

OLD THINGS ARE BEST.

Old things are best. We wander so strangely and so lonely From here to that world yonder. Why not grow fond and fonder In tried affections only.

SHOPLIFTERS.

Some of Their Clever Tricks and Ingenious Devices.

"Every vestige of the fashionable 'kick' has disappeared," said a detective to me the other day, when I requested his views regarding a certain phase of metropolitan life.

The shoplifter's "kick" is the technical name for the capacious bag or pocket she who prefers to "buy" when the clerk has his back turned has concealed under her cloak, or rather, sewed to the same on the left side, or which men have under the left coat tail.

It is not by reason of an edict by Beau McAllister that the old "kick" is going out of use, but because section 508 of the penal code makes it a criminal offense for anyone to have it in his or her possession. It is both in sorrow and in anger that shoplifters are parting with it; but the "cops" having "got on" to it it had to go, for it stood as conclusive proof against its owner.

From several stores detective learned that the methods used in "working" the old "kick" had become so well known to them and to salesgirls that shoplifters saw the necessity of keeping pace with a progressive age. So a more convenient contrivance was gotten up. It is called a "hoisting kick."

This consists of a regular dress skirt, so far as appearance goes, covered by an apron overskirt, which is short, and can be raised easily.

In the front of the underskirt is a wide vertical slit which is but the opening to the immense bag which the underskirt consists of, it going around the entire body and down to the heels. This was found more convenient than the side "kick," from the fact that it necessitated less movement and a motion that aroused little suspicion.

The thief would stand close to a counter where small articles are exposed, generally lace or silk handkerchiefs or stockings. She would take one in her hands, examine it, hold it on the edge in front of her, call for something else, and while the salesgirl had her back turned would slip it into the slit.

As the "kick" is made of paper muslin the stolen articles would slip down easily. Should the thief miss the aperture—a rare occurrence, for they are persons of nerve—the article would fall on the floor and the thief would pick it up, replace it on the counter and claim that it was an accident, which it really was.

This worked well, until several shoplifters using this "kick" were arrested and searched, which exposed the whole thing, and now there are few of them in existence. So the evil-doer's genius had again to be called into requisition, and a woman who was arrested in a Sixth avenue store showed how she had improved on that style.

She wore a beautiful flounced dress, covered with a short apron overskirt, draped and caught up here and there in such a way as to form natural-looking puffs. This went around the entire body, and a little to the right was a pocket, rendered absolutely invisible by the drapery. When searched an incredible amount of articles of all sorts, stolen from different stores, were found in the underskirt.

A detective told me that a notorious shoplifter was once caught who had in her "kick" two pieces of lace of twenty-five yards each, worth twenty-nine dollars a yard; two pairs of silk stockings, one silk and one lace handkerchief, a piece of scented soap and a Brummagem scarf worth forty-eight cents, all of which she had stolen in various stores in Sixth avenue. And, strange to say, it was the cheapest of articles that betrayed her—the handkerchief.

detectives say that there are relatively few professional shoplifters in the city now, and once they caught they disappear—as soon as law permits—and never return. They go to other cities. They say that supposedly respectable women now have more trouble than thieves.

I found out, to my astonishment, that there are comparatively few of our large stores who employ detectives, the majority of them training their salesgirls and floorwalkers to do that work. Still, I found one which, besides having a man detective, also employed a woman, who mixes among customers in all street costume. All store thieves are caught, and who are captured are not always freed. And this entails a loss to the class store which runs up into thousands, and which has a place of "cash paid for old gold and silver."

raison d'être, so to speak, and worked so admirably, that it was a long time before the detectives "caught on," and many thousand dollars' worth of articles were stolen by this means before an arrest was made. The first capture was caused by a salesgirl at a lace counter in a Twenty-third street store.

She had not seen the shoplifter put anything in the handbag, but had been attracted by the singular manner in which the cover was closed—apparently of itself. She notified a floorwalker. The woman was called into a private room, accused and searched, and in the handbag were articles enough to start a miniature country fancy goods store.

Among other things she had thirteen scarfs, an inkstand, a cigar holder and a dice box, stolen from different stores—which showed that her tastes extended over a wide field.

Well, the handbag has had a brilliant but comparatively brief career, and few arrests were caused by its use, but those that were made occurred within a few days, and the workers of the contrivance saw that the game was up and gave up the ghost. There is no record of any having been used recently.

This was in time succeeded by a simpler trick, one that has long been worked with success, because it creates no suspicion. It is the satchel game. Although store detectives say it is comparatively dormant just now, it was extensively worked during the holidays. These are used for stealing pocket-books as well as goods.

They are, in appearance, like ordinary hand satchels, but they open and close by means of a spring. The thief's right hand presses a button, and the left, which is always unengaged, does the rest. It is by this means that pocket-books are oftentimes stolen in crowded dry goods stores, and this has served to make trouble for many salesgirls.

The pickpocket (for such he or she is) generally works with a confederate. She first spies a woman with a pocket-book in her hand—and they are legion. She will follow that woman in the generally gratified expectation that she will ere long deposit it on the counter where she stops to examine goods.

The thief will crowd near and snatch the pocketbook in a twinkling at the first opportunity and pass it to the confederate, who disappears and has not been noticed near. The real thief can remain beside the victim with safety, as, should she be arrested, nothing can be found on her.

As the best inventions are generally the simplest so are the latest and most successful methods of shoplifting. These are three. One is done by means of the cloak known as the conennara. It is a long, loose cloak, covering even the hands. It enables the thief not only to steal with a greater degree of safety but also to conceal her booty.

All she has to do is to get near a crowded counter, throw the edge of her cloak partly over the article which she covets, slip her hand underneath the cloak, take the article, step back and hold it in her hand. Unless she is caught in the act she cannot be arrested or even suspected.

Another is still simpler. The thief lays her handkerchief carelessly on some small article she wants to steal, feigns a desire to buy something else, is not suited, and while the saleslady replaces the goods on the shelf the thief picks up her booty with her handkerchief. If she should happen to be caught she naturally claims that she did not know that she had the stolen article in her possession.

The third one is worked by means of a handbag containing twine and wrapping paper. This bag is carried in the left hand and filled with whatever goods the shoplifter can secure; then she will go into the toilet room or some side street, take out the goods, paper and twine, wrap them up in a neat parcel and try again or go away unmolested.

But perhaps the cleverest of the shoplifters' tricks is the "pennyweight" game. It is known to but few and practised by a still smaller number, for it is a difficult one. It has been most successfully worked by a pretty little blonde, with a baby face, blue eyes, curly hair and the general appearance of a bewitching songstress. Her professional name is "Little Scotty." She came to grief in Boston and was given three years.

Her mode of working is to go to a jewelry store and ask to be shown loose diamonds on a tray. She pretends to be very shortsighted and bends over and very close to the tray, examining the diamonds through an eye-glass. She exposes her left hand so as not to be suspected, and at a propitious moment drops a one-carat diamond into the tray, and with her tongue, on the point of which she has pulverized alum, she lifts up a two-carat diamond. She cannot find the exact counterpart of the one she wants to match (which she has not with her) and goes into another store where she exchanges her two-carat diamond in a similar manner for a three-carat, and so on ad infinitum.

When she was caught she had started with a one-carat diamond and had ended six and a half carats, making a profit of four hundred dollars in a few days.

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