

Crimes and Criminals.

No. III.—COINERS AND COINING.

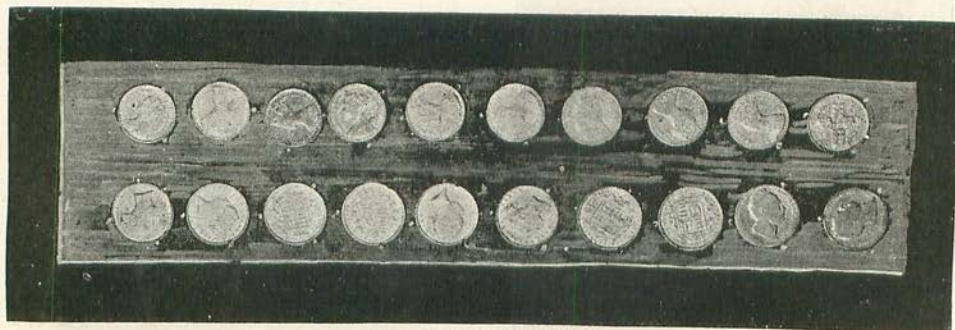


FIG. 1.—BURNISHING BOARD.



HE up-to-date counterfeit-money coiner is one of the most difficult individuals with whom the police have to deal. He is a positive artist. He no longer cuts shillings with a pair of scissors out of brass and silvers them over, as was done in the early part of the present century. He employs more scientific means, and his methods are such that only men of considerable ingenuity and inventive powers could possibly hope to bring them to a successful issue. But, alas! as in most things—woman's in it!—and to the fair sex belongs the first case on record in which any person appears to have been executed for counterfeiting the coin of the realm.

In May, 1721, Barbara Spencer had the crime brought home to her of indulging in the—in those days—highly treasonable pastime of manufacturing shilling pieces. She employed two other women, Alice Hall and Elizabeth Bray, to act as her agents, or “passers,” and it is a significant fact that in almost every case of counterfeiting up to the present day women are employed in this particular branch of the profession. Barbara, it should be mentioned, was strangled and burned at Tyburn, on the 5th July, 1721, her accomplices being acquitted.

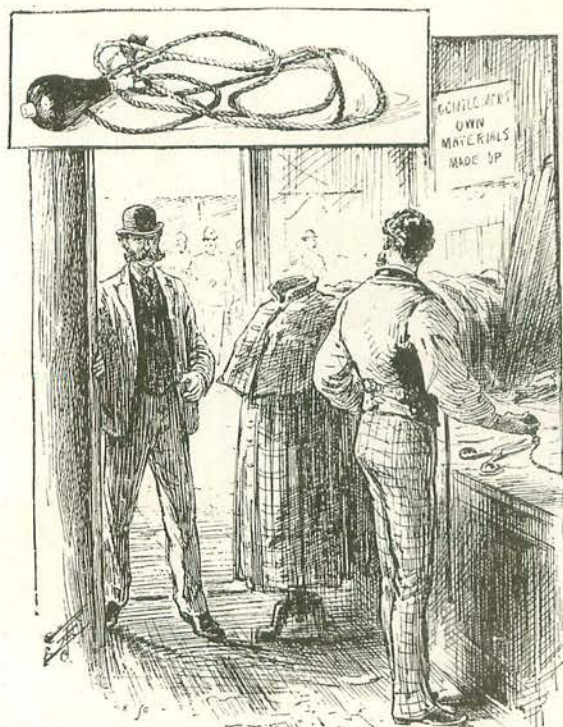
The question may be asked: Is the manufacture of counterfeit coin in a flourishing condition? The answer is a very decided affirmative. True, the convictions against counterfeiters are few and far between; but that is owing to the very elaborate measures adopted by the counterfeiters themselves of

preventing a knowledge of their whereabouts becoming the property of the police. Your next-door neighbour may be a magnificent hand at turning out “five-bob” pieces; your butcher, greengrocer, and milk purveyor may all be adepts at the game. In proof of this, examine this bell and its companion. One is an ordinary electric bell—the other an invalid's bell-push.

Thomas Raven, *alias* Cooper, Beauchamp, and “Tom the Tailor,” was a tailor in the salubrious neighbourhood of Bethnal Green. The police made a raid upon the premises and discovered something like 200 pieces of base coin in the cellar below, and between the joists some lampblack, plaster of Paris, and a spoon which had contained molten metal. The coiners were fairly caught. It was the duty of the gentleman in charge of the shop upstairs to give a certain signal with the bell, to warn the enterprising personages downstairs. A mistake was made, and the irrepressible Tom remarked, when told the charge: “Well, I have had a long run; but if they had given the signals right this morning, you would not have had me now.”

