

A Novelty in Jewelry

By Ivor Wyatt

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Messrs. Sparton and Plowing prided themselves upon being the best jewelers in town. They were a very go-ahead firm; and in their window the latest novelties in watches and clocks could always be seen.

One morning Mr. Plowing, the junior partner, began to dance round the shop, excitedly pointing to a parcel which lay open on one of the glass-covered show-cases.

"What have you now?" said Mr. Sparton.

"It's the phonographic watch," said the junior partner, excitedly; "it will sell like blazes."

"I have never sold any blazes," said the senior partner with a reproving frown—"let me see those talking tickers."

The partners undid the wrappers in which some 15 watches were encased. They looked very harmless, and had the stupid, over-conscientious look of the ordinary watch.

"They are all going," said Mr. Sparton, after he had put each to his ear.

"It is ten minutes to nine," said Mr. Plowing; "in ten minutes we shall hear them speak. I believe one contains the voice of Mr. Roosevelt and one a line spoken by Ada Rehan."

The partners then arranged the watches in two rows upon the desk, and anxiously awaited the hour. As the big clock over the shop began to wheeze preparatory to striking, a tiny little voice was heard to proceed from one of the mild-looking watches on the desk.

"Nine. Your father has gone down to breakfast," it said, in the quiet, subdued tones of a trained servant.

"A schoolboy's holiday watch, I suppose," said Mr. Sparton.

Mr. Plowing looked for the words "your father" in the descriptive catalogue.

"No. 942—a young lady's watch," he said.

"Nine. Quite time to get up," said one of the watches, brightly. Then the others said, all talking at the same time:

"Nine. Open the letters and take them upstairs."

"In the city by nine."

"Nine o'clock. The labor we delight in physics pain," said another. "nine

o'clock."

"Nine. Talk to the cook about din-



"Oh, Mary, I'm Mad!"

ner." "A lady's watch that," interrupted Mr. Sparton.

"It is quite nine o'clock."

"Nine, old chap."

"Nine tailors make a man."

Then no more was heard. Mr. Sparton stood amazed at the experience, while Mr. Plowing looked on with the air of a man who was showing off something of which he had a perfect knowledge.

"I heard the whole batch in New York," he said. "They are wonderful little instruments. The Shakespeare quotation is a little gem."

"I suppose there are singing watches, and preaching watches, and musical watches?"

"Yes," said Mr. Plowing. "For our first consignment I thought that the speaking watch would be the best, and as you generally entrust all purchases to me, I ordered this lot. I hope I have your approval?"

"Yes. They seem to be a very good invention."

"Here is the show-card," said Mr. Plowing. "We had better put it in the window, and keep the watches here to 'speak' to the customers."

He placed the show card in the window. On it was written:

THE PHONOGRAPHIC WATCH.

"This watch will tell you the time, instead of leaving you to work it out for yourself. You can have the voice of your dearest friend, favorite politician or preacher, singer or actor. You can have your own voice reproduced on

payment of ten dollars extra. You can have a 'repeater' to quote texts, dates, poetry, or prose."

At midday there was a great crowd assembled to hear the new watches in Messrs. Sparton and Plowing's. Everybody admired the little wonders and talked of getting one for some one or other, but said that perhaps another day would do as well when they heard the price. Some made some slight purchases, but no one bought a phonographic watch.

"Why did you get 15 of them, Plowing," said Mr. Sparton, when they were arranging the new watches to "speak" at one o'clock. "Five would have been quite enough. We shall never be able to get rid of 15 at this price. There are not enough rich people in town."

The junior partner was by no means disheartened, for he well knew Mr. Sparton's methods. Sparton used to leave all purchases to his partner, and then heap all the abuse on his head if an article did not sell.

