

When doctors graft it is folly to be sick.

Another thing that will make Milwaukee famous is a "woman policeman."

Why worry over good roads when we are all on the verge of taking to wings?

If war scares keep on accumulating they may be offered by the dozen at reduced rates.

When women are required to sit on juries they should be permitted to bring their knitting.

Western farmers are returning to the effete east to buy up the deserted farms of that section.

Fir lumber has gone up one dollar on the thousand. Now, all together: This is going too far!

Goose-bone prophets are of the opinion that this winter will stretch out as long as a British election.

Alfalfa in various forms is to be served at a banquet in Colorado. Now who is "brother to the ox?"

Alexander wept because he had no more worlds to conquer when he should have hustled around and found a few.

Pittsburg wants to annex about a dozen suburbs. This is likely to start a new annexation movement in Cleveland.

The unarmored cruiser Detroit, which cost \$233,000, has just been sold for \$20,000. So run the fighting ships away.

New York's largest hotel is to cost \$17,000,000. It is to be built on Herald square at Twenty-fourth street and Broadway.

School teachers think they are entitled to pensions, but can teaching be called war since corporal punishment has been abolished?

A Boston man declares that he can prove that there are nine hells, and we presume that discovering that the furnace fire is out is one of them.

That New York man who started to shoot himself but thrice changed his mind in time to dodge the bullets may live to congratulate himself on his fickleness.

Morocco is to pay money to Spain for the war which Spain recently fought in Morocco. Such is the embarrassing consequence of coming out only second best.

Maybe some time they will invent a padded aeroplane which will not rise more than ten feet from the ground. Then the careful man will become interested.

He has football in the fall and track athletics and baseball in the spring and now the college student has ice hockey all winter. And yet he is said to play too little.

In the year 1910 the American hen laid 17 dozen eggs for every man, woman and child in the country. We have reason for believing, however, that at least several dozen of those eggs are still in cold storage.

A report from Berlin has it that Emperor William has become interested in boxing. It is not likely, however, that he will at his time of life try for the middle-weight championship of Germany.

Men who began life as waiters now own one of Chicago's biggest hotels. But, of course, they were good waiters and never spilled soup down anybody's back nor forgot to renew the contents of the finger bowls.

The Episcopal bishop of Michigan says that bridge whist players are just as much gamblers as Wall street plungers or Monte Carlo patrons. They must play for more than a quarter of a cent a point out that way.

By drinking 20 bottles of beer a day for 30 days a St. Louis man won a suit of tailor-made clothes and \$250 in money, but the chances are that a man with a thirst like that will pawn the clothes, and he certainly won't have the money long.

If that ship that got into New York the other day with a load of elephants and pythons and other creatures could have been stuffed into the stockings of several million children it would probably have settled for all time their demand for Noah's arks.

When rats carry plague and cats and dogs that kill or drive them away carry diphtheria and tuberculosis, both of which are affirmed by the experts, it seems there is nothing left for threatened humanity but to get off the earth.

That technical secret attack upon the Atlantic coast by our returning battleship fleet will be valueless unless the mole St. Nicholas Har and the New England faker who heard so much cannonading at sea in 1898 are allowed to get into the game.

THE FAKE AUCTION

By H.E. TWINELLS

COPYRIGHT BY PEARSON PUB. CO.



THE PROPRIETOR



THE CASHIER



THE AUCTIONEER



THE SHILL

AMERICANS have the reputation of being quick witted and shrewd. As a matter of fact we are Barnumized bluffers, far more glib and credulous than any class of any nation. Right now, in nearly every moderate-sized city of the United States we are falling in line and dropping gold into the tills of organized fake auction stores and taking in exchange a misrepresented article. These bogus auction stores are more harmful to us as a nation than all the old-time lotteries, policy games, mail-order fakes and circus grafts, including gold bricks and shell games, combined.

They are not honest. They play "heads we win, tails you lose." Uncle Sam doesn't want to bring up his boys in the business; yet he countenances it, and over 530 of his cities issue licenses regularly to the auctioneers of these fake companies, giving them the privilege of swindling the public at a nominal fee.

Any town with over 10,000 blind, Barnumized Yankees waiting to be buncoed is considered a fertile field.

From coast to coast,

from line to line, we find in nearly every state from one to forty cities supporting temporary auction swindles. Few are permanent; it is a mushroom business which springs up overnight in a cheap store, leased from month to month, and stays until trouble occurs or the field is worked dry.

