

► *Rackets that prey on the  
superstitious millions.*

## LUCK FOR SALE

BY JOHN ROEBURT

New Brunswick, N. J.

Gentlemens Sir and friendes, i notice your high John the Conquerer root and if it is so good and luckey i would lik to have one. also send me a herb for manhood and how to use it.

Beg to remane

THIS actual letter, typical of thousands, is the foundation stone of many an illicit fortune. It represents the average customer in a series of flourishing and highly profitable "superstition rackets." Millions of Americans are in constant and ever hopeful search of ready-made luck and herbs and ointments to solve all their problems. And hundreds of clever manipulators sell them almost anything their heart desires for a mere pittance. As dealers in commercial occultism and voodoo and as parasite tipsters on the parasitical numbers racket, also known as *bolita*, they collect millions of dollars annually.

A dozen large companies stud the big cities of America and function independently or collaboratively as the fountain-heads of occultism. They print dream books and package herbs; they mold magical candles and fill small bottles with perfumed chemicals bearing such exotic names as Beneficial Dream, Bat's Blood, Fiery Wall of Protection; they stuff little square boxes with Live Lodestone, Sahara Desert Sand, Chinese and Jinx-Remover Washes, Graveyard Dust, Wahoo Bark and Sumbul Root. Then specially-trained salesmen dispose of them to the eager men and women in the tenements of St. Louis, Shreveport, Chicago, Harlem — wherever education has touched only lightly.

Though the salesmen are able gentry, the chief selling is done by mail through the company catalogue, an elaborately designed affair that appeals gaudily and directly to the lowliest dreams of

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fame and sexual power, health and wealth, and categorically promises the attainment of them all. Next to these promises, in very small type, appear the words *so-called* and *alleged*, which form sufficient legal safeguards but which the prospective buyer seldom reads or, if he does, doesn't quite understand. Here are a few excerpts from one such catalogue:

*Five Finger Grass* — hang over bedstead to ward off evil.

*Life Everlasting Herb* — said to prolong life; one teaspoonful to one cup of water.

*Smellage Root* — Rub on foot of person who has been a bad influence.

*Dragon's Blood* — to uncross a person: burn it for seven nights, at midnight, near a window.

Among the other best-sellers are the ritualistic candles, which run the gamut, in nomenclature, from Peaceful Home to Inflammatory Confusion. The Lucky Number candle, guaranteed to work miracles in the numbers game, is at the very top of the list of consumer interest. The quantity of such candles sold reaches astronomical figures.

The largest share of catalogue space and sensational emphasis is given the fifty-nine varieties of dream books, bearing such mystic titles as *Afro Dream Book*, *Raja Rabo*, *Policy Pete*, *3 Witches*, *King Tut* and *Sen-Chu Dreams*. They are

all carefully consulted by the numbers-betting cognoscenti over the breadth of the forty-eight States. The text in each is an alphabetical arrangement of single words with a number juxtaposed. The reader condenses his dream into a summary noun or word-image and searches the book for its corresponding number. According to the *Five-in-One Dream Book*, for example, if the substance of a dream was vengeance, the winning number the reader must hasten to place his bet on is 444. This scholarly volume opens with ABANDON — 754 and closes with ZULU — 777.

The response to these catalogues is constant and tremendous. The file of original letters making inquiries or purchases is cross-indexed by name, product and geographical location. Known frankly as the sucker list, it is the blood and tissue of the superstition rackets and insurance of a perennial golden harvest of orders and cash. Indeed, it forms a business in itself, for one distributor will rent it to another at prices ranging from \$12 to \$30 a thousand names. The more recent the names on a list the more it will fetch. The Numbers Tipster, who carries on a running hide-and-seek game with the postal inspectors, is ever on the lookout for up-to-date sucker lists, more trustworthy than

mildewed ones, and gladly pays the highest prices. In the trade the Tipster's fraud is known as a "blast."

The fresh, innocent, hopeful lamb caught in the live list immediately gets this letter or some variation of it:

YOUR NAME WAS GIVEN ME BY A FRIEND WHO SAID THAT YOU HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR ADVICE IN THE PAST AND THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET ON THE WINNING SIDE OF LIFE PROVIDED YOU GOT SOMETHING STRAIGHT. LET ME HELP YOU BE A WINNER. I WILL GIVE YOU THREE STRAIGHT HITS NEXT WEEK. GUARANTEED. I HAVE THE MOST POWERFUL COMBINATION OF JINX BREAKERS THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN. RUSH \$2. IF YOU DO NOT HIT, MONEY BACK IMMEDIATELY.

A strikingly large proportion of the recipients of such a high-pressure letter comes across immediately. Here is a sample favorable reaction:

Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Sir in reply to your letter I am very glad to get the information and I am sure would appreciate a straight hit as I am a Poor Lady on the relief and I am penniless. I am borrowing the money now to send. God bless you as I trust your judgment.

Sincerely yours,

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Sometimes