

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1418
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

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BROADWAY GANGSTERS AND THEIR RACKETS

ROTHSTEIN—THE KING OF RACKETLAND

A smiling, dapper young man stepped jauntily into a waiting limousine outside Police Headquarters, on Centre Street, in New York City. His eyes caught and fixed themselves on a placard showing a policeman shooting a fleeing crook, and emblazoned across the card were three words: "YOU CAN'T WIN!" This man was the King of New York's racketeers. He had just beaten down an accusation that he had shot and wounded a patrolman who raided a card game in which he had been playing at a 45th Street hotel. His explanation was simple. He thought the raider was a thief endeavoring to hold up the players. Other witnesses swore that the raider had loudly shouted, "Open in the name of the law!" before being shot. But the accused man stuck to his story, and they had nothing left to do but turn him loose. There is no recollection that the dapper youth stopped smiling as he saw this placard with its flaming warning. He could win. He never lost. His name was Arnold Rothstein.

If there was ever a man born to be murdered, or, as the popular expression has it, to die with his boots on, that man was Arnold Rothstein. Broadway expected it for twenty years. At fashionable Belmont Park race-track, or in colorful Saratoga during its thirty days a year of life, on the baseball fields,

about the prize ring, wherever Rothstein made his power felt, the "wise mob" prophesied it would come. Everybody seemed to know it must happen. But, nobody knew it better than Arnold Rothstein.

A remarkable man in many ways, he first became known in Manhattan's "Tenderloin" for his pool-playing ability. A slight youth, from one of New York's many respectable Jewish homes, Arnold's Broadway history dates from his appearance at the rendezvous of the day, Shanley's, at Broadway and 42nd Street. Here he dined, and, with a few cronies, invariably sauntered over to the historic Doyle's Billiard Parlor, two blocks away. Rothstein was an expert player. But he was essentially a "money" player. When stakes were high, he always won. Unlike many men, when a huge sum was at stake, who go all to pieces, Rothstein always tightened up. If it was the drop of a pool ball into a pocket that was necessary, the turn of a card or a throw of the dice, he could be counted on to be coolest when the money was highest. The game of pool was piker stuff to this man. It was just practice, making him ready for greater fields. A strange insight into the man's gambling technique can be noted in that he was never known to play a game of billiards. The explanation was simple: he knew his strength as a pool-player, and his weakness at billiards.

It was at the game of pool that Rothstein first began his practice of the racketeer's code: "Never give a sucker an even break!"

Once Rothstein learned this line he never forgot it. He never entered into anything in which he couldn't have at least fifty percent the best of it over the other fellow. Once he corraled a sucker at Shanley's and enticed him into Doyle's, Rothstein would proceed to play like a dub. He would lose steadily, but only small sums. It is known that he once lost every game of pool played to a certain Broadwayite for four consecutive months until Rothstein thought the stakes had reached the point where he was ready to make the killing. Rothstein possessed that necessary virtue of all good gamblers: patience. If the dumb-founded loser believed his opponent merely won through a streak of luck, he usually suggested a return match, generally for an increased sum. Sometimes the sucker didn't wake up until after half-a-dozen of these return matches to the fact that he was pitted against one of the greatest pool players in the country. By that time the sucker's spirits were heavy, but his pocketbook was undeniably lighter.

Rothstein was never a gangster. But as a racketeer he reigned supreme in the gambling world. His next step upward from the green-covered pool tables was to the green lawns of the country's race-tracks.

He became a bookmaker. No stakes were too high for him to handle. He prospered amazingly, and soon owned his own stable which he called the Redstone Stable. The name "Redstone" was an English translation of the German syllables of his own name.

Bookmakers, lawyers and eventually judges and track authorities took note of the peculiar behavior of the horses in the Redstone barn. Those figured to win had a disconcerting habit of chasing the other horses to the finish line. Redstone horses that seemed as if they could not finish sixth in a five horse race, and were handicapped accordingly, had a nasty habit of romping in miles ahead of the favorite. Investigation revealed that Rothstein had been "fixing" both horses and jockeys, in his own stable and others, and was promptly ordered barred from all tracks and his stock of thoroughbreds sold.

In company with a man named Burke, Rothstein turned his attention to gambling on a grand scale. They outfitted and ran for many seasons an elaborate layout of chance at Long Beach, Long Island. Here, one could indulge in the passion for gambling at almost any game ever invented. As the money poured into Rothstein's lap, he looked for other outlets, and it was no trouble to find them. His fortune, in the days of the Long Beach gambling house, was estimated above ten million dollars, and although never verified by the man himself, he did admit the actual figures were close to that. He did not say if the estimation was above or below the true amount.

