

SWINDLING QUEEN LIVING HONESTLY.

Mrs. Ellen Peck, the Cleverest of Confidence Women, in Her Old Age.

Quietly Living in Brooklyn Off the Proceeds of Her Many Robberies.

Millionaires, Lawyers, Business Men and Criminals Were Among Her Victims.

MANY INDICTMENTS AGAINST HER.

Police Hold These Over Her Head and by Their Means Compel Her to Keep Within the Pale of the Law.

A gray-haired man with the air of a military veteran, and a small, nervous, white-haired woman met on Centre street yesterday.

"Good morning, Sergeant," said the nervous little woman, extending her hand.

"Good morning," replied the man with the military air.

He was Timothy Golden, who was said to be the shrewdest thief-catcher on Inspector Byrne's staff. The woman was Mrs. Ellen Peck, alias Mrs. Knight, the "Confidence Queen," credited with being the cleverest woman thief in the country. Sergeant Golden had arrested the woman scores of times. Her operations, which never failed to worry the police in Inspector Byrne's days, were always left to Sergeant Golden to ferret out. Sergeant Golden had retired from active service in 1880, so the veteran thief and the veteran thief-catcher talked over their old experiences as an open, jovial way.

Mrs. Peck was recently brought to public attention again by her connection with Mrs. Elizabeth de La Barre, who arrested James C. Hart on Broadway and handed him over to the police, charging him with stealing \$10,000 worth of diamonds from a friend of hers.

The main reason why Mrs. Peck has kept out of public notice of late has been that there are twelve indictments still standing against her. The operations of this woman are so dangerous that the authorities have thought best to hold these indictments over her head as a warning. How Mrs. Peck has managed to live since her freedom is a puzzling problem to the officials. It is thought, however, that she stowed away a good portion of her unlawful gains, although she was ever declaring that she had no funds with which to pay the clamorous lawyers who defended her in her numerous cases.

Policy Was Her Ruin.

Love of "policy" and hopes of winning capital prizes caused Mrs. Peck to first wander into the paths of crime. She first developed into a dangerous confidence woman eighteen years ago. Some of her questionable dealings prior to that time had been brought to the attention of the police, but they were not serious enough to cause her to be watched. In 1878 she succeeded in

swindling B. T. Babbutt, the soap manufacturer, out of \$10,000. Since then she has engineered swindling schemes in which prominent business men have been defrauded out of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Her next notable victim was Samuel Pines, a patent medicine man. She misled him out of \$2,700. She represented to Pines that she had a close friend who was an intimate of Jay Gould and kept her posted on all stock fluctuations. The pill milder was dabbling in stocks at that time and anxious to grow wealthy rapidly. He willingly gave Mrs. Peck money for "points." His investments, which were made on the strength of these tips, proved disastrous, and then he found that Jay Gould was selling the very stocks which he had been buying.

Her next victim was John D. Grady, known as "Supers and Slings," who conducted an illegitimate brokerage and loan business. It was thought that Grady could never be duped, but he succumbed to Mrs. Peck's arts. He loaned her \$2,700, which he never recovered.

Mrs. Peck bought a \$75 ring from John Bough, No. 22 Liberty street, one day, saying that she intended to sell it to a friend. In view of these circumstances, Bough offered her a commission. She refused to take this, but said she would return again for a larger order, and then she would take advantage of the proffered commission. She did return, and with a story that a lady whom she worked must give her a diamond ring, she wanted to buy a pair of diamond earrings. Bough turned the earrings over to Mrs. Peck without question. She had promised to return the earrings or bring the money the next day. Neither money nor earrings were ever recovered by the broker.

Swindled Even Professionals.

Mrs. Peck delighted in outwitting professional criminals, and she never failed to take them in when she once set about it. Julius Columbian, the notorious forger, fell into Mrs. Peck's clutches. He had stolen a bundle of valuable bonds from the residence of a wealthy Staten Island family, and had told Mrs. Peck about it. She suggested that he forge the original bonds, give her the bogus papers, and allow her to sell the entire lot as genuine. He did this, but Mrs. Peck was clever enough to know the good bonds, although he had not shown them to her. She retained these, turned the bad bonds over to the police and had an officer in waiting at a place she had appointed to meet Columbian to formulate the final plans for the proposed sale. He was arrested, and was sentenced to eighteen years in State prison, and Mrs. Peck went scot free and still retained the good bonds.

Mrs. Peck had a fashion of going insane every time a case against her was called for trial. After her counsel had induced the complainants to sue her in civil courts, her writs would return to her and she would leave the asylum to renew her swindling business.

Under the name of Mrs. Elizabeth Knight, Mrs. Peck, on September 21, 1881, defrauded John H. Johnson, a jeweler, of No. 15 Bowery, by representing that she had a large account in a well known New York bank. She exhibited a letter purporting to this bank. It was subsequently discovered that the Mrs. Knight who had mounted in this bank was an entirely different person from the purchaser of the jewelry.

