

# Mail Fakers Put Behind Bars Last Year Got Over \$77,000,000 from the Unwary

## The Total Sum Gleaned from American "Marks" by Unapprehended Swindlers of This Kind Can Only Be Conjectured, but It Mounts to Stupendous Figures, and Just at This Season Uncle Sam's Crusaders Against Fraudulent Use of the Mails Have To Be on the Alert Against the Spring Crop of New Schemes.

ABOUT this time of year mail fakers of all kinds wake up and come forth with new schemes hatched during the long hibernating period of the winter months. As a reformed faker once explained to me, they figure that most people are in a receptive mood about springtime and ready for a change—on the lookout for new ventures which may lead to that long looked for time when they will no longer have to worry about rent day and the wherewithal to pay for wife's new spring bonnet.

But while the fakers get busy Uncle Sam is also on the job. In fact, he has been waiting for several years to get a good whack at the dead beats and fakers who

of their operations and the enormous amount of their ill gotten gains. For instance, only the few swindling promoters who were arrested last year obtained more than \$77,000,000. There are undoubtedly hundreds of persons operating similar schemes who have not yet been caught. The policy of the department is first to crush out the strong and powerful criminals who have grown rich at the game, and this has also proved exceedingly effective in eliminating the smaller fry.

"Since Postmaster General Hitchcock assumed charge he has been very anxious to rid the mails of illegitimate literature used in defrauding the public of untold millions, and he is the man who should have credit for the work. The greater part of the \$77,000,000 gathered in by persons jailed during the last year was invested before any questions were asked or any precautions taken against fraud.

attempted to proceed with the work he found in short order that this was exactly what the advertiser did not want. Furthermore, the machines furnished are usually cheap and practically worthless affairs and the prices charged are exorbitant.



POSTMASTER GENERAL HITCHCOCK.

for the work. If the fraud promoters would confine their operations wholly within a state it would be easy enough for the state to stop it; but fraud operators do not so confine their operations. They send their fraudulent mail matter all over the country, having previously obtained a list of what they call 'suckers.'

"Their usual method of operation is something like this: A man saves up a little money, and wants to invest it with a view to increased earnings, and anything that looks like a good proposition is enticing, provided the right fellow comes along and offers to sell it. These fakers organize sales agencies. They fill the various selling sub-agents full of falsehoods. The selling

agents which they work on. Some legitimate prospectors make fortunes, but they are few, very few, and far between. The fraud artist, upon finding a show of ore, will organize a company, capitalize it for one or ten million dollars, and then put the stock in the hands of a selling agent, along with his false printed matter and his lying statements. A friend once asked me: 'What is a "prospect"?' I told him my idea of a "prospect" was a hole in the ground owned by a liar. It would be impossible to estimate the number of millions of dollars the American people have dumped into rotten mining prospects, in the hope that if they should yield gold it would make them rich. After all is said and done, it is the gambling spirit of the American people upon which these fraud vultures feed.

### THE UNITED WIRELESS SCHEME.

"Many kinds of business are used to base fraud schemes on. We had what is called the United Wireless cases recently, which is possibly the best sample that can be given. The United Wireless Company took advantage of the invention of the wireless telegraph. They organized a million-dollar corporation, led the people to believe by literature that they were going to do a large commercial business, and undertook to establish on the tops of various buildings in large cities high poles which were supposed to be the instruments through which communication was had between the stations. Few instances are noted where commercial messages were actually exchanged, these poles being erected apparently for the purpose of sending stock selling agents over the country, calling attention to the fact that they were in a new and wonderful commercial field. Of all the money that was received from the sale of stock, about 20 per cent went into the pockets of these selling agents, and the balance to the fraud promoters, and when the balance sheet was made up it was found that practically no commercial business had been done between the city stations of any character at all. It subsequently developed that the promoters were the principal owners of the stock selling agency company."

Among the other types of schemes, which are still being worked to-day, were those which depended for their revenue upon what may be termed catch-penny advertisements. For example, articles offered for sale are described in misleading language, but so ambiguously as to render it possible for the advertiser to answer complaints by saying the complainant had misunderstood the advertisement. Readers were induced to believe that they could obtain valuable jewelry for a small sum of money by the description of such jewelry as "solid-gold laid" or "German silver."

