

*The New York World*  
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***A New Trick in “Bargains”***

***Nellie Bly Discovers an Enterprising Woman Who Makes You Think You Are Getting Things Very Cheap***

***Pianos, Furniture, Pictures***

***A Bogus Bill of Sale Which Misleads Customers as to the Real Cost and Value of the Wonderful Bargains***

***An Interesting Household***

***A Striking Illustration of How Clever People in the Big Town Manage to Live on the Credulity of the Unsuspicious***

Of all bargain frauds, I believe, the bargain furniture fraud comes very near being the worst.

Look in almost any newspaper and there will be found these alluring advertisements:

ALL THE magnificent furniture pertaining to a first-class private residents must be sold immediately, consisting of superb Turkish parlor suit, also silk tapestry suit, \$40; paintings, magnificent grand upright piano, \$140; silk couches, screens, portieres, magnificent hand-carved oak buffet, table, leather chairs or bedroom suits, fine velvet carpets, \$14 and \$18 each; all like new, used four months; sell separately, 127 W. 47<sup>th</sup> St.

Alluring? Yes; and to the very people who can't afford to be swindled.

Advertisements, changed slightly in form, but always retaining some special features, such as “silk tapestry suit, \$40; magnificent grand upright piano, \$140,” have appeared daily for some months from No. 127 West Forty-Seventh street.

I began to wonder why it took so long to sell that furniture, and at last I decided to see it.

The house is a four-story high-stoop situated between Sixth avenue and Broadway. It is the most pretentious house on the block, and has an impressive hall door, adorned with heavy hinges and stained glass, that makes the old houses across the street shrink back fifty feet in very shame.

I went up the stoop rather timidly for a “bargain-chaser” and touched the electric bell, that sent a jingle through the house. A man answered my ring, a well-spoken fellow, who admitted me to the hall and then paused inquiringly to hear my business.

“I have seen your advertisement,” I began in the same old way, and the man inclined his head, with a pleasant smile, I needed to say no more.

“Will you wait one moment, please, until I call the lady of the house,” he said, and off he went through the hall to the rear parlor.

This gave me a chance to look about, and the hall bade fair to maintain the pretentiousness of the front door. There was a large fireplace in it filled with gas jets and above the mantel were a cabinet and two gas jets...

The front and rear drawing-rooms were hidden from me by cheap chenille portieres.

What amused me most at the moment was that someone began to play the piano the moment the man went into the rear room.

“That is the 4140 piano, and they intend to draw my attention to it,” I thought.

Just then the front portieres were drawn aside and a little stubby woman, rather too stout for her height, invited me to enter.

“I want to buy some furniture,” I said to her, as her sharp, dark eyes scanned me closely.

The woman is far from prepossessing. Her eyes are dark and have a bad expression—keen, cruel and unscrupulous. Her hair is very dark and very banged and curly about the face. Her nose is “pug.” She began in a very business-like way.

“What kind of furniture do you want?” she asked promptly.

“Oh, every kind,” I answered, airily. “I am furnishing a house.”

“We are selling off everything, if you will state what you wish to see,” she replied, a trifle testily.

The piano kept going in the back room and I said that I would like to see a bedroom suit.

#### GAUDY AND BRAND NEW

The woman evidently did not expect to sell bedroom furniture, so, for an instant, she was rather disconcerted.

“I have some beds to sell,” she said at last, “but I have some friends visiting me and I cannot show them today.”

So I turned to look at the things that were before me.

The floor was bare of carpet, but filled with furniture of every kind. Chairs, sofas, tables, lamps, bisque statuettes, cabinets, and all of the gaudy style that catches the general bargain hunter.

The tables and cabinets were gold, and the chairs and sofas were upholstered in light-colored cotton brocades, with trimmings of velvet, such furniture as one sees in the windows of every cheap furniture store.

It was very evident that not a single article had ever been in use.

“How much do you ask for this little gold table,” I inquired.