New York city alone demands to be duped by no less than eight practically permanent companies of this sort, only shifting their positions to greener fields as the crowds change.

There are three ways to tell a legitimate auction. If the place is permanent and advertises sales on certain days, if the goods to be sold are catalogued piece for piece, and if there are no outside men hired to control the bidding, then it is certain that the sale is genuine.

The fake auction game is played under the pseudo patronage of reliability. The auctioneer's license, issued by the city, is hung conspicuously near the door and the goods are claimed to have been consigned from private sources or pawnbrokers in nearby cities. It is misrepresentation from the start. As a matter of fact the goods were picked up in job lots from novelty houses, jobbers, Japanese stores and regular auction supply firms who handle job lots of trashy stuff and are to be found in all the larger cities. The ivories they handle are made of cheap clay by shrewd Japs who have scraped through the shell of American bluff and found the flabbiness of the flesh beneath. These antiques crumble to pieces after six months in a heated apartment. Practically all the goods handled in these stores are made on the same principle and bought at from one-fifth to one-fiftieth of what they will bring at auction.

There is nothing criminal in selling at an exorbitant profit if the purchaser gets the square deal. But a fake auction company is primarily a ring of cheats never intentionally giving anyone a square deal.

The proprietor is the arch rogue. His profit depends on selling an article at anywhere from fifty to two, three and sometimes five hundred dollars. The auction does not pay if run for the average buyer; it is merely a trap, a "plant," for the occasional "good thing" who happens in and is quickly relieved of a large amount of money through an elaborate system he never suspects.

It is a joyless game, played on cut-and-dried rules which admit of no freshness or originality. The average cast—for they are all actors and play the same cheap show every day—is made up of one backer, or proprietor, two auctioneers, one pretty girl cashier, and from two to ten "shills" (the pale-faced people with mushy morals), their number depending on the size and situation of the store.

The backer usually is a shrewd and unscrupulous man who rents a vacant store, fills it with a scattering of cheap, showy articles to attract attention and a number of large so-called "works of art" and "antiques" which, on inspection, prove to be minors. The range runs from fountain pens at ten cents to deceptive "ivories," "bronzes" and "paintings by the old masters" that bring from fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars, and sometimes more, from the uninitiated.

The proprietor hires a pretty girl cashier and counts her as an additional attraction. He gets one or two auctioneers—they usually travel in pairs, to relieve one another and the public—and guarantees them ten per cent. of the sales; which commission runs from forty to two hundred dollars a week.

Then the dealer incorporates the backbone of the whole crooked business—the body of "shills."

The word "shill," or "shilliver" in full, is of indeterminate origin. It is synonymous with "capper," "booster," "ringer," "dummy," "stool," "stool pigeon" and "outside man;" all technical slang titles for the shabby creature, the human buzzard, who picks up his foul living by rascality and roguery in working between the public and some swindling game: in this case, working among those who stop in at the auction and pretending to have no connection with the sale, betraying a score of people a day after ingratiating himself in their good graces through cunning and craft.

Without these shills no sham auction can exist. Of course in smaller towns only two or three can be used, as strangers are more easily noticed in such places. They are the crooks on whom the proprietor relies to pick out unsuspecting visitors snared by the bargain lure and jockey them into buying misrepresented articles.

The shill mixes with the crowd. His business is to look just like an interested buyer and lie in wait for the fly for which the elaborate web was spun.

This individual, for whom the scenery is set and the actors dressed, is called in technical slang "a rummy." The old three-card monte men christened him "sucker."

Picture a room 40 feet long and 20 feet wide. Double doors to the sidewalk are invitingly open; above them hangs an enticing red flag bearing the name of what purports to be a legitimate auction firm; beneath that, in large letters, are the words:

SALE TODAY.

Pick out any acquaintance who lives in a small town, is fairly prosperous, and has come to the nearby city of 10,000 to 30,000 population to look around for the day, purchase a present for his wife and some implements for the farm.

He has read in the papers and magazines accounts of book, art and antique auctions and noted the high prices brought by rarities. When he stumbles on to the flagrant flag of the fake auction house and looks in at the window, heaped with a miscellany of antiques, he is suddenly stirred by that perennial longing for a bargain.

He glances through the door. There is a worried auctioneer struggling with eight dull-faced people. He is trying frantically to sell a pair of opera glasses.

