

How Hard Money is Made.

"We don't make money here," said the courteous Chief Clerk of the Assay Office, "that is, we don't convert bullion into coin. We receive gold and silver from depositors, melt and assay the bullion, form it into bars and ship the bars to the Philadelphia Mint, and in the course of a few days that institution sends us back the coin. Government furnishes us with a bullion fund amounting to over thirty-five million dollars, out of which we pay the depositor just as soon as the fineness of his metal is determined by assay, the weight ascertained and the value calculated. In fact, all our deposits, except in cases of re-melt and re-assay, are made within two days.

"Now," said he, picking up a bright new double eagle, "you know how easy it is to spend that coin, but unless you are familiar with the work you can form no idea of the time and labor it took to make it. From the time the bullion from which this double eagle was made reached the mint, until it was converted into coin, it had passed through no less than ten distinct processes, such as melting, allowing, forming the metal into ingots, rolling the ingots into strips the thickness of a coin, cutting from the strips the 'planchets' or 'blanks', annealing, milling and adjusting the pieces, beside sundry minor operations incidental to milling. Now, examine that coin closely under the glass, and see how well the work is executed. The Romans excelled in the art of engraving, and many of the coins they threw up our But we cannot afford to throw up our central designs in such bold relief as the Romans did, for in the hurry and bustle of our day and the rapid handling and piling of coins, we would soon wear the face off of the goddess and wings of the eagle. So, while our designs are in bold relief, yet we make them low and protect them as much as possible from abrasion and wear by 'throwing up' the edge of the blank, technically called 'milling'.

"The manufacture of dies, or the art of 'die sinking' has reached great perfection at the Philadelphia Mint, and all the coinage dies or other dies made at that institution. The artist first makes the design, and then a model of it in wax three or four times larger than the desired coin. From this model an electrotype is taken, and then the design is transferred by means of a Hill engraving machine, which works on the principle of a pantograph, to a block of steel the size of the coin. But as only the principal design, such as the head, eagle, or shield, can be thus transferred, the artist fills in by hand the stars, date, and all surrounding details. Then, after removing the ground on the face of the block, he strikes from the block an impression into and upon a second block. This second block is hardened and an impression is transferred to a third similar block, which we call the 'parent die' or 'master hub' and from which the regular coinage dies are made. The impression on the 'master hub' is in relief, or convex, while that on the 'working' or 'conceal' die is in 'intaglio', or concave.

"But let us see what they are doing in here," said the Chief Clerk, as he stepped into the 'weigh room', where truck loads of silver were being weighed. "That scale you see there is a model of accuracy, and will weigh from ten thousand ounces down to one-hundredth part of an ounce. This small balance weighs from twenty ounces down to the one-fifth-thousandth part of a grain. In fact we must have accuracy in this work, not only to check our operations, but to maintain the reputation of this office, which is such that our stamp of weight and fineness passes current in all the commercial centers of the world."

For Coin Collectors.

A coin is said to be "proof" when it is specially struck by hand press, instead of by steam press, from a polished planchet, and a "proof set" is a complete set of proofs of current coins. A "pattern piece" is an early specimen of proof from a newly adopted coinage die or dies. An impression in soft metal to test an experimental die is called a "trial piece." When a piece is struck from regular dies on experimental dies with experiment legends, devices or designs, it is denominated an "experimental piece." Trial and experimental pieces, struck for mint purposes only, will not be issued, circulated or sold. Pieces popularly known as restrikes, false metal pieces and metallic replicas, or copies, are prohibited by the revised statute. Proof and pattern pieces are sold by the superintendent of the mint. The superintendent will furnish without charge, a pattern piece to any incorporated numismatic society in the United States. In such cases, if the pattern be in gold or silver the value of the metal will be required.

Booksellers of Paris.

In Paris, they will not sell you a book for five hundred francs and let it go afterward at your own auction sale for a hundred dollars. If they have sold you a "peach-blow vase" sort of a book, their dignity as well as their interest will make them redeem it at the price they have made you pay, or not much less. It is the ambition of every bookseller not to become wealthy in ten or twenty years, but to become a bibliophile; perhaps because in that realm of equality everybody's desire is to be of the privileged few, perhaps because honors are prized more than riches there. It is silly to run mad after a bit of red ribbon for the lapel of one's coat, but it is not for the bibliophile who runs mad after book-binding to say so. Moreover, the man who would rather have a red ribbon than a fortune, if a bookseller, is the man for a bibliophile. Valuable books are not to be sold like old boots; there must be some show of feeling about it.

Preserving Wood.

A plan recently introduced into Belgium for preserving wood from decay produced by the atmosphere, water, etc., is to fill the pores with a liquid gutta-percha, which is said to effectually preserve it from moisture and the action of the sun. The process employed consists in exhausting the air from the pores of the wood, and filling with gutta-percha solution. In pouring the solution into the pores, the solid gutta-percha is liquefied by mixing with paraffine in proportion of about two-thirds of gutta-percha to one-third of paraffine; the mixture is then submitted to the action of heat and the gutta-percha becomes sufficiently liquid to be easily introduced into the pores of the wood. The gutta-percha pores of the wood as soon as it becomes cold.

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