

FRAUDS ONCE WORKED THROUGH THE MAILS

A Fortune Cleared Up by One Man During the Bicycle Craze.

AVARICE BY HIS SUCCESS

Victims of a Swindle Robbed a Second Time—An Old Land Scheme.

When the swindler that worked through the mails a decade ago would be arrested now, said an old-time man in a restaurant, "I don't remember that fellow who got away fifteen years or so ago with not less than \$200,000? He cleaned it up in less than six months during the bicycle craze."

"That fellow had considerable nerve and \$20,000 in cash as an asset. He must have had nerve because he spent every dollar of his \$200,000 before he got any returns."

"He fitted up a suite of offices on lower Broadway and called his concern the Cur Rate Bicycle Company. He made a deal with a large manufacturer in New England for 1,000 bicycle wheels for which he agreed to pay a manufacturing cost of \$22.75 each and he paid \$15,000 cash in advance and put the balance in escrow against the delivery of his wheels. The manufacturer contracted to supply him with as good a wheel as any that then retained for \$75."

"Pending the turning out by the factory of his 1,000 wheels he and his clerks were busy compiling a list of bicycle crazed young men residing in all parts of the Union. He advertised everywhere for young men to act as agents and offering to send absolutely free and by express prepaid a sample wheel to use for advertising purposes."

"The best of wheels were then selling at \$75 to \$72 and the second grade at \$60 to \$55, so when the Cur Rate Bicycle Company offered a brand new \$75 wheel for \$55 and to send a sample wheel free to its agents the applications for agencies were received by bushels at a time. By the systematic work just 1,000 applicants in 1,000 of the smaller cities were selected and as had been promised, every one of them received a free wheel, shipped express prepaid direct from the factory."

"The agents received letters authorizing them to accept twenty orders for the same style and grade of wheel at \$25. Cash was to accompany the orders. Every Tom, Dick and Harry on the job got from two to twenty orders, with the cash and within a short time the Cur Rate Bicycle Company's office was as busy as a bee with a tentative acknowledgment orders and remittances and sending out letters stating that the great demand would cause a little delay in delivery."

"Well, the fellow who conducted the swindle held out just as long as he could and when he had orders for approximately 10,000 wheels and \$250,000 cash in hand he hit out for Egypt, and he may be there yet for all I know."

"Then there was that chap who had no nerve at all, who merely acted for correspondents for a dramatic paper and who answered all the applications by stating correspondents would have to be subscribers at \$3 a year, payable in advance, but that each and every correspondent would receive a pass for himself and a friend at every theatrical performance in his town. This fellow mailed all his letters in one day from his little 6 by 9 office, then he locked the door, which had a slit in it for mail to be pushed through, and hiked off to the country for a week. When he returned he could hardly push the letters behind it."

"That swindler's chap gave one long look at the stack of letters and fled. No one ever saw or heard of him again. The great success of his idea soared him out before he had time to realize it."

"Then there was that man fellow who advertised for men to collect weekly instalments for the largest instalment book houses in the world. When the applicant's letter was received he was sent a blank with space for the names of ten referees and was told to return the blank and ten cents in postage for each reference, a 2-cent stamp to be used to write to the person given as a reference and another to be put on the return envelope. This fellow, as nearly as the postal authorities could estimate, had at least 20,000 victims and it is safe to assume he profited by 25 cents on each of them."

"That surety bond swindle was another scheme to get money out of poor young men seeking employment. The way this was worked was by having a fake mercantile agency in New York and a fake bonding company in Philadelphia. The mercantile agency advertised for district representatives, and every applicant received a favorable reply and was to be engaged on condition that he furnish a \$1,000 fidelity bond. This could be obtained by the applicant from the Philadelphia bonding company for \$5. When the bonding company had received all the \$5 remittances it was likely to get it disappeared, as likewise did the mercantile agency."

"But for simon pure unadulterated nerve I think that bright young man who was employed by a medicine company is entitled to first prize. As a poorly paid clerk in the offices of the medical concern he saw his opportunity. This medical concern was notorious for its clinging to a victim until every penny that it was possible to get had been milked out of him."

"Now where the bright young man comes in is just after the victim had shewn the white flag as far as sending any more money was concerned. This young man made a list of all of these, and when the medical concern had milked them absolutely dry what he did was to milk the milk."

"He opened up a fake law office and got in communication with the medical concern's victims and told them he had sufficient evidence against the concern to make them disgorge their ill gotten gains, and if the victim would send him \$5 to cover the cost of drawing up the legal papers he would get him his money back from the medical company."

"I don't know how much this young man made out of his scheme, but while his graft lasted I saw him wearing a high silk hat on week days and drinking champagne every morning for breakfast."

authority than formerly. There are other swindlers too that are not worked now because the country has passed its pioneer stage, and such a swindle as the philanthropic land game wouldn't find an operator who had the money or the perseverance of old man Jones, who was the one who conducted it.

"This scheme was to rescue a man and his family from the very depths of poverty and misfortune and when the victim's thoughts were more of doing away with himself than anything else. Old man Jones used Arkansas as his fertile field of operation after the victim was in his clutches and some of the best paying farms in that State to-day were made so by his victims."

"Shortly after the civil war land in Arkansas was almost given away, and old man Jones obtained forty or fifty thousand acres at about \$1 an acre. He cut this up into eighty acre lots and on these embryo farms put men and their families at work improving the land."

