchequer draw \$25,000 each per annum; there are three Junior Lords at \$5,000 each per annum, a Patronage Secretary at \$10,000, a Financial Secretary at \$10,000, and finally the Permanent Secretary, whose office is worth from \$10,000 to \$12,500. He has an Assistant Secretary at \$7,500. There is also an army of private secretaries, and other officials at salaries ranging from \$500 to \$7,500. Sir Francis Mowatt, K.C.B., is the present Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. On Budget night in the House the voice is the voice of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the hand is the hand of the Permanent Secretary. Sir Francis was born in 1837, and was educated at Winchester and St. John's College, Oxford.

Perhaps the most important post in our administration is that held by Sir T. H. Sanderson, K.C.B., K.C. M.G., who is permanent secretary at the Foreign Office. It is a position of the greatest delicacy, for a false

step may mean war, or, at any rate, undesirable foreign complications.

The Colonial Office has played an important part in recent years. The permanent secretary is Sir E. Wingfield, K.C.B. What this gentleman knows about South African politics and personages would make the fortune of a journalist in a day. Messrs. Kruger, Leyds & Co. would also give much to be in his confidence.

Then there is the Home Office, the Local Government Board, and the General Post Office, the permanent secretaries of which are Sir Kenelm E. Digby, K.C.B., Mr. S. B. Provis, C.B., and Sir G. H. Murray, K.C.B., respectively. All three are important offices and by no means over-remunerated, none of the salaries exceeding \$10,000. But for these and other permanent officials, no Government elected by the people could run the British Empire.

AROUND LONDON.

Primitive Appearance of the Farms and Farm Buildings.

The physical fact that London is surrounded by farms and woods and meadows and that its streets, terraces and rows of semi-detached houses do not extend to a distance of more than nine miles from its centre, is merely one aspect of the fact that London is not larger than it is. It is not, however, this physical fact alone which tends to render the aspect of our suburban country strange.

What is most striking in it is not the fact that it is country, but that in many directions it is a country of curiously primitive character. The villages have all the air of villages of the last century. There are old inns unchanged since the day of the coaches. There are public-houses with signs swinging in the public streets just as we see them represented in Hogarth's pictures. There are quaint, secluded dwellings, half cottage, half villa, which seem to belong to the time of Strawberry Hill.

There are farms and farm buildings carelessly and picturesquely irregular, like those which George Eliot has described so well as characteristic of the England which existed before the railways and the first reform bill. And far more strikingly primitive are the looks and the demeanour of the people. The rural laborers within fourteen miles are as leisurely in their gait, and seem as strange in the hurry of modern life as the figures which encounter one slouching along a Shropshire lane or lifting their cider kegs in a remote Devonshire field.

In point of dress, indeed, the former are often more primitive than the latter. It is in the country close to London that the smock frock has survived longest. Smock-frocks and ploughmen only a few years ago might be seen among their furrows within a gunshot of the Alexandra Palace; while from one of the towers at Sydenham a man with a good telescope might detect to-day, on the village green of Kent men and women who might be denizens of the "Sweet Auburn" of Goldsmith. In this fact, there is indeed, something striking—this persistence of traditional and local habit among all the changes so distinctive of modern progress, nor is it by any means exemplified among the poorer classes only.

In spite of the cosmopolitan spirit which rapid travelling generates, the spirit of locality is still strong, as is shown by the vitality of the innumerable local newspapers, which flourish in districts almost within sight of the metropolis. To readers of this journal the club flower show, fete and cricket club are far more important than any similar events in London. The clergyman, the doctor, the village residents, the farmers, all revolve round the same local axis, and the rumor of London merely reaches them "like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong."

CLEAN RAILWAY-CARRIAGES.

Some important recommendations for insuring the health of travellers have just been sent by the French Minister of Public Works to the various railway companies. It is suggested that the sweeping and dusting of railway-carriages and waiting-rooms should be entirely prohibited, and daily washing substituted. With this end in view the necessity for the substitution of linoleum or some similar substance for carpets, and the periodical disinfection of compartments is emphasized. Bedding and pillows should be disinfected by hot air process after each journey. A decree has been in operation for some time to the effect that persons suffering from contagious diseases must travel in separate compartments, which should be disinfected after each journey.

WONDERFUL SWIMMING FEAT.