He made his office, then, at a delicatessen on Upper Broadway known as Reuben's. His office consisted of the sidewalk outside the delicatessen from 9 P. M. until midnight, and inside from midnight to dawn. Here flocked

dope peddlers, bootleggers, racketeers of all kinds with propositions, who found their man waiting with an expectant ear and a fairly open pocketbook. He trusted crooks implicitly, He was ready and willing to finance any deal with the underworld, but was deaf to legitimate propositions. In his own words, "Profits on legitimate propositions are too small!"

By this time, Rothstein's enemies were countless. He was a marked man, and he knew it. His own father knew it, and came to Reuben's one night to plead with his son to get out of the shady company and dark deals, but Arnold refused. Sadly, the father disowned his son, even to the extent of performing the terrible funeral rites for the disowned that is part of the Jewish faith.

It is a difficult thing to bar a man with ten million dollars from any place in this world. Rothstein had wealth, power and influence. The latter two must always go with the former. Rothstein went to O. H. P. Belmont, master of the racetracks, and persuaded that gentleman to reinstate him to standing on the turf. Belmont relented to the point of permitting Rothstein entrance again to the grandstands and club houses, but with the stipulation he was not to make books or own a stable.

By this time Rothstein no longer desired to personally engage in the lowly estate of the bookmaker. He was already above that. Bookmakers galore worked for him. Each Saturday night they came to his "office," turned over their winnings, took their share and departed until the following night of settlement.

Enemies were already gunning for Rothstein, but this was before the war and gangland was timid about using gats. The war was destined to revolutionize the underworld. Men who previously eyed a pistol with fear came back from France expert at dealing death from a machine gun and ready to use their knowledge to settle private disputes. However, it was just in case some gangster should desire to "bump him off" that Rothstein employed an amusing deception for his own protection.

He procured a barber and engaged the tonsorial artist to come to his home nightly to shave him. He always tipped the man lavishly, and fostered the barber's legendary delight for conversation. It was no trouble to suggest that their discussions be prolonged by a walk down Broadway to Reuben's, yet always on these walks which took place nightly Rothstein walked close to the buildings, letting the barber walk between him and passing motor cars. It was a two-fold precaution. Should members of the underworld see them together, they would naturally believe the second man to be a bodyguard, and would think twice before attacking. In the event, however, that an attack was made, it was most likely to come from an automobile. And any bullet from an automobile had to get past the barber before it could touch the gambler. No attacks were made at that time, and Rothstein moved his headquarters a mile down Broadway to Childs' Restaurant, at Columbus Circle. The walks were discontinued. It is highly

doubtful if the barber ever knew how narrowly he missed death each night, as he earnestly discussed affairs of state with his generous customer.

Lest a question be raised in the minds of the readers concerning murders from automobiles, while the slang expression of "taking a man for a ride" was then unknown, murder from cars was not. Herman Rosenthal made gangland history when he stepped out of the Hotel Metropole, Broadway at 43rd Street, to be riddled by the bullets from four gunmen in a motor car.

Rothstein was internationally famous when Rosenthal was killed. Hailed as the greatest gambler of all time, Rothstein's reign when he held nightly court at Childs' was the high spot of his astonishing career.

Happy, and certainly unafraid in public, he made a hobby of practical jokes. Victims of his jokes, which were sometimes brutal, rarely complained, and if they did, a gift from Rothstein quieted them. His wit was quick, and a story is told in line with his policy not to finance legitimate deals. A play producer called him on the long distance telephone, to beg for funds to finance a revue over a bad week in Chicago.

"I need five thousand dollars, Arnold!" said the showman. "I can easily pay it back with high interest if I can get the five grand to pay salaries until after Christmas!"

"I can't hear you," said Rothstein.

The revue producer repeated his request, in a louder tone.

"I still can't hear you," said Rothstein.

"I NEED FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!" shouted the producer.

At this point the telephone operator broke in. "I don't know why you can't hear him, Mr. Rothstein," she said. "I can hear him plainly."

"All right," said Rothstein quickly. "Then you give it to him!"

The great World's Series baseball scandal, that began in Chicago and astounded the nation, involved Rothstein. Yet he had covered himself so well that, although innumerable accusations were made against him, he managed to beat down all of them. In doing so he lost a friend of many years standing, Abe Attell, the prize fighter. But Rothstein was then in the tightest jam of his life and sacrifices had to be made and made quickly. Again the old phantom of sudden death reared its head on Broadway, and whispers were heard on all sides. If Rothstein heard them, and it is foolish to think he did not, he gave no heed.

