

ROBBING THE MINTS.

DIRECTOR PRESTON CHATS ABOUT SOME BIG THIEVES.

Fortune in Gold Dust and Nuggets—Trusted Employees Who Did Not Resist Temptation—Some Curious Stories.

It has 50,000,000 standard silver dollars in a single vault. The San Francisco mint has, I am told, more than \$50,000,000 worth of precious metal stored away, and in the vaults of the mint at New Orleans there are now something like \$20,000,000 worth of gold and silver. During my stay in our Philadelphia treasury house I was shown the different methods by which Uncle Sam guards his hoard. Every atom of gold and silver is watched, and, although the mint has handled more than a billion and a half dollars worth of bullion since it was founded, only a small part has been lost. Still the temptation to theft is great, and every now and then the Treasury Department finds a shortage in some of the mints or in the Government assay offices in different parts of the West. The true details of such thefts seldom get into the newspapers. They are filed away in the records of the Treasury Department and in the minds of the detectives and officials who have aided in exposing the crimes. During the past week I have heard the stories of a number of such robberies, and, in my study of them, I have had access to the records of the treasury, in connection with R. E. Preston, the director of the mint. Mr. Preston has charge of all the mints in the United States.

He is the chief "watch dog" of Uncle Sam's treasures of gold and silver, and he knows more about the mint, perhaps, than any other man connected with the Government. He has been in the employ of the United States Treasury for the past forty years, and he is to-day one of its most efficient officers. You remember how, about two years ago, Henry C. Cochran, the weigh clerk at the Philadelphia mint, stole bars to the value of \$113,000 from the gold vault, stealing it bar by bar from a stack of sixteen million dollars' worth of gold bullion, which was there stored away. Mr. Preston was one of the officials who superintended the putting away of that bullion, and he was acting director of the mint at the time that Cochran's theft was discovered. The first steal in the Philadelphia mint occurred forty-three years ago, just before Mr. Preston entered the Government service, and, curiously enough, this theft was detected by Cochran, who was an under clerk of the robber, and who by exposing his superior got the place of weigh clerk, which he held for forty years, and in which he was at the time his own great robbery occurred. During the investigation at Philadelphia the thief, Cochran, told Mr. Preston the story, and Mr. Preston repeated it to me to-day.

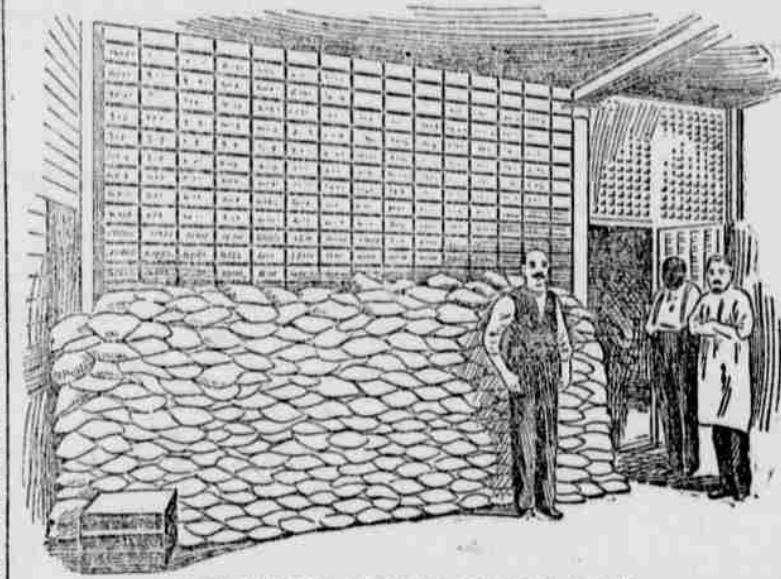
"It was away back in 1853," said the director of the mint, "when a vast amount of gold was coming from California that the first big robbery occurred. The culprit was James E. Negus, and he was the weigh clerk of the mint. There was at this time no assay office at New York, and all of the gold dust and nuggets were sent by the banks of the different cities to Philadelphia to be reduced to bullion. Negus had the handling of this treasure, and he for a long time carried on a systematic stealing from the different deposits sent in. It was his business to take charge of them, weigh them and put them into the vault until they could be melted. By taking a nugget or a pinch of dust from each deposit he was able to steal thousands of dollars, and he probably carried on his stealings during the whole of the four years that he was in the employ of the mint. Cochran was at this time a boy working in the mint. He acted as Negus's assistant. He was led to

was not from the treasury, but from the banks who sent in the gold, and there was no way of telling just how much he stole.

