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POLICE SCIENCE



CALVIN GODDARD [Ed.]

FETTERING DEVICES

MERLE A. GILL¹

[Editor's Note: The following interesting article by Mr. Gill was accompanied by photographs of no fewer than twenty different specimens of fettering devices, all the property of the author, whose collection of such instruments is probably without equal. Unfortunately the JOURNAL is not in a position to publish even a small percentage of these, inasmuch as it would like to do so, and must content itself with printing a single cut only, in which some seven of the exhibits in Mr. Gill's collection are illustrated.—Editor.]

Available records show that in the United States alone some 200 different types of manacles have been invented. These include handcuffs, leg shackles, waist and body manacles, thumb cuffs and chain "come-alongs." In foreign countries still another 200 varieties have been developed. Most of these invented, however, were never manufactured, nor were models ever constructed, it would therefore be quite impossible to obtain specimens of every type of fettering instrument thus far designed. I have in my possession copies of the patent specifications covering all devices of this character issued since 1860. Prior to that date no records are available from our Patent office, due, I am informed, to a fire which destroyed the early patent office files.

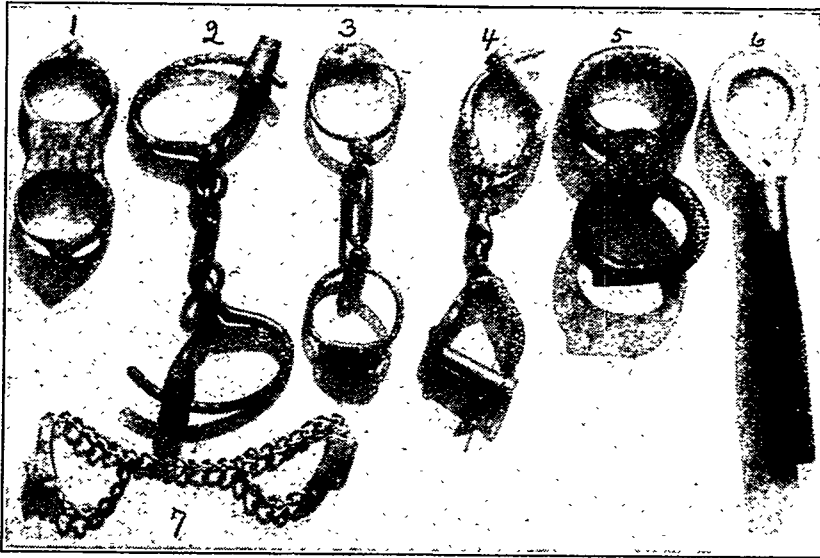
It has always been a mystery to most people, especially those not familiar with police work, how trick artists, or "Handcuff Kings," as they call themselves, can escape from the many different devices that are made to hold the wrists of prisoners securely. There is no mystery in most cases, as these men all have a set of keys hid in

¹Forensic Ballistician, Kansas City, Missouri.

their cabinets or about their clothing. When the "artist" is behind the closed door, of his cabinet, it is a simple matter to select the right key and quickly unlock the cuffs.

It is quite true that some handcuffs can be picked with a hard steel piano wire bent to shape. Modern handcuffs can be picked in this manner easier than can the old time devices. Cuffs that have chain connections between the wrist levers can be turned around in such a manner that a key or pick can be gently placed in the key hole and the locking dogs forced back from the ratchet teeth in the levers. This requires some practice.

A few years ago I was in the business of manufacturing handcuffs and thumb cuffs and had the opportunity to study the construction of different locking arrangements contained in the steel



- No. 1—Famous Bean Giant handcuff patented November 1st, 1887. Captain Bean, the inventor, offered a reward of \$500 to any person who could escape from this manacle. Houdini and many other handcuff artists 'made' them.
- No. 2—Marlin Bottle-neck handcuff, patented December 2nd, 1879. R. H. Daley was the inventor. Three patents issued.
- No. 3—Walden Wire handcuff, patented January 8th, 1918.
- No. 4—English "Hiatt" handcuff known as the "Fool-Proof". Note the odd flexible portion of the bows.
- No. 5—Rare device known as the Massive Challenge handcuff. This is a trick handcuff and opens with a pin. The pin-hole being in the center connection. When properly placed upon the wrists of any person, it is absolutely impossible to escape from them, handcuff artist or otherwise.
- No. 6—This is the Night-Club, invented by an El Paso, Texas, police officer to use in dragging drunks off the border bridge. Not patented.
- No. 7—Burdick Chain cuffs, patented September 15th, 1903. Some of these devices had steel handle-bars attached to the connecting links.

hulls of many types of hand and leg shackles. I also examined the hundreds of drawings which disclosed the secrets of various inventions that have never been marketed and I have come to a positive conclusion that it would be an act of discretion for police officers to sleep with one eye open when transporting prisoners bound in any type of handcuff.

Not so long ago in the State of Maine, a policeman was found at the bottom of a lake locked in his own handcuffs! It was apparent that a prisoner had removed the cuffs from his own wrists and murdered the officer, then handcuffed him and tossed his body into the water. Up in South Dakota in 1923 a Sheriff was killed by a hard-boiled hombre by the name of Edwin Rust. Rust was handcuffed and being transported on a train. The sheriff was seated across from Rust when, all of a sudden, the latter grabbed the officer's gun from a shoulder holster and shot him dead, pulled the safety cord and escaped from the train. Rust was killed a short time later by St. Paul, Minnesota, detectives. In 1922, In Oklahoma, a sheriff was hit over the head with a pair of handcuffs, his gun removed gently from the holster and he was shot and killed by a Negro named Welsh. The cuffs were buried with the sheriff's body in a swamp! In 1923, I believe it was, a Federal prisoner escaped from a government officer while the latter was using the telephone. He turned up a year later with the cuffs still in place! The chain connection was gone, but the levers were deep in his wrists which were twice their natural size when the manacles were removed.

In January, 1931, Earl Lockman, famous handcuff artist, failed to escape from a pair of handcuffs that had been placed on his wrists by Chief of Police, O. W. Freeman, of Evanston, Ill. These were the "Flash-Action" solid handcuffs patented by myself. They have no chain connection and it is impossible to manoever the hands into a position in which a pick or key can be used. They can be unlocked, however, by placing the bit of the key in the seam of your shoe and turning this gently to the right of left! Provided you have a key.

A handcuff was patented in 1876 by John Tower that no person has ever picked. This cuff is known as the "Tower double-lock" and all handcuff kings caution the student to be sure to have a key when attempting an escape from this device. Not Houdini, nor his brother Hardeen, or Lockman, or Sweetwater, or Thurston, ever picked this manacle when it was double-locked. I have tried for 15 years to open it with a wire pick but have failed at every attempt. There are also several old time devices that cannot be picked with a wire