He opened up a general insurance office on 57th Street, near stately Fifth Avenue. Rothstein had then been putting considerable of his gains into real estate, and he owned properties on 57th Street and 72nd Street, two of New York's greatest crosstown thoroughfares. The insurance business was an inspiration. Men who came to him to borrow money were forced to purchase staggeringly large life insurance policies. He explained that this was a protective move for him. Then he deducted the first premium from the loan. Most of this pre-

mium goes to the broker. Rothstein rightly figured that few of his policy-holders were going to continue payments, but that was the company's worry; not his.

Still moving downtown, Rothstein and his entourage departed from Childs' and stationed themselves at Lindy's Restaurant, similar to Reuben's. Here, at 50th Street and Broadway, in the heart of the great Broadway theater district, Rothstein took up what was to be his last stand. Each of the restaurants he had chosen for headquarters had leaped into a tremendous vogue, to the delight and profit of the proprietors. But when society flocked to Reuben's, Rothstein was requested to move away. The owner of the sandwich emporium did not desire to mingle his new society customers with his old gangster band. Rothstein, ever obliging, moved to Childs', and overnight that place leaped into popularity. As a midnight rendezvous, Childs' lacked the color of Reuben's, and instead of Rothstein's crowd bringing along swanky society, they brought a mixture of upper and underworlds. They swarmed all over the place each night, and Rothstein was literally forced to seek new quarters.

Lindy's seemed to prove ideal to the gangland chief. Always attired in a natty gray suit, slim and clean shaven, he stood in the shadows alongside the Rivoli Theatre, next door, and talked to the myriad racketeers who had business with him. He transacted little business in his 57th Street office. Two brothers and a large staff attended to the insurance and real estate. Arnold slept until five each afternoon,

and then spent an hour in the office. Here, surrounded by telephones, he dealt with those he did not desire to meet at Lindy's. Into one telephone, speaking to a lagging borrower, he would growl threats and demands; then, in a trice, he was at another phone, murmuring dulcet whisperings to some attractive show-girl who momentarily interested him.

Rothstein's habits, aside from gambling, were exceedingly temperate. He neither smoked cigarettes nor indulged in liquor. He drank coffee and ate apples after midnight in Lindy's. Eight apples were his usual allotment each night. He wore gray suits only. He detested newspaper reporters, and any that came to him with the bright hope of getting a story were told to keep his name out of the papers. The request was generally accompanied by a look that plainly told the reporter to obey . . . or else!

In September, 1928, it became noised about Broadway that Rothstein had welshed a bet. Broadway was aghast. A card game at the Park Central Hotel, in which as high as \$50,000 was wagered on the turn of a single card, was where Rothstein's failure to pay had occurred. The exact sum he was said to have lost was in excess of \$300,000. And, Rothstein, who had often won and lost half a million at one sitting, had not paid. It was unthinkable.

The alibi for Rothstein, offered by his friends, was that the game was crooked. Marked cards, or "readers," they claimed, had been used against him. But the "wise mob" smiled. The man who could fool Rothstein

with marked cards, or any card trick, was yet to be born.

The only reason that offered a semblance of truth was that Rothstein had met business reverses and was temporarily short of funds. A gambler does not "welsh" a bet. It forever bars him from active gambling with others of his fraternity. For twenty years Rothstein smiled at the ever-present phantom of sudden death.

He had beaten the game for two decades. He was not yet fifty years old. He had plans . . . but fate stepped in and ended the game. Somewhere, on the night of November 4th, 1928, a revolver barked in the darkness. Rothstein, clutching his stomach, made his way to Polyclinic Hospital to die. The newspapers were on the streets with the news within half an hour of the time he was shot. And Broadway and the whole world, which had been expecting this very news for twenty years, stood aghast . . . shocked . . . and surprised!

TRICKS OF RACKETLAND

Broadway, which belies its name because it is a very narrow street when judged by the standard of the humans that walk its pavement, has a racketeer every few feet. And each one plies a different trade. It may not be an old adage or Chinese proverb, but it's a safe bet that if you toss up a nickel on Broadway it will fall on a racketeer.

"Racketeer" is essentially a modern American slang word, but the business of the racketeer is the oldest in the world. Rome, in its

glory, undoubtedly numbered racketeers among its citizens. Likely a few "droppers" were at work in the throng which heard Brutus declare "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him!"