"Genuine Lemier, gentlemen; concave and convex lenses, put up in this heavy morocco case," the auctioneer cries, "and \$2 is bid for them. Think of that! Not a tenth of their value. Why,

I don't believe you gentlemen would give \$2.50 to see statue of liberty do a Salome dance. Two dollars bid, oh, shill! Two dollars!"

Jones, your out-of-town friend, is undecided whether to go in or not; but at that moment a fellow near the door shakes his head to a seeming stranger beside him and says in a low voice: "It's a shame. Things are going for nothing. Wish I had the price to buy some of that cut glass. It'll sell for a song."

Jones overhears and is interested. He thinks the mind of everybody in that store is centered on the opera glasses, going so cheap. He smiles at their rapt attention and the auctioneer's hard luck complaints. The smile would disappear instantly if he knew that he himself was the sole concern of the eight minds in that audience, and the auctioneer. He would be furious if he knew the whole sale of the opera glasses was in cut glass. The auctioneer saw Jones looking in and immediately transmitted this fact to the shill nearest the door by saying, "Oh, shill," casually in his speech. Jones had never heard the word, so naturally he didn't select it with suspicion from the auctioneer's jargon, and suspected nothing when the man near the door remarked about cut glass bargains.

As a matter of fact Jones was interested in cut glass. His wife liked it and occasionally he invested in some, it being the nearest he could get to diamonds.

So he sauntered in casually and watched with an amused smile the frantic auctioneer trying to sell a watch. Jones wasn't interested in watches. He had one in his pocket; so his eyes continually roved toward the cut glass in a little Japanese cabinet.

He didn't know it, but before he was in the place two minutes, while the auctioneer was trying to "feel him out" with the watch, one of the shills had noticed Jones's interest in cut glass, and had called the auctioneer's attention to the fact by touching the cabinet significantly.

The auctioneer, on his perch above them all, had control of the situation. He noted the signal from the shill, jotted down mentally that Jones wanted cut glass, and knocked down the watch he had been experimenting with to one of the shills for a ruinous price, which was all helpful in showing Jones that a shrewd man could pick up a bargain if he laid low, attracted no attention and bided his time.

"Sold for six ninety. Put it with the other goods for Mr. A. Deposit sufficient," the auctioneer cried to the pretty cashier.

Jones did not bid on the first piece of cut glass. The auctioneer did not look toward him once to give him a chance. The piece was knocked down for \$3.80. It was a frightful bargain. Jones would have given \$5 for it himself. But the auctioneer passed abruptly to the next article.

Jones pressed forward this time as a gorgeous punch bowl was put up. He heard various exclamations around him, all tending to give him confidence in the fact that things were going dirt cheap. Two ladies beside him commiserated because they wouldn't have enough "Gentlemen and ladies," the auctioneer went on solemnly, "if I had this article in Chicago or New York it would bring one hundred dollars, one hundred dollars. You couldn't duplicate it at retail for less than two hundred. It is the finest piece of art glass ever shown in your city."

"Can I get one hundred dollars? Ninety? Eighty? Seventy-five dollars? Can I get sixty? Fifty? Give me forty; thirty-line; thirty!"

"Fifteen dollars!" came a halting voice from beside Jones.

Jones was interested. He sensed a bargain. Had he known that when the auctioneer said "thirty-line" it was a signal to the shill beside Jones to bid \$30 with a line through it, or fifteen actual dollars, he would not have been so enthusiastic.

"Sixteen!" "Seventeen!" "Half!" "Eighteen!" staccato offers punctuated the atmosphere after the auctioneer's encouragement.

The little man beside Jones shook his head sadly.

"Gee, it's gone beyond me," he sighed, turning to Jones; "it'll go dirt cheap, too. If you could buy that for \$50 it'd be a bargain, sure enough."

"Twenty-eight is the last bid," wailed the auctioneer. "Why, you could take it out and pawn it for more than that."

Jones thrilled as the auctioneer turned to look squarely at him.

"You'd give thirty, wouldn't you?" he cried. Jones gulped and nodded.

The auctioneer skillfully led up to the grand landing by taking offers of "thirty-six" and "thirty-seven" from members of his troupe. He had felt out his man carefully and knew that \$40 would be Jones's limit.

"Will you give me forty?" he said simply, in a level tone, leaning far over the showcase. Jones hesitated, gulped, and then nodded his head abruptly.