The Roman record in swimming has just been broken by two Italians not for swiftness, but for the length of time they were in the water. Under a burning sun and with a strongish wind they took to the water, Signor Montalboddi accomplishing twenty-five miles in 7hrs. 35min, and Signor Altieri the same distance in 7hrs. 55min. This means, of course, continual swimming without a break. Both arrived at their destination without great exhaustion or cold.

The biggest aerolite ever found was discovered in Greenland in 1870. It weighed 23 tons.

AFFECTED 1,500 FAMILIES

SMASH OF THE LEIPSIK BANK COST \$25,000,000.

Ruin Followed German Bubble—Victims Execrate Director Exner.

Never since Germany stepped into the arena of industrial and commercial powers has the financial outlook of the country been so troubled. All the greed and lust of gain have not been free from an element of criminality.

The smashes culminated in the stoppage of payment by the Leipsic Bank. This was an old-established, conservative concern. All went well until about five years ago, when a certain Herr Exner became director. The capital of the bank was about \$5,000,000 when he joined it. He rapidly ran it up to \$16,000,000. Exner saw his way to a great coup and singled out an insignificant grain-drying establishment in Cassel which he determined to boom. It was probably worth \$100,000. The Leipsic Bank began to support it and Exner ran up the shares. In a few years the bank had lent the Cassel grain-drying firm about \$20,000,000 and the enterprise was paying some years fifty per cent. dividend—of course, out of the money lent by the bank. Exner bought Cassel shares when they were next to nothing and sold them when they were quoted high above par. He must have realized \$5,000,000 on the shares.

THE CRASH CAME.

Like a bolt from the blue sky came the crash. The directors of the bank announced that they had stopped payment, but informed their victims that if they only had patience all their claims would be met. They were about \$25,000,000 to the bad then. Days of panic and wild talk such as Leipsic had never known followed. The customers of the bank stormed the offices but they found the pay desks closed. Women wept, fell fainting, and were carried out. Lohmann's big flannel works dropped \$200,000; a huge paper manufactory lost \$370,000; the Humanitarian Institute of Leipsic, a concern supported by Government, lost \$125,000, and it is computed that of the small people concerned over 1,500 families are practically ruined. Exner was arrested at his villa and lodged in jail, where he hears the execrations of the crowds he has ruined. The banker, Edward Krohmann, believed to be implicated, and feeling the disgrace coming, shot a bullet through his head. Henry Schaefer, one of the directors, followed the same course. Robert Kohlmann, a man in a large way of business as an iron merchant, hanged himself. Ferdinand Rahden, a wool merchant, cut his throat. A man in Coburg, driven to despair by his losses, shot himself dead after shooting and severely wounding his wife and daughter. One of the smaller traders ruined by the crash flung himself into the Elbe at Dresden.

A BARGAIN VICTORY.

She was shopping with her husband and was looking for bargains. Here is how she got one. I don't want quite so much as there is in that piece, she said to the saleswoman who held up a piece of dress goods. I require only two yards and a half.

But that piece is two yards and five eighths, and I couldn't cut two yards and a half off, explained the young woman behind the counter.

But I don't want so much, protested the customer.

Well, I am sure I cannot cut it, repeated the saleswoman.

But can't you call it a remnant? persisted the woman who wanted the goods.

No; it isn't a remnant madam, calmly replied the young woman.

Well, I shall not buy it, said the customer, determinedly. I don't propose to pay for more than I want unless you make it an object.

Well, I'll call it two yards and three-quarters, said the saleswoman as the customer started to move away.

All right, I'll take it, exclaimed the customer without hesitation, as she glanced at her husband in a satisfied way. The man's admiration for his wife's victory was expressed in his face.

HE WAS FORESTALLED.

When Tennyson's In Memoriam appeared a certain poet was standing at a bookstall turning over the leaves of the new volume, when a literary friend of rare taste and learning stepped up and said to the poet: Have you read it?

Indeed I have, was the answer; and do you know it seems to me that in this delightful book Tennyson has done for friendship what Petrarch did for love.

This was too fine for the literary friend to forget. That afternoon he called upon a lady, and noticing a copy of the same book on her table saw his opportunity. After the usual greeting he took up the book. Have you read it? he asked.

Yes, she said, and I have enjoyed it greatly.