The "dropper" picks a likely victim in a crowd, and drops a wallet fat with a great many sheets of worthless paper cut to resemble good American currency. He picks up the bulging wallet in plain sight of his victim, and pretends to be in a terrific hurry. He offers to sell the "found" wallet, unopened, if the purchaser will try to find its rightful owner. The victim-to-be has two courses on which to proceed. He can buy with the honest intention of locating the owner and covering the purchase price by the reward, or, stifling qualms of conscience, he can expect to keep the wallet and reap a handsome profit from the contents. If he decides on the latter (and you'd be surprised how many do) he does not display his decision. He takes a bill from his own pocket and purchases the wallet filled with newspaper. When he discovers his mistake the "dropper" has disappeared. Down the sands of Broadway time will always resound the name of Kid Dropper, gangster and racketeer, who gained his nickname because of his proficiency in the gentle art of dropping the wallet. The Kid died, sardonically enough, surrounded by policemen. An obscure East Side gangster figured the glory and prestige he would win throughout gangland was worth the twenty years to life imprisonment that would go with it. He sent a bullet into the Dropper's brain as

that worthy was leaving a police station where he had been summoned to answer some questions pertaining to a gang war.

Greatest of all Broadway rackets was the "floating crap game." It has passed on now, for lean days have fallen on the proprietors. In its hey! hey! day it was famous for its stakes, and Arnold Rothstein and Nick the Greek were familiar figures, battling viciously over its green table. The house was ready to "fade" any bet of any size, and made, its profit by taking a cut from the big winners.

This game was always played strictly on the level. It had to be, not necessarily because of the inclinations of the proprietors, but because at least one smart gambler was always participating who was well aware of every trick of the dice and couldn't be fooled. The celebrated "floating game" was the straightest game of chance in New York. It gained its name of "floating" because it never played in the same spot twice in the same week. It wasn't unusual to see half a million dollars in cash on the table, and the game kept moving partly to forestall the police, but principally to avoid hold-up men. From the Bronx the game might be played next night in Brooklyn, or it floated from Lower Broadway to Washington Heights. In order to locate it, a player went to a prominent Broadway restaurant, where a pilot issued a password for the night and the name of another Broadway place, usually a cafeteria. Here, another pilot gave the game's address to each player who gave the correct password.

Even then, admittance could only be gained following close inspection.

Fortunes were won and lost nightly, and those favored with smiles from Lady Luck were given an escort home. The escort was armed to the teeth and not afraid to bite.

An interesting story, illustrating how the fever of the game causes men to forget the value of money, is told about the notorious Nick the Greek. He dropped over fifty thousand dollars in a game before quitting. On the way home, desiring some gum as he passed a slot machine, he inserted a penny but found the machine out of order. Whereupon he called out the proprietor of the store and stormed so furiously it seemed as if nothing would satisfy him. But something did. The store owner simply gave him back his penny.

When the "floating crap game" was operating, it offered some ingenious racketeers considerable easy money. They formed an imitation game which became known among the denizens of racketland as the "steer joint." Men were placed close by those who represented the real game. Anyone in search of the bona fide game, but uncertain how to approach, were guided or steered to the pseudo-game, not far away. The "joint" was an exact replica of the real game in every particular except one; the dice were crooked. Only one sucker was admitted at a time. The men gathered around the table, gambling huge stakes, were merely paid employees. The sucker was framed from the start, and when he ran out of funds he was quietly eased out by determined looking boun-

cers. Many men who thought they had lost their cash in the great Broadway "floating crap game" were actually tricked in the "steer joint" nearby, and will probably never know the truth.

One of the great gangs of racketeers that made Broadway its headquarters, was the Whittemore gang. Headed by a dapper youth, Richard Reese Whittemore, they performed their various rackets during the day and evening, carousing in the late hours at a night club: The Club Chantee. Here, their profession unknown and hardly suspected, they spent money lavishly. Whittemore, a gem thief, loved to display uncut diamonds to the chorus girls of the revue and to the gaping men of the club's jazz orchestra. But he was never so foolish as to give away these stolen gems. When he was finally apprehended by clever detective work, he made good his escape from the surrounded night club but was overtaken and subdued. Brought back to the night club for identification, a chorus girl insisted to a detective that Whittemore was not a racketeer but a fine young gentleman. She based her reasoning on the fact that the several times she had allowed him to escort her home after 3:30 in the morning, when she had finished work, he had behaved himself admirably. He had not even tried to kiss her. The chorus girl naively added that if he had attempted to, she would not have been angry. Nevertheless, Whittemore was identified as a thief and a murderer, and expiated his crimes on a Maryland gallows.

