

Bad Money Goes to Waste

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 10.—Five tons of counterfeit money were destroyed a few days ago by order of Secretary of the Treasury Shaw. This was contraband coinage captured by Uncle Sam's secret-service men during a little more than a year. The counterfeit coins accumulate so rapidly that this annual destruction becomes necessary, and it is believed that the stuff destroyed represents the greater part of the spurious coinage.

The actual amount of money "captured" last year was \$31,223.98. This was probably the bulk of the bad money floated during the year. If that be true, it is seen that the ratio of spurious to genuine coin is \$1 to \$4,000. This estimate is based upon the fact that the government mints have in the last year produced more than \$125,000,000 in coin.

The relation of counterfeit paper money to genuine paper money is probably about the same; so it would appear that the business of making counterfeit money is not, from the standpoint of the counterfeiter, "just like finding it."

Nevertheless, counterfeiters have been made ever since the government was established. Accordingly, a large staff of men are employed by the treasury department constantly to bring the counterfeiters to justice; and as soon as counterfeit money comes into the hands of government officers the most scrupulous care is taken to preserve it until a sufficient quantity is accumulated to call for its destruction according to the rules and regulations of the department.

This destruction takes place about once a year. The paper stuff is burned, unless it happens to be in the form of bank notes and treasury notes of such elaborate and painstaking workmanship that it is calculated to deceive the public when it appears in the circulating medium of the country. In that event—and there is always a considerable quantity of these notes—they are ground up in a kind of huge sausage machine, called a "macerator," in the basement of the treasury building in Washington.

The metallic counterfeiters, together with all the plates, dies, presses, and similar material captured from counterfeiters by the secret-service officers, are melted down, either at the Washington navy yard or at a local iron foundry. The recent destruction of spurious coin and paraphernalia of counterfeiters was effected at Schneider's iron foundry.

This year's "destruction committee" consisted of Samuel Wallace, C. E. Corwin, and George C. Flenner, trusted officials of the treasury department. The "destruction committee" is appointed by the secretary of the treasury each year to examine all the counterfeit materials captured by the secret-service bureau.

Whenever a secret-service detective makes a "haul" of counterfeit stuff he forwards it to Washington by express, and each article is carefully examined, and then labeled and numbered in the office of Chief Wilkie. The stuff is then stored away. The coin and notes are placed in a safe.

The more bulky material, such as dies, plates, and printing presses, are stored in a carefully guarded room in the treas-

SONS OF COUNTESS CASTELLANE



Before they set foot on American soil, the two young sons of Count Boni de Castellane, despite the fact that their mother was an American, had never seen an American flag. The youngsters are now in this country with their mother paying a visit to her relatives, the Goulds.

ary building. Sometimes it is necessary to keep the materials for a long time, for use in court as evidence to secure the conviction of criminals. But when the stuff ceases to be of value for this purpose, and after a year's supply has been accumulated, the secretary of the treasury appoints a "destruction committee" and the contraband stuff is burned, macerated, or melted, according to the character of the material.

The burning of miscellaneous counterfeiters' material, such as "flash" paper and other stuff, takes place in the basement of the treasury, the materials being thrown into the furnaces from which the building is heated. The destruction of this matter, however, is conducted with scrupulous care, in order to guard against any of the matter being abstracted, either with dishonest intent or for the purpose of preserving as souvenirs. The destruction committee goes down to the furnace-room with a secret-service detective, and while the firemen hold the furnace doors open, the stuff is thrown in. Not a scrap of anything is allowed to escape.

Similar care is taken in the destruction of coins at the iron foundry. The metallic stuff is loaded into a wagon and driven under heavy guard to the foundry. At the foundry the melting down of the matter is superintended by the destruction committee and at least one detective of the secret-service bureau.

When the annual melting took place the other day a great street crowd was attracted to the place upon the impression that the foundry was on fire. With the coins and other matter were a large number of electrotype plates, from which the wood "backing" had not been removed. The wooden material in the blast furnace made a big blaze under the abnormal conditions of draft, and the flames leaped several feet above the top of the smokestack.

The conglomerate mass of metal which results from the melting down of counterfeit coins is turned over to the foundry.

It is of little value except as junk. It would be idle to speculate upon the exact composition of this molten stuff. It contains lead, copper, zinc, brass, iron, and a little—mighty little—silver. There may sometimes be a little gold, but it is safe to say that if a man had a hundred tons of this residue and was able to extract whatever gold there was in it he would not have enough of the precious metal to buy a breakfast. Small quantities of the base metallic composition are sometimes given away by the treasury officials, molded into the form of paper weights and other articles.

The destruction of the paper money is more interesting, possibly, than that of the coin. The counterfeit notes are tied up in packages and carried to a room in the north end of the treasury building. There each package is placed by a skillful operator under a huge descending knife, which is part of a machine used in destroying counterfeiters.

After the notes have been cut into strips by this machine the pieces, carefully counted and guarded, are carried to the macerating room. The macerating machine has not been inaptly described as a "sausage machine." It is fully four feet in diameter, and stands as high as a man's head. The counterfeit notes are thrown into a sort of hopper at the top, a cover is closed, and the machine is operated by power from the engine-room in the treasury building. Water is also used in the machine, and the result of the operation is a wet, grayish pulp.

Not until this pulp appears does the vigilance of the treasury officials cease. The pulp cannot possibly be used for any illegal purpose known to the counterfeiters, and it is thrown into the dump or is given away to persons who mold it into images of the Washington monument, the bureau of engraving and printing, and other objects of interest to sight-

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