

BRIC-A-BRAC BURGLARS.

CURIO COLLECTORS WHO STEAL RARE WORKS OF ART.

A Queer Old Man with a Passion for Quaint Things—Romance of a Rembrandt—Thieves in the Libraries—Studio Sneaks.

"We have to keep our eyes open to prevent our stock being carried off," said a Broadway bric-a-brac dealer the other day. "You have no idea what really respectable men and women are tempted to steal a valuable piece of porcelain or a curio or a rare coin when it is put so conveniently before them as the things are in this store. We display everything very freely, but there is always one of the employes killing around in an unconcealed sort of way who looks out for our interests."

"Are your customers ever tempted to pocket your wares?" he was asked.

"Well, now and then we have a case of that kind, but of course nothing can be done, and unless the article taken has some special artistic value we say nothing about it, for we should lose a good deal of custom if we did not overlook the eccentricities of the kleptomaniacs. The collectors are the worse kind we have to deal with. You see that old man over there," pointing in the direction of a very respectable-looking gentleman with white hair and a quizzical eye and clothed in a long and seamy ulster. He was strolling along from one shelf to another, examining everything furtively with his sharp, little, ferret-like eyes.

"That man," said the dealer, "has one of the finest porcelain collections in this city. He used to be rich, but now I guess he had to hustle to get his three meals a day properly. When he was well off I thought nothing of selling him \$1,000 worth of goods every month, but he hasn't spent a cent here in years, and I have to watch the old chap half the time to see that he doesn't walk off with my best things, for there isn't a better judge of the value of a work of art than he is in America."

At the storeroom and miscellaneous libraries numerous trunks and devices are used by unscrupulous collectors of prints to get possession of some rare picture or edition. They either cut the desired illustration out of the book, thus ruining it forever, or take the work away with them when they go, substituting another volume already prepared in its place. Since print collecting has become so popular some elegant works belonging to the New York libraries have been ruthlessly destroyed and very often stolen. The only way to stop these depredations is to keep a constant watch, and even then so tricky are the thieves and so fertile of device that they carry on their practices beneath the very eyes of the librarians.

It was only a few weeks ago that a magnificent quarto was destroyed in a library by one of these vandals, armed with a sharp knife and a strong artistic desire to capture a rare print at the expense of his principles of honor. Artistic thieves are sometimes of very respectable families, which the following incident will show. It was in the library of a gentleman living in West Twenty-second street owned among other paintings a real Rembrandt which he had purchased in Europe at a good round price, and which was a very fair specimen of that artist's work. The other pictures were all light works by American painters, but this picture, on account of its value, occupied a room by itself, and its owner was very proud of his possession.

When hard times struck that family and the collector was compelled to hand over the picture to the auctioneer, it was then discovered that the Rembrandt, that much treasured painting to which all Murray Hill had bowed in reverence, was nothing but a clever forgery.

The gentleman who had owned it so many years, and who considered himself no mean judge of art, was dumfounded and did not believe it. An investigation proved that the canvas on which the picture was painted had the stamp of a New York firm on it, and that a drying varnish had been mixed with the paint that was invented only twenty years ago. The fact that the picture was bought was definitely settled by the arrival in town of a wealthy Brazilian who said he had purchased in Europe the original of the painting, and that all the critics in London and Paris had combined in saying that he had a genuine Rembrandt.

Detectives were finally set to work to ferret out the mystery and soon made everything clear. The son of the American collector, who had taken a wild and dissipated young man, had taken an artist friend into his confidence and together they plotted to exchange the genuine picture for a copy. The friend worked on the copy at night and soon produced a fair imitation, while the son with the real picture went to Europe and there succeeded in selling it to the Brazilian.

In Philadelphia another great picture was spirited away for a long while by much the same means and not returned until the wheel of the law were set in motion. Every now and then we hear through the press of the robbery of an art gallery, but hundreds of such thefts are never heard of. Artists who go away for the summer on sketching tours often return to find their studios ransacked and some of their best paintings cut from the frames.