The best break of luck a racketeer can have is to stumble on a racket that is within the law. Such nuggets of fortune, however, are few and hard to find. So the next best thing is to find one "nearly" within the law and retain a good lawyer.

A Broadway gang of racketeers, that shall go nameless because many of the members have never been proven guilty, depended entirely on a smart lawyer for their freedom. This lawyer, or "mouthpiece" as attorneys are called in the jargon of the underworld, was an expert at proving his clients had been entirely within the law. So cleverly did he extricate the men from legal chains, and so consistently, that the gang waxed more daring with each successful acquittal.

This gang was expert at three smart rackets. One of these involved the happy freedom allowed by the bankruptcy laws. This was the chief activity of a delegation of the racketeer band, but because it required considerable time, other rackets, in which swifter action was to be had, also occupied their valuable time. For the bankruptcy racket, one member of the gang established credit at a bank, and rented a small space in New York's Garment Center. Each time this racket was tried, a new textile would be chosen for the star role. Thus, once they might engage in the fur business, then silk and then woolens. It didn't matter, much.

A "fence," with no qualms about what he was getting, agreed to buy bargains for cash. With credit established at the bank, the "firm" would send word to the mills or wholesalers they were

in the market for goods. Salesmen called, looked up the new organization's rating, and sent their goods payable in ten days. The racketeers placed large orders, portions to be delivered at ten-day intervals. These orders were placed with a dozen big mills. And then the fun began.

As quickly as the materials were delivered they were turned over to the fence for about 20 per cent less than cost to them, but in cash. As swiftly as each order was delivered, it was sold. The amount of buying was increased each week, and as the bills came due they were paid promptly. With the lengthening of business relations, the mills or wholesalers became more agreeable to granting better terms. So, when they could procure goods on a 90-day credit arrangement, the racketeers cleaned up cash for two and a half months and suddenly plunged themselves into bankruptcy.

Thieves, they claimed, had entered their "storehouse" and stolen their goods. By this time, of course, nothing was left in the bank account. Questioned about this, the "head of the firm" would ruefully tell his creditors he had lost most of it gambling.

The lawyer did the rest, and the firm went on into a new field to begin again. Naturally, the racketeer who posed as the head of the firm was no longer in a position to continue, his reputation having been forever blasted for commercial pursuits. So he was then considered graduated on to learning the second racket of the gang.

This second racket requires a lightning brain

and an adept "line." It is complicated, but remunerative. In material things, it also requires a twenty-dollar bill and a single dollar bill. A place like a restaurant or drug store, where a cashier and cash register is stationed, is a prospect for this racket.

Entering the chosen spot, the racketeer makes a purchase that totals less than a dollar. He pays for it with the twenty-dollar bill. As the cashier makes change, the racketeer opens a conversation on any interesting subject of the moment. Let us suppose he had bought something for seventy-five cents. The cashier returns a ten and nine singles and twenty-five cents. The racketeer picks up the quarter but lets the paper money lay on the counter. He then requests a package of gum or cigarettes. He pays for this with the quarter, but, fishing his single dollar out of his pocket, apologizes for having offered the twenty. Had he been aware he had a single dollar, he declares, he would not have proffered the twenty. He makes as if to pick up the ten-dollar bill from the pile and lay down the single in his hand, always keeping the cashier engaged in conversation. Actually, he does not lay down the single dollar, nor pick up the ten. He thrusts back the nineteen dollars to the cashier and asks for a ten-dollar bill for the pile. Receiving a ten-dollar note, he starts for the door, hesitating for one reason or another, until the cashier discovers his mistake. If he is not called, he pretends he has discovered it himself and returns.

At any rate, he and the cashier become aware

of the fact he has handed in nineteen dollars for a ten. More conversation ensues, and then the racketeer draws forth his single dollar bill again, and suggests that she change it all for a twenty-dollar bill. By this time, possibly, the reader of this, as well as the cashier, have forgotten about the ten-dollar bill that the racketeer pocketed for the nineteen. Certainly, enough cashiers forgot about it to make the livelihood of the racketeer quite prosperous, and a hundred and fifty dollars a day could be turned in by an energetic hustler at this racket.

The third racket that was part of the repertoire of this particular gang was the business of selling supposed "stolen" goods to honest customers. The object of the sale may be a fur, a ring, a watch, a stickpin or a roll of silk, or a pawn ticket. It is to the value of the racketeer to give the sucker a suggestion that the object for sale is either stolen property or found. He pleads poverty, and sets a low price or offers to accept any reasonable offer. Whatever was being offered for sale would look so good under a slight scrutiny as to seem worth any figure between five dollars and five hundred. If the "spiel" that went with the sale sounded as it should, a good average of customers was to be found, and each would purchase the object for about two thousand percent what it was actually worth.