It was, indeed, a long run. It took three years to run “Tom the Tailor” and a lady who helped to get rid of the coin to earth; and it was believed that the *pseudo* coat-cutter had been making counterfeit coin for the last seventeen years, and before that he had acted as coiners' agent. If time is money, Tom is still at his old occupation—fourteen years' penal servitude.

New Scotland Yard has every reason to



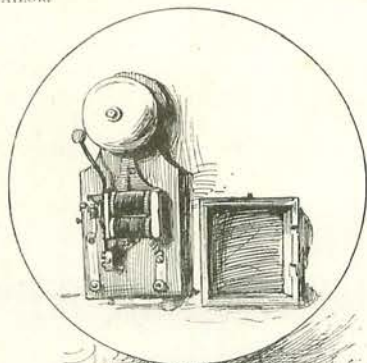
A SURPRISE FOR THE TAILOR.

be proud of its counterfeit collection—it certainly has real and original samples of everything associated with this glittering profession, which we shall now proceed to specify. We do so without the slightest qualms of conscience, and without any fear that anything we may say may lead to anybody admiring these remarks too greatly, and seeking to imitate. We are informed that years of practice are necessary to come up to the standard counterfeit coin of to-day. Take this sovereign, which is accorded the place of honour in one of the glass cases. It was made in Barcelona, and actually contains sixteen shillings' worth of gold in its composition. It would deceive a banker—there is the true, honest, unadulterated ring about it. Its date is 1862. To those

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whom it may concern—that is, those who happen to be in possession of sovereigns of this date—this fact may be interesting. Beware of Barcelonas!

But this gold piece is an exception. There are two or three thousand gold and silver coins here—all arranged in the prettiest and most delightful of heaps—that would not deceive the easiest-going of individuals. Pennies, sixpences, shillings, two-shilling pieces, half-crowns, crown pieces, half-sovereigns, and sovereigns are all here, the most popular, however, amongst the fraternity being the shilling, two-shilling piece, and half-crown, as people, when they accept change, are less likely to “try” these than coins of a higher value. There are some coins here, however, which positively call for respect. These George IV. half-crowns are perfect. The King's head is partially worn away by time—grit and dirt, from constant use of seventy years, are lodged in the creases of the coin. But time did not wear the King's features away, or constant use provide the dirt. After the coin was in a finished state it was placed on a burnishing board (Fig. 1)—made of a piece of ordinary deal, with a few tacks stuck in to hold the coins in position—and rubbed over with an old scrubbing brush, in order to dull the coin and



COINERS SURPRISED.

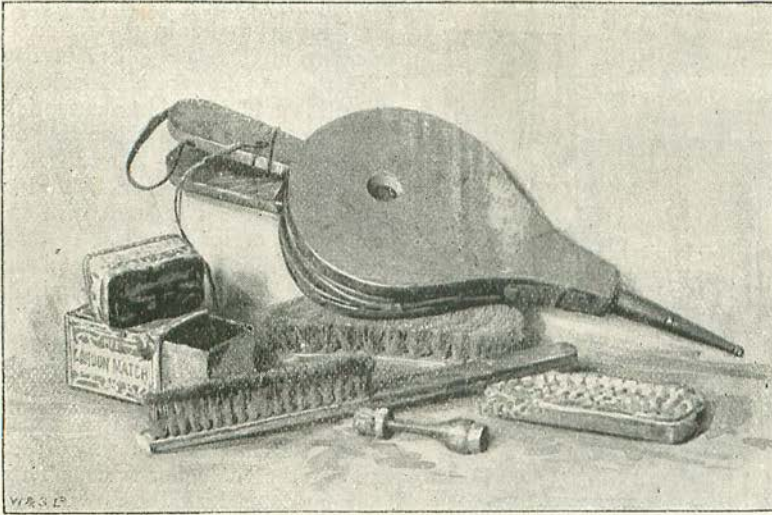


FIG. 2.—LAMPBLACK, BRUSHES, AND BELLOWS.

give it an ancient appearance. And the dirt? It is here quite handy. It is in a match-box bearing a portrait of General Gordon, whilst another deposit is in a small tin whose label tells that it was originally intended for mustard. Both the match-box and the mustard-tin contain lampblack. The bellows is used for "blowing-up" purposes (Fig. 2).

