

SWINDLING AS A FINE ART

MOST confidence tricksters have but a single arrow to their quiver, an "unfailing" trick that they work to death over a period of years.

But they hatch their operations with the greatest care; not a detail goes unforeseen.

The most ingenious rackets are those that speculate on the inherent dishonesty of many "honest folk."

A seedy-looking man will walk up and down in front of a Paris department store during the afternoon. He keeps his eye open for elegant women who are driven upon to the store in luxurious motor-cars.

"Madam, are you the person who dropped this pearl necklace?"

He displays a good-looking necklace that he claims to have picked up from the pavement.

Most frequently the woman will be truthful and reply in the negative. Occasionally the woman will be seized by curiosity and ask to see the necklace.

And then, clutching her throat, in simulated emotion, she will ex-

claim, "Good God! My necklace!"

The scheme has clicked. The woman will produce a few hundred francs (£1 equal to about 176 francs) to reward the poor man for his honesty.

The good woman, of course, hopes to come into possession of a 100,000 franc necklace through his happy accident. The necklace, however, is of the sort that can be bought in any department store for a few francs.

There is almost no end to the variety of schemes that crooks operate, relying on the elasticity of conscience of otherwise honest people.

The following is a racket that dates back twenty years.

A well-to-do Frenchman receives a ten-franc bill from an unknown party accompanied by the following letter.

"Dear Sir: I have perfected a method for manufacturing ten-franc bills. You can judge the quality of my production from the enclosed sample. Present it to

the Bank and ask whether it is good. I am certain of the reply."

Invariably the victim will let himself in for the experiment.

"I am afraid it is counterfeit," he will tell the cashier. "A merchant refused to accept it."

"On the contrary, it is genuine," replies the cashier, and adds with a sigh, "I wish they were all as good as this."

The following week the Frenchman receives a second letter.

"Dear Sir: I am sure that you found the first bill that I sent you completely satisfactory. I am now in a position to sell you five more at two francs each." An address is given.

"Bah," thinks the good man, "I will only be risking the ten francs that I made on the first operation." But he sends for the bills and receives brand new notes that are accepted by the cashier without any difficulty whatsoever.

A month later another letter arrives.

"Dear Sir: I am now in a position to begin producing on a big scale. Since the entire business is not without certain risks for myself I must know the exact amount of your order. Please send me the sum that you are pre-

pared to devote to these operations."

By this time the Frenchman has been bitten by the demon of greed. He collects ten thousand francs and sends them to the general delivery address indicated.

He never hears again from his unknown correspondent.

The reader will have guessed by this time that the bills that had been sent to the greedy Frenchman were genuine ones and served as a bait. The crook can't complain about the rates of return on his investment.

This racket can be worked on a grand scale for it is highly improbable that the victims will report their misfortune to the police.

A few weeks ago a similar incident took place. A rich French industrialist met two ingenious inventors of an original sort.

"We have invented a 'magic box' that reproduces money by a special copying process. You insert a banknote in it and two come out."

A demonstration given in a hotel room proved absolutely conclusive. The next day the Frenchman paid the £3,000 for the box and the two "inventors" disappeared.

The "magic box," however, at once stopped working. The Frenchman went to the police. The two crooks were arrested. The poor victim was left at liberty.

Art amateurs are the choicest quarry for swindlers. Recently Greek customs officials questioned a rich American tourist about a white marble arm that they found tucked away in his baggage.

"That," replied the Yankee, "is an arm of Venus de Milo. It was sold to me with a written guarantee by an antiquary in Athens. I paid £2,000 for it. I hesitated to declare it because I thought that the Government would prohibit the exportation of so valuable an object."

The police interviewed the antiquary in question and discovered that he had been doing a thriving business in arms of Venus de Milo. He had already sold three of them at the fixed price of £2,000 each—all three to Americans, of course.

All of which is decidedly flattering to Venus de Milo if not to the perspicacity of the American "amateurs."

The technique of the swindle at its very finest is demonstrated on a modest scale by "the man with the glasses."

This crook is an elderly gentleman. He preys on young girls residing in the centre of Paris, who are about to be married to men with homes in the suburbs. Their fiancés' mothers must still be alive.

The names and addresses of such girls are easily accessible at the various district town halls. Of the eight hundred marriages that take place in Paris every week about fifty will fulfill these conditions.

The old gentleman asks to see the girl or her mother and begins as follows: "Madame X (the name of the future mother-in-law) came into the city yesterday to order this pair of glasses from me. Since she was unable to come in again to fetch them, and since she needs them at once, she asked me to leave them with you, and have you give them to her son. As for the bill . . ."

At this point the young girl, eager to please her future mother-in-law, usually interrupts, "I will pay the bill. Mme. X will refund the money to me. How much is it?"

"Eighty francs."

The glasses are worth about ten francs. The sharper who works this racket has never been caught.

A little reflection will convince

one that the technique of this racket is pretty well fool-proof.

The worst that can happen (in case the future mother-in-law is blind or on bad terms with her

son) is that the girl will refuse to pay. She will never call the police for fear of publicity.—*Paul Getin, condensed from Vendredi, Paris.*

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THE JAPANESE IN BRAZIL

SCATTERED about Brazil there are some 180,000 Japanese. They work the country in compact, secretive groups. Japanese laborers are imported, perhaps conscripted, by Japanese companies from Japan and put on the land under co-operative organization. They work like beavers. At night they practice their ritual *jujitsu* and *kendo*, and see Japanese movies twice a week. They speak no Portuguese, mix with no Brazilians. They are supposed to drill in secret in their villages. They build oval wood houses with a dining room in the center, flanked by kitchen and bedroom. When they get into trouble, the Japanese consul takes care of them.

The Japanese naturally mystify and frighten the Brazilians. Nobody can figure out what they are up to. Once the Japanese children were taught by Japanese teachers. Now the Brazilians have compelled them to study under Brazilian teachers and to learn Portuguese. Brazil has clamped an official quota on Japanese immigration but still Japanese pour in because they are the cheapest and best obtainable labor. Outside real estate, their economic stake in Brazil is small. The Japanese run shops in a few towns and cities. Some are fishermen on the coast. Some rent land from the Brazilians and work it to death. Some even hire poor Italians and Brazilians at the lowest wages paid in Brazil. But at present the Japanese are only a strange, unassimilated lump in Brazil's army of races.—*Condensed from Life.*