The selling of pawn tickets would have to be done in league with a pawn-broker. Stationed a block or so from the shop, the racketeer would accost a passer-by and claim to have just found the ticket. He would offer to sell,

even allowing the stranger to go in and examine the pledged article before paying. In the shop, the broker would enlarge on the value of the object, as compared to what was loaned on it. Should the passer-by purchase the ticket and redeem the object, he would find it to be of little or no value. Often enough, the pawnbroker had previously shown him something entirely different, and claim he made a mistake before. Should the trapped sucker endeavor to re-pawn the article for the same amount, he would find the broker unwilling to oblige.

The racket of selling supposed stolen goods has been so worked to death by bands of racketeers all over the country, that a new phase simply had to be invented—and it was.

A delivery wagon, dressed up to look like a prominent local department store's truck, would park near a large hotel. A man in uniform would accost a likely looking stranger, and offer a plausible enough story as follows:

A package (of anything desired) had been ordered by a Mr. Brown at the store and paid for in advance. Mr. Brown wished the package delivered to his room at the hotel across the street. But, unfortunately, they had been delayed in delivering the parcel and now, arriving, they have found that Mr. Brown has checked out, leaving no forwarding address. Consequently, the truckmen have the package on their hands, and as it is already paid for, and worth about two hundred dollars, they will let the stranger have it for a paltry fifty dollars. As the package looks genuine, and so does

the truckman, the average man will stifle his conscience and consider himself lucky to get such a bargain. What he has actually purchased, and finds when he gets home, depends upon the ingenuity and imagination of the racketeers who packed the bundle.

Fate, always a great dramatist, worked up to its climax of retribution as no fiction writer could do. A great many of the gang had been picked up on a racketeering charge and when the case was called, came into court with their usual swank and swagger. They had the best lawyer in the city; and he had told them that everything was fixed; as usual, they had nothing to fear in the nature of a spanking from the hand of the law.

Their confidence was superb; their nonchalance unassumed. They listened with evident boredom to the charges of the assistant district attorney, and grinned with good-natured tolerance as he related their various crimes. These grins widened into broad smiles as their lawyer stood up to state their own case. He had never failed them. Prison was thousands of miles from their thoughts—no doubt they had new rackets planned for the morrow. But this time Fate, the great comedian, took a hand. The lawyer addressed the judge, started to speak, turned pale and clutched at his heart. In five minutes he was dead from an attack. In an hour court reassembled, and within a short period the captured members of the racketeer band were on their way to state's prison to take up residences of from one to ten years.

There is, along Broadway, the inevitable racket of helping stage-struck suckers achieve their ambitions. There are fake dancing schools; singing teachers; dramatic teachers; elocution teachers and countless varieties of "phoney" professors, waiting to take over those would-be Thespians. But the racketeer loves best the stage-struck Napoleon of finance who craves to back a show. Down through the decades of Broadway he has come, flaunting yellowbacks, proud to be honored with the names of "Butter and Egg Man" or "Angel." An "Angel" is a wealthy sucker, generally making good money in some alien line, and anxious to find a suitable outlet for his surplus in that fairyland filled with beautiful chorus girls and prima donnas.

In legend, plays and story books it has been related that the angel gets the best of the racketeer, and the show he backs becomes a smashing success. A play, called "The Butter and Egg Man," dealt with this theme, but in real life it must be sadly told that this miracle rarely takes place. For the benefit of the "Angel," a third rate company interprets a fourth rate play. Scenery rented for almost nothing is billed to the "Angel" as brand new, and no opportunity to make him pay and pay for his experience is overlooked. Racketeers of this sort fill the odd office buildings lining the side streets of Broadway, and find it easy pickings. So long as beautiful girls are employed in the show business, there will be Angels—and Devils.

Freely worked along Broadway, although the

scene of operations is generally in the suburbs, is the racket of "giving away" real estate. A large tract of land, apparently having all the conveniences of a fine summer resort colony, yet with all the inconveniences of a poorhouse backyard nearby has to be discovered. When it is, the racketeer takes an option on the property for a few months.

