

## About Bogus Lotteries

How They Are “Got Up”—Their Mode Of Operations Detailed—How They Manage The “Drawn Numbers” Beforehand—The Great Shrewdness Of The Operators—The Social Respectability Of These—The Great Firm Of “G. W. Huntington & Co.”—The Immense Circulation Of Their Journal—Their Victim, A Maine Farmer, Who Believed He Had “Drawn” Five Thousand Dollars, And Counsellor Wheaton, His Lawyer, A Story To The Point—Who Invest In Lotteries: Children, Widows, Clergymen, Bank Cashiers, Etc.—How The Firm Of “G. W. H. & Co.” Was Captured—No. 23, William Street, New York, Their Pretended Banking House—How A Bogus Lottery Company Swindled Its Own Agents—A Queer Tale.

THE object of these narratives is not simply to paint human nature in the color of its subtle facts, more strange than the imaginings of fiction, in order to excite the reader’s mind as he runs over these pages, or to feed the greediness for the marvelous—not these alone; but the writer trusts that what he has taken so much pains to cull out of the repertoire of his observations and experiences, and from those of others, and reproduce here for the instruction of his fellow-men, shall be found useful as well as interesting; and by teaching those who are inclined to the commission of offences against law and the good order of society, that they cannot easily escape discovery if they commit crimes, shall prevent, to some degree, the perpetration of such crimes. But there are sufferers as well as guilty actors, and these the writer would serve also, as well as preserve the innocent and unwary from the operation of those crafts and cunning devices by which they might be made sufferers.

To-day, tumbling over some old files of notes and papers at the bottom of an old trunk, the contents of which had not been thoroughly disturbed for over ten years before, there came to light a sealed package, marked “The Bogus Lottery Papers: not to be opened without my consent.” This package has awakened a host of “memories of other days,” and decided me to wander a little perhaps from the preconceived line of these narratives; and not so, either; for in this tale it will be seen that the detective had his legitimate part to play in the matter which it recalls.

The package is found to contain notes for guidance in working up the case; letters from dupes or victims of the crafty speculators in human credulity; bits of the personal history of some of these wily scamps, and which they would hardly desire to see in public print, with their true names affixed (for some of them were and are of high rank in the business, social, and literary world); copies of certain financial journals, devoted to the dissemination of remarkable facts tending to show the wise philosophy of “nothing venture, nothing have,” and from their first column to the last, filled with cunning lies; my own correspondence with certain victims; memoranda of facts gathered at sundry post offices and elsewhere; piteous letters from the deluded; correspondence with lawyers on the subject at issue, etc., etc.,—quite a little pile, as they lie on my table here. Some of the letters have grown dark with age, and there is a peculiar smell about them, as if they hinted at unsavory things, and so they do.

And these remind one of other years very peculiarly, and suggest many thoughts on human weakness and perversity. I am vexed not a little as I look over them, and call to mind the class of men who mingled in the iniquities of which I am about to speak, that I cannot write out these men's names for the public eye. But some of them have "reformed," have gone into legitimate business, and have families dear to them, and who were ever quite unconscious of the modes by which their husbands and fathers obtained money here in this seething sea of iniquity of New York,—this worse than modern Babylon,—whom it would be cruel now to wound. And I call to memory now one of these operators in petty villainy, who is dead—a noble fellow in the general way, a son of a distinguished father, well bred, and related by blood to some of the first, and really finest people in New York. Ah! what would a certain philanthropist say—a man who leads noble charities, devotes his now declining years to the practical duties of a Sunday school teacher, and whose voice has been, within a few years past, heard in the national Congress, as that of one of the few there whom the corruptions of politics have not stained; a man of large wealth, with which he makes far less display than many a man of the expensive habits of these latter days with but a tenth or fiftieth of the former's income, and a man of marked intelligence, too, as well as of high morals,—what would he say, were it disclosed to him that his relatives, his nephews, the sons of his not unnoted sisters, were participants in these crimes,—cool-blooded, mean, devilish,—and continued, and carried on, under the guise of "business," and indeed as a business for years? But if this simply, were told him, he could not understand the half, for he would not know the half. I shall spare the participants in those criminal schemes the mention of their names here, though I conceive that I should have done no more than my duty had I, at the time in question, given them publicity through the press. But even in the last ten years the public sentiment has largely changed, not only in New York, but throughout the country, perhaps, in regard to the true standard of morals, or the recognition of any standard at all, may be; and those who are acquainted with the modes of conducting business in Wall Street,—(the real centre of practical government for the nation),—and therefore know what iniquities transpire there in the way of "legitimate business," so called, could hardly be surprised at anything I might disclose of the past. It is a sad reflection that the greed of gain governs everything else in these days in this Union; and that the manner of obtaining a fortune is, in most people's opinion, of no account, however vile, in comparison with the matter of possessing it. Money is a veil which will cover every crime, and nobody knows this fact more surely than the detective. It is a fact, that to save anything like a fair proportion of the value of a thing stolen, the loser will almost universally compromise with the thief when the detective secures him. "Compounding a felony," in itself a crime at the Common Law, has become so universal as to be the "common law" itself: and in New York it is a matter of but slight disgrace, at most, to be guilty of any crime; and especially of those crimes by which the perpetrator secures a large amount of money. Wall Street, for example, is thronged every day by men in respectable and high ranks of society, who are frequently guilty of crimes which would, a generation ago, have consigned them to the State Prison for a long term of years, if not for life. But after all, the reflection comes that morals, like the matter of conscience, are educatable, changeable; and that the hearts of men are not so very bad at bottom, most wrongs being chargeable to the institutions of the people. Competition, instead of cooperation, being the rule, and the depraved doctrines of such writers as

Carlyle, advocating the development of the individual, rather than the interest of communities and blended peoples, have had a direct tendency to increase the volume of crime.