“I will sell that for \$25. It cost double only three months ago,” she answered.

The table could, I should judge, be bought in any store for \$10 at the very most.

I saw that the walls were covered with cheap oil paintings, regular sawed-out things of impossible colors, so I inspected them.

“Have you any by noted artists?” I asked.

“There is one by Murand,” she answered, pointing to a ghastly thing, “and there is one by Watson.”

“Who is Watson?” I ask, meekly.

“Don’t you know Watson, the celebrated artist?” she ejaculated, with cutting scorn, which I bore with Christian fortitude, for I did know Watson, better than she could ever suspect, but more of that later.

“Have you any etchings? I don’t care much for oil,” I say, to turn the subject.

She has no etchings. The class of people that search for bargains are usually fond of gaudy oils in deep frames.

“Are these the only chairs you have?” I asked, nodding towards the pink and blue brocades before me.

“I have some back here,” she said, leading the way to the rear room. “I have elegant dining-room furniture, if you want any.”

The back room was more furnished than the front. There was a carpet upon the floor, a business table in the center, the \$140 piano against the wall and a number of chairs standing around. The dining room, with a high window of cut glass that succeeded in making the place frightfully gloomy, was yet further in the rear. An ordinary oak table was there, with six oak chairs. And there were several upholstered chairs, a roll of lace curtaining and a roll of carpet—that she said was sold.

#### COST \$600, WOULD SELL FOR \$140

While we were looking at these things the man that admitted us was thumping with great energy upon the piano, and naturally I spoke of it.

“I believe you mention a piano for sale,” I suggested. “Is it a good piano?”

“Try it yourself,” the woman said quickly, as the man rose up to make way for me.

“There is no better make, and I have a five years’ guarantee.”

I looked at the manufacturer’s name, Sears R. Kelso. It was unfamiliar to me and I said so.

“Oh, well, that may be,” she replied, in a tone that suggested I didn’t know much, “but the firm is well known just the same.”

“You can see this, that will tell you all about it,” spoke up the young fellow at the table, as he handed me a circular that stated that the piano cost \$600. It was a black ebony case, and I considered the one before me a very plain affair for the price.

“I will sell it for \$140,” the woman added, “and I’ve only had it since last August.”

“That is quite a bargain,” I say, pleasantly, and then I turn to other subjects.

“I should think you would be sorry to sell your furniture and leave such a pleasant home,” I observe, amiably, but she doesn’t grow very confidential.

“We must do according to our circumstances,” she answers, carefully.

“Is this house for rent?” I go on.

“No; it’s been rented,” she answers, quickly, “but it’s for sale. We have power to sell it for the owner.”

Promising to return the next day, I depart. Then I set about to look up this woman’s record. I find a history that, though short, is interesting, presenting another phase of New York life. Between thirty-six and forty years ago Fanny Ford was born somewhere in West Virginia. Her parents were poor people. Her father, now a man of perhaps seventy years, was for forty years a pilot on the Ohio River.

#### SHE WAS FANNY FORD

The family moved to Gallipolis, O., and something like ten years ago Fanny Ford married a man named Walsh, who tried to practice medicine in Cincinnati.

It is said that Walsh made a failure of medicine, and that then Fanny went into the furniture business, just as she is in it today, buying cheap furniture, at wholesale prices, and selling it by alluring misrepresentations to would-be bargain-finders.

Less than three years ago Walsh died and left his wife with three children whom she idolizes. There is Lucy, nine years old, who has a governess, for her fond mother will not permit her to attend public school. Next comes Tiny, a little five-year-old girl, and last is Elmer, three years old, the baby and only boy.

After Walsh died Mrs. Walsh had about \$10,000 that she had scraped together, and with that amount and her three children she removed from Cincinnati to broader fields.

In other words, she came to New York and rented No. 17 West Twenty-fourth street, where she opened a boarding-house.