The man who owns a fine collection of bric-a-brac or paintings or curios has more need to look after the visitors and admirers of his treasures than among the servants of his house. Many an amateur who is badly bitten with the craze of collecting curious works will say what he wants as long as he can, and then when the money gives out he will steal at the first chance the coveted article which he admires and must own. The average thief has a royal scorn for artistic work, except when he considers it will bring a good price. He would just as soon steal something less artistic and more salable, for a painting which is well known is hard to dispose of at a fence.

An old Bohemian who used to sell art materials to the various studios was discovered to be a most notorious sneak thief. It was discovered that he carried on quite a business in disposing of pictures and sketches which he pilfered while in the studios under the pretense of selling paints and brushes. Several janitors were suspected of committing these thefts, but the real man was at last laid down and prosecuted. In his room in East Broadway piles of canvases were found and portfolios full of sketches which he had surreptitiously made away with during his brief but successful career as a sneak thief.

The collecting mania is in its infancy in this country and consequently the poor collector is more clumsy as a thief than his European brethren, who could give the average sneak thief points in the business. The American, however, is steadily improving and in time may become as dexterous in making off with a peach-blow vase or a Chinese god as the collectors across the water who have more experience.—New York Journal.

Abstractly, we do not believe in laws to force men to behave themselves. But concretely, men must be helped to do right if they won't do so of their own accord.—The Barth.

ENEMIES OF GOOD FICTION.

Shortsightedness of Book Publishers. The "Readers of Manuscript."

One great drawback to good work in fiction is the financial inability of capable writers of both sexes to put their work before the community. It is useless to say that publishers are ready to seize everything new and eager to give the public the latest thoughts. This may be true of some publishers, but many are as eager to make a hit and reduce fancies or ideas to hard coin as any merchant in the land. They publish books to make money, and a striking title is often prized more than a good plot. The publishers themselves are human and often shortsighted. Every one knows that some of the best works ever given to the world were knocked about from publisher to publisher and finally sold for a song.

Why is this? Back of the publisher are the "readers of manuscript," the man and one woman, sometimes the two men and one woman, who must sit in judgment on the author's work. With all due respect for the factitious men engaged in publishing books, it is undoubted that these readers do not always possess special fitness or knowledge of the works in question. It may sound like treason, but it is undoubtedly true that many excellent volumes of fiction are now hidden away, condemned by some "reader" far less experienced and gifted than the writer, which, if published, would rank high and benefit the reading world. Any one who spends much time in an editorial capacity knows that mistakes as to acceptance and rejection constantly occur. It is the earnest effort to talk of the "individuality" of the writer and "the reality of experience which is the secret of success" when a book of real experience, far more captivating and filled with moving, thrilling life, is set down upon, behind the scenes of some publisher's desk, by men and women who "think it will not pay."

Why talk of the reality of experience? The real enemies of good fiction are the unappreciative, inexperienced "readers," who can no more understand the sympathetic life of the people than a mere mechanical painter can understand the good points of the Rembrandt in your library. They are good men, good women, who are paid to sit in judgment on the heart throbs of real workers, real thinkers, real doers, and their total inability to write a good work of fiction renders them unfit to decide upon the work of those who already have the public ear and are eager to give our own conflicts a place in this fiction of the day. The possibilities of American fiction are enormous, the life of the American people fruitful, but the outcome will not be satisfactory until genius and application, ideas and imagination are not subjected to the crucial test of incompetent "readers," nor while publishers pay more attention to making a hit than to the merits of a volume. The fault does not rest with the makers of fiction, but its producers in the market.—Boston Globe.

Good Time on the Panhandle Road.

The examination of watches of conductors and engineers on the C. & St. L. and P. is progressing slowly. There are some 300 watches to be examined, and about 150 have been examined. Fully 50 per cent are condemned. The idea of the company is to compel every man in their employ to have a reliable time-keeper. Some amusing incidents connected with the examination are related. One big, honest-looking man, who had just been promoted to an engineer's seat, came in the first of the week. He had an old-fashioned watch that might have kept good enough time to run a country school on, but certainly wasn't the kind of a timepiece on the accuracy of which you would want to trust your life. When it was condemned the man took it good naturedly.