But I will, with these “prefatory remarks,” return to the body of my subject. New York contains a large number of people who obtain their living by the practice of frauds, of one kind and another. The gambling saloons, with their marked cards, and faro banks, so arranged that while the pretension of fairness is observed, the chances in favor of the bank are made sure in the proportion of ninety per cent, to ten per cent, for every hundred dollars which go upon the table; the iniquitous “corners” made in Wall Street, and all the fine scheming of the Bulls and the Bears, etc., etc., illustrate this. In fact, commerce itself is, in all its avenues, made to bend to this skill of fraud in making money, and making a living; and it is a wonder that there are not more, rather than less of the institutions of which I am about to speak, in New York. These exist today; but it is a long while since I have been called into relations with them in a professional capacity.

At the time to which I allude, there were several bogus Lottery Companies having their centre in New York, and extending their operations all over the country, fleecing the credulous people to the extent of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. In Maryland and in Georgia, and also in Kentucky, at that time, lotteries were licensed, and perhaps in some other States; but most of the States prohibited them. Cuba, too, licensed extensive lotteries, and Havana was, as she still is, the chief city of the world, perhaps, in this respect. The bogus companies in New York mostly pretended to be agents of the legitimate companies to which I allude above; and purported to give their “policy-holders” the true reports of the public drawings of these lotteries, by which their fate, as winners or losers, was decided. Among these companies of scamps, was one, self-styled “G. W. Huntington & Co.,” concocted and “managed” by men of classical education, high bred, representing some of the really best families in the land, but who had not been as fortunate in legitimate business as desirable, and so resorted to this course of fraud in order to make money easier, and more of it. They knew the value of advertising, to any business, and they published a sheet in the form, in part, of a literary paper, in which counterfeit schemes of the companies they pretended to represent, were set forth in due style. It appeared, in the course of my investigation of these affairs, that this company issued monthly no less than two hundred thousand copies of this paper, which were sent to various addresses, culled out of directories, and otherwise obtained, from almost every village as well as city in the nation, north and south, east and west; but principally in the Western and Middle States. As the agents of the companies they pretended to represent, and of pretended companies too, which never had an existence, these men were in constant receipt of letters, containing from fifty cents, as a minimum, up to ten dollars, usually the maximum, from their victims, who wished to purchase tickets in this or that drawing; and they got tickets in return, to be sure. I was informed that these letters were received in numbers varying from thirty to a hundred a day, for several days, and even weeks at a time, when some especially grand “drawing” was announced to soon take place. Their mode of operations, as disclosed in our investigations, was this: They first fixed upon nine numbers, which they were to report after the alleged (pretended) drawing should have taken place, as the numbers drawn—thus, for example: —

1, 7, 14, 35, 11, 8, 55, 91, 240.

According to their “rules,” whoever chanced to hold a ticket upon which any three of the above numbers should appear in consecutive order (as, for example, 1, 7, 14; or 11, 8, 55; or 7, 14, 35)—would draw the largest prize of the scheme in which he bought his ticket, and in many of these schemes such sums as \$50,000, or \$100,000, or \$250,000, were announced as the chief prizes; and then there were numerous small prizes in each scheme which the ticket holder was sure to draw if he happened to hold a ticket with numbers thereon, which should represent *two* of the above numbers consecutively; and so on ran their rules. Well, having previously decided what numbers they would report to their countless victims as the drawn numbers, these wily scoundrels had, for their safety, only to take care in issuing each ticket to see that it did not contain any three of the “drawn numbers” in consecutive order. To A, for example, they would send a ticket bearing the Nos. “1,” “7,” “80; to B, “11,” “S,” “200, etc., etc.; and after the “drawing “ they would send their report, containing a slip of paper bearing the nine “drawn numbers,” as above arranged, with a letter, running somewhat this wise.—I am sure I had, at one time, several of the letters actually sent to victims, but they do not disclose themselves from my package now; but no matter, for my memory of them is pretty clear. The report of drawings was private; but the letters were usually written with a pen, in part, in order the better to flatter each person that the company took especial notice of him, and hoped for his particular success.

(Here was a picture of their Banking Office.)

BANKING HOUSE of G. W. HUNTINGTON & Co., Bankers and Brokers,  
and Dealers in Foreign Exchange, and Agents for the chief  
Baltimore and Havana Lotteries, 23 William Street.

NEW YORK, June 14, 1858.

JOHN HENRY JONES, ESQ., *Harrisburgh, Pa.*

“The public drawing of the ‘Grand Consolidated Lotteries’ of Baltimore, Md., No.—, took place as advertised, yesterday. Herewith find slip bearing the drawn numbers.” (Thus far, save the address, printed, then followed in writing.) “We are sorry to perceive that your ticket in scheme No.—, and numbered 14, 35, 80, has drawn a blank. But you observe that you came near winning the chief prize, as we heartily wish you had (as it is for our interest as agents that our special customers be lucky); ‘14, 35,’ only needed ‘11’ to follow them, to have made you a rich man. But perhaps your luck will come next time. ‘Perseverance is a virtue which wins in the long run.’ Hoping for your further favors, and that you will yet be amply lucky, we beg to remain,

“Your obedient, humble servants,

“G. W. HUNTINGTON & Co.”

