

seers and sold as souvenirs on the street or from the hotel news stands.

In the coins and paper notes destroyed this year were a number of famous collections. The remainder of the contraband stuff captured from the notorious Brockway gang of counterfeiters was destroyed. A quantity of this had been held for two years in order to secure the conviction of other criminals. There was also a quantity of notes captured from the notorious John Alfred Skoog. This man shot himself on the street in New York some time ago at a time when, being hard pressed by the police and secret service, his capture was imminent. He had been a counterfeiter for many years, and had served a term or two in the penitentiary. He was a skillful maker of "queer" money, and he did not confine his operations to imitating the money of the United States. He produced some clever reproductions of Swedish and Danish notes and was at one time making a clever counterfeit of the notes of the Bank of Scotland when he was arrested. A part of the stuff captured from the Johnson brothers of Detroit was also destroyed. These men made the famous imitations of the silver certificates of the denomination of \$2, bearing the Hancock and Windom heads.

An interesting part of the collection of stuff annually destroyed is the so-called "flash" material. This is usually matter made by persons in good faith, without any intention of criminal deceit, but merely for exhibition as curiosities. The laws relating to counterfeiting are now so strict, however, that the remotest imitation of government money is not allowed. Advertising schemes, innocent in themselves, have had as their basis the imitation of Confederate notes and United States paper money. These are under the ban of the law.

Such matter is always seized wherever it appears, and the producers of it are sometimes punished. Clever paintings of bank notes and coins are sometimes made for decorating saloons and other public places. Sometimes these paintings are really valuable in themselves, but they are invariably seized. In Chief Wilkie's office hangs, among other curiosities, an oil painting representing three barrels filled to overflowing with bank and treasury notes of all denominations. The painting is so true a reproduction of the original notes that a careless observer—if any observer could be careless upon witnessing such a sight—would at first take them for real money.

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"That Boston girl hung up her stockings and got a pair of spectacles in them."

"Why, I thought that was what she always got in them."

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He—Give me a kiss.  
She—I won't.  
He—You should not say, "I won't."  
You should say, "I prefer not to."  
She—But that would not be true.

**A CAPITAL BEAUTY**



One of the most beautiful women of the diplomatic set at Washington is the Countess Cassini, wife of the Russian ambassador. The countess entertains lavishly and is a leader in the foreign social set at the national capital.

**A False Alarm**

The big panting engine stood by the passenger station waiting for the grimy hand of the engineer to grasp the throttle and start it down the smooth steel rails. He stood by its side oiling the ponderous machinery and closely scrutinizing the different parts for any flaws that might have escaped the watchful eye of the machinist at the roundhouse.

Bill, the fireman, was wiping the sides of the machine and patting it in a loving manner, while he sang softly some popular air that he had heard at one of the theatres a few nights before.

The engineer finished his work and took his place in the cab. As the fireman entered, he said:

"Bill, let's compare watches."

Both proved to be on the dot. The engineer glanced back in the direction of the rear of the train. The conductor was coming towards the head end with rapid strides.

"Here are your train orders, Tom," said he. "How do you understand?"

The bronzed runner glanced at them sharply, and read them aloud in a slow and halting manner. Then he passed them to his mate, who did likewise and returned them to the engineer, who thrust them into the greasy pocket of

his blouse. "Take 'em away," said the "con," laconically and the man at the throttle pulled it open and the willing engine, in response to his touch, moved down the shining track.

"Bill," remarked the engineer, as they swept along swiftly to the next station, "I feel superstitious tonight and I can't tell just why. I have been lucky in the years that I have railroaded and have never had an accident, but there is a kind of creepy feeling runnin' down my spine that tells me something is goin' to happen tonight to you and me."

The fireman, who was shoveling great lumps of coal into the open jaws of the firebox, laughed, stopped a moment, and leaned on his shovel.

"Why, Tom what's the matter with you? Have you been taking a new brand of spirits aboard, or has your best girl given you the shake? Throw off that fool idea and talk about something lively."

And the gay coal shoveler hummed a rollicking air as if to banish the matter from his mind.