### "WORK-AT-HOME" SWINDLES.

So-called "work at home" schemes have victimized many women. The usual plan is to advertise for women to do work at home for which a reasonable compensation will be paid. It is always a condition precedent, however, that the worker buy from the advertiser a typewriter or a sewing machine with which to do the work, or a sample or model of the article to be copied. The interest of the advertiser ends with the sale of these goods, and women who

### "ASTROLOGERS" DRIVEN OUT.

During the last few years a large number of self-styled astrologists have been driven out of business. These men advertised in newspapers and promising fortunes told by the stars, and pretending to cast the horoscope and read the past, present and future of the patron for a small retainer. The system followed by these swindlers was in all instances practically the same. No horoscope was cast, and the reading furnished was a form of letter identical with that sent every other person whose date of birth fell within the same sign of the zodiac. These letters were prepared in large quantities, and comprised, as a rule, twelve forms, one for each sign, and the only service performed by the "astrologer" for the money paid him was to select the form covering the sign under which the patron was born and send it to him.

### ANOTHER WIRELESS SWINDLE.

The scene for another wireless scheme was laid in a prosperous mining city of the West. Everything looked good to the promoters, and what suited their scheme best was the fact of the town being located on a slightly ascending slope of a mountainside. On the higher side of the town there was a giant tree, the only one of its kind which could be seen from any part of the town. The wireless schemers went to work and chopped off every branch of this tree, until there was nothing left but the bare trunk standing. They then installed a wireless antenna on the top of the tree, got some wireless apparatus, installed it at the bottom, and the everything was in proper shape and the prospective victims to come and admire. The citizens of the town were then informed of the wonderful opportunities for getting rich quick by investing in this wireless stock. It was not long before the fakers accumulated something more than \$200,000 from the credulous ones of the community and decamped. The tree trunk is still there.

### BIGGEST THING IN THE WORLD.

"Fighting Bob" Evans, said a naval veteran of Washington, had like most fighters, a tender heart. "Fighting Bob" had a specially tender heart toward children. I once heard him say, as he held his little grandchild's hand, "A child is the biggest thing in the world. A ragged, emaciated, hungry child is to me bigger than a battleship."

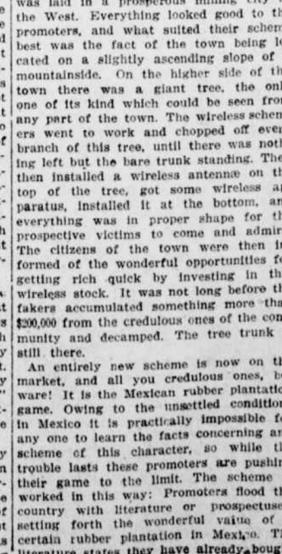
### THE MOTIVE.

John D. Crimmins was talking at Palm Beach, apropos of a political squabble, about motives. "Motives are strange things," he said. "Never judge an action without first understanding its motive. Then you won't go wrong."

### BATHETIC.

General Marion Latus has a keen and delicate taste in literature, and at a recent dinner at Vancouver Barracks, discussing a popular novel of little worth, General Maus said: "The pathos of the book is really pathetic. It reminds me of a private's widow. The good woman was about to sell her household furniture, her rugs, plated ware and what not. As she was going over these articles her eyes filled with tears, a host of memories rose to her mind, and, laying aside a half-dozen knives, she said: 'Oh, dear! I can't let these go! They've been in poor George's mouth too often!'"

### INSPECTORS' DIVISION, POSTOFFICE DEPARTMENT.



INSPECTORS' DIVISION, POSTOFFICE DEPARTMENT. UNCLE SAM'S ASSISTANTS IN HIS MAIL FRAUD CRUSADE.

### THE TREE USED BY THE WIRELESS FAKERS IN THE \$200,000 SWINDLE.

prey on their fellow men, but it was not until last year that his crusade got into full swing. During that year mail fraud promoters were put out of business who had obtained more than \$77,000,000 from the public. This, you will understand, represents only the money actually collected by the swindlers who were arrested and convicted and are now behind the bars.

### CHIEF POSTOFFICE INSPECTOR R. S. SHARP.

Every conceivable lure is laid before the unwary, from wonderful patent devices to be sold to agencies to fake mining schemes. There are no fewer than forty different groups of swindlers, and in each group there are many variations. Some of these are only constructive swindles, while others are out and out fakes and crimes, the obtaining of money under deliberately false pretences. Some play upon the cupidity of the victims, such as the green goods workers, and others upon their charity, such as the obtaining of money for institutions that do not exist. In practically every case the victim is caught because he does not investigate the reliability of

lators shows they are a distinct class of criminals," said Mr. Sharp. "Many of them are so-called promoters, but they promote nothing but their own individual pockets, and the government is determined to bring these promoters into court and send them to prison. I believe this is the only preventive, as our records show that none of the criminals who have been once convicted of a charge of this character has ever again attempted to reorganize the scheme under a new name, as was often the case where fraud orders alone were the only punishment.

"Our work during the last year has uncovered a condition among the swindling class which shows the astounding extent