Now, “John Henry Jones, Esq.” was probably an ignorant, low-minded, dirty-faced ironmonger, of Harrisburgh, who managed now and then to get together a few dollars, and had a hankering to get rich fast. His letter to the company was badly spelled, and so forth; but it contained money, and was, therefore, as acceptable as the elegantly-written letter of some cashier of a bank in Ohio, or some poor clergyman of Illinois, who thought it no harm to try his luck for once—(for many clergymen, as well as others, get bitten by these schemes). John had never been addressed as “Esquire” before; never received such a polite letter in his life, and from a great banking house, in the largest city on the continent! and John was flattered. Besides, he had almost drawn a great prize; of course he would “try again,” and again, and again, for it appears that many persons become infatuated in this sort of speculation, and will buy lottery tickets several times a year, and year after year, for a long period, even without a particle of success.

When a customer sent these fellows ten dollars, they would so arrange the numbers on his ticket, sometimes, in relation to the prepared drawn numbers, as to allow him to draw one, two, or three dollars, so that he should not feel that his loss had been entire, and to tempt him by a little success to try again for a greater one. This will serve to illustrate the business ways of the fellows; and just here; since it now comes to mind, perhaps I had better note a little “side issue” of one of these companies, of which I was told by one of the participants. The company had its agents,—postmasters, many of them,— all over the country,— and thought they would make a little speculation on their agents themselves. So they prepared a splendid “scheme,”—a wonderful GRAND CONSOLIDATED UNION DRAWING, etc. The tickets were most elegantly printed, and vary-colored, in red, blue, and black, on the nicest paper. No ticket in this grand scheme was less than ten dollars. To some fifteen hundred of their agents, in as many different localities, they sent from three to five of these tickets each, with a printed letter, but marked “very confidential,” setting forth the great advantages of the new scheme, and suggesting that among these tickets were doubtless many prizes, and the company did not expect to reap much profits from the sale of tickets in this scheme, but were anxious that its old customers should reap the prizes, and so forth. Of course the company did not expect that any agent would be able to sell all the tickets sent him, even though so few, and were surprised that many were disposed of before the time of the alleged drawing. On the day of the “drawing,” more than nine tenths of the tickets still remained unsold, and unreported upon in the hands of the agents. Having prepared written letters in anticipation of the small sales, as a part of the trick, they sent them forth to each agent. The letter ran something like this, in substance: —

“DEAR SIR: The drawing of the Grand C. U. Lottery took place at Baltimore, at twelve M., yesterday. Please to return us the tickets, Nos. —, —, —, —, —, now in your hands, at once, without fail, and *buy back any, if you, can*, which you may have disposed of, and charge us, and ask no questions, and we will send you certified copy of drawing immediately on your reply.

“Yours, most respectfully,

“ \_\_\_\_\_.”

This being an unusual way of doing business, excited the agent's suspicion. He reflected that probably some one of the tickets he held had drawn a great prize, and that the company meant to keep it, but he could not, of course, guess which; and so as to secure the prize himself, he would hold all the tickets, send on the money for them, with an apology for not having reported earlier, and frequently with a long lie about the trouble he had had, and naming this or that man to whom the tickets had been sold. So hundreds of them sent in, after the day of the alleged drawing, from thirty to fifty dollars apiece, according to the number of tickets they held, and received by return mail a "certified report" of the drawing, by which they discovered that the tickets, they held were all blanks, each, perhaps, thinking that somebody else had drawn the "mammoth prizes." This trick was fruitful to the amount of a great many thousands of dollars, and cost the company only its expenses for printing, stationery, and postage. These same agents continued to act for the company, and I presume that not one of them to this day knows how he was taken in. But I trust that this narrative will fall into the hands of many a one of them, and open his eyes as to the fact of his having been made a tool of by designing scamps to cheat his neighbors, and to be cheated himself.

The mayor of New York was constantly besieged, and I presume the same is the case now, with letters from all parts of the country, complaining that these writers had tried and tried their luck, time after time, in this or that company, in vain, and asking him regarding the standing of the company, and so forth. Sometimes a victim would get his eyes open, conceive that he had possibly been cheated; or, having had some rupture by correspondence with the company, discovered that he was cheated, and beg the mayor to take the matter in hand. On two or three occasions, within my memory, the police have made raids upon such companies as they could get at; but usually matters were so secretly conducted, that it would cost the police too much effort to get at anything decided, especially without extra compensation for their labors; and the frauds complained of in each case would generally amount to not over ten dollars at most, and the complaints usually, perhaps always, came from obscure men, living at a great distance from New York, who could not afford to come and attend to the matter themselves.

But the companies constantly had difficulty from one quarter of the land or another—enough so as to keep them all the while on the alert. Their offices were in obscure places. The members had business names which differed from their real ones. Ostensibly, they carried on a real estate business, for example, actually doing something in that line for respectability's sake, and conducting their lottery swindle in some secret room, having a box at the post office, and sending for their letters a clerk, who was instructed to deposit the letters in some secret place, from which one of the firm would secretly take them. Thus they managed. But one day "there came trouble into the camp" of "G. W. Huntington & Co." They had sold a ticket to a sturdy, and somewhat intelligent farmer in or near Portland or Bangor, Maine. (I am unable to find his address at this writing.) When the alleged drawing took place, the company sent on its usual report to the farmer, among the rest of their victims, saying, "You perceive that your ticket has unfortunately drawn a blank. We regret it," etc.