But George IV. is, or was, a great favourite with counterfeiters. There are such things in this world as lucky sixpences, and they are signalled out as such charms, should they happen to have a hole bored through them. Who would not give a mere paltry ordinary sixpence for one of these bringers of luck, and a George IV. at that? Echo answers—everybody. We hope Echo will be more careful after learning the use of this little drill which we are now examining (Fig. 3). It is used by counterfeiters to bore holes into sixpences, which they can war-

fiftieth anniversary of Her Majesty's accession to the throne. Once again the counterfeiter had a chance. True, the Jubilee sixpences offered him admirable opportunities in the way of giving further point to the old adage that "All is not gold that glitters." But he went farther. He made counterfeit half-crowns and five-shilling pieces, fastened pins to them, and put them on the market, charging but a small sum for the supplementary fastener.

"Well," argued the purchaser, "the coin will always be worth the money!" Permit

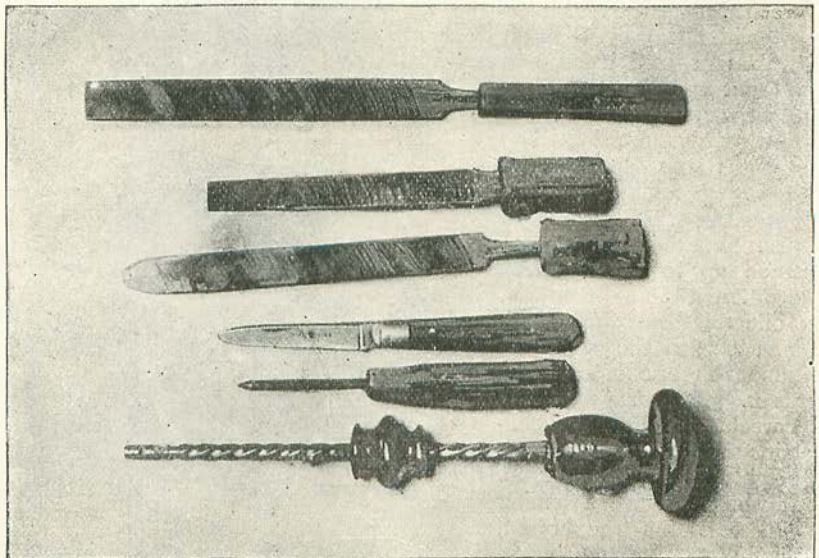


FIG. 3.—COINERS' TOOLS.

rant, seeing that they are their own make. The counterfeit brooch is not missing from the collection. It had its birth with the issue of the Jubilee coins, when those who could afford it had one of the gold Jubilee five-pound pieces—which were coined to the value of over £250,000—mounted as a brooch, and worn or treasured as a souvenir of the

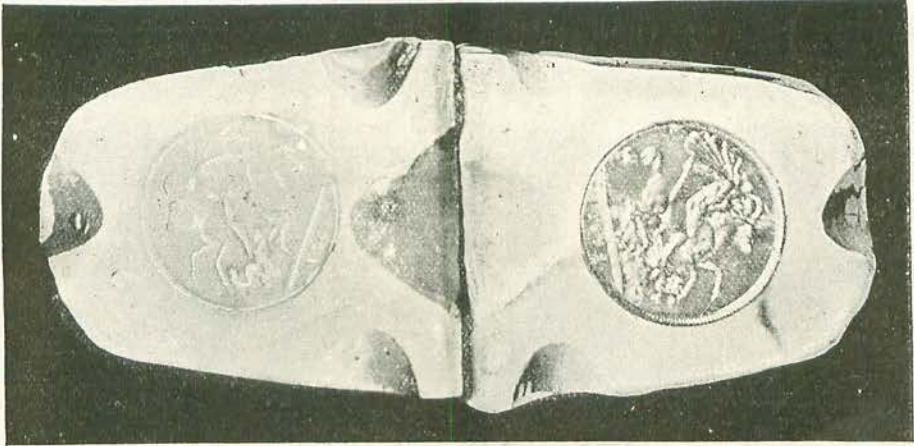


FIG. 4.—MOULD FOR FIVE-SHILLING PIECE.

us to observe that the price realized for sham coins rarely exceeds twopence to twopence-halfpenny in the shilling, whilst a true, sterling shilling would buy four base half-crowns.