"If it isn't reliable," said he, "I don't want it. I run as much risk as the passengers do."

That man is now the possessor of one of the finest watches on the road. Another man, who had just taken charge of an engine, dropped in a couple of days ago.

"I want my watch right," he said, "because for the past two years I have been firing for a man who was so careless about his time that a piece that I lived in a sort of perpetual fear. He had an old Waterbury and he always carried it in his pants pocket."

The movement of the Panhandle road is something of an experiment. If it is successful it will in all probability be adopted by all the other roads in Pennsylvania.—Indianapolis Journal.

Joe Howard After the Frauds.

I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Howard immediately after his famous interview with Mr. Pulitzer. He came into the International and walking up to the bar asked for some "calisaya and seltzer." There was nothing in his manner or appearance to indicate that he had been mauled by the Mayor. The barkeeper mixed the drink, Howard regarding him sternly.

Instruction in Practical Work.

Col. Richard T. Auchmuty, who has been writing for magazines on the subject of industrial education, is practical as well as theoretical in the advancement of his ideas upon that subject. For many years Col. Auchmuty has brought together in the shops of New York in night schools and small gatherings young people whom he has instructed in practical every day work. A gentleman who has visited his schools said to me the other day: "The colonel is a practical philanthropist and has been sowing good seed. I saw him showing one young man how to mix mortar. Another of his pupils was instructing in showing a jack plane. Still another was being shown how to use a saw. That seems to be a simple thing, but skilled carpenters will tell you that not one man in fifty knows how to properly shave a saw back and forth through a pine board. The colonel had also a little class of pupils who were being instructed how to sharpen edge tools. You can catch the idea of his work from these samples. He was engaged in making helpful young men out of helpless ones."—New York Tribune.

Accepting the Situation.

Bobby to young Featherly.—Will you please pass me the cake basket, Mr. Featherly?
Featherly.—No, Bobby, you cannot have any more cake.
Bobby.—Why not, ma?
Featherly.—Because I have said no. You will have to take no for an answer.
Bobby.—Well, I'm no worse off than Mr. Featherly.
Mr. Featherly.—How so, Bobby?
Bobby.—Sister Clara says you'll have to take no for an answer.—New York Sun.

SHADOWS.

As though I went by beckoning hands close behind, I heard, as when one answers calling fond, The curtain by which "there" from "here" is hidden— Its mesh grew gauzy, and I saw beyond. Against its screen my eyes stared straight and strongly, The soul of sight searching past warp and roof. Until I could not think my gaze had wrongly Led me to sea of afterlife a proof. I seemed to see a stir of wings light smitten, And velvety waving of white, shining hands, But misty as the summer's message written, On quivering air above the sun-steeped lands. And then, as though by some mysterious tension, The warp and woof grew close my gaze before, And darkness fell beyond, with quick desension, And air of wings and hands I saw no more. —Ben D. House.

UNCLE SAM'S CAVALRY.

What a Man Has to Go Through to Belong to It—How the Men Save Money. "People have an idea that the recruiting offices of the United States army take most anybody who comes along," said a newly enlisted man in the cavalry service to a reporter. "But that is a great mistake. I took pains to find out something about this when I entered my application and learned that only about one man in thirty of those who apply to enter the cavalry service are able to successfully pass examination. Last month out of forty-four who applied only eight were accepted. Instead of jumping at a man, as people suppose, they put him through the most rigid and thorough examinations, and after it all they ask him over and over if he is sure he knows his own mind and is fully satisfied to give his services wholly to the army for five years. You have got to be sound mentally and physically, and your eyesight and hearing are put to very severe tests.