Now the farmer had “studied up” on the matter, and he saw that if they had sent him what they called the copy of the “certified report” of the drawing, he had drawn a prize of five thousand dollars, instead of a blank, and so he politely wrote the company about their mistake. Correspondence ensued, in which the company tried to convince the farmer that he was mistaken; but it was of no use. The farmer was too keen for them, and insisted on his rights. He consulted a lawyer in his place, and the lawyer opened correspondence with the company, hinting that legal measures would be taken. The company put the matter into their lawyer’s hands, and the two attorneys fired away at each other, the company laughing in their sleeves over the humbugging they were operating on the Maine lawyer. Finally the farmer’s lawyer wrote on to say, that the farmer would go down to New York, and institute proceedings there, unless the prize was cashed within a week, and suggested that a suit would seriously injure the credit of the company. To this the company, by its lawyer, made no reply.

The farmer came on, and proceeded to the “Banking-house of G. W. Huntington & Co., 23 William Street.” He brought with him one of the company’s papers, in which was an engraving of the building, 23 William Street, with the great sign of “G. W. Huntington & Co., Bankers,” running across the whole face of the building, in large letters. His astonishment can be guessed at when he failed to find any such bankers, or any such sign there. There was the building, correctly represented in the picture. The rest was fiction, of course. The building, except the lower story, which was the office of some brokers, I believe, was occupied mainly as lawyers’ offices, and it chanced that the farmer, in his astonishment at not finding “G. W. Huutington & Co.” there, and being determined to investigate the affair, and not be cheated out of his five thousand-dollar prize, after coming all the way from Maine, sought counsel at the office of one Mr. Wheaton,—a great criminal lawyer, and the son of the distinguished author of an extensive and valuable work, in two volumes, on International Law and Practice. Mr. Wheaton was the same gentleman who, a few years ago, was run over by the Harlem train of cars, on its way out of the city, and killed. He was a very gentlemanly man, and heard the poor man’s case; told him that the company was undoubtedly bogus; but pitying the man, who was really not well off in this world’s goods, undertook to aid him, and through the post office sent a very polite note to the company touching the matter. The note was politely responded to, and eventually, after three or four days’ delay, the company, securing a sharp and unscrupulous lawyer, sent him to wait upon Mr. Wheaton. The lawyer represented that he did not know the company’s place of business even, but was ready to treat for them; that they would not pay a dollar, and that the whole trouble arose from some mistake. But Mr. Wheaton would not settle without something being done; but at last, after a few days, agreed to take thirty dollars, which would pay for the farmer’s travelling expenses to and from Maine. How the poor fellow met the rest of his expenses, I was never told; but he doubtless went back to Maine a wiser, if not a better man. (Should this article chance to fall under his eye, he can certainly do some of his neighbors good by reading it to them, and “illustrating” it in person, saying, “Gentlemen, *I* was the man! behold the picture! and forever be wary of lottery agents.”) I had been called in to work up the case, but the settlement was effected the next day, and it was dropped. Mr. Wheaton had a conference with the mayor concerning it; and afterwards, when, on

several complaints being made against the company, the mayor resolved to trace out the company, and break up their nefarious business, he sent for me.

Numerous efforts had, at times theretofore, been made to hunt out these companies' dens. Officers had been stationed inside the post office, and when a clerk—usually a rusty, scampish-looking lad, or an old sinner of a man—came for the letters, and he took them, he was tracked, with the hope that he could be traced to the secret office. But he was too wary for that,—had had too good instructions,— and escaped; or, if next time he was arrested, after having been traced along a circuitous route, going into this or that crowded store, or eating-house, it would be found that he had already disposed of the letters, having adroitly handed them to one of the “firm,” perhaps, properly stationed at some point for the purpose of receiving them: or, if he was arrested at the post office with the letters in hand, he was found to be an individual not easily frightened, and when taken before the mayor, would declare that he did not know the company, or the individuals composing it; that some man, whose name he did not know, had employed him at fifty cents or a dollar a time to draw the letters with the box check or card. If the mayor took away the check, all the company had to do was to write to the postmaster for another, alleging their loss. Keeping this fellow under arrest for some length of time did no good. The company readily found out about the arrest, and would send some lawyer to act for the clerk, and the result would be that he would be released speedily, and go to drawing letters again. Attempts had also been made to trace out the printers of the papers sent out by these companies. So great were the numbers of these at times that they seriously burdened the mails. The postage expenses to the companies must have been enormous; but advertising “tells,” and if only one paper in a hundred chanced to fall into the hands of a man who would be allured thereby to invest in lottery tickets, the business would pay. But after considerable search for the printers, within the city, it was concluded that the papers were printed somewhere else, and sent into New York in bulk, and privately prepared for the mails.