In order to arrive in some measure at the exact method of manufacture, it is proposed to examine the curiosities of the New Scotland Yard counterfeiting cases more minutely.

Every coiner has his "pattern" piece, that is, a genuine piece of money, which is to give the cast of the coin intended to be copied. The cast from the true coin is taken in plaster of Paris of the finest possible quality. There are enough moulds here to thoroughly colonize a country with counterfeiters! They may be accepted as excellent examples, for the greater proportion formed part of the stock-in-trade of the notorious John H—, *alias* Sydney A—, who was rewarded with twenty years; some were also found on the premises occupied by a famous Fulham coiner—whose name we are asked not to publish, but of whom more anon; others belonged to a worthy who made the fine and large crown-pieces a speciality (Fig. 4). Some are quite clean, others are burnt through constant use, not a few show the coin in its rough state, with the edge uncut and unfiled (Fig. 5), a process

performed by an ordinary pocket-knife and file; whilst a "half-crown" mould reveals the "get" (Fig. 6), or surplus liquid, which is poured into this receptacle for making false impressions.

Here are the lead and ladles (Fig. 7). The ladles belonged to a man who was forced to submit to twelve years' penal servitude as recently as 1891. They are about one and a half feet long, and are used for melting the composition on the fire. The ladles are similar to those used by plumbers, costing perhaps eighteenpence or a couple of shillings. When a ladle is not used, then a melting-pot or crucible is called into requisition (Fig. 8); even a saucepan would not be despised. When a pot or a saucepan is used the glittering liquid is taken out in a boiling state by iron spoons—and these spoons, of all shapes and sizes, designs and prices, are provided with a special corner.

Much speculation has always existed as to the real ingredients of a counterfeit coin. Solder—here is another item in the plumber's outfit—is often the original foundation. But such lead is very poor in itself, and tin and bismuth have both been found to possess excellent hardening properties (Fig. 9). But the finest foundation for a counterfeit coin is obtained out of a certain receptacle from which your average working man invariably blows the froth previous to sampling the contents—pewter-pots! Here we have a reason for the frequent thefts



FIG. 5.—COUNTERFEIT COINS (UNFINISHED).

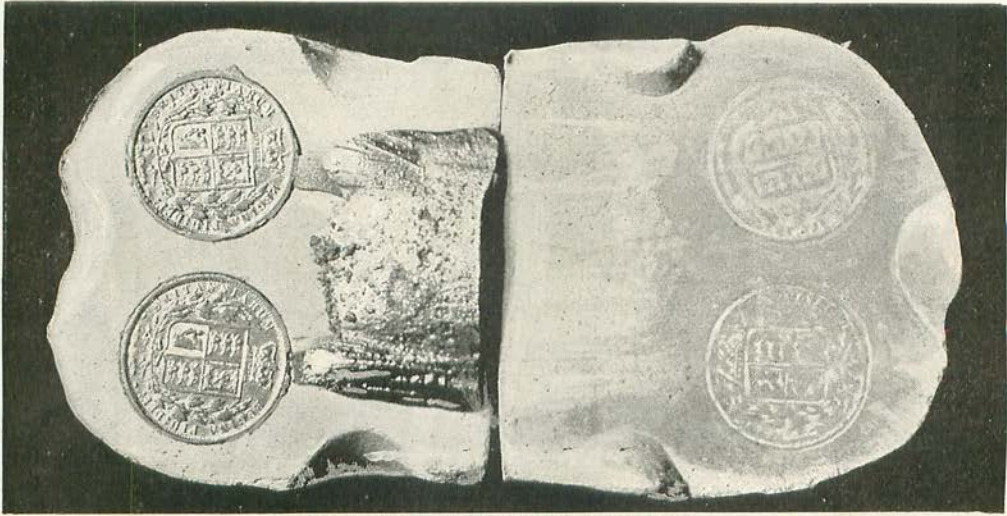


FIG. 6.—A HALF-CROWN MOULD, SHOWING "GET."

of the traditional holders of mild and bitter, and when such a theft is brought home to a man, he is at once surmised, and very properly so, to be in league with coiners.

