

certaining whether any raised device had ever been on these banks: they placed them on red-hot iron plates; when heated to a certain temperature, the fraudulent pieces remained as plain as before; but the worn-down genuine coins presented the device very faintly re-introduced, of a greenish hue; this revival disappeared as the coins cooled down; but lasted long enough for the immediate purpose in view. Collectors themselves adopt a similar plan, when testing old silver coins of which the device is so worn down as to render the reign and date almost illegible; they place them upon a red-hot poker, and watch till the inscription comes temporarily into view.

Macaulay gives a graphic account of the woful state of coinage in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Down to the time of Charles II., the blanks for coins were cut out from sheets by means of shears, and then hammered into circular shape; this circularity was by no means perfect, while the edge was often irregular, and without any legend or milling. One consequence of this was that the dishonest clipped and pared and filed the edges of the coins, and appropriated the fragments of gold or silver thus obtained. The government, on urgent and repeated representations from bankers, merchants, employers of labor, and shopkeepers, caused a machine to be constructed for milling or stamping the edge. But, unwisely, the old coins and the new were allowed to be in circulation at the same time, producing an effect which had not been duly foreseen. "Fresh wagon-loads of choice money came forth from the Mint; and still they vanished as fast as they appeared. Great masses were melted down; great masses exported; great masses hoarded; but scarcely one new piece was to be found in the till of a shop, or in the leathern bag which the farmer carried home from the cattle fair." The gibbet at Tyburn was at work nearly every week, executing wretched creatures, women as well as men, who had been convicted of clipping