This was the situation of things when I took hold of the matter. I was advised of what had previously been done, but was, of course, allowed to pursue my own method. After a day or two's experimenting in following clerks from the post office, and finally tracking one of them into a lawyer's office on Nassau Street, and being coolly informed by the lawyer that the company were his clients, and having had some, difficulty with disaffected parties, had put their correspondence into his hands for a while, I thought best to pursue another course. There was little or no use in attempting to convict him of complicity with the matter. He said he would take his oath that he did not know whether the company was bogus or not, or were really the agents of responsible companies in foreign states; and as for that matter he did not care. He had been, he said, employed by them to attend to certain legal matters of theirs, and he never inquired into the private character of his clients except when necessary. “They pay me well for my services, generally advancing my fees, and I am satisfied.” My own opinion was, and is, that he was one of the firm himself, and as guilty as any of the rest, but he was shrewd enough to not get trapped. I saw it would cost more than it would come to to pursue that line. If I arrested the letter clerks for a few days, and took them before the mayor, that would not break up the business. The company's plans were safely laid. When I did get at them, I wanted to



break them up effectually; and I set myself about procuring copies of their papers, which I did by writing from the mayor's office to the parties who had sent in their complaints, asking them to forward all documents and papers which they had received from the company. Receiving these, I submitted them to various wary and knowing printers, in order to find out at what office in the city the printing was probably done. A printer or newspaper man will ordinarily detect, by the size of column, or some other peculiarity, from what paper a given extract has been clipped, as readily as a tailor can tell from whose shop a certain coat or pair of pantaloons came, or as easily as a man can distinguish the handwriting of his friends. But in this case I was baffled at first. Nobody could give me any hint, till I finally came across a printer then working in the *Tribune* office; and on looking over some of the papers, he discovered something which reminded him of the style of a certain paper in Norwich, Connecticut; and then, as if a new light had dawned upon him, suddenly exclaimed, "By George! I believe I have it, for I know that at the — office, a year or two ago, the boys used occasionally to do a great deal of extra night work, and got extra pay. I never knew what 'twas."

In further conversation with him, I concluded that there must be something in it, and in a day or two posted off for Norwich, where I made the acquaintance of a gentleman by the name of Sykes, then editor of the "Advertiser" (I think that was the name of his paper), and was soon put in possession of abundant facts for the then present time. I learned that the papers for certain bogus lottery companies, to the extent of several hundred thousand a month, were printed at a certain office there, and mailed through the Norwich post office; that it was a matter of considerable pecuniary profit to the post office to have the mailing of these documents, and that certain men of much social respectability in Norwich were engaged in printing and mailing these papers, which they well knew to be the circulars of bogus lottery companies; but I could do nothing with them; and exposure of their conduct in Mr. Sykes's paper was not likely to result in much good. The lottery papers reached parties who would not be apt to ever hear of the exposure; besides, to make it was no part of my business on that occasion. I found, to my satisfaction, that whereas "G. W. Huntington & Co.'s Bulletin" had formerly been printed in Norwich, and distributed from there over the country; that it was now doubtless printed somewhere in New York, and at Norwich I prepared my traps to find out certainly where the papers were printed in New York, which fact I finally accomplished after a little delay. Determining about what time of the previous month the papers for the next month's issue would be put to press, I made business to the printing office, and gave the printers an order a little difficult to fill, and which I knew would have to be delayed. I also set a brother detective on their track with a like affair, so that we could have proper excuse for visiting the office occasionally. I managed to privately secure (no matter how, for somebody yet living might not wish me to tell) two or three copies of the paper then in process of being struck off. The character of the printing office was high, the members of the firm being all what are styled "good fellows," not likely to be in complicity with the lottery pirates, and I was not disposed to injure the printers; but I was determined to learn what parties gave them the orders for printing these papers. The laws of New York are a little stringent upon this matter, and I waited till I found out that a very large number of the papers were struck off and ready to be delivered. I had learned that these were usually sent off out of the office to somebody's care, but I did not propose to follow up the

parties as I had done the letter clerks; so one morning, when all was right, I took a couple of regular policemen along with me, and entered the printing office on Spruce Street, and calling one of the proprietors into the counting-room, advised him of my business, and the law in the premises. He was taken aback; turned a little pale; and protested that he had no suspicion that he was engaged in an unlawful business; said they exercised no secrecy in the printing, so far as attempting to cover up any offence was concerned; but that the lottery company had asked them to observe a degree of privacy in the printing, on account of their competition with rival companies.

“But,” said he, “I read a little law once in Ohio; thought I would make a lawyer, but got sick of it; and I remember that one of the first things my old instructor, in whose office I read, taught me, was, ‘Ignorance of the law excuseth no man,’ and we shall have to bear the brunt of it, I fear. Besides, we have a bill of nearly a thousand dollars against these fellows, and if you break them up, where are we to get our pay?”

“Have they been good pay heretofore?”

“O, yes; we let one bill run on to over fifteen hundred dollars. I felt a little skittish about it, but they paid it all up, and gave us five hundred dollars in advance on the next month’s issue.” I was convinced of the gentleman’s honesty. I had learned a good deal about him, and his manner was that of an honest man. “Well,” said I, “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. You deliver these papers, but do you let me know precisely where they are delivered: tell me the true names of the parties who order them: give me such ‘copy’ as they have sent in to be printed from, so that I may be in possession of their manuscripts; describe the personal appearance of each of them whom you know, in writing, and make a written statement over your own signature of all your connection with them, and I will wait till you get your pay from them, if you will stir them up immediately, and promise to not do any more work of this kind for them.” The gentleman instantly replied, —

“That’s fair. Of course we won’t do any more such printing if it is illegal: but some of these lottery men are persons of great respectability in society, and I am astonished to find they are engaged in such a nefarious business, and I prefer to consult my partner” (a much older man), “before I concede to your proposition. Let me speak to him a minute, for there he is, and I will give you my answer. I prefer that *he* shall take the responsibility.”

