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The Risks of Illicit Diamond Buying.

People are often reminded by sundry paragraphs in the newspapers of the vast sums earned by the diamond-mining companies. The profits, however, might not have been so large were it not for the South African Diamond Trade Act of 1882, which created a new offence—that of illicit diamond buying, familiarly called "I.D.B."

The practitioner of I.D.B. is generally a native of the ghetto—keen, astute, and unscrupulous. He works through native touts, and it is no uncommon thing for him to have sixty or seventy coloured men in his pay. The transaction generally takes place in some low eating-house or grog-shop, when uncut stones worth hundreds of pounds change hands in a

few moments. I.D.B. is terribly risky; and fifteen years on Cape Town break-water, which was constructed by convict labour, was the portion of the unlucky one who fell a victim to his own carelessness or the vigilance of the police.

According to the Act, it is illegal to possess a diamond if you are not a licensed dealer, and the police have well-nigh unlimited power in arresting and searching people whom they have reason to suspect. They may even seize packets passing through the post, should they believe they contain stones illicitly obtained. In two years £30,000 worth of "goniphers"—as stolen diamonds are called—were seized, and the salaries of special I.D.B. detectives amounted to £25,000. A registration fee of 1/4 per cent, during the same period brought in £20,000.

When the precautions taken at the mines are very stringent. All workers have to strip, and put on a special dress when they arrive at the mines; and when the time for leaving-off comes, they are again searched, their hair, nostrils, ears, and the inside of their mouth being closely scrutinized. They are also made to jump over bars, so that the motion may shake free any diamonds they may have managed to conceal.

To fight all these precautions the unlicensed buyer is not without his machinery. Mounted on swift horses, his "troopers"—as the runners are called—convey the stolen stones at a gallop over the frontier to the I.D.B. depots. If hard pressed by the police, in spite of the excellence of their horses, they drop the "goniphers," casing in lead, into the long grass, returning for them later. Dogs are fed with meat containing diamonds, afterwards being killed and cut open. Stones have been concealed in the tails of oxen, and beneath the wings of fowls. A native employed by an unlicensed buyer used to hide stolen stones in the bowl of his pipe, then fill it up with tobacco and begin to smoke. A diamond is not as big as a grand piano, and ways of hiding it are innumerable.

Give a Thought to Music!
Don't wait till your piano becomes so bad that it gets on your nerves and neighbours' nerves. If it has begun to get "tinny," the probability is it needs tuning. If you want your piano put in good condition and kept so, send for me. Yearly contracts taken.

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Jan 8, 1920, 2m Phone 649A.

Phantom Swords.

(By ELLIOTT O'DONNELL in Pearson's Weekly.)

Swords are so closely associated with all the grim horrors of killing that it is not, perhaps, remarkable their ghostly counterparts should be regarded as invariable omens of ill.

History can point to a number of instances of sword omens, though none, perhaps, more extraordinary than that connected with the Lovat family.

In the mansion of the Lovats, as in most mansions of the old aristocracy, there hung on the walls a large assortment of swords, and it is recorded that on the birth of the Lord Lovat of Jacobite renown, several of them leaped out of their scabbards of their own accord, those that witnessed the phenomenon believing they were drawn simultaneously by invisible hands.

The incident was borne in mind when the unfortunate Lord Lovat lost his head, when it was declared to have been a warning of that much-lamented catastrophe.

The Phantom of Death.

It is hardly to be wondered at that a family abounding in so many traditions as the Douglas should number among them one at least referring to a sword. The young Douglas of Chevy Chase renowned, shortly before that battle, was ascending the staircase of his castle when the shadow of a huge

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double-handed sword suddenly barred his way. Much astounded, he stood still not knowing whether to advance or retreat, when the sword vanished,

and it was then told him that it was a sure presentiment of coming evil. The warning was justified, for the unhappy nobleman was killed on the battlefield soon afterwards.

A Case From Germany.

Another case comes from Germany. A certain young nobleman happening to lose his way one dark and stormy evening in a big town, knocked at the door of the most respectable-looking house he could see. It was opened almost at once by a tall man in rather poor clothes, but possessed of the most singularly cruel and savage features, who bowed politely to the wayfarer and conducted him into an inner chamber, the walls and floor of which were smothered in swords, scabbards and machines of a dreadfully ominous nature.

As the young nobleman stood appalled, hardly knowing what to say or think, a sword suddenly fell from its scabbard with a loud clink on the floor.

The nobleman drew back in alarm, noticing as he did so the eyes of his host fix on him with a curious expression of inquisitiveness and malignity. So remarkable was the look that the nobleman could not refrain from inquiring who his host was and why he eyed him in such a very peculiar manner.

"I am the public executioner," was the reply, "and the incident you have just witnessed is a sure sign that in the fulfilment of my office I will one

day cut off your head with the very sword you have seen leap out of its own accord from the scabbard."

The nobleman was so alarmed that he got out of the house as quickly as possible, but, being drawn into a plot shortly afterwards, was executed by that very man and the identical sword.

The Two Brothers.

Lastly comes a case from the late war. A soldier told me that he was conversing with his brother one day, shortly before the outbreak of the war, when a sword that was hanging over the mantelpiece near them, suddenly came out of the sheath, and fell with a loud clatter on the fender.

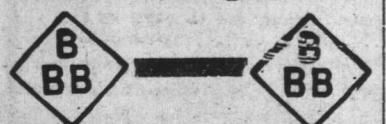
No one was in the room but these two at the time, but when they related the incident to their mother, she burst out crying and exclaimed:

"It's a bad sign! I'm certain it is. Praise God, it will be only one of you that will be taken and not both."

And her words came true. War broke out, both brothers enlisted, and the younger of the two was killed in a cavalry charge soon after he arrived at the front. The other came through the war unscathed, but died of pleurisy soon after.

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