At five minutes to one Mr. Bunsner came in. He asked to see the new watch. Mr. Bunsner was a very rich manufacturer, and spent his money very freely. Sparton produced the watches and turned them on, while Plowing explained all he knew about their mechanism in order to bridge over the interval until one o'clock should strike. A moment before the big clock struck the watches began to talk, about ten went off exactly at the same time, and what they said could not be distinguished. All Mr. Bunsner heard was a recipe for chicken salad from one watch, and the excellent advice "one o'clock, take your hands out of your pockets," from another.

"What's that one?" said Mr. Bunsner, eagerly. "How much is it?"

"Which, Mr. Bunsner, please?"

"The one that said 'Take your hands out of your pockets.' It will do beautifully for my boy."

"Oh, that's the schoolboy's watch, sir; it has a lot of useful precepts. It has also some football maxims, the chief rules of good behavior, and some hints upon keeping pets. The whole to conclude with some nice homely advice in a lady's voice for every night at ten. After that, if consulted, it says: 'Don't talk,' and 'Go to sleep,'" said Mr. Plowing, reading from the descriptive catalogue.

"What is the price of this one, then?" said Mr. Bunsner.

"Forty-five dollars," said the officious Plowing, pushing his way past Sparton.

"I will take that with me, please,"

said Mr. Bunsner.

Mr. Bunsner took the watch with him; he did not look at it during luncheon at the University club—the phonographic apparatus had been turned off, as he did not wish to be surprised by it during business hours.

"It might tell me to take my hands out of my pockets or to go on with my work when one of my clerks was in my room, and that would be annoying," he said to himself, as he turned the button.

He said nothing of the purchase to his wife, however, as he hoped to surprise Bertie the next morning with the "Conscience watch."

"I have bought you a watch for your birthday, my boy," he said to Bertie, when the boy came in to say good night; "put it in the watch pocket by your bed; now mind you take good care of it."

"Yes, father, I will," said the boy, his eyes brightening at the present; "thank you very much. Good night, father."

"Good night, Bertie, my son, don't be afraid of your new watch."

Mrs. Bunsner and Bertie laughed, and the boy went off to bed handling his new possession.

A servant came into the boy's room a few minutes before eight the next morning. She pulled up the blind, calling to the sleeper.

Bertie turned over and had a long discussion with himself.

"Shall I get up? It will be awfully nice to get up in a few minutes. I haven't had enough sleep. It's very bad for one not to have enough sleep. Another quarter of an hour will do me a lot of good. Well, perhaps a quarter of an hour is too long. I'll go to sleep for another five minutes. When I really will get up."

"Eight. Time to get up now," said somebody.

"Hullo, I'm dreaming. That was a ghost, I suppose," said Bertie.

"Half-past eight. Get out."

"Nine. You have been in bed too long; get up," said somebody.

"What on earth is it?"

"Ten. Don't talk in school."

"Eleven. Hurry up to the other class-room."

Something had gone wrong with the watch, and nothing would stop it.

"Twelve. William the Conqueror, 1066."

"One. Don't eat too fast at dinner."

"Two. Don't run after eating."

Bertie got up and looked all around the room, and under the bed.

"Ugh!" he said to himself. "I must be going mad. I keep hearing horrible counting and people saying things. There it is again!"

"Five. Don't speak with your mouth full."

"Six. Change your shoes and brush your hair."

Bertie screamed for help, and the servant came rushing in.

"Oh, Mary, I'm mad! And there are ghosts saying things all round me. Listen!"

Mary listened attentively, as did the boy.

"Eight. To bed in an hour and a half—" was all they heard.

Mary fainted and Bertie hid his face in his hands and groveled on the floor. Suddenly he jumped up, tore down the watch pocket, and held it to his ear.

"That's it," he cried. "It's this watch that papa gave me is mad; not us," and he dropped the watch and all into the water pitcher. "We shan't hear it there," he said to himself as he tared the contents of the water pitcher over the servant and called for help.

Mr. Bunsner rushed in and scolded his son for his ingratitude; then sent Mary away, and administered corporal punishment.

As his father left the room, Bertie muttered to himself:

"Talking watches are humbug!"

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