A suit was finally brought by Jeweller Bough, which threatened Mrs. Peck with more trouble than she had previously experienced with the courts. Some missing jewelry, which Mrs. Peck had pledged at a pawnbroker's shop on the Bowery was identified by Bough as being his. At the trial on September 12, 1884, Mrs. Peck testified that she had bought the jewels some months before from a man named George P. Thomas, of Brooklyn. Thomas went on the stand and corroborated Mrs. Peck's statement. It was proven, a few days later, that he had perjured himself and in a confession to the police, he said that Mrs. Peck exerted some supernatural influence over him, compelling him to testify as he did. Through some technicality Mrs. Peck escaped imprisonment.

One of Her Favorite Tricks.

One of Mrs. Peck's favorite ways of raising money was by mortgaging and remortgaging furniture in her home, at No. 307 Third avenue, Brooklyn. Her ladylike appearance and glib tongue aided her in



Miss Leonora O'Reilly Cutting Button Holes.

pulling the wool over the eyes of the loan agents. At one time she was the defendant in twenty-eight civil and criminal cases.

Champion Bissell, a lawyer at No. 22 East Fourteenth street, was once her counsel. She obtained \$500 from him on a chattel mortgage on the furniture in her house. She exhibited a letter purporting to be signed by her husband, Richard K. Peck, saying he would aid her in repaying the loan. Mr. Peck, who by the way, was one of the best known structural engineers in New York, pronounced the letter a forgery. He claimed the furniture as his own. Indictments secured by Bissell still stand against the "Confidence Queen."

Mrs. Peck's first sentence was received on October 6, 1885, when she was sent to prison for four and one-half years. The crime was the forgery of a bond given with a mortgage on the house owned by her husband in Brooklyn. She obtained \$3,000 on this forged bond from the Mutual Life Insurance Company, of New York. An ex-convict, who was a witness in the case, recognized Mr. Peck and received the money.

Mr. Peck, who was regarded as a man of the utmost integrity in business circles, despite his unfortunate marriage, died several years ago. Mrs. Peck is now about sixty years old, and, while she has lost something of her former good looks, still retains her same old nervous energy and keenness of perception in business matters which she has turned to such profitable account.

FEATHERS AROUND OIL CAN.

That is Why the Police Thought Mrs. Weldon Set Fire to Her House.

Mrs. Catherine Weldon, of No. 456 Pavonia avenue, Jersey City, is locked up in the Oakland avenue station house, that city, on a charge of arson. She had a preliminary hearing before Judge Douglas yesterday and was remanded until tomorrow.

Mrs. Weldon owns the house at No. 405 Pavonia avenue, which is a small frame one, and occupies the top floor. The first floor and basement she rents to George Benaw, who has a wife and one child.

Last Friday night, while Mrs. Weldon was downstairs with Mrs. Benaw, fire broke out in her bedroom and was extinguished at 9:30 o'clock. At 11:30 o'clock another fire was discovered. After it had been put out the police found an oil can surrounded by a lot of feathers. This seemed to them a suspicious circumstance and Mrs. Weldon was arrested.

TO DEFINE A "CORINTHIAN."

Delegate Day's Suggestion to the Yacht Racing Union—Next Year's Council.

An effort is being made by several delegates of the Yacht Racing Union to have the definition of a Corinthian yachtsman altered so as to again admit such well-known helmsmen as Larry Huntington, Thomas Clapham and others to be eligible to handle the stick in Corinthian races.

Neither of these men have ever received pay as sailors or for services in handling a yacht, and it appears reasonable that the definition should be amended so as to allow them all the privileges of an amateur, and by defeating the suggestion of delegate T. Fleming Day, it would appear that the union were willing to debate men whose ability is exactly such as the union was organized to encourage.

Corinthianism in yachting is that attribute which represents participation for sport as distinct from gain, and which also involves the requirements of nautical experience through the love of sport, rather than through necessity or the hope of gain. It is consistent with the more higher than necessary found in the ranks of officers of the navy, licensed architects of the commercial marine, naval architects, yacht builders, sailmakers and riggers, notwithstanding that they secure a livelihood by following those professions and trades. No man who loves the sport should be refused admittance to its contests because he has become skilled in handling through experience and knowledge gained while in pursuit of a dignified and honest calling. In this respect, the following general definition is given:

"No person who has accepted remuneration for services rendered in handling or serving on a yacht, or who is a professional in any other sport, shall be considered a Corinthian yachtsman."

This definition was not passed upon at the annual meeting last night but in the interest of the sport the council will do well to consider it.

The Council for next year, which was appointed late for publication in the fourth issue of the Yacht, consists of Walter C. Kerr, Charles P. Tower, F. P. Towle, Charles T. Pierce and Frank Boyne Jones. The latter gentleman will act as secretary.

TEACHING THEM TO COOK.

Emanu-El Sisterhood Society's New Department is a Great Success.