"I have tried to," his partner said gloomily, "but, Bill, it stays with me and I won't be satisfied until this old machine is in the yards at the end of our run." Then both men became silent, and nothing could be heard but the labored efforts of the engine as it rushed with lightning speed over the rails.

"Sometimes I wish," said the engineer, breaking out again, "that I was running on a double track line. I dread the

thought that the time may come when some careless runner or operator may make a break and we may meet on the same track and a smashup occur which may mean the loss of precious lives on the passenger."

The fireman shrugged his shoulders, saying:

"You had better quit the road if you begin to feel that way. I never heard you talk that way before. Brace up, old man, and keep a stiff upper lip; nothing is going to happen if we look sharp."

As he finished his cheery remark he glanced out of the window. Straight ahead of him he saw a bright light that froze his blood. It was the glare of an approaching headlight. "My God, Tom," he cried "we are in for it; stop your engine!" The startled runner gave a quick look ahead.

"Bill, we won't stop her, cut her off and we will meet the engine alone and save the passengers."

In a flash the fireman scrambled over the tender, pulled the coupling pin, and the engineer, with the throttle thrown wide open, caused the great machine to shoot forward with lightning rapidity.

Both men, with straining eyes, watched the approach of the coming train, ready to jump when the crash should come. But the inevitable did not happen, and as they came near the glaring light at terrific speed, it proved to be an engine attached to a freight that was quietly standing on a side track waiting till the express should pass by before proceeding on its journey.

The engineer shut off the steam, and looked at the fireman. Both men met in the center of the cab and shook hands.

"What a pair of fools we are!" cried the former. "If the old man hears of this he will fire us both. How in blazes could we make such a break?"

By this time the flying machine had come to a full stop, and they turned back to find the coaches that had been left behind. After running slowly for a short distance the crestfallen enginemens came in sight of the deserted cars, which had run at a swift gait for a brief time, but had come to a standstill.

The conductor and the breakmen were out at the head end, talking in an excited manner and trying to account for the missing engine. When the matter was explained to them, they gave the baffled engineer and fireman the laugh and were only sworn to secrecy by the promise of a box of the best cigars.