So have I, said her visitor; and do you know that in this charming poem Tennyson has done for friendship, what Petrarch did for love?

Indeed, rejoined the lady, adding, with a mischievous smile, Mr.— called this morning and said the same thing.

COUNTERFEIT COINERS.

THERE CLEVER TRICKS AND HOW TO DETECT THEM.

A Well Known Detective Tells of Their Many Devices and Tools.

There is no rogue half so incorrigible as the professional coiner, says a well known detective. A reformed burglar or pick-pocket is quite common; but a regenerated coiner, in my experience, is even more rare than a black swan or a dead donkey. There appears to be some fascination in the misapplied art; for no amount of punishment seems to deter a convicted coiner from returning to his moulds and batteries the very moment he is free.

The modern coiner takes a very high rank among intelligent criminals, and is as far removed from his forerunner of a few generations ago as an average man from an ape. The coiner of our grandfathers' days was indeed a clumsy workman, who was content with a battery made of jam-jars, and manufactured his coins out of iron and tin, bismute and brass; and the products of his "skill" would impose on none but the ignorant and careless.

Even to-day a few of the "baser" sort of coiners are almost equally primitive in their methods. Their batteries are crudely contrived out of domestic vessels, and the rest of their apparatus consists of plaster of Paris and plumbago to make the moulds, a crucible, an iron spoon, a file or two, and a little grease. In fact, the whole of their equipment would be dear at fifty cents. It is needless to say their victims are generally of the most ignorant classes; and even then they and their "snide pitchers," the men employed to pass the spurious coins, are often "lagged."

THE "SUPERIOR" COINER.

however, is a man of considerable intelligence, who has often made an exhaustive study of metals and electro-plating, and can produce coins as perfect in appearance as any that are issued from the Mint, and which satisfy all the ordinary tests of weight and so on. In fact, many of the coins they produce are actually made of gold and silver; only the gold is of a low grade and is liberally alloyed with copper and silver, while it is a well-known fact that it is possible to mould spurious coins of silver of the requisite fineness, and yet make a profit of 100 per cent on the manufacture. At this rate of profit the business is quite lucrative enough to compensate for a little risk; and naturally such coins, which are of full weight and of standard silver, are most difficult to detect.

But most coiners are not satisfied with reasonable profit, and they prefer to make their silver coins of antimony and lead (antimony furnishing the bulk of the coin) covered, of course, with a coating of silver. Spurious gold coins are largely made of platinum, a metal which gives the requisite weight.

The process of coining is really very simple, although it requires both delicacy and manipulative skill. An exact impression is taken of the coin to be copied, and a mould is made from plaster of Paris. The molten metal is then poured into the mould through a small aperture in it. Any superfluous metal is filed away, and the part from which it is removed is

MOST CAREFULLY MILLED.

The coins are now placed, in a rack, in a silver solution, in which they are soon covered with a coating of silver electrically deposited on them. To remove any suspicious newness they are covered with a mixture of grease and cigar-ash or lampblack. To increase the deception the coin which is copied is almost invariably old and worn; and the resultant copy, after undergoing the various doctoring processes, has all the appearance of a dirty, half-obliterated coin of the days of the Georges.

A favorite trick with coiners of gold is to take a genuine sovereign, and by drilling or slicing remove as much as possible of the interior gold, filling up the cavity with platinum, so as to preserve the proper weight and ring. By these artifices the sovereign loses half or even as much as three-quarters of its intrinsic value, while retaining the unmistakable appearance of a good coin.

Probably none but an expert teller could detect these impostures; but the ordinary spurious coin made from pewter, antimony, lead, and similar base metals can almost invariably be detected by one of the following tests:—If on rubbing the coin with a moistened finger the bright metal appears under the worn and dirty surface, you may be sure the coin is counterfeit. The practice of biting the coin, common to many people, is excellent; for the spurious coin is always "gritty" as distinguished from the smoothness of a genuine coin; and if you find that your suspicious coin will make a mark on a slate you may be sure that there is good ground for your distrust.

Tourist (in French restaurant)—I want some mushrooms. Waiter—Pardon. I not understand. Tourist—Mushrooms, mushrooms, and taking a paper he drew a sketch of one. The waiter beamed with intelligence, and rushed off to execute the order. In a few minutes he returned with an umbrella.