

Changed Status of the Wrist Watch

MUCH has been printed in European papers on the subject of strap watches as a part of military equipment. This has attracted a good deal of attention, since modern warfare has demonstrated the necessity for officers and soldiers to know the time. The telephone and signal service, which play important parts in modern warfare, have made the wearing of watches by soldiers obligatory. The only practical way in which they can wear them is on the wrist, where the time can be ascertained readily, an impossibility with the old style pocket watch.

European reports show that strap watches have been adopted for use in the army and navy, and that civilians are also wearing them in preference to the pocket watch.

There have been instances during the progress of the present war where bad

effects have resulted from the wearing of watches. The chief danger has been from the breaking of the crystal, and, when the watch was worn on the wrist, the consequences have been serious, owing to parts of the shattered crystal flying into the eyes, and for a time there was talk of discontinuing the use of wrist watches.

Realizing the seriousness of the defects in the old-fashioned strap watches, European watchmakers set about remedying them. Many devices were introduced, such as grill, or filigree work, placed over the dial, leaving only the figures exposed. This, however, made it very difficult to ascertain the time readily and consequently had to be abandoned. Then the hunting case was resorted to, but as its usefulness necessitated the pushing of a spring to open the case, it also was found to be impracticable. Not only this, but the damp condition of the trenches soon rusted the springs and the difficulty, if

not impossibility, of having them repaired confronted the wearer.

Celluloid glass was then introduced. This was during the Summer season, but when cold weather set in the crystals contracted and dropped off, the dials became scratched, and the inflammable nature of the celluloid and the danger entailed from its use in close quarters, where candles were the only mode of illumination, soon manifested themselves.

The fertile brain of the inventor finally hit upon unbreakable glass, clear in color and non-inflammable. Being of an unshrinkable nature, unbreakable glass is likewise dustproof, which is not the case with the ordinary crystal. So great has become the demand for wrist watches equipped with unbreakable glass that

European manufacturers are working overtime and being compelled to convert ladies' watches into military timepieces to supply the military needs.

Until recently the bracelet watch has been looked upon by Americans as more or less of a joke. Vaudeville artists and moving-picture actors have utilized it as a funmaker, as a "silly ass" fad.

Now, however, since preparedness has become the watchword and timepieces have become a necessary part of the equipment of soldiers, the status of the wrist watch is changing. The objectors are now willing to concede the value of a bracelet watch for general outdoor life, but have not quite reached the point where, after poking fun at it, they can consistently adopt it for all occasions.

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