Whilst on the subject of pewter-pots, the writer is inclined to relate an amusing incident, communicated to him by an East-end publican. Some curious contests take place in Whitechapel and its environs, one of the most popular of which is that of pewter-pot cleaning, when James, the potman at the "Three Boot Brushes," meets William, who holds a similar position at the "Laughing Lobster," in friendly rivalry, to decide who can clean the greatest number of pewter-pots in an hour.

This particular East-end publican had such a contest at his "house" one Sunday morning, and after a most exciting contest his own particular potman won. This was all very comforting. But, by some mysterious means, the same evening the public-house was robbed of a number of pots—and all clean, too!

"I wouldn't 'ave minded *that*, sir," said the communicative publican, with a decided emphasis on the "that," when relating this—"I wouldn't 'ave minded *that*;" but what annoyed me was the remarkable number of bad two-

shilling pieces me and the missus took over the counter a week afterwards!"

The pewter having been melted, the coins having been cast—the two sides of the mould being kept together by clamps made of strong hoop-iron, in order to secure a firm impression (Fig. 10)—filed and edged, and got as near the proper weight of a good coin as possible, a very important process now takes place. We will take "silver" coins as an example. The coins are put on battery racks. Several of these are to be found here—a pair (Fig. 11) near a couple of batteries (Fig. 12) will suit our purpose well. One is empty, and shows the wires made in various sizes to hold securely the coin intended to be immersed in the bath containing the silvering solution. The other, as will be seen in the illustration, is well charged with coins. The process of silvering coins is exactly similar to that of plating knives, spoons, forks, etc., though the vat—which is usually made of iron with a thin

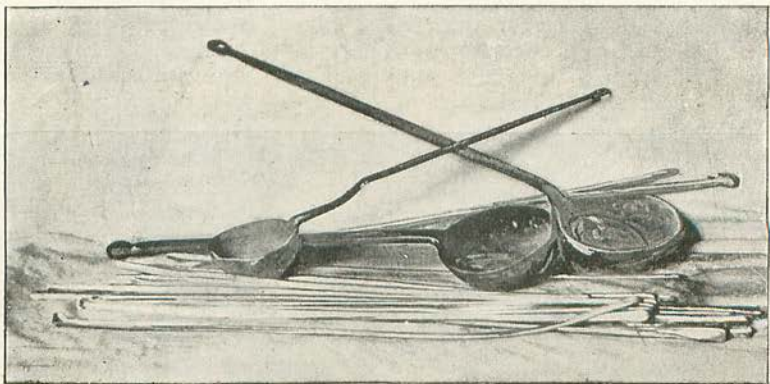


FIG. 7.—LEAD AND LADLES.

lining of wood—containing the plating liquid is very much smaller than those used by men engaged in a legitimate business.

The "charged" rack is now put into the vat. Coins made out of Britannia metal, tin, or pewter are not dropped into acid before plating, but into a

very strong and boiling hot solution of pure caustic potash. The coins are then scratched with a small brush especially made for this purpose, or at once taken from the alkali without having been immersed in water, and plunged direct into a cyanide of silver solution at about 190° Fahrenheit. An electric current of great strength is run through the vat in which are the coins until they begin to receive a thin coating. After this they undergo a treatment of ordinary plating solution to receive the full amount of silvering required. This completed, they are fixed on a burnishing board to relieve them of any undue brightness.

We have already referred to a board of this kind, but there is one at New Scotland Yard of peculiar interest. In the first place, it is curious from the fact that it is made out of the seat of a common wooden kitchen chair (Fig. 13), and, further, it is surrounded by far more curiosity when it is known that it once formed part of the stock-in-trade of one of the most scientific coiners of modern times. His name can only be hinted at as "the Party from Fulham." He approached coin-



FIG. 8.—MELTING-POT AND CRUCIBLES.

ing from a thoroughly artistic point of view. His ideas of counterfeiting and gilding were all carried out on the highest scientific principles, and an examination of his property revealed an extraordinary state of affairs.

When arrested he had in his possession 8s. 10½d. in good money, together with a shilling and two sixpences, which, judging from their appearance, had evidently been used as "pattern" pieces. But his home-made coins were as extensive as they were peculiar. They included 1 five-pound piece, 8 two-pound pieces, 31 sovereigns, 18 half-sovereigns, 125 half-crowns, 51 florins, 101 shillings, and 174 sixpences. A capital and convincing collection! In addition, he had in the way of manufacturing paraphernalia, 17 moulds, 1 battery, 2 ladles, a quantity of plaster of Paris, melting-pot, plate of sand, 9 bottles of chemicals—including gold plating solution and liquid ammonia, a selection of which receptacles is shown in company with a Leclanché battery (Fig. 14), made out of a common three-pound jam jar—files, clamps, brushes, etc.; in short, everything to prove

that he was the one to whom the expression of "You're coining money, old boy!" would be honestly applied by any enterprising detective anxious to slap him on the back and to decorate him with "the bracelets."

