

FRAUDS OF ART DEALERS

Americans Not the Only Victims of Their Swindles



"WHAT TRANSPARENCY, WHAT REFLECTION! YOU SEE THE TREES UPSIDE DOWN!" "YES, BUT HOLD ON, THEY ARE NOT THE SAME TREES!"

ground, while Osman Pasha Toussoun, cousin of the Khedive, was still digging. Yet when half the purchase price had been paid it was learned that the medals were mere imitations.

Should they ask their money back? It would be to confess that Berlin had been again deceived. Therefore the museum made no answer to the charges, even refused to notice a communication from the Berlin Numismatic Society.

The Berlin public laughed. It understood. The rumors had been started by the museum people to keep off competition and reduce the price of the remaining medals! Hum, hum! Think you?

The famous Etruscan terra cotta bought by the Berlin Museum at the Hotel Drouot, Paris, were confessed to be counterfeit only after furious campaigns against them in the Landtag.

"Later the Director, Herr Bode, announced triumphantly the acquisition at Rome of a superb bronze bust, the portrait of a Duchess of Urbino, which he attributed to Desiderio da Settignano. It is simply cast from a bust in painted stucco belonging to the collection of Lord Venyves in London.

"The city of it," says Elina. "They are men of artistic genius, these obscure imitators. The French or Italian Renaissance would have honored and enriched

those tools. Let me take out two screws and I will show you my factory mark on the back of this piece of carving. In a few minutes they had the proof. Then an inquiry was opened. M. Caillat had sold the stuff to a Paris dealer for 600 francs. Through a complainant janitor



WHILE ST. MARTIN GAINED HIS REPUTATION BY DIVIDING HIS COATS INTO TWO FOR CHARITY, THE MUNICIPALITY OF SOUDEILLES WILL SCARCELY BE REMEMBERED FOR THE GREAT FEAT OF MULTIPLYING ST. MARTIN HIMSELF TO FOUR.

it was warehoused in an old building of the Faubourg St. Germain. There the Cluny people were led to "discover" it at the price of 9,000 francs.

The Louvre has always been exposed to frauds. Away back in 1849 an Amiens antiquary sold to its director, M. de Longperier, for 10,000 francs a collar of great Roman gold medals, "found" in digging



LATER IT WAS FOUND THAT HE HAD PAID THE LABORERS FORTY FRANCS EACH TO DIG THE CELLAR UP. M. de Longperier, however, soon retrieved his reputation by denouncing the famous Texcoco vase brought from Mexico as the most valuable vestige of Aztec art.

Every artist wanted to share in the applause. None wanted to be left behind when the enthusiasm was handed over. Naturally some artists were more popular than others. All wanted the same degree of applause, however, and evidently all got it.

One rumor used to pay the chef de clique, who was still able to keep the business in his own hands, not less than \$300 every time he made his first appearance in a role. Few of the artists were so liberal as his senior. Most of the singers at the Metropolitan Opera House were anxious to get to the Metropolitan and they wanted applause for this reason.

"I was sent to you," the little Pole with the black eyes, the sympathetic face and the obsequious manner would say to the representative of the singer that he vis-

ited, "by Mme. Trala. I have done work for her for several seasons. She thought you might want me to have some friends in the house when you make your first appearance this year."

This modest chief de clique never met the principal in any of his business affairs. If she were a woman it was always the husband or the secretary to whom he had to speak.

"I knew that nasty Trala had somebody doing this for her," was always the first thought of the party to whom the wily Pole made his first appeal. "But why in the world could she have sent him to us?" It usually ended in the engagement of the young man on trial. He could always do what he promised at the Metropolitan Opera House, but it was not so easy at the more conservative Metropolitan. There his earnings could never have been very large.

After a while there was so much for him to do at the Metropolitan and Manhattan as to make it necessary to bring in an associate. When the Boston Opera House opened its doors there was still more business to attend to. It was with managed and then hope that he might realize something out of the enterprise.

"No soon as I have made enough out of this," the handsome young Pole told THE SUN reporter the other day, "my plan is to go to Berlin, study medicine and come back here and practise. My brother is a very well to do broker in Berlin and he would take me in with him were I not married. Then I have had the opportunity to go into one of the leading banks in Berlin to learn the business

under circumstances which would be very advantageous to me. But I am determined to be a doctor."

Much of his time this season was passed in Boston, where he knew the Russian singers in the company. "I went to Boston not because I made more money there but because I have friends among the artists," he told THE SUN reporter, "and they are fond of me. I leave my New York business in the hands of my associate. There is naturally not nearly so much in it as there is in my services to the artists. I have used to be when Hammerstein still had his company. There was not much to be done in Philadelphia because Hammerstein was so bad that the singers do not go whether or not they were applauded. I had my most profitable customers in Boston, and there was plenty with the other artists to keep me busy. I always went to the opera and was always devoted to it. I got on spoke of the collapse of New York audiences when Signor Caruso came first to the Metropolitan. "After a while it occurred to me to offer my services to the artists to insure them some applause. In that way I got into the business. But there is not enough on it to make it worth while for any man to stick to it. So when I have made enough to go to Berlin and enter the university I mean to do so."

