

## THE TRADE IN MODERN ANTIQUITIES.

ONE of the chief delights of Continental travel, as every person of experience will admit, is the unlimited opportunities it affords for buying antiquities. The statuary, the coins and the pictures that may be purchased in Italy are a source of never-failing interest to English travelers and of never-failing profit to Italian dealers. Andalusia, again, is a huge curiosity shop. Being once upon a time in Seville we came across a retired British grocer or tailor, or something of that kind, who had just purchased a "Madonna and Child"—unhappily unsigned—which he had picked up for a few pounds in a dingy back street. He was going to send it to the Exhibition of Old Masters, and if he ever did so he probably found that it was worth only a pound or thirty shillings at the outside. It is the same, indeed, throughout Spain. The altar cloths, the broken fans, the inlaid tables and cabinets, as resplendent as anything in the convent of the Cartufe at Granda, the wonderful chairs and the still more extraordinary scraps of ancient lace, upon which all who have ever traveled in Spain have spent much money—these abound from Malaga to Irun, and naturally one is inclined to speculate a little on the odd circumstance that the supply is more abundant than ever, although the demand is fairly brisk. Tangiers is, we should say, a hotbed of modern antiquities, and even Mr. Chamberlain bought some of them when he was over there a year or so ago. He ought to have known something about this class of goods, being a Birmingham man, but the child-like faith of the President of the Board of Trade in all things ancient is notorious. America, oddly enough, has taken to this business of manufacturing the antique Dutch cabinets that, with bronze panels, dingy and marked with the cracks of fictitious centuries, are turned out every day from Chicago furniture stores, and for some purposes they are quite as useful as if they had indeed belonged to some departed burgher in the dead cities of the Zuyder-Zee. New York experts in this sort of forgery make a specialty of Queen Anne chairs and tables, and the imitation is so perfect as to deceive all but those who have studied such things minutely in Europe. The explorer of furniture stores may come upon magnificent specimens of English Gothic chamber pieces, or ancient looking Chippendale and Sheraton chairs, which might have belonged to Queen Elizabeth but for the fact that they did not. It must be puzzling at first to discover in New York shops stamped leather chairs of the time of Louis Treize, plentifully ornamented with brass nails, whose heads are fully an inch in diameter, and the citizens of that enterprising city are invited to become the happy possessors of as many of these treasures as they like on ridiculously low terms. If, however, the explorer is inquisitive, and the furniture venders are in a tolerably candid mood, the visitor may be conducted into some back yard where these gems of high art are produced. A Queen Anne's chair just made can, for instance, be supplied with worm holes by the simple process of tilting it bottom side up and firing a charge of pigeon shot into the bottom and front

of the seat. Old armor, too, is a good line in this business, the drawings required for the purpose being made from the collection in the Grand Opera House, in Paris. It is said that Birmingham knows something about this branch of the trade, and that helmets, shields, casques, breast plates and complete suits of mail are regularly manufactured for the gratification of credulous oil speculators and retired pill manufacturers. If a man starts a lot of ancestors he likes to have dummies of them in his hall rigged in their mediæval ironmongery. If Birmingham did not gratify him Germany would. It is astonishing how many tons of antiquities are annually sold along the Rhine, and it is even asserted that in Castle Colburg, where Martin Luther threw his inkstand at the devil—and, unhappily, missed him—the original splash was cut up and sold long ago; but that, as the timber is massive, the place is carefully reinked every night for the purposes of sale next day. We cannot say how much truth or falsehood there may be in this particular story. There might have been some excitement in seeing the original transaction if both the distinguished parties to it were present. There can be none in gazing on a patch of ink. The trade in modern antiquities, however, is a curious reality, as real as the sale of old clothes or tombstones.

## GRAY HAIR AT WASHINGTON.

A JADED, worn-out, anxious look appears on nine out of every ten countenances you meet. Why it is I do not know. Perhaps the life here has something to do with it. Many of the women—the majority of them—are away from home and family. Many of them have no homes. For living in a boarding house or hotel is not living at home, and it may be this lack of home life that shows itself in their faces. People here get old before their time, and notably so those people connected with the Government employ. Damocles, although dying with hunger, lost his appetite when, with a most bounteous table before him, he saw just over his head, hanging by a hair, a sharp, two-edged sword. Young women, old ladies, dependent on their situations for their bread, cannot live peacefully nor sleep soundly when they know that the next movement of the Government caprice may turn them from its employ. It is this uncertainty of office tenure which makes young ladies of twenty-five have the wrinkles of forty, which puts the anxious look into their eyes and silvers the black hair twenty years before its time. There are more young men and women in Washington with gray hair than in any city I have ever visited. This is a fact always noted by observant strangers. Faces fresh and blooming are crowned by locks of silver, and the gray-haired people of Washington are the finest looking of its population.

A BEAUTIFULLY executed picture of Bartholdi's great statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World," has been presented to us by the Travelers' Insurance Company of Hartford, Conn., who have been among the most liberal contributors to the Fund. The picture, which is 26x36 inches in size, gives an excellent idea of the superb work of art which is to adorn the harbor of New York.