The gentleman walked out to where his partner was engaged in looking over some work, held a moment or two’s conversation with him, when they both came into the counting-room, and the older gentleman heard from me my story and my propositions, and answered at once. “Of course we will accede to your propositions, and be much obliged to you for giving such excellent terms.”

The propositions were specifically complied with. The printing-house got its pay for its work by refusing to deliver it till paid for. As the lottery agents were in need of the papers, and would lose a month’s revenue for want of them, they were obliged to yield, and pay up all arrearages, threatening to take their printing elsewhere thereafter, which

had been considerable; but the printers kept silent, and did not even let them know that they had discovered they were pursuing an unlawful business. The papers were duly delivered to the lottery men, and I kept watch on their private den, concluding that I would not disturb them till they had gone to the expense of wrapping the papers, and paying the postage, which must have been something enormous. Whole bushels at a time of the papers went to the post office, and the rascals were probably dreaming of the revenue which was to follow that mouth's laudable labor. I was willing that they should do the government as much service as they pleased in the way of sustaining the postal system, and inwardly rather feasted on the "prospect." Their private den was unoccupied during the night. Indeed, they usually left at an early hour in the afternoon, save on great mailing days.

I hired desk room in a lawyer's office in the same building, No. 5 Tryon Row, close by the courts of justice, and within the immediate shadow of the City Hall,— not an inappropriate locality for the bogus lottery scoundrels after all; for the common council of New York holds its sessions in the City Hall, and there, too, is the mayor's office, and that office has sometimes been filled by as great wretches as these lottery agents. Indeed, I call to mind one mayor who made not a little of his large fortune in the "policy business," i. e., in a scoundrelly, though, in a measure, legalized lottery swindle. Matsell, the old chief of police, had his rooms in the same building, and had he been in office at the time, would have rejoiced to find these "birds" making their nest so conveniently near him. Having a desk in the lawyer's office, I was of course entitled to spend my nights there, or as much of them as I pleased; and being next door to the "Real Estate Office" (as a sign on the door facetiously intimated), or, in other words, the private office of "G. W. Huntington & Co.," I found the "patent lock" on their door not at all in my way for making observations. With a dark lantern I could select such of their correspondence as I pleased, take it to my room, and there, by a broad light, read it. I got possession in this way of many astounding facts, and also procured "specimens of the handwriting" of several of this honest firm—notes written to the clerks, giving orders, etc. Some of these I preserved for future use, but returned most of the customers' correspondence. There were in their office numerous large packages of "business" letters; letters from agents and customers—(when we took possession we found somewhere about twenty thousand letters, which were only a part of what the company had received during their comparatively short existence. They had destroyed great numbers, merely to rid themselves of the encumbrance.) I got a pretty thorough understanding of the business, and collected facts and names of customers for future witnesses, etc., to put it quite out of the question for these fellows to ever resume their business under their then title, after they should be broken up; and, all things prepared, kept watch so as to catch one of the proprietors in the office at work. The "Real Estate" department, in which nothing at all was done, was divided off from the lottery den by a board partition, over the door of which was a sign "Private Consulting Office." Leaving my assistants at the door (and having sent an officer to an office in 115 Nassau Street, to arrest another of the "proprietors" there), I went in to see the gentleman on real estate business; and was informed by the clerk that his principal was in the consulting room, and would be, out soon. The clerk who had come out from the "consulting room" as I went into the office, had closed the door (which was evidently open before); and I remarked, that as I was in a

hurry, I'd step in and see the principal; and suiting the action to the word, stepped to the door, when the clerk,—a tall lad, of twenty years of age, perhaps,—brusquely stepped up before the door, and said, —

“You cannot enter here— that's my orders.”

I pushed him aside without saying a word, whistled, and went in, and caught the principal with pen in hand at work at a table, with a pile of correspondence before him, while at the same time my two men at the door rushed in, and I called to them to secure the clerk, and bring him into the private room, which they did. I then stepped out of the private room and locked the outside door, and returning, informed the principal what I knew about him, and so terrified him as to extort from him a full confession of his connection with the business. He confessed that they were thoroughly caught, and must be broken up; which conviction was soon deepened, when one of my men answering a knock at the outside door, let in an officer, accompanied by another of the principals. I took possession of the contents of the office, made the parties deliver up the mails for that day and the day before (the money received from which they still had on hand), in order to refund the money to the swindled parties; made them give me money enough to pay for the requisite stationery and postage, all of which I got from them on the spot; and then took duo proceedings against them legally, leaving the office in charge of one of my men, till I could get around to it and examine the correspondence, which was in time to be destroyed. I made these fellows advance me money, too, to pay for the rent of the office, on which a month's rent was then due the lessor, and for another month's rent. These fellows were men in high social position, and they tried hard to bribe me into silence, and made large and tempting offers, and promised also to quit the business forever; but I reminded them that their very offer was an offence against the law, and suggested that they must not even repeat their bribes. There was a third member of this honest firm, but the officer sent to arrest him reported that he was out of town, to return next day; and as we wanted him too, we took good care that his friends should have no opportunity to communicate to him, or anybody else that day. I never saw more “sore-headed” chaps than they. The fear of exposition through the public press, was a terrible one for them; and as it was compounding no felony, and was no breach of law to agree to not give the facts to the press, and to let these chaps be brought before the proper officers and plead guilty, under assumed names, when we should get to that point, I had no hesitancy in accepting for myself and my men a pretty large sum of money from them. It was true that the money gave me some uneasiness, as I reflected that it had probably been cheated out of poor victims, although the rascals asserted that they had not made much in that way. But their correspondence showed that they had. The third man was arrested next day, and kept apart from the other two. He was taken before the mayor under his assumed name, and there made a pitiful confession, disclosing more than his *confreres* had done. He was the “scion of a distinguished house,” was younger than the rest, and had been inveigled into the matter by the ambition to be independent of his father, and make money for himself; and having been bred to no legitimate business, easily fell into this in connection with his cousin, one of the other principals. The third party is now dead. He “reformed,” and went into a legitimate business. Some of the steps we had taken with these fellows, were rather bold ones, hardly within purview of the law; and the mayor, satisfied with the