Perhaps, how-

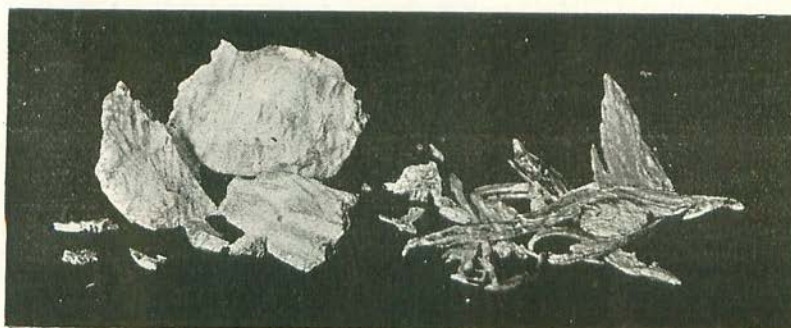


FIG. 9.—TIN AND BISMUTH.

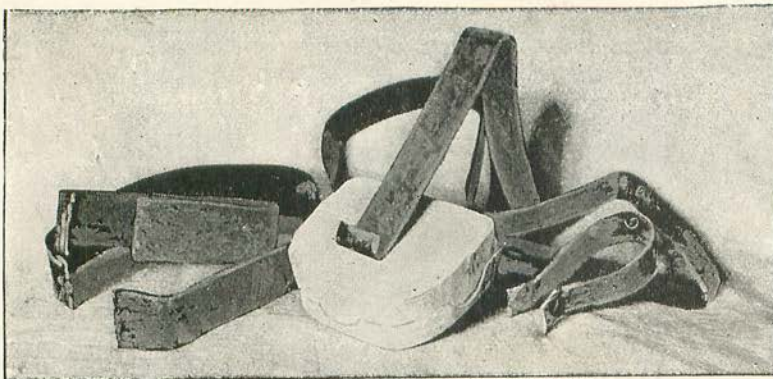


FIG. 10.—CLAMPS AND MOULD CLOSED—WITH CLAMP.

ever, the books he used are the most interesting. These consist of a couple of standard works on chemistry, which he had freely interpolated with marginal notes and pencil marks against anything calculated to assist him in the pursuit of his profession. But his "private" reference book is the good thing in his pack of literature. It is a book similar to that which any schoolboy would use to do his homework in. It contains the addresses of English taverns in Paris, servants' registry offices, sewing machine dealers, shops where furniture may be obtained on hire, house agents, money-lenders, addresses of statesmen, etc. The newspaper cuttings in this volume are of a varied character, and include an advertisement of "A Young Gentleman who has a Grand Piano for Sale," "A Good Cure for a Cold," "Cure for Chilblains," "Furniture Polish," and prescriptions for removing surplus hair from the back of the neck, the right treatment of headaches, the proper ingredients for making a highly satisfactory mustard plaster, and a certain cure for sluggish livers!

"The Party from Fulham" adopted—probably in his early career—an ingenious means of becoming possessed of useful information—a method which it would be well if those papers who reply indiscriminately to questions sent them would make note of. He would write to periodicals asking such simple conundrums as, "Will you kindly tell me the simplest way to make a battery?" or, "Would you kindly say in an early issue the simplest way to make solder for silver?" He often got replies, as is proved from a newspaper cutting, giving an answer to the last query—an answer we refrain from publishing, seeing that it gives a very efficacious recipe for the first step towards "making money."

Further, it is presumed that "the Party from Fulham" either kept a shop, was a receiver of stolen property, or else attended sales and purchased articles in the hopes of pawning them and securing a profit—the latter a distinct business in the East-end of London. The

book contains an entry against the name of a well-known pawnbroker, of "a wedding-ring, 4s.," followed by the bitterly suggestive words, "ticket lost"! And there are entries relating to everything between a violin and a paillasse, a brass fender and a blue beaver coat. There is actually a ticket of admission to a cookery lecture, which all goes to prove that "the Party from Fulham" was a most prolific personage.

