

CAUGHT BY FAKIRS.

The advertising fakir is by no means a thing of the past. He has been compelled to forsake old scenes and old methods, but that is all. As an active propagator of fraud and deception he is as wary as ever. Probably more so, for his prey is not to be caught so easily by the style of angling common a few years ago.

Strange to say, the medium through which the advertising fakir gets at his victim is often the newspaper, the instrument that assisted in exposing his fraudulent practices in the past. An instance of this was seen one day last week in the supplement published by the Toronto Mail. That journal has studied to be in Canada what the London Times is in England—the Thunderer. But even if half that is alleged to be true it has lent itself to the perpetration of a deception upon the business public of Toronto that cannot but injure its reputation as the leading journal.

The great trouble with The Mail is that in its desire to get more than its share it is apt to forget its position and standing. The joke this time is on the advertiser. Poor fellow! Caught by the prize baking powder scheme, eh? If anyone of these advertisers had called up Mr. Bunting or Mr. Dyas and asked their opinion they would have been told not to go in. Of course, advertisers have to pay for experience as well as anyone else, but some are always buying experience.

Some time ago a quartet of American advertising fakirs decided to "work" Canada. Recently they arrived in Toronto. Two of them did office work, and two of them did the canvassing. They proposed to write an illustrated sketch of the city, to write up the different lines of trade, and to reimburse themselves for this they asked for advertisements from the leading manufacturers and business men. The price of the advertisement was to be \$16—or as near it, of course, as they could get. All this was to appear in the Toronto Mail, and besides each advertisement was to appear in fifteen other papers published in the Province of Ontario. The aggregate circulation of the sixteen papers was given as over 80,000. But The World, which has been exposing the matter, shows that the circula-

tion of the sixteen papers, the Mail included, is only half that amount, even according to the information furnished Rowell's newspaper agency by the publishers themselves. The projectors of the scheme did not hesitate to throw out a sprat to catch a mackerel when occasion demanded it. For instance, in order to induce the merchants in a certain line to "go in" for their scheme they would approach one of them and ask permission to insert his advertisement free. "You know, if we get your 'ad' we can get most of the others." The "sprat" however did not always catch the desired "mackerel," and in such an event the free advertisement did not appear. It was only when the schemers caught something with the bait that they stood by their agreement.

In due time the issue containing the illustrations, write-ups, and advertisements appeared. Then it was that the advertisers began to realize that they had been duped. In every way the issue was disappointing. Typographically it was anything but satisfactory, while the promised business write-ups consisted of words—mere empty words—that no more benefited the respective lines than if the space allotted to each had been filled in with blanks. Here, for instance, is every word it had to say about the grocery trade of Toronto:

It is often said that Toronto, among its other characteristics, is a "city of 'grocery fortunes.'" Clear back until the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, at least not in Toronto, this city has been a great central mart for groceries. Fortune after fortune that is now concerned with a hundred interests was reared upon the solid foundation of the wholesale grocery trade. It is indeed characteristic of the city that the "grocery fortunes" are so abounding. They stand for Toronto, bent toward trade and solid business rather than speculation. Toronto can boast of several of the largest and best equipped wholesale groceries in the world.

Exhibits much careful research, doesn't it? Then it is openly charged that but few of the fifteen other papers have published the advertisements. And even those that have done so have merely folded up the Mail's supplement inside their own journals.

But what is more surprising than that the patrons of the scheme should be duped, is that so many shrewd mercantile men, financial men, and bankers should have been led into it. The scheme was a fake upon the face of it. One well-known merchant was heard to remark: "O, I knew it wouldn't do me one cent's worth of good, but I went in because of my personal friendship towards Mr. Bunting." But this could not have been the reason that actuated them all. If they would only confess it they would acknowledge that they were caught by the glib tongue of an advertising fakir. Had they been deal-

ing with a man who was selling something appertaining to their own trade they would have got down to the basis of either taste or sample before placing an order, but in the present instance they allowed themselves to be carried away by the eloquent tongue of a sharp Yankee advertising solicitor. THE GROCER has had occasion within the last few weeks more than once to expose the practices of advertising fakirs, and it is with pleasure, therefore, that we learn that some merchants, with these articles in their memory, rejected the blandishments of the schemers who have recently been at work in Toronto. Barnum, the great show man, once said "the public like to be humbugged." How true. The one desire from boyhood to manhood is to get something for nothing. "Not how good, but how cheap," is the average advertisers motto.

There are some men who profess to never see any results from advertising; and it is no wonder when they throw their money away on such schemes as some of them did last week. There is advertising and advertising. It is safe to say that not one in a score of the merchants whose cards appeared in the Mail's supplement will ever see one single dollar's return for the \$16 they invested. In the first place the medium was not a good one. Taking for granted that there was the promised aggregate circulation of 81,000 copies, how many of that number would go into the hands of those whom they were interested they should go? Few, indeed. But aside altogether from the allegation that the contract regarding number of circulation had not been complied with, the possible value of the "ads" were lessened by the inartistic way in which they were "set up" and arranged and the substance of them. An "ad," to be of any value, must, in the first place, be attractive. There is nothing of this qualification about an "ad" which reads: "Jones, Brown & Co., Tea Merchants, Toronto." And this was about the sum and substance of the advertisements that appeared in the aforesaid special issue. If Jones, Brown & Co. expect to get returns from advertising they must select a medium that goes direct to the persons whose trade they want to catch, and then "word" their advertisements so that it will attract attention and leave an impression. This is the only way in which results can be obtained. From men who follow this rule one never hears complaints about advertising not paying; and they are the most successful and wide-awake of merchants.

The Yankee advertising fakirs now that they have completed their errand in Toronto, have moved to other fields of labor. Merchants and manufacturers—keep your eye upon them.