thorough work which had been done,— we having captured all their correspondence, their elaborately kept journals, containing corrected lists of all their agents, together, with quite a large library of city and business directories, and a countless quantity of business cards, which had afforded them names to which to direct their papers, and schedules of “drawings to be held,” etc., etc., the mayor conceived that we had so effectually crippled them, that they could not, seeking a new office, go on with their business; and as all he wished to do was to break them up, he concluded to let them go, on their promise to not reenter upon the business; and turned to me, and asked if I did not agree with him. I said, “Yes; but I think there is one thing more which these men owe to the public, through their victims. They have apparently a plenty of money, and we have their register of correspondence. My proposition is, that we draw up a circular to be sent to all their victims, stating that the firm is broken up, and warning the customers of the fraudulent character of this and all other such concerns, get a few thousand of the circulars printed, and mail them to each man on their books, and make them bear the expense of printing, enveloping, clerk hire and postage, and pay the clerks liberally for their work. They ought to do this, to undo the wrong they have done, as far as they can.”

“Yes, yes, gentlemen, I like that proposition. What do you say to it?” said the mayor.

They were deathly silent for a moment; looked askance at each other (for at this session we had all the three present); but one broke the silence —

“It will be a pretty big bill. I told you the truth when I said we are poor; as for myself, I am worth next to nothing.”

The mayor looked at me inquiringly, and probably saw something in my face which was as expressive as if I had said, “Bosh! they are perfectly able;” so he said, “Gentlemen, I shall insist on the condition;” and turning to me, he added, “make out a liberal estimate, and hold these men under arrest till you get the sum advanced. Mind! I say advanced! don’t trust them for a minute.”

The firm, seeing that it was of no use to quibble, agreed to meet the emergency that day; and I, having in the course of two hours found out how much it would cost to print twenty thousand circulars, and for clerk hire for two months, for two clerks, with postage added, at two cents a circular, agreed to accept eight hundred dollars,—a pretty liberal sum, for I was not disposed to oppress myself for want of means, on account of any foolish pity for these chaps. The amount was forthcoming, and the scamps were released.

I at once drew up a circular in these words. By the way, I had secured their engraving of the building, No. 23 William Street, with which the circular was headed: —

“MAYOR’S OFFICE, NEW YORK.

“DEAR SIR: This is to inform you that the great ‘Banking House of G. W. Huntington & Co.,’—the above picture of which you have doubtless seen before,—has ‘suspended operations,’ having fallen into the hands of the police. This house was a bogus lottery

concern, which conducted its stealthy business in an obscure den, while pretending to occupy the building above represented, by the picture of which they more readily enticed their country customers to 'invest' in their shrewdly-devised schemes. If in dealing with them you ever secured a prize, it was only given to entice you into larger ventures. Beware of all such companies in the future. The mayor directs me to advise you that there are no legitimate lottery companies or agencies in the city of New York. None are allowed by law to do business here. All of them are bogus and fraudulent. His honor the mayor further suggests that you may, perhaps, do your unwary neighbors a service, by showing them, if you please, this circular,— or by at least informing them that all such companies and agencies in New York are fraudulent in their character. The mayor receives hundreds of complaints during the course of a year from the victims of these companies, or 'agencies,' and a list of all those to whom this circular is sent, is kept, and no notice of the complaint of any one of these will hereafter be taken. The mayor trusts that you, sir, will not only escape being imposed upon by these bogus lottery sharpers hereafter, but will so warn and instruct all your friends that they, too, will escape being victimized. Respectfully yours,

“\_\_\_\_\_.”

“Mayor’s Special Clerk.”

About eighteen thousand of these circulars were duly mailed to the addresses found in the captured books, and the books themselves were duly deposited for further reference. It would seem that this warning, scattered as it was into more than half the towns in the Union, ought to have lessened the number of victims to these swindling concerns; but I have been informed that some of them are in full blast to-day, and that all along, since the arrest of “G. W. Huntington & Co.,” other concerns carried on heavy operations. Everybody, almost, it would seem, *must* have personal experience; will *not*, for some reason, profit by the experience and advice of others who have suffered—been bitten by sharpers. But I trust that this article will be heeded by all who read it. Perhaps it is a sufficiently clear exposition of the way these rascals proceeded, to make it evident that there is no trusting the pretences of any of them. Sure it is that there are at least five hundred thousand people in the land, who, if they were to read this exposition, could reflect that it must be, as it is, literally true, entirely unembellished by imagination to the extent of even a word, and that, too, from their own experiences; and they can now understand the *modus operandi* by which they were swindled.