In the interval this slight and very dainty young person, with much of the charm of his sex and a dainty disposition of manner that would almost, despite the most sophisticated, seem to be enjoying the good things of this life and even putting away money

alongside of the real a Museum of Artistic Frauds.

"The things in themselves are beautiful and valuable, yet the artists who make them must remain unknown. Such a museum would give them honest outlet for their very great talents," he said.

"Their ingenuity is wonderful," continued the Louvre curator. "For instance, to give goldsmiths work the patina of age they make a sack of cat or dog skin. Into it they break a lot of eggs and shake them up. Then they put in the gold article. When taken out at the end of three months it is so beautifully oxidized that it is impossible to tell the difference from the genuine.

In Rome sculptors of talent turn out nothing but defigured antiques, broken arms, legs, heads, whose missing parts never existed. They have invented a liquor for the staining of marble. Once perfected the antiques are planted. There they lie, watched over by innocent shepherds. When the wealthy tourist comes along the innocent shepherd whispers to him. They strike a bargain. Then

at night they dig the antique up. This time the wealthy tourist is sure of his antique!

Even mummies. Having paid more than they dared tell for the mummy of Queen Nitocris, the Munich Museum people put it in a place of honor. After a few weeks they were astonished to discover that it was a fragment imitation.

When Elina affirmed that a Montrouge workshop made such mummies for museums and families, painted and gilded their wooden cases perfectly and sent them to Egypt for their attestations, he was publicly contradicted by savants until inspectors of Egyptian customs, stirred up by the controversy, stopped three specimens going in "to get their

papers"—and all three mummy babies! When asked "Why babies?" the consigning Paris dealer was forced to answer. His three words condensed a chapter of modern taste and erudition: "Babies are decorative."

Those who imagine Americans the typical victims might ponder over the kind heartedness of a famous French collector who presented the Persian carpet to the Gobelins and the Italian Renaissance marbles to the Louvre.

The erudite old gentleman passed delicious afternoons along the book stacks of the Seine, gentle mania of many a Paris savant, because never is find made on those well weeded stalls. There one day he met a poor proud girl, but learned. She had just picked up a worthless little eighteenth century rockbook, but with autograph and notes by Marie Antoinette.

The kindly collector saw the fraud but never blinked. Instead he asked if she would part with it for \$20? She would. Later she made a find each week, and he always bought them, a Galen with notes by Rabelais, an "Esther" with dedication

have always had one or two in stock at 100 francs each.

When Henri Rochefort recently made public that the "Angelus" has "lost its soul" the Paris press hastened to cry that it "must have happened in America" and followed with the well known legend of 60,000 fraudulent Corots in our country. Rochefort had exonerated us the next day; it was Chaudard who himself told him: "The Angelus was cracking, and I had it stopped up by a young painter of great talent." So, while all Paris ran to see the "Angelus" "without," I asked my friend about those 60,000 bogus Corots.

"I'll tell you of one," he chuckled. "I think it was a Corot. Cleaned out of a Paris cellar, mildewed, signature obliterated, paint rubbed off, edges rotted, the dilapidated object was secured for \$30, the value of its genuine old frame and canvas as possibilities for restoring.

"In the hands of a Corot specialist it became again the masterpiece it might have been, so much so that a New York dealer cabled them to rush it. While it was being boxed for shipment the painter and a friend admired it. Suddenly the friend said: "Look at the reflection of the trees in the water!" "I see it," said the painter. "What transparency, what reflection. You see the trees themselves upside down!" "Yes, but they are not the same trees!" whispered the friend.

"And so it was. The restorer painting in the obliterated trees had preserved the genuine Corot water. He pondered: "New York says rush it. Why not? It's a proof of genuineness. Corot made the mistake himself. A counterfeiter would have been too careful to practise."

Crossing the Place St. Augustin a friend pointed out two aristocratic ladies

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"You think they deserve being duped?" I suggested. "I stand aside," he answered. "I remain poor, but I permit myself to smile when Americans calmly propose to take advantage of a falling family's misfortunes—when they are on their visits as the Hon Pheasant judiciously distinguishes."



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All of this does not lessen the marvel of the Emir's Lamp. It was believed in, the famous lamp of the Emir Arghoun. During his lifetime the art monthlies had all reproduced it from the superb engraving by Henry Guérard.

Recently one of the heirs invited an exposition of lighting. To his indignation he saw exposed an exact replica of the lamp of the Emir. "How could they make this copy of my uncle's unique lamp?" he asked. "Let us see your uncle's lamp," the merchants answered. "The valuable object was fetched to the exposition. "It came from our house many years ago," said the merchants. "We stopped making the model forty years ago, but we

"who buy half a million of bogus art each year." They salt chateaux. They have fashionable agents in London and New York. They travel back and forth. They make acquaintances and pass the rich Americans along. Those most followed are millionaire widows, very rich men just retired from business, parvenus who have made sudden fortunes and rich parents of dreaming daughters.