Jones was pleased with his bargains until he got home and his wife told him he could get the same punch bowl for \$10 anywhere and that the other stuff was worthless.

THE POTASH CONTROVERSY

German Claims Presented at Washington Are Contradicted by American Interests.

Washington, D. C., Jan.—The cotton growing states are particularly interested in the potash controversy between the State Department and Berlin, since the future price of fertilizer is directly affected by the outcome. German interests have just made representation to Secretary Knox similar in effect to those assertions made by circular letter to the miners throughout the South claiming that the German potash law, which places a penalty on mines selling heavily to Americans at a lower price than has formerly ruled, is merely a part of the general conservation policy of Germany.

According to Ochsimus, a leading German geologist, there are about 39,000 square miles of potash in one section of Germany, each of these containing some 50,000,000 tons of pure potash. This same authority states that the annual output from these mines is about 600,000 tons each, and he figures that if the annual output should jump to 5,000,000 tons annually, it would still require 621,600 years to exhaust the supply.

Another of Germany's assertions is that the law does not discriminate against Americans. The brief of the American potash buyers committee submitted to congress points out that, under the law as recently passed by Germany, the mines of the potash trust in that country were allowed a proportion of output sufficient to supply the world, while the independent mines that had made contracts to supply the United States at a reduced price were limited to one-fourth of their actual sales already made to us. In addition a penalty of \$22 per ton was imposed for overproduction. Thus the penalty falls exclusively upon shipments to this country and indirectly upon the consumer.

An effort is apparently being made to create the impression that this controversy is really a contest between the policy of the German government and an American trust. The fact is that there is no such complete and powerful trust in the United States as this German potash syndicate. This syndicate actually monopolizes the entire potash supply of the world, save for the two mines that broke away from the trust and sold to American buyers. In this country there are about 70 different fertilizer manufacturers using potash, and of these about 75 per cent are independent of any trust affiliation.

Another claim made by the German committee at the White House was to the effect that the American buyers knew that a law would be passed providing for government taxes and penalties to be assessed, and that they made these contracts with this knowledge in mind. The American committee states positively that this information was brought to them after the contracts were made, and used as a club in an attempt to force them to give up the contracts already entered into, which would have reduced the price of fertilizer materially in this country.

An official high in the government here is authority for the statement that the cost of this controversy must necessarily fall upon the consumer, and that it should, therefore, be settled quickly. While the American companies paying a penalty have met the prices made by the German trust that pays no penalty, this has been done at a loss, and should they withdraw from the field because of this, the price of fertilizer in this country would be dictated by the German monopoly untrammelled in Berlin.

The Walkers.

James M. Beck, the famous corporation lawyer of New York, is a native of Philadelphia, and to Philadelphia he often returns to see his old friends.

Mr. Beck, at a recent banquet in Philadelphia, defended corporations with an epigram.

"The trust buster and the Socialist may do what they please," he said, "but mankind will still be divided into two great classes—those who walk to get an appetite for their dinner, and those who walk to get a dinner for their appetite."

DISTEMPER

In all its forms among all ages of horses, as well as dogs, cured and others in same stable prevented from having the disease with SPOHN'S DISTEMPER CURE. Every bottle guaranteed. Over 600,000 bottles sold last year \$50 and \$1.00. Any good druggist, or send to manufacturers. Agents wanted. Spohn Medical Co., Spec. Contagious Diseases, Goshen, Ind.

Inherited.

Knicker—Jones has a bad memory. Bocker—His mother never knew what were trumps, and his father couldn't remember anything on the witness stand.

TO DRIVE OUT MALARIA AND BUILD UP THE SYSTEM
Take the Old Standard **PAINLESS CHILL TONIC**. You know what you are taking. The formula is plainly printed on every bottle, showing it is simply Quinine and Iron in a tasteless form. The Quinine drives out the malaria and the Iron builds up the system. Sold by all dealers for 30 cents. Price \$1.00.

Any New Methods?

"Ain't it strange, th' way Kelly beats his wife?"
"I dunno. How does he do it?"

FILES CURED IN 6 TO 14 DAYS
Your druggist will refund money if **PAZO OINTMENT** fails to cure any case of Itching, Blind, Bleeding or Protruding Piles in 6 to 14 days. No.

There are many kinds of pleasures, and some of them aren't so pleasant.

Itch Cured in 30 Minutes by Woolford's Sanitary Lotion. Never fails. At Druggists.

No noble things, not dream them a day long.—Kingsley.