This preliminary business complete, the racketeer's next move is to send a confederate out with a printed book. The book contains little numbered stubs, as in a raffle. He visits various parts of the city, talking only to housewives. A raffle is being held as an advertising stunt, he tells her, and by just signing her name and address she will become a participant at no cost to her. When a goodly list of "participants" have been enrolled, the racketeer begins his calls. Meeting each lady who holds a slip he asks to see it, and, after examining the number thereon, informs her with cheerful mien that she has been very lucky. Indeed, her fortune has been great. She has won the prize of a beautiful lot near the ocean where she and her family can spend the rest of their days. Incidentally, a slight fee is charged immediately for looking up the title to the deed. This fee, generally five or ten dollars, actually does not interest the racketeer considerably. It is in the nature of a thermometer to tell if the sucker is hot or cold. Those who rebel at the fee are considered poor prospects and are often dropped at once.

Those who pay the fee, and many do eagerly, are either transported at the expense of the

racketeer or told to appear at a designated time (on a Sunday) at the development. Taken to their own lot, they find it about the last place anybody cared to live on. The "salesman" joins with them in their regret. Then he gets a bright idea. Not far away is a far better lot which would ordinarily cost a thousand dollars or so, but by turning back their own lot in exchange, they can have it for half that sum. If they don't care to part with so much money in a single lump, the "salesman" takes a cash deposit and arranges a time payment proposition. Rest assured that no power on earth is going to get this family out of the hands of the suave "salesman" without buying something. So, the sale is consummated, except the racketeer asks that they return the receipt for the money they gave him to guarantee the title. He assures them the money will apply to the transferred lot. Thus the law, should it be informed, will have less evidence. So, when enough suckers have bought the same lot and paid a few installments on it (not being allowed to take possession until a certain amount is paid) the racketeer's option runs out and so does the racketeer.

The little parlor game of matching coins has provided a pair of smart racketeers with a clever career. In a sense, they have utilized the method of making the sucker think he is the wise guy. That makes the blow a little harder when the sucker finds out, but also makes the going easier until he does.

In this racket, the first racketeer must lo-

cate and get on friendly terms with the sucker. He may be a speak-easy, club or restaurant acquaintance. In one manner or another, the second racketeer gets in with this pair and makes himself generally unpleasant. He is loud and uncouth, seemingly a bit alcoholized, and exceedingly anxious to gamble. When he has made himself sufficiently disliked, he leaves the room for a moment. Then the first racketeer suggests they take this intruder down a peg or two by "framing" him. It's an easy matter (and he's right) for two men to beat another man in a matching game. A little code between them, and the third man can't win. If he touches the top button of his coat, his "partner" is to show a head. If he touches the lower button, his "partner" is to show a tail. The "sucker" agrees, and the second racketeer returns. The game begins and goes fine from the start. The "sucker" obeys the signals and they win continually. However, what he probably does not notice is that his "partner" is doing most of this winning, all their money is slowly accumulating in his hands. If he does notice anything significant in this he dismisses it, because his "partner" allowed for just that contingency. They are to meet at some agreed spot fifteen minutes after the game is done.

When they call a halt the sucker's money is all in his partner's hands, but so is the supposed "sucker's." Only when the time for the rendezvous has come and gone, with no sign of the partner, does the poor fellow realize

he has been caught in the meshes he had thought entrapped another.

In the opinion of the writer, the racket we are about to explain is the classic of all. It is never outside the law; in fact it depends on the law to bring it to a successful conclusion. The master mind that conceived it, you must agree, possessed considerable knowledge of psychology. He knew, for instance, that the seed of suspicion can cause more damage to the imagination than all the actual knowledge in the world. Perhaps I am getting too complicated. Here, judge for yourself.

The racketeer lays the foundation for his killing by engaging a suite in an expensive hotel. Other preliminaries that we shall explain later are attended to, and he takes himself off to a prominent jeweler. The time, by the way, is Saturday; just around noon.

He may enter the jewelry shop at a half hour before noon, but looking here and there over trays of stones will consume time until it is past noon. Then he selects a handsome jewelled watch, for about three hundred dollars, and, not having that amount in cash with him, offers to make out a check. The bank is closed now, you may notice, but he gives his hotel as a reference. When the hotel verifies his residence there, nine jewelers out of nine will accept the check. At least, they would before they got caught with this game.

With the watch in his pocket, the racketeer works fast. He meets a likely looking prospect, and offers to sell the three hundred dollar watch for about fifty dollars. A telegram has

come, demanding his presence in another town at once for a big business deal, so he is willing to sacrifice the watch for cash. When the bargain purchaser demurs, as he is quite certain to feel there is something wrong with this proposition, the racketeer names the jeweler where he made the purchase.

"I'll wait on the corner," he tells the man. "You take it in to the shop and see if I'm not telling the truth. It cost me three hundred dollars only this morning."