"But why always Americans?" I asked. "Who else is ready to accept sudden hospitality?" he laughed. "So what can we do for these charming Americans? Take them an automobile trip to Count Henri's chateau. Poor fellow, it will cheer him up. Perhaps he will fall in love with Lucy."

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"Oh, no!" I said. "They accept the invitation to dinner, and when a sad old dowager calls their attention to the real Sevres service, whispering, 'Our unhappy hostess is about to sell it to a dealer for \$6,000, a downright robbery—and all because her husband gambled!' their fingers itch to write the check out. Quick, a find! Write out a check, quick, for \$6,100!"

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Paris, April 27.—The little French town of Soudeilles, ancient and sleepy, off the beaten track, vaguely proud yet negligent of its past, possessed a precious gold antique in its monastic church, a Gothic reliquary of St. Martin of Tours.

To ignorant Soudeilles dealer in disguise a Dutch art expert and dealer in antiquities. He was on one of those quiet quests that have been productive since the separation law made nobody in particular responsible for local heirlooms.

He proposed his plan to the municipal authorities to buy their old St. Martin for \$3,000 and give them a perfect imitation of it to show tourists. Thus, he whispered, had been done with the jewelled alabaster Knight of Lagnenne, the ebon-sonn—coffer of Cozant, the crown of St. Michel.

The officials felt. They knew it was illegal, that their St. Martin was "classified" by the Beaux Arts, so they made him pay \$5,000. In turn he supplied them with a poor imitation to show tourists. It was so poor that the Hollander laughed when he read later that Beaux Arts inspectors had forbidden its sale to a passing Austrian. The article added that a copy had been sold in England two years previously.

"The Beaux Arts is all mixed up," he chuckled, making a slip trip to Soudeilles. "Really, did the inspectors take my copy for the original?"

"Oh, that thing, it is in the garret!" said the principal authorities with the frankness that one has for an accomplice. "We



"THEY SALT CHATEAUX. THEY HAVE FASHIONABLE AGENTS IN NEW YORK AND LONDON."

hoped to pass a good imitation on the Austrian—tens, like the one you purchased."

"You mean like the one you sold in England?"

"We sold two in England," giggled the simple minded countryman. "We had three good imitations made at the same time. You got the second."

St. Martin won lasting reputation by dividing his coats in two for charity; yet Soudeilles will scarcely be remembered for the greater feat of dividing up St. Martin, coat and mitre, into four or more.

The reason is that there are so many at it. Witness the embroidered Spanish carpets sold to one purchaser as royal. A second edition of them straight from Segovia or Saragossa, where they formerly covered the steps of a throne, woven with flours de lis in relief, was caught entering France during the brief career of a friend of mine as customs expert.

"Anterior to the eighteenth century they pass free," quoted the expert. "They are pure Louis XIII."

"Pure nineteenth century," said Elina; and cutting the threads of a fleur de lis he turned over a printed page of "Paul and Virginia" that served as stuffing to give relief to the flower.

Elina guessed the bogus nature of the

capable of fabricating weeping Iphigenia's earrings, to be planted in Tauris. He has the confidence of art artisans of Athens and can get them to repaint ruined tapestries in their spare hours. He knows tipsy armor forgers of Vienna; but were you aware that there are armor forgers in these days?

Gauvin was such, and being dead, he may be mentioned, because some of the armor in New York is of his work. From a tub of blackish liquid he would fish out rapiers, poignards, pistols and ask clients to admire "the patina of the cen-



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tures." Randour, a dealer, bought at the Museum of Artillery, Paris. In the lot were detached pieces of Gothic armor. Later Randour came across others in a consignment of junk from Italy.

At the forge Gauvin so modified and added to the samples as to produce a complete suit of Gothic armor; but out of pure devilry he left on every genuine scrap its ancient hallmark, so that the harness bears a bewildering number of old, forgotten makers' names, Italian, German, French. You can count them for yourself in New York.

Also the superb suit of plate armor, entirely gilded and damascened, bought by Horace Walpole in 1772, by Sir Richard Wallace in 1883, insured by him for \$100,000, and totally destroyed by fire in 1885. With some mashed and discolored bits of iron a Paris dealer bought from the insurance company the valuable salvage, not so much the ruined bits, but their certificate of identity. Gauvin did the rest. His production, not gilded nor damascened, passed to the Spitzer collection.

Two years before the Louvre tiara scandal the great Museum of Berlin was swindled with a similar gold crown alleged to be Gothic. Purchased on the certificate of an eminent German historian, it was recognized as a fraud after less than a week and removed from the museum.

Since then Berlin has grown wiser; it denies its mistakes. A find of five gold Greek medals had been made near Aboukir, and the Berlin people were told how some of their explorers were in jail for having dug in Egyptian Government

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When M. Caillot came on to Paris the Beaux Arts commission was incredulous. "It is pure Renaissance," they said. "To make that kind of decoration they had tools that are now unknown."

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