"These men were selected from the unemployed in large cities and had all but given way to despair because of their unfortunate circumstances. Just when the children hungry and the landlord threatening to turn them out in the cold for non-payment of rent old Jones appeared with a cheery manner and a well filled pocketbook. The rent was paid, medicine was obtained for the wife and food aplenty for all. When the happy family, no longer cold or hungry, gathered around to hear what the old swindler had to propose they showed a willingness to do whatever he wanted them to do."

"He said that as the father had spent his younger days on a farm the city was no place for him and that he would send him and the wife and children to one of his farms in Arkansas and provide him with food, money, live stock and everything else needed to start him off right. The husband and father jumped at it at the chance and in a few days they were off to Arkansas with a letter to old Jones's agent."

"The old swindler had now expended, say, about \$200 in actual cash and his victim was given credit at the general store for \$300 more. He was also furnished with two mules, two cows, a few pigs and chickens and lumber sufficient to put up a comfortable cabin and a shed for his stock."

"The terms were very simple and advantageously comparatively easy. There had been \$500 cash advanced and the eighty acres of land, the lumber and live stock were put in at \$500 more. It was true that at this period a claim of 100 acres of similar land could have been taken up by any citizen of the United States at no more expense than that of entry, and by agreeing to reside on it for a certain length of time, but our poor victim could not have done this when in the circumstances that when he was told to pay \$100 only at the end of his second year, \$200 the third year, \$300 the fourth and \$400 the fifth he was as happy as any one could be and he asked no questions. He was given to understand that in five years the farm and all on it would be his."

"The first year he worked fearfully hard clearing the land and putting in such crops as new land will produce, and with his credit at the general store everything went along fine. The second year was a repetition of the first, excepting the land was much more improved, but try as hard as he could the victim could not get together the \$100 to make the first payment. The agent of the old swindler fixed it up all right, saying it could run over until the third year, when he could pay \$300 instead of \$200."

"With renewed energy the victim and his boys, now old enough to help considerably, made the new farm soon look like one that had been years under cultivation, but the third year still found them shy the money to meet the payment falling due. Again old Jones's agent came to the rescue and assured the victim that another year would fix it up all right and that he could easily pay \$300 at the end of that time and he would allow the balance of \$300 to go over until the fifth year, when the \$700 could easily be made and paid as the final indebtedness."

"At the end of the fourth year the farm was under a fine state of cultivation and there were now seven cows instead of two; the poultry had multiplied, there were many more pigs and goats and the near owner wore a contented and happy look as he surveyed the results of his pioneer work, yet there was \$300 to pay and he did not have it. But he did not worry, for the agent of the old swindler had told him to let the \$300 go over to the fifth year to be paid with the \$700, or \$1,000 in all."

"Surely, he thought, his cotton would net him that much the next year, but it didn't and the old swindler knew it wouldn't and he claimed as his by law everything the poor victim had when at the end of the fifth year only a small part of the \$1,000 could have been paid, even if old man Jones had not been too wise to accept it—it was \$1,000 cash immediately or get off the farm."

"The state of the victim at this stage of the proceedings may be imagined, although as one of the sufferers later expressed it, 'We are no worse off now than when we started. We have lived comfortably for five years and the children are that much older.'"

"I understand the old swindler had at least 500 such farms that had been improved from wild land, worth \$1 to \$2 an acre, to cultivated farms that he sold at prices varying from \$25 to \$40 an acre, and when you deduct his initial cash outlay you can figure out that he made more than a barrel of money."

KANSAS LIQUOR JOINT.

Rooms With a False Chimney and Secret Trapdoors.

From the *Trappea Capital*. A hollow sound that followed the rap of a billy club on the side of a structure which to all outward appearances was a chimney corner last week led to the discovery of what the local police term is one of the most clever ruses for concealing beer and whiskey that they have ever met.

The chimney was in reality a closet for booze and as a result of the discovery Charles F. Hecht, who runs a poolroom in the building where the false chimney was found, has had two warrants served on him. The chimney contained seventy-four quart bottles of beer and one quart of whiskey when it was found by detectives. To give the chimney a bona fide appearance a gas stove was placed in front of it. False plumbing came up through the floor below the stove and a regulation size stove pipe connected the heater with the chimney closet. One side of the structure was hinged and served as a door opening into a recess about eighteen inches square and fitted with five shelves on which the beer was placed. A strip of moulding such as was used in other parts of the room was nailed over the corner and top of the chimney so as to hide the ends and sides of the door. A small keyhole in the door was concealed by a picture post card which was tacked over it so that it could be swung to one side.

The room was fitted up with a bed, a stand, a water pitcher and chairs. An ice chest was kept in the room, but was always empty when the place was visited by police officers. The closet was but a part of the equipment that tended to keep in the dark what happened on the second floor of the building. This side door leading to this and other rooms was securely nailed and barred, so that admission to the second floor was possible only from the pool hall below, in the rear of which was a concealed ladder leading to the door above.

In the event of the discovery of this latter the persons who frequented the rooms of the second floor were notified by a rapping and a system of electric bells was arranged so that notice of the arrival of officers below could be signalled to the rooms above immediately.

On the night the raid was made the electric bells were used. The officers broke open the street entrance door and reached the room where the beer was kept only in time to see three men make their exit out on the roof through the skylight by means of a folding ladder, concealed when not in use.

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