Her first boarder was Victor Cadieux, a Canadian youth, less than twenty-one years old, who attended to the stereoscopes in the Eden Musee.

No one knows whether it was the widow Walsh who made the first advances, or the boy Cadieux, but be that as it may, they say that in less than eight months after her husband's death, and with courageous, if not admirable disregard of the almost double difference in age, the two were wed, and Victor gave up the Eden Musee, with its motionless inmates, for the boarding-house and its spry mistress.

The boarding-house proved a failure. I don't know why, for though Fanny didn't sell furniture during that time she sold carpets.

Having lost considerable on the boarders, she removed to No. 138 West Fort-sixth street, where she went into the business in which she is at present engaged.

But trouble will come to those who deal unfairly, and at last too many had lost money through her to make home very comfortable, so she gave it up and went to No. 48 West Twenty-seventh street.

She only remained there about six months when she sold her lease, at \$100 increase, to a Mrs. Gibbs, together with \$800 worth of furniture.

It was only six months from the time she lived in West Twenty-seventh street until she sold and moved to No. 127 West Forty-seventh street, Feb. 1.

She buys her furniture at wholesale prices from Pierce & Co., West Nineteenth Street, near Sixth avenue, and this furniture she represents as having cost enormous amounts, and succeeds at swindling her customers into buying at prices that exceed the real value, giving Mrs. Cadieux a most handsome profit.

Her pianos are bought from Sears R. Kelso, One Hundred and Thirty-third street and Lincoln avenue, and by examining the following receipts, it will be seen how buyers are easily misled and swindled.

The first receipt, dated March 5, 1894, giving the number of the piano and price, \$100, is the real receipt. That was meant only for the Cadieux family. The second receipt, dated Aug. 26, 1893, and giving the number of the piano and the price as \$600, is the "fake" receipt, given by the firm of the Cadieuxes to help them swindle the public into believing the piano cost a great deal and that at \$140 (\$40 increase in real price) they would be getting it at a great bargain.

The carpets are furnished by Dobson & Co. Most of them are made in the house, and when they are shown it is always done in the hall, so that a buyer cannot judge how small the carpet is.

I was shown one that was actually not more than ten feet long and four breadths wide, and was earnestly assured that it covered the floor of a very large room.

They have more trouble over their carpets than with any other article. They tell most dreadful lies about the size, and their victims are helpless when they discover the truth.

A queer lot compose the household at No. 127. On the top floor are two women, Mrs. Tona Banie and Mrs. Richardson. They live well, dress gaily and enjoy life generally.

#### ARTIST WATSON ET ALS

Then there is a Mr. Wilson, or Nelson, who once did a Japanese act at the Eden Musee with Olive Nelson, who is his wife, and lives there with him.

Besides these are a trio of queer fellows who came from Cuba and have joined their fortunes with Fanny Cadieux and her boy-husband.

There is James Brown, a Scotchman, who helps to move around, and in and out, the furniture. He also attends to the door.

He might properly, being the most useful, be called No. 1 of the tribe.

Tom Watson is No. 2. He is an Englishman and tries to paint. It is his name that honors some of the elaborate "oils" in the drawing-room. One, a Venetian scene, is considered especially fine. Tom is very handy at copying pictures and painting over lithographs.

No. 3 may not be useful, but he is ornamental. He says he is the Marquis Daniel de Cardamus. The Marquis, in his ornamental weariness, sits around in the easiest chairs admiring Jim Brown's muscle, Tom Watson's paintings, and Mrs. Cadieux's clever sales.

Besides all these Mrs. Cadiexu has her father and mother with her. They confine themselves to the rooms on the floor above the drawing room, where they help the nurse to attend to the three children. There are three servants in the house.

While I have described how business is done at No. 127 West Forty-seventh street, it is folly to imagine that it is the only place of its kind in the city. But it is the largest and most successful.

Only remember in the future that about everything worth having is either unattainable, or expensive, and—beware of bargains!