All “gift enterprises,” so common in New York, and other places, to-day, partake in their nature of these bogus lottery operations, and no man is safe who trusts a single one of them. He will be swindled in the end, in some way.

I could not well allow myself to cut this article short at this point, although my tale is, properly speaking, finished, and my contract under this head, with my publishers, fulfilled. There is something so marvellous in the human heart in the way of its disposition to adventure in order to make money easily; such a wonderful credulity in the minds of large numbers of people, and a willingness to fasten in trust upon the merest

shadow of success, that perhaps these fraudulent concerns will never lack victims. But in studying the correspondence which fell into my hands,—over twenty thousand letters,—and with which I beguiled many hours during the six months in which I kept them, before burning them, I became apprised of the fact that the great majority of the “customers” of these concerns are illiterate; most of their letters being misspelled; that great numbers of them were young men, boys, and poor women; nearly all evidently mechanics, and from some of the States, such as Pennsylvania, many farmers. (Pennsylvania, by the way, furnishes more victims to petty frauds, I learned, than several other States which I might name, taken together.) She has a large number of citizens who are barely cable to read and write poorly, and who probably do not read the public journals extensively, and are, therefore, not likely to be well informed of the current iniquities of the time. I seriously meditated, after having studied the “G. W. Huntington & Co.” correspondence, the writing of a book on the matter of Swindling, in general; and this correspondence would have afforded me many pathetic things for comment. While looking over that correspondence, the tears often came irresistibly to my eyes. I recollect the letter of a boy writing from Easton, Penn., I think it was. He had, it appeared from his letter, sent many dollars to the company for tickets, a dollar at a time, and winning nothing from his ventures, was getting discouraged. He wrote an imploring letter at last, accompanied by a dollar, in which he begged the company to choose him a winning number. He told them it was his last dollar; (he was but sixteen years old, he said); that he should not be able to send again, if he failed this time, for he had to give every cent he could earn; (I forget what he said he worked at, but he named the business and the pitiable wages he got); that his father was a dreadful drunkard; one of his little sisters was “sick all the while;” another had broken her leg two months before, and the doctors thought she might have to lose it, and soon, a pitiable tale—a tale to stir the hardest heart, and written in that style which stamped it as undoubtedly true. At the bottom of this letter was a note for the clerk, in the handwriting of one of the firm. “Write to” (somebody, I forget his name, of course), “at Easton, and learn if this story is true; and if it is, let the boy draw five dollars in Scheme No.” (so and so.) There was a note dated some days after, below this in the clerk’s hand. “Letter received from Easton; story true; ticket issued.” Probably that boy re-invested the whole five dollars. Drawing the money, his hope would naturally be excited; and now that he could buy a ticket in a larger “drawing,” he probably sent the five dollars back, and lost them of course.

Widows, with large families, and who wrote most mournful stories, sending on every cent they could save (while half-starving their families in order to do so, probably), were among the number of correspondents. Clergymen of poor parishes sent for tickets, with long letters, in which they commented piously upon the matter of hazard and lotteries, in a manner to excuse themselves for sending, and hoping that they should draw something to help them out of their poverty and misery, and expressing their belief that “God would pardon them if they were doing wrong,” were also of the number. Many letters were of a comical nature, the writers half-laughing at themselves for doing so foolish a thing as buying tickets in a lottery; but yet unable to resist the temptation. By some of the letters it was evident to me that the writers told abominable lies about their sufferings and trials, in order to excite the sympathy of the “agents,” and induce them to use their best efforts to secure for them winning tickets. Some of the correspondents offered to give the “agents “

half their prize money, in order to bribe them to select a successful ticket. Some of them sent counterfeit money. I found such notes as this at bottom of several letters, "One dollar counterfeit, two dollars good. Send tickets in Scheme No. 8." "Counterfeit; send back." These were evidently directions to clerks. If the writing in these letters which contained only counterfeit money had been good, I might have suspected the writers of perpetrating an appropriate joke; but the letters were evidently from ignorant people, some of whom, perhaps, knew that the bills they sent were counterfeit, and hoped that the great banking company, in their vast press of business, would fail to detect the bills. Many of the letters were written in excellent mercantile hand; but I noticed some badge of ignorance about all these, as well as about the poorly-written and misspelled ones. Probably ninety-nine in a hundred of the victims were made such through their ignorance of the world and the wicked men in it.

"Knowledge is power;" not only a power to execute, but a power for salvation; and when her light shall be sufficiently diffused, all such crafts *as these bogus lottery swindlers* will "have had their day," and not before. I doubt somewhat that if all the newspapers of the land should, on some given week, publish each a full *exposé* of these swindles, and repeat the same every week, for a month, the majority of the victims would be saved. Many would; but some with their eyes opened, as far as facts could open them, would still be duped. The investigation of this bogus lottery business did more to weaken my respect for the good sense of my fellow-men in general, than had all the experiences of my life theretofore. But I find I am tempted on beyond the limits I had set for myself in this article. The subject is an interesting one to me, and I may return to it at another time, and to some of its phases not here commented upon.

George S. McWaters, *Detectives Of Europe And America, Or Life In The Secret Service: A Selection Of Celebrated Cases*. Hartford: Burr, 1877 (848 pages).