We propose saying something as to how counterfeit coins are circulated, with one or two instances of ingenuity on the part of those responsible for putting them about. The coins being completely finished, they

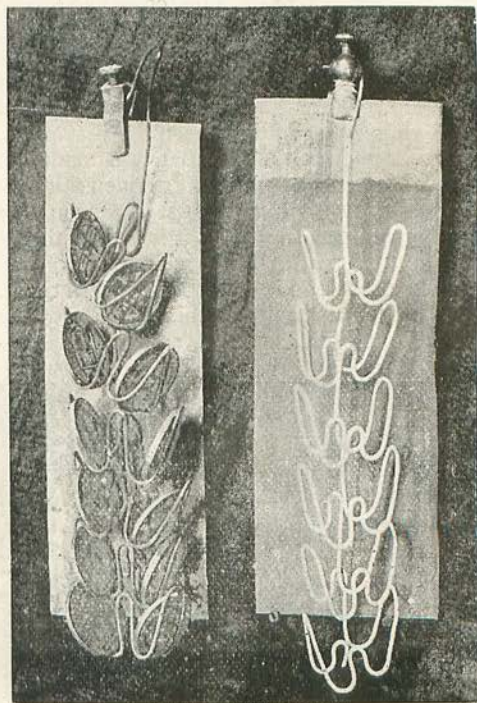


FIG. 11.—BATTERY RACKS.

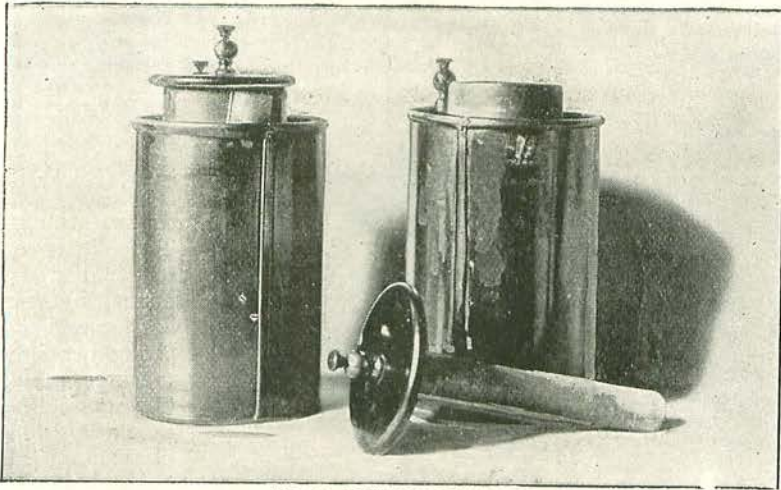


FIG. 12.—ELECTRIC BATTERIES.

are wrapped up in tissue paper (Fig. 15) in parcels of a dozen or so, with a piece of paper between each coin in order to keep them from scratching and chinking when passed from one person's hand to another's. There are usually four persons employed in a delivery of counterfeit coin to the public: the maker, the agent, or go-between—in most cases a woman—the buyer, and the passer proper, the latter individual never knowing who the actual maker is. The bundles of coins are generally sold at street corners—by appointment only—or in public-houses. They are conveyed to the rendezvous in many ways, perhaps the most original of which was that of the man who carried a couple of bird-cages—one containing a beautiful little singer which trilled away to its heart's content, and the other full of counterfeit money!

Women, more often than not, lead to a conviction, as the would-be passer, say of a bad half-crown on a too-confiding grocer, has seldom more than one bad coin on him. He makes a small purchase at the grocer's and tenders the coin. The man of sugar and spice looks at it.

"Excuse me, sir," he remarks, "but I think this half-crown is bad!"

Artful one takes it back.

"Dear me, so it is! Ah! that's all right," giving a good one this time. "Thanks. No,

don't trouble to send it home. Good day!"

Had he succeeded in passing the half-crown, ten minutes afterwards he would have been supplied with one equally bad by the lady in waiting round the corner. This is where the police find such difficulty in bringing home a conviction to the actual passer, as anybody in these deceitful days might find himself

the unfortunate possessor of a spurious coin. Perhaps the before-mentioned grocer would complain to a policeman. The man would be watched. He would be seen to "speak to the woman." That would be quite enough—and the possibilities are that they would find the counterfeit coins concealed about her person, as was the case with a lady whose Christian name was Harriet, and who owned to thirty-nine years of age at Clerkenwell Police-court, who had no fewer than forty counterfeit florins sewn up in her dress. It was sufficient to cast her husband on the hospitality of a country, the inhabitants of which are not inclined to grumble at being obliged to provide him with convict comforts for a period of eight years.

