

TO THE MEMBERS OF
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA.

At the last session of Parliament an Act was passed respecting the sale and marking of manufactures of gold and silver, known as "The Gold and Silver Marking Act of 1906."

Reason for the Act

Prior to its passage there was no law governing the stamping of gold goods in this country. If a manufacturer felt so inclined, he could mark his goods 10, 14 or 18 karats when they were in reality one, two or more karats lower in fineness. He was not compelled to use a registered trade mark whereby responsibility could be traced to him in case of fraud. A few manufacturers did so of their own volition: their trade mark on an article indicated that they stood behind the stamp to guarantee its correctness. Many, however, did not follow this course and instances were by no means uncommon where fraud was deliberately practised for the purpose of unfair competition and reaping inordinate profits from the consumer.

Its Provisions

As a protection to the honest manufacturer, as well as to the consumer, an Act was passed providing that gold goods, when marked at all, should have three separate and distinct marks as follows:—

- (a) The trade mark of the manufacturer, registered in Canada.
- (b) A letter to indicate the period of time when the article was manufactured.
- (c) A mark truly indicating the quality of the gold in the article.

An exception was made in the case of the Hall-mark of Great Britain, and goods bearing the Government stamp of any foreign country, providing that the quality of these goods was not less than 10 karats.

Standards—American and English

This standard, viz., 10 karats is fixed by the Act as the lowest quality gold that can be made, stamped and offered for sale in Canada. It is the same as was adopted in the first Federal Act of the United States, passed about a year ago. For thirty years reputable manufacturers in both countries have been making nothing lower for the legitimate jewellery trade. Other standards in general use on this side of the Atlantic are 14 and 18 karats.

In England the Government has given recognition, through the Hall-mark of Goldsmith's Hall, to four standards, viz. 9, 12, 15 and 18 karats. Originally the Hall-mark was applied only to 22 karat goods. The regulations were subsequently amended from time to time, first to provide for 22 and 18 karat markings, then for 18 and 15 karat markings and finally after much opposition for 18, 15, 12 and 9 karat markings.

The English 9 Karat Standard

It was on December 11th, 1854 that this last amendment was adopted. It was strenuously opposed by the leading jewellery manufacturers of the United Kingdom until it was explained to them that it was only desired to meet the requirements of the cheap export trade of Birmingham. In a report made by the Secretary of the Goldsmiths' Hall Company of Great Britain, sent to the Canadian Manufacturers Association through Lord Strathcona, and now on file with the Government at Ottawa, is to be found the following statement,—

"The Goldsmiths' Hall Company of London advised against the introduction of this lower standard, and very little work of this standard is assayed at Goldsmiths Hall, London. A considerable quantity of small gold articles, of 15, 12 and 9 karat fineness are dealt with at the country offices."

Manufacturing jewellers in London make practically nothing but 15 and 18 karat goods, the quality demanded almost exclusively by English home consumers.