"They way they tried my eyesight was this: A man holding a pack of cards stood at a distance of twenty feet from me and the doctor put one hand over one of my eyes. The man with the cards held up one after another in quick succession, and I had to call out the number of spots on each card. If you fail in telling one card correctly you are rejected. In my hearing they turned me so that my back was toward the man at the other end of the room and the doctor placed his hand over one of my ears. Then the man called off, in low, monotonous tones an improvised and incorrect multiplication table, such as 5 times 8 is 36, etc., and you must repeat what he says without the slightest hesitation. Men often get caught at this hearing, only to find out afterwards that the doctor were correct multiplication. "I learned, too, that some men during the five years save as much as \$1,000, becoming teachers and doing extra duty for which there is extra pay. Others lend money on interest to their comrades and make a good deal that way. Besides this, there is a sort of savings bank established by the government which pays interest on the savings of the soldiers. One can also save on the allowance for clothing and the home fare allowed after year term of enlistment is over. Three-quarters of the cavalry ranchmen, I am told, are ex-soldiers who have invested their savings in land out there. A great many who enlist in the cavalry are well educated college graduates."—New York Mail and Express.

The Companion of Sirius.

The companion of Sirius is getting so close to its dazzling comrade that even with the most powerful telescopes it can only be glimpsed with difficulty. Soon it will completely disappear from view in the overpowering light of Sirius, and even the great Lick telescope will be unable to detect it. But after several years it will again emerge so bright and move away from the Dog Star until comparatively small telescopes will show it. This wonderful companion of the brightest star in the heavens is a great puzzle to astronomers. They have calculated its orbit and know that it makes a journey around the great star once every forty-nine years or thereabouts. It is easy enough to understand that, but the surprising thing is this, while this singular star is probably half as heavy as Sirius, it possesses several thousand times less light. Is either a perishing or a dead sun; and in the latter case, of course, is simply an enormous planet shining with the reflected light of Sirius.

But such a planet staggers the imagination. Our sun is more than 1,000,000 times as large as the earth, yet in comparison with the companion of Sirius he would appear so insignificant that we might be ashamed to acknowledge him as the great boss of the solar system. The genius of Voltaire, which accorded to Mars his two moons more than 100 years before the telescope had proved that they really existed, also foretold that a large planet, the birthplace of the giant Microcosm, revolved around Sirius. So the imagination of the great Frenchman twice anticipated the most unexpected of astronomical discoveries. But nobody could be more astonished at the fulfillment of his guesses than Voltaire himself would have been.

Two Incidents of Army Life.

Among the many incidents of my army life, two have always remained impressed upon my memory with especial clearness. The first of these occurred, I believe, at the battle of Fair Oaks. Gen. O. O. Howard, an officer as brave as a man need be, in spite of his decidedly ostentatious boldness, was brought from the front upon a litter, evidently severely wounded. The gallant Gen. Phil Kearney saw him and went to his side, saying: "Gen. Howard, I am really deeply grieved to see this. Where are you hit?" Howard, pointing to Kearney's empty right sleeve, a relic of his Mexican war service, replied: "General, you can lay your gloves in Paris now." The other incident occurred during Porter's famous Red River expedition. Admiral Porter despised Banks as a military man, and was inclined to treat his plans with great contempt. Banks one day, after some rather heated correspondence, undertook to order Porter to place his gunboats in a certain position. Porter's answer was short and to the point: "Tell Gen. Banks," he said, "that he may be a king on land, but I am an emperor on the river." Banks' fury at this reply may well be imagined, but it stated the facts, and the general had to submit.—Col. L. J. Hartley in Globe-Democrat.

The Barroom Crank.

The barroom crank is one of the characters of the town. No metropolitan bar is complete without its crank. At such well established as the Hoffman he is commonly a man of means, whose wits have been worn threadbare by overindulgence. In smaller establishments he varies in quality from the Jack of the bar room who sweeps the place out for the privilege of hanging around and picking up what he drinks he can, up to some well-to-do customer whose cash makes his eccentricity excusable. This species of crank is the most interesting because he presents such an infinite variety of oddity. Some are sour-tempered and others merry; some look at the quality of their liquor, and others would drink vitriol and forth through a pine board. There are humorous and melancholy cranks and the wise and foolish ones. Indeed, I know no quality of mentality that is not represented among them.—Alfred Trumble in New York News.

Railroads.

Table with columns: Station, Time Table in effect Nov. 15, 86, WESTWARD, EASTWARD, and Arrival at Lock Haven.

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