When the would-be buyer does as he is told, the jeweler immediately becomes suspicious. We say this with authority, because the racket has rarely failed to work as we are telling it. Learning the watch is sacrificed for fifty dollars, the first thing the jeweler does is telephone the original buyer's hotel. To his dismay, the man has checked out. Instantly, panic strikes the jewelry emporium. The man's check will certainly come back from the bank on Monday morning! They are being robbed!

Explaining the plot to the honest man who would have bought the watch at the tremendous reduction, the jewelers persuade him to lead them to the culprit. He is waiting on the corner, and for the sake of their business and other jeweler's business, they call a policeman and throw the racketeer into jail for intent to defraud. Week ends always cause complications in matters of court hearings and procuring of bail, so our racketeer languishes until Monday morning in durance vile. Then

the jewelers get the shock of their uneducated lives; the man's check is good!

With profuse apologies, they drop their case, but the racketeer is no longer a charming, easy-going customer. He is ripping mad, with fire in his eyes and ice in his heart. He produces the telegram (sent by a confederate) to show he was actually called out of town on a deal involving thousands, and now the opportunity has gone forever. He summons a lawyer and proceeds to bring suit for any sum from ten to a hundred thousand dollars. Then, if he is a particularly smart racketeer, he'll settle for whatever the jeweler wishes to give him. A court case of the matter is liable to bring up some disconcerting questions as to what the "big business deal" was about, and the previous career of the racketeer may be unhappily brought to light by the defendant's attorneys.

But these are things that the jeweler is unaware of, so let us say he offers the racketeer five thousand to drop the case, and the racketeer's lawyer takes one fifth of this. Four "grand" isn't half bad remuneration for the indignity suffered in spending two days behind the bars.

The prohibition law has brought to light more rackets than you could shake a nightstick at. Before prohibition, racketeers went calling on business houses with bottles of perfume, with an aroma that was as sweet as any flower in the Garden of Eden yet was as clear to the eye as water. Gentlemen in love, husbands on the outs with their wives, were suckers for

This sort of trade. One genuine bottle was passed around, that the smitten men might smell of the delights within, and then the racketeer took orders at a ridiculously low price. In one office, if it were large enough, he could sell a hundred bottles. When the perfume was delivered, often enough, the men placed the handsome looking bottles carefully away for presentation that night to wifey or sweetie. If, perchance, one charitable male decided to open the bottle at once, the racketeer was gone before the cork popped out. Then, investigation would reveal, the "perfume" that looked like water was indeed water. Five dollars for a pretty bottle of water is still considered high. The perfume racket was just about dying on its feet when Andy Volstead came to the rescue of the embattled racketeers. Prohibition! Presto! The bottles were made larger, neat labels were printed, and perfume racketeers went forth and sold the same ingredients in the same way—only they called it Gin.

Variations of this racket have been worked in innumerable ways. Kegs of beer have been sold, and the racketeer has tapped each keg to prove to the wary customer that his barrels are on the level. Sure enough, gurgling, bubbling, frothy beer has flowed out the barrel. But the racketeer always hastened to place the tap back after a pint or so has been extracted. You see, there is only a quart of it, placed in a separate receptacle, next to the tap. The remainder of the keg is what scientists prefer to call H₂O.

Something, of course, should be said for the appearance and general demeanor of the rack-

eteer. Age, naturally, is no limit, and the denizens of racketland may be anywhere from nineteen to ninety. Likewise, as stated before, sex does not bar you from becoming a sharpshooter at finance. But we are principally interested in the male of the species, preferring, with some slight semblance of chivalry, to pretend "there ain't no other kind." To the lay mind, one conceives that all the racketeer requires for his trade is a suave tongue, a swift brain and no conscience. Actually, there are other requisites.

One of these is a smart appearance. The racketeer must tend to convince his suckers as to his personal prosperity, and woe to the racket man who is down on his luck. Let his clothes become shabby, his beard grow a trifle too black, and his day is done. Nothing but luck can put him back on his feet again.

Two prime requisites are confidence and optimism. Uncertainty has killed more chances than policemen. The average racketeer, therefore, exudes confidence from every pore. Conceit, self-confidence and arrogance go hand in hand with every sharpshooter on Broadway. This despite the fact that the records will prove that, sooner or later, every racketeer runs into the law. And often this occurs a good deal sooner than later. Consequently, whenever the writer observes a racketeer hot after a quarry, yet simply dripping with optimism, it puts him in mind of the chap who jumped out of a tenth story window. While passing the fourth floor the jumper observed cheerily to himself, "Well, I'm all right so far!"



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