The officers and members of the Emanu-El Sisterhood Society, No. 229 East Seventy-ninth street, are jubilant over the prospect for their new cooking department. There will be classes on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings of each week. In plain cookery there will be three classes—two for young girls of the sewing schools and one for the members of the Girls' Friendly Club. Miss Carrie D. McCumber has charge of the classes.

The Emanu-El Sisterhood is composed of the women connected with the Tennis Club, Madison avenue and Forty-third street. There are now six sections of the Sisterhood, each under the supervision of a member. Miss Dolly Steiner is in charge of the sewing class, Mrs. J. K. Kinton in charge of the sewing classes, Mrs. J. Levy in charge of the Working Girls' Club, Mrs. B. Friedman in charge of the kindergarten, Mrs. Jacques Levy in charge of the Sunday school and Mrs. D. Levin in charge of the cooking school. The Sisterhood also has an employment bureau, which has secured positions for 1,000 persons.

Miss O'Reilly is forewoman in a gentleman's furnishing establishment. She has held her present position about seven years. When seen yesterday she was at her work cutting buttonholes in shirt-bands. She paused unwillingly when asked to talk about her views recently read at the Twilight Club. "This is my work," she said, "not journalism."

ETHICS OF THE BARGAIN COUNTER.

The Twilight Club Hears the Subject Discussed at a Dinner.

Miss Leonora O'Reilly, One of the Workers, Presents Some Facts in a Paper.

Compares the Bargain Hunters with the Women by Whose Toil They Are Created.

THEY ARE SLAVES TO THE NEEDLE.

Forced to Make Wrappers at Forty-nine Cents a Dozen, and Shirt Waists at Ninety-eight Cents.

The Twilight Club held a meeting last Thursday evening at the St. Denis Hotel. This was but the sequel to an elaborate dinner at which were present over one hundred guests.

The topic for discussion during the evening was "The Ethics of the Bargain Counter."

An interesting feature of this discussion was the paper read by Miss Leonora O'Reilly, of No. 1045 Third avenue. This was particularly valuable because of the fact that Miss O'Reilly is herself a working girl. It was for this special reason that she was invited to contribute to the evening's entertainment. The guests included Mrs. Frederick Nathan, Colonel J. B. Wilson, Mr. George L. Record and Mr. Horace E. Deering, all of whom were to participate in discussing the chosen topic of the evening. Then Mr. C. P. Wingate, who is the secretary of the club, suggested that as the persons selected knew about bargain counters only from a certain standpoint, it would be well to invite also a woman who herself was a toiler to join in the evening's entertainment.

"True," said Miss O'Reilly, "most do away with the bargain counter. The truth seldom comes to light. One of the bargains oftentimes run after women who make shirt waists for morning wrappers. These they pay 49 cents apiece for. Yet other women slave early and nightly, perhaps with sick children to care for, perhaps ill themselves, and receive just 40 cents a dozen for making these wrappers. This slavery acts women who make shirt waists 98 cents a dozen. A smart woman can make six dozen house skirts a week, and thereby earn \$2 to live on. A dollar and a half work is what the woman earns who makes men's bargain scarfs."

Miss O'Reilly suggested that there was a remedy for the horrors attendant upon the manufacture of bargain counter goods. This lay in the purchase of union label goods. The label of the union is placed on all goods, which may be bought with the understanding that they are fairly paid for, and manufactured under conditions which the union vouches for.

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What to Get, or Where to Get It, Aye, That's the Question.

Where to get is easily answered—"At LAMBERT'S, Third Avenue and 58th Street." When you get there the main and important question is easily decided, their store is at all times a feast to the eye, but during the holiday season it is especially brilliant and attractive with the display of thousands of articles appropriate for presents. This is what draws the crowds which constantly throng the store.

The time is too short, now, for argument or urging. If you have delayed purchasing, there is just **four days and evenings left.** "Step lively, please!" or—well, somebody, your somebody, will be minus a present.

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 LADIES' SILVER BEAUTIFUL ENAMELLED, ALL COLORS, WITH PIN TO MATCH..... 7.50 " 15.00
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 LADIES' SOLID GOLD CHATELAIN, RICHLY ENAMELLED, ALSO SET WITH PEARLS, PEARLS AND DIAMONDS, AND OTHER CHOICE DESIGNS, WITH PINS TO MATCH 25.00 " 250.00

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 GENTS' SOLID GOLD WATCHES.....18.00 " 30.00
 GENTS' SOLID GOLD FILLED WATCHES 10.00 " 25.00
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 CELEBRATED HOWARD WATCHES IN EXTRA HEAVY 14 KT. SOLID GOLD CASES 48.00 " 125.00

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None of our watches are placed on sale until thoroughly tested and regulated.

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 CANES AND UMBRELLAS, WITH GOLD AND SILVER MOUNTINGS 1.00 " 20.00

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 BRONZE 8.00 " 30.00
 CUCKOO 5.00 " 50.00
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