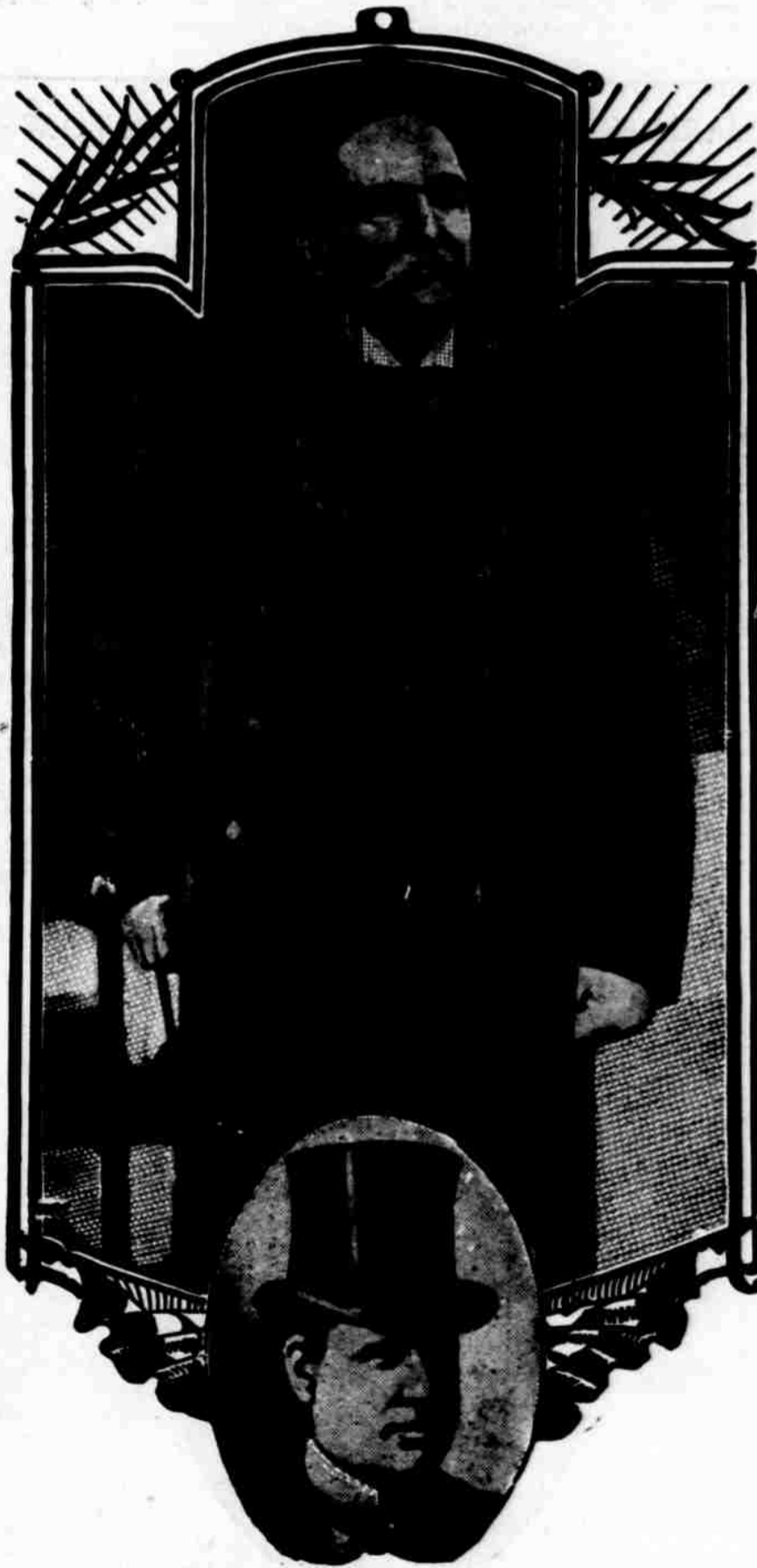
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**THE BLAZE OF NOON.**

Strange as it may seem, Uncle Sam does not make use of the sun for reckoning time, but, as already described in "St. Nicholas," he turns his attention to some of the regular steady going stars, or "fixed stars," as they are called. Every clear night an astronomer with a big telescope looks at certain of these stars and makes his calculations, from which he can tell just when the sun would cross the seventy-fifth meridian. One of the great clocks in the observatory is called the transmitter, because it transmits or sends out the signal that keeps standard time. This clock is set and regulated by the star time, and then every day at three minutes and fifteen seconds before 12 o'clock a switch is turned on and the beats of the pendulum of this clock are sent by electricity over the wires to the telegraph offices in Washington and New York. When the telegraph operators hear this sound on their instruments they know that the noon signal is about to be sent out, and they at once begin to connect the telegraph wires with other towns and cities, until in a minute or two the "tick, tick" of the clock at Washington is heard in hundreds of telegraph offices. The beats stop at ten seconds before 12 o'clock, as a notice that the next "tick" will be the noon signal, and so as to give the operators time to connect their wires with the standard time balls and clocks. There are time balls in a great many cities—usually on top of some prominent building, where they can easily be seen. The one at Washington is on the roof of the state, war and navy department building, at the top of a high pole, ready to drop the instant the signal comes over the wire. In the government offices at Washington and in many places in other cities there are large clocks connected with the observatory by electricity. These are so arranged that when the 12 o'clock signal is flashed over the wires the hands of each one of these clocks spring to 12, no matter what time the clock may show; in this way hundreds of clocks are set to the correct time each day.

Well, the moment the sun is supposed to cross the seventy-fifth meridian the telegraph instruments give a single tick, the time balls drop, the clocks begin to strike, and everybody in the district knows it is 12 o'clock.—St. Nicholas.

**CUBAN SENATE TO RECONVENE.**



PRESIDENT PALMA AND U. S. MINISTER SQUIRES.

The Cuban senate will reconvene January 20. Reciprocity with the United States will be one of the first measures considered. President Palma of the Cuban republic and Minister Squires, representing the United States, are now in daily consultation over the important measure.