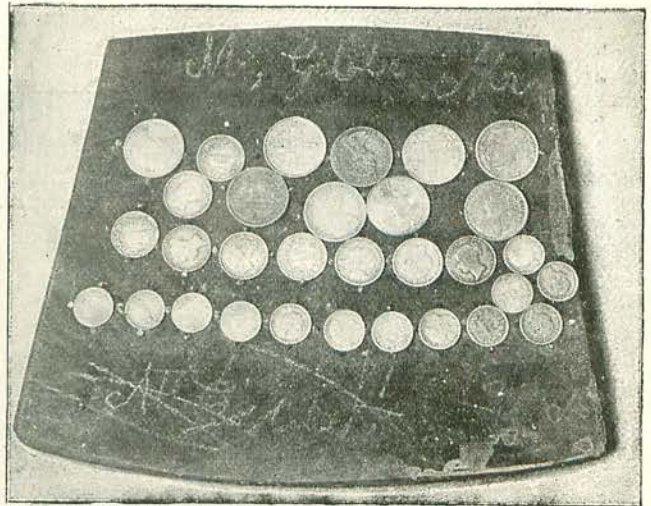


FIG. 13.—BURNISHING BOARD MADE OUT OF CHAIR SEAT.



FIG. 14.—LECLANCHE LATTERY, AND BOTTLES OF GOLD SOLUTION, ETC.

A frequent method employed is to "work" a publican—and this is the more enterprising on the "passer's" part, seeing that the generality of publicans are men who are not often to be caught asleep.

Scene: "The Last House."

Enter well-dressed man smoking big cigar.

Polite Publican: "Good evening, sir."

Big Cigar Proprietor: "Good evening. Brandy and soda, please!" (Throws down a sovereign, receives brandy and soda and change, the change all in silver. Big Cigar Proprietor picks up change.)

Big Cigar Proprietor: "Oh! excuse me—could you let me have half-a-sovereign for ten shillings' worth of this silver?"

Polite Publican (always ready to oblige): "Certainly, sir." (Does so.)

The publican gets, as he thinks, ten shillings' worth of silver back. Does he? Oh, dear, no! There were three bad two-shilling pieces amongst it!

It would be difficult to hit upon two more contrasting illustrations than the following. The first instance goes to prove that children are called into play as "passers"—though unconsciously so—in the case when the smallest "coined" piece

the dock and put in the box to give evidence against her father. Her childish evidence was convincing enough, and at the end of the examination, the man, overcome with better feelings, contrived to catch the little one up in his arms, ere he was sent down below, caressing her fondly and covering her tiny face with kisses.

Such a method—an awkward method, and one in every way calculated to be eventually found out—stands in strong contrast with the really delicate and ingenious means employed by a lady whose efforts at changing a sovereign were worthy a better cause.

Her *modus operandi* was to select say a boot-maker's shop, generally in a well-populated suburban district, and purchase boots to the value of nineteen and sixpence.

"Will you kindly send them to my house, No. 42, Easyway Terrace, in an hour's time?" she asks the shopkeeper.



FIG. 15.—COINS PACKED IN TISSUE PAPER.



CARRYING COUNTERFEIT COIN.

“Certainly, madam.”

“I will pay the messenger when he brings them—I find I have not sufficient money in my purse. Mrs. Adams is my name,” she further remarks, and leaves the shop.

In an hour's time the boy with the boots is on his way to No. 42, Easyway Terrace. Curiously enough, he is met outside by Mrs. Adams herself!

“Oh! are those boots for Mrs. Adams?”

“Yes, mum.”

“Thank you. Let me see,” playing with

her purse, “nineteen and six. There's a sovereign. You can keep the sixpence for being so punctual.”

The lad is delighted, and away he goes whistling. The lady is equally pleased—away she goes with the boots to a pawnbroker's. The shopkeeper is in a rage—for the sovereign is a counterfeit one!

It will be well to state the best means of detecting counterfeit coin. The simplest and most effective test is to bite it. If the coin is bad, the bite will produce a very gritty sensation on the teeth, which is never produced by a genuine piece of money. This test will be found to be an infallible one.



THE COUNTERFEITER AND HIS CHILD.