"It was in this way that Henry S. Cochran became weigh clerk of the mint," Director Preston went on. "He took the place of a thief, and there is no telling how soon he became a thief himself. He told me that he did not steal anything from the mint until after the deposit of that \$16,000,000 in gold bars; but his connection with the mint lasted for more than forty years and his position was the same as that of Negus. During his whole term of employment he had the confidence of every one. I have a letter here, signed by Daniel Sturgeon, who was treasurer of the United States when he was appointed. It is he who advises the appointment, and he describes Henry S. Cochran as honest, able and courteous. Cochran seemed to be crazy for gold. He fell in love with the precious metal, and when we found that he had robbed the mint of \$113,000 he hated to give up his stealings and he complained bitterly when the money found in his house was taken away. When he was appointed weigh clerk he was about twenty-three years old. When his robbery was discovered he was sixty-three. He was then a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, and was organizing a campaign for the Salvation Army in the neighborhood in which he lived. He had been married and divorced. He had a grown-up daughter. He appeared to be eminently respectable in every way and still he had been stealing for years."

"How did you come to suspect him of the robbery?" I asked.

"It was through his own actions," replied the director of the mint. "He had, you know, the charge of the vaults which contained the gold bullion. Much of this bullion had been untouched for years. In the vault from which the robbery was made there were \$16,000,000 worth of gold bars. This vault had not been opened for six years. The gold had been brought from the assay office in New York in 1801 and stored away in 1857. I aided in putting it in. The gold bars were piled up crosswise like railroad ties, and they were arranged, as usual, in a series of melts. When we



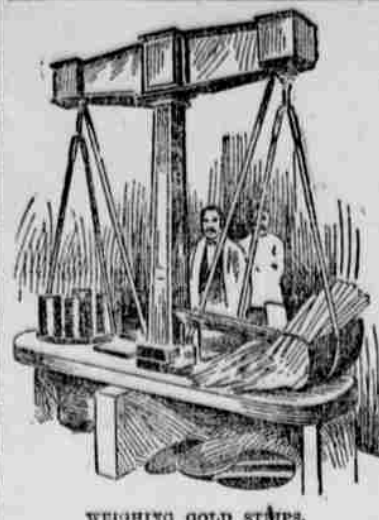
FIFTY MILLIONS OF SILVER BAGS AND BOXES.

put the gold in the vaults we put each melt by itself. Each gold brick has its number, and it is marked as to the melt to which it belongs, so we can tell just exactly how many pieces of gold there are in a vault, just where each piece is and just what it weighs. This bullion was weighed twice before it was put in. There were about twenty-five tons of it. I superintended the weighing. I helped to seal the doors of the vault when we were through and saw that everything was secured. From time to time the vault was inspected, but the seals were intact, and no one had any idea but that the gold was all there. About two years ago Secretary Carlisle gave orders that this bullion be coined. The vault was opened and more than 400 pounds of gold were missing. We had little trouble in detecting the thief. Cochran had been much excited when I told him of the intention to coin the bullion.

"He objected, and said the gold was so nicely piled up, and was such a beautiful sight to show to visitors, that the Government had better bring some of its bullion from New York and coin it. I laughed at this, the Cochran then insinuated that the gold might not be all there. When he found that we really intended to coin the gold, he came over to Washington to see me, thinking there might be yet a chance to stop it. He called at my house here at 11 o'clock one night, and asked if it was really true that the Government was going to take the gold out of that vault. I replied, 'Yes.' He then said: 'Well, you won't find all the gold there. Some of it is missing. It was never rightly weighed, and it is not there.' It was at this time that I began to suspect him, and I said to myself, 'Well, if any of that gold is lost, I think you know where it is. A day or so after this we opened the vault, and we found the gold was just \$113,000 short. Still, the seals were intact. The steel walls of the vault were unbroken, and there was no sign as to where the gold had gone. Cochran seemed very nervous, and upon finding that he was suspected, he confessed he was the thief. He showed how he had fished the gold out with a crooked wire. He would pull it down from the pile and drag it to the door of the vault, and then by slightly pushing the door at the bottom he was able to get it out through the crack between the door and the floor. He had carried it off, bar by bar, in his lunch basket, or in his trousers pocket, and had taken it to his home in the suburbs of Philadelphia."

"What did he do with the gold?" I asked.

"He sold it right back to the mint from which he had stolen it," replied Mr. Preston. "He did not dare to do this without remelting it, as the gold was so fine that it would be sure to create suspicion. He had at his home a crucible and he remelted the gold,



WEIGHING GOLD STAMPS.

mixing it with silver and lead. This last product he sent to us through the express company, and was able to do so without suspicion. We found one bar of gold in Cochran's house the day he confessed, and we also found \$5000 in gold eagles. It was a curious house. It was honeycombed with secret closets, and it was in these that the money was found. Cochran kept up his stealing to the last. The day the weighing was completed Cochran came down early. He was there before any of the other employees of the mint. We had weighed part of the gold. The vault was open, and there was a truck in it loaded with bars of bullion. Cochran, finding no one about, picked up twenty of these bars, and, one at a time, threw them into the ventilator shaft of the vault, so that they fell in between the roof of the vault and the floor above. When he confessed he told where this gold was and we got it back. The remainder was partially covered by that which we found at the house, and we received something from Cochran's property and his

bondsman. Uncle Sam is, however, still \$12,000 or \$13,000 short from that."

"What did they do with Cochran?" I asked.

"He was tried and sent to the penitentiary for a term of six years and seven months. He is now in prison. He weighed 250 pounds when he was arrested. He does not weigh 150 now, and has lost 100 pounds since his theft was discovered."

"Do you think he was insane?"

"That is a question," replied the director of the mint. "He seemed to be a monomaniac on the subject of gold. He claimed that he had saved the United States millions of dollars by guarding its treasures, and he was indignant when the gold was taken from him. Since that time we have not kept gold bullion in vaults of this nature, and there will probably never be a robbery of that kind again."

"Has Uncle Sam ever lost as much as this in the past?"

"There was little loss in Cochran's case," replied Director Preston. "The money was nearly all recovered. There have, however, been big losses in the past. In 1855, just about the time that I entered the Treasury Department, Uncle Sam lost \$150,000 at the San Francisco mint. When one of the settlements was made it was found that this much was short. The smelter and refiner claimed that this was waste, that it had been lost in refining or had escaped up the flues. It is a question in my mind whether he did not tell the truth. At any rate, he was arrested, but not convicted. Shortly after his trial he left the United States and went to South America. He was drowned there."

"There was a queer robbery at San Francisco in 1878, by which a colored night watchman stole \$20,000 in gold. It was known that gold was in some way or other being taken out of the mint, but it could not be traced. The detectives finally discovered that Henry Smith, the night watchman, had been selling bullion. They arrested him and charged him with taking it from the mint. He denied the crime. They then went to his home and thoroughly investigated it. They took up the floors and broke the furniture, but could find nothing. They next attacked the yard. They dug the soil over with spades, and found a little furnace in which gold had evidently at some time been melted. This was shown to the watchman, but he said he knew nothing about it. They then went back and dug up a flower bed, which they had not touched on account of its beauty. It was filled with pennies, and the ground about it was covered

with rose bushes and geraniums. They had dug about two feet down into the bed when they found a big earthen pot which was covered at the top with melted wax. Breaking this, they discovered a saucer beneath it, and under this there were seven cones of yellow gold, worth, all told, about \$6000. They took this to Smith, and he at once confessed. He had stolen about \$20,000 in less than three years. He had taken the gold from the separating tanks by means of a spoon. The bullion was placed in such tanks and treated with acid and water to remove the silver. By the action of the acid, the gold fell to the bottom in the shape of a fine black precipitate, and the silver solution was washed away. The tanks were covered and locked at night, but there was a hole in the bottom of them in which a hose was inserted for the washing of the precipitate. The watchman unscrewed the hose, and then, by means of a spoon, ladled out a few spoonfuls a day and took them home. Each spoonful was worth about \$20, and he laid the precipitate aside until he could buy a furnace and crucibles. With these he turned the black powder into yellow gold by melting it, and he sold the product to the bullion dealers of San Francisco."

"What was done with this man?" I asked.

"He was arrested, tried and sent to prison," replied Mr. Preston; "but his fate was rather an exception to that of the mint robbers of the past. Many of them have escaped punishment. I do not believe in this at all. I think they should be prosecuted and punished to the full extent of the law."

Food of Moles.

Little is known of the habits and food of our native moles. Professor H. Garman has examined the stomachs of fourteen moles in Kentucky, where it sometimes becomes troublesome in gardens and lawns by loosening the soil about newly set plants or marring the appearance of the sward. While strongly accused of eating seed corn after planting, it appears that the bulk of its food consists of earthworms and insects, especially the former. It is especially fond of the May beetle, the parent of the white grub, so destructive at times to lawns, and appears not to eat corn or vegetables of any sort.—New York Independent.

CALF WITH THREE LEGS.

He Has Only One Front Leg, and Was Born That Way.

There is a three-legged calf at Shickshinny, Penn. The triped belongs to S. C. McDaniels. Five months ago his faithful family cow presented him with Ben. Ben is the name of the calf that has become famous for being not like other calves. His right leg is entirely missing. Both hind legs are perfectly formed and placed. His left fore leg is also just as perfect as any calf's, but it is almost in the middle of his body. All the ribs are naturally formed, reaching all the way to the neck. There is not even the trace of a shoulder blade on the right side.

The calf weighs 250 pounds, and can run and play as lively as any calf with a full set of legs. Store piles and ditches are not obstacles to him—he frisks over them, tail high in the air, using his fore leg on the principle of a jumping pole. He has been much petted, and follows the members of the McDaniels family about like a dog.

At the tender age of four weeks Ben



THE CALF BORN WITH THREE LEGS.

left his mother and went with his master on a jaunt about the surrounding country, attracting considerable attention and earning considerably more than his living expenses, thanks to the willingness of Americans to pay to see freaks. He has not missed a meal in his life, and is unusually strong and healthy.—New York Journal.

Extinguishing Burning Oil.

Never throw water on burning oil—it only spreads the flame. Dry sand will quickly put out the burning flame by smothering it. If sand is not at hand in such emergency throw some heavy woolen substance, as a rug, a carpet or a damp towel or sheet, over it. Excluding the air is the great secret of extinguishing all fires.



Here—"Well, that was a hare-breadth escape!"—Truth.

COAT AND BASQUE.

SOME NEW ATTRACTIONS IN WOMAN'S APPAREL.

Stylish and Attractive Coat With Slashed Collar—An Exquisite French Model Basque of Striped Beige Cloth.

TOBACCO-brown cloth, velvet braid and smoked pearl buttons are stylishly combined in the smart top garment depicted in the first large illustration. The picturesque hat of brown felt, writes May Manton, is trimmed with velvet-edged ribbon and brown ostrich plumes.



COAT WITH SLASHED COLLAR AND PICTURESQUE HAT OF BROWN FELT.

The coat fronts are loose-fitting, closing in double-breasted fashion by three fanciful tabs at the top on the left side. The graceful and perfectly-fitting back is shaped by seams that extend to the shoulder, which are concealed by straps of cloth applied in tailor fashion. The center-back seam is omitted (the newest wrinkle, by the way). Below the waist line the back is laid in deep box plaits.

An attractive feature is the stylish collar, cut in deep slashes and outlined on its free edges with braid. It is so arranged upon a deep band as to provide the fashionable flare.

The one-seam gigot sleeves are of moderate but fashionable fullness, and are completed at the wrists by flaring cuffs of velvet to match the collar. Prettily shaped pocket laps cover inserted pockets.

Melton, covert, whipcord and all regulation plain or mixed cloakings may be employed in making this stylish coat with decorations of fur, Astrakhan, braid, or plainly finished by machine stitching.

To make this jacket in the medium size it will require two and three-fourths yards of fifty-four-inch wide material.

LADIES' FRENCH MODEL BASQUE.

Striped beige cloth made the exquisite basque that closes in centre-front with small buttons and button-holes, are laid at the neck on each side of the box-plait in centre front. These plaits spread gradually, allowing an easy, graceful fullness over the bust which is confined again at the waist line, and the lower edge is concealed under the dress skirt. The full back



FRENCH MODEL BASQUE OF STRIPED BEIGE CLOTH.

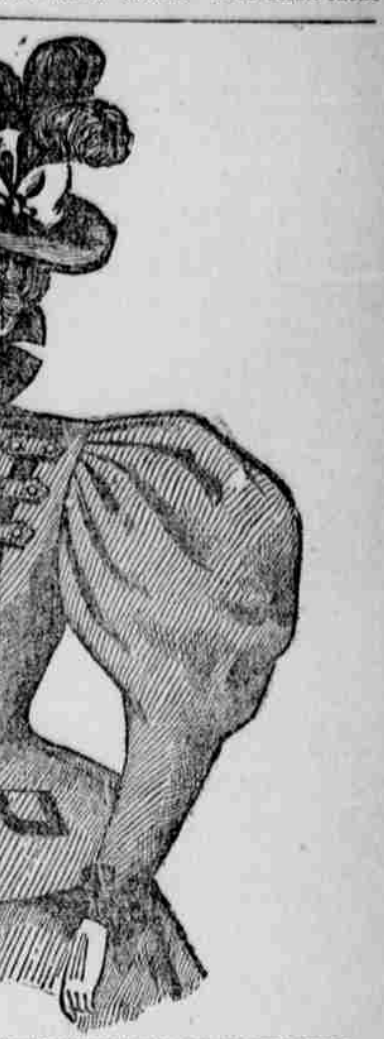
as shown in the second large engraving. The waist, of becoming length, is rendered glove-fitting by double bust darts, under-arm and side-back gores with a curved centre-back. A smooth standing collar of velvet fits the neck closely. The one-seamed gigot sleeve of fashionable fullness is arranged over coat-shaped linings and finished at the wrists with flaring velvet cuffs. When cut with "V" shaped neck and embellished with trimming, the waist is suitable to complete a

dinner toilette, while the circular or square neck will be appropriate for an evening bodice.

To make this basque for a lady having a thirty-six-inch bust measure, it will require two and seven-eighths yards of forty-two-inch wide material.

NEWEST MODES IN WAISTS.

Peacock blue and green shot silk made this stylish waist, which is one of the newest modes. The rolling collar and cuffs of white linen are adjustable and can be removed to have laundered when necessary, or when made to match the waist they can be permanently secured. A handsome stock collar of satin ribbon is tied under the collar in a large bow at the centre back. Belt to match closed with silver buckles. Five small tuks



LADIES' WAIST.

is stylishly plaited or gathered, as preferred, and joined to the straight lower edge of yoke lining, the handsomely pointed yoke in newest design being laid flat over the plaits or gathers and stitched on the curved edge. The stylish bishop sleeves are fashionably wide, gathered at the top and finished with wrist-bands to which the



LADIES' WAIST.

is stylishly plaited or gathered, as preferred, and joined to the straight lower edge of yoke lining, the handsomely pointed yoke in newest design being laid flat over the plaits or gathers and stitched on the curved edge. The stylish bishop sleeves are fashionably wide, gathered at the top and finished with wrist-bands to which the