

SY TO "BEAT" NEW YORK HOTELS

Smooth strangers who live luxuriously at the best hotels without paying a cent

New York, October 2. It was the "Smooth Stranger" who a few days ago declared that of all the cities in which he had lived and filled his calling none was such a paradise for hotel "deadbeats" as is New York. As a matter of fact, he spoke the truth, for with the thousands who come and go among the great caravansaries in the metropolis it is impossible to keep watch and ward over the honesty of every patron. Men there are who boast of living on the fat of the land from month to month at the expense of the city hotel men. One of the most impudent of this class wrote a letter recently to the president of the National Hotel Keepers' Protective Association, which has its headquarters in New York and told him that in all his varied experience he had not found a place that was easier than this city.

That he was right about it no experienced caterer to the public is disposed to deny. The principal assets of an accomplished hotel "beat" are a certain quiet assurance, self-control, good clothes and a so-called conscience. After that there is little else necessary than the well-formed resolution of never paying a cent.

One of the officers of an agency which is devoted to giving information concerning predatory visitors declares that it is possible for a "beat" to live unmolested in the hotels of this city for the greater part of a year before he would find the situation growing uncomfortable; he could do this, and, in fact, he does, without a single cent of capital and by committing no greater offense against the State than the violation of the innkeepers' law.

Conditions of modern hotel life are peculiarly adapted to the growth of that constantly increasing class, the "smooth strangers." It was not long ago, certainly less than two decades, that the average clerk knew every patron by sight who was in the house, and was able to call many of them his personal friends. The proprietor was constantly in touch with those who stopped at his hostelry and was able to detect almost at a glance if any undesirable persons were under his roof.

Personal Element Eliminated.

Hotel keeping in this present generation is ordered something after the manner of a factory. The public is carried about through the establishment by means of elevators like so much raw material. The patrons are thrown into one hopper and fed; they are committed to another department and moistened with cocktails and highballs; then they are taken on lifts to the dormitory department and laid away for the night.

Nobody pays much attention to them except the hotel detective. His position is much like that of a hopper boy at a colliery. He gets a rapid survey of the specimens of humanity, large and small, as they pass before him in the corridor, which is much like an endless belt, and occasionally he removes an exceptionally bad piece of slate. This sharp-eyed person, however, is not likely to take any risks unless the man under suspicion has a Rogues' Gallery portrait or has been convicted of various crimes and misdemeanors. He cannot question the financial standing of every stranger, and if the hotel "dead beat" is not of striking appearance detection is well nigh impossible. More than a hundred thousand strangers go every day through the great hotels of this city, and the man on the floor, no matter how observant he may be, can only hope to protect the patrons of the place from the attention of pickpockets, thieves and confidence men. As far as insuring the proprietor of the hotel from being robbed by the "smooth stranger" the average hotel detective is helpless. Some of the shrewdest of them bear testimony to the ease with which it is possible for unassuming freebooters to ply their calling.

First of all the hotel "beat" must have a reckless disregard of consequences and a good digestion. He must not have a constitution which experiences symptoms of distress after being reinforced with food for which the man who furnished it will never be paid. Conscience, a sense of shame or even a lurking shadow of self-respect would be fatal to him. Once he has the proper psychological attitude toward the business he can go to any lengths in following it.

Having discarded his conscience he must then acquire either a small satchel or a dress suit case. The expenditure of two or three dollars will fit him out in that regard. If he feels disposed to the niceties of dress he might also carry something of a wardrobe; but this is considered unnecessary; such things as shirts and collars may be purchased from time to time as they are required. It may be that circumstances will arise when it is necessary to leave the dress suit case with the hotel proprietor in order to make a quick exit.

Importance of Correct Dress.

It is also necessary that the hotel beat should be neatly attired, but he should avoid the use of flashy neckties, scarf pins of striking or unusual design, fancy wristwatches or bright and shiny yellow shoes. It would be fatal to him almost if he should be identified as a man with a bright red tie or as a man with a green beetle scarf pin. If he should be so unfortunate as to have a heavy scar or any marked blemish it would be well for him to adopt some other occupation.

Unobtrusiveness is the keynote of success when one deliberately seeks to defraud a hotel. The "smooth stranger" must glide in and out of the place, sit quietly in the writing room, talk to no one unless he is addressed, make few acquaintances and comport himself as one who is devoted to serious business.

As hotels are managed at present nearly any one can live in one for a week without receiving any communication from the cashier. The "dead beat" uses this fact to his advantage, taking care, however, not to ring for ice water too often, or to have meals sent to his room, or to in any way impress his individuality upon the employes and attendants. High living is all very pleasant, but it is likely to result in disaster. The most successful of the profession do not order wine for dinner, neither do they have 50-cent cigars charged to them. They never dine at a hotel. The "smooth stranger" class hotels in New York City where they are able to live under the best conditions. The 150 so-called family hotels are not as good a field on account of the comparatively small number

of transient patrons. As long as the freebooter keeps his expenses down to fifty or sixty dollars a week he is likely not to attract any undue notice. He can have a room and bath, provided that in the place where he happens to stop there are many suites of this character; but it is recommended by the leaders of the profession that the engaging of two rooms and bath is hazardous unless confidence is first established by the cashing of a perfectly good check. Taken all in all, beating the hotels on a conservative basis of not more than \$10 a day is considered as the most practical and the easiest method of living without labor.

Nothing is said to the "smooth stranger" until he has begun to delay in the matter of the first week's board.

cases, especially if they are taken to the Police Court, the intent to defraud must be made manifest. The detective hesitates to go to the extreme of causing the arrest of an unassuming person who has all the self-control and quiet assurance of a man following a legitimate calling. While this interesting question is being discussed the "smooth stranger" will take his dress suit case and quietly disappear. He might pass several attendants with his baggage in a hotel where three or four thousand persons are quartered without attracting the slightest suspicion to himself every hour of the day in that establishment seeing the arrival or departure of scores of persons with dress suit cases and trunks. But even if the baggage is abandoned

should decline to give it another probably will. There are so many patrons of a hotel that the office force rarely has time to exchange suspicions, especially those of the unverified kind. Many of the wandering gentry pass worthless checks in the hotel, but this practice is discouraged by the more skillful ones.

"I have made it a practice," said a representative hotel beat recently, "not to lay down checks, for by so doing one leaves a trail of documentary evidence which is likely to follow him around the country and eventually result in his doing time. A man of ordinary address, however, can get sufficient money for incidental expenses by making a swift touch at the desk. Of course, I do not pretend to say that

One of the most remarkable documents illustrating the trickery of the human mind is contained in the confessions of a deadbeat recently sent to the president of the National Hotel Keepers' Protective Association. He tells the names of the persons and the hotels which he has defrauded and a careful inquiry reveals that in every respect he told the truth. The operations cover the month of last August, during which time he had accumulated board, lodging and loose change to the sum of \$432.20.

These operations began in North Carolina on August 1, and by gradual stages and at the expense of the persons whom he defrauded the adept made his way north, arriving in New York City on the 15th, and after spend-

HE DICTATES LETTERS TO SOME WELL KNOWN HOUSE



ASKS FOR FIVE DOLLARS-CASH TO BE CHARGED TO HIS ROOM



EVEN THE FACT OF EATING A MEAL FOR WHICH THEY DO NOT EXPECT TO PAY HAS A PECULIAR CHARM FOR THESE ITINERANT BUCCANNERS

there is a fortune in beating hotels, but a man who attends to business can always make a comfortable living and escape hard work.

It cannot be denied, however, that the majority of hotel beats also combine forgery and check kiting with their profession, a fact which is greatly deplored by the adept.

"It seems to me that there's nothing easier," said a well-known hotel detective, recently, "than living for nothing at the leading houses in New York City; provided that one does not lay down bad checks too often and constantly changes his name and modifies his clothing or personal appearance as much as he can."

"After finishing an engagement at one hotel it is easy for the operator to transfer himself to another. If he should have been put to the extraordinary expedient of leaving his baggage as a hostage he can soon acquire the necessary impedimenta. It is considered an unwritten law in the profession not to play more than four hotels in a large city in succession. Even in New York it is customary for the hotel beat to run out of town for a few days and then return under another alias; by that time, if his presence had caused any little ripple of excitement or curiosity, the incident is likely to have been entirely forgotten. He begins all over again and frequently ends up at some quiet family hotel uptown for his final engagement. Here he is the conservative business man. He dictates letters to some well-known house, outlining vast business prospects.

"The public stenographer tells the second assistant day clerk about him possibly, and the impression gets abroad that he has heavy responsibilities which he is bearing in silence and reserve. Having established his credit, by delicate processes of suggestion, the 'smooth stranger' concludes his New York engagement by inducing the management to cash a check for fifty or a hundred dollars, and is thus supplied with the amount needful for making a long jump. He has his 'get away money,' and again he is out in the open, visiting the smaller cities of the United States, preparing for his return in the course of months under a slightly different guise and in a new speciality to Broadway."

ing from two to three days at the hotels he made a jump to Buffalo, traveled to Detroit by boat at the expense of the navigation company, and started to acquire board, lodging and cash at the hotels of Detroit. It was in this city that he writes he was overwhelmed with remorse. He wrote a letter confessing his misdeeds, and with it sent an itemized account of his operations

STORY-TELLING: A NEW OCCUPATION FOR WOMEN

STORY-TELLING is as old as language, yet the modern woman finds it a medium for a new profession, one which pays very well when the story teller has that indefinable personal magnetism which holds the attention of an audience either of children or grown-ups.

About five years ago an English woman came to New York with letters to several prominent people telling of the success which she had made in London in telling fairy stories at children's parties and delightful stories in French which were told at evening entertainments, private and public. As a social diversion there did not seem to be much demand for story-telling, and the prospect of engagements was very limited. About this time librarians were finding out the great educational influence that could be exerted by systematic story-telling to children, who made such large and desultory use of books. This English woman was asked to tell fairy tales in the children's room of several large libraries, and was instantly a success. In a short time she not only had many engagements to tell stories, but was employed in teaching others the method of the art. Women's clubs invited her to tell stories and deliver lectures on the subject in order that the home "story hour" could be made more effective in both pleasure and profit.

The demand has steadily grown, and there is a large number of women engaged in the work professionally. If we are indebted to England for one of the best and most successful of story-tellers, London in turn has had an extensive experience with Americans in the past year or two

in the month of August. He said that he was about to board a steamboat at the Queen City of the Straits and to throw himself overboard.

It is not generally believed by hotel men that this "prince of deadbeats" has come to a tragic end, for under some other alias, and upheld by his confidence in being counted as dead, he may have begun his depredations anew. His methods of obtaining accommodations were along the traditional line. He acquired considerable cash at Broadway hotels for his petty expenses by hiring automobiles. It was his custom to cash small checks and after paying the chauffeur appropriate the few dollars remaining for pocket money. In several places he posed as

an expert in automobiles and in others as the traveling agent of a well-known paper house in Cincinnati.

One of the reasons given for the comparative freedom with which hotel beats operate is that they are as a general thing not reported by the bonifaces through the agents established for that purpose. They seldom notify the police, as they wish to avoid any notoriety, and many of them neglect to inform each other by circular letters or otherwise. One of the largest hotels in Pittsburg charges its losses from hotel beats to the advertising account and other hotels cheerfully put down the amounts to profit and loss—three or four hotels in this city caused to be written across the face of the account of the repentant Warren the inscription in red ink, "Committed suicide!"

A Southern woman, who has been very much in demand in this country for entertainments, had just returned from London, where she had filled a number of engagements during the fashionable season just closed. She said, describing her experiences:

"I was a part of what the English critics termed the 'American invasion' this season, and to tell the truth it was amazing how many American 'entertainers' of one sort and another were in evidence—musicians, instrumental and vocal, even a whistler, dancers, and last, but not least, tellers of stories. I think negro stories, and the cake-walk craze has led to a demand for dainty tales in the dialect. I was kept pretty busy for two months at evening parties, teas, and house parties, in addition to several public recitals.

"English people do not like recitations; they want stories told in a personal way, just as one would talk to a group of friends without the least bit of elocution or striving after effect.

"I met a young American girl who lives in London whose story-telling is quite unique. Her personality contributes a great deal to the success. She is a most talented and promising artist. As a child she lived in Jamaica, and having an insatiable taste for stories, had been told many of the old African folk tales which survive in the West Indies. It is very difficult to get the natives to tell these stories, many of them connected with spells and charms, to grown people, so this girl was very fortunate in hearing so many. She published a book of these tales that attracted considerable interest, especially in England, and the author was often asked to tell a story in order that the quaint dialect might be better understood. This girl has a real genius for the art of telling tales, and before she knew it she had become known and very much in demand for entertainments.

"In a very short time after really becoming a professional she was 'commanded' to Windsor, and that, of course, increased her vogue. She has also made an impression with her interpretation of poetry—more especially that of the Celtic school. They call it lulling, and it is a most effective half-sung, half-spoken method of reciting a poem. It is said to resemble the way old bards told their tales in verse. I think a story-teller is a good story-listener, for I confess to the greatest delight in this clever girl's work, and to some envy, too, for this really exceptional talent of story-telling is only an aside in her real career as an artist. I shall go over again next year.

"We are all simply entertainers and do not do the sort of educational story-telling which is not only interesting and amusing but has behind it a plan and a purpose. With children the intention is to have them become familiar with the great poems and stories of history and literature. Grown-ups, too, have come to realize that years do not destroy the taste for a story and are surprised at the amount of wisdom to be found in an old fairy tale. It is surprising that people have not more generally told stories as a source of amusement and entertainment.

"As I have said, the success or failure of your effort is apparent as you proceed in the kind of response your hearers make to the points of your story. If a woman has the endowments which this art demands there is a field of well-paid, agreeable employment open to her. It is not a temporary fad of amusement, but a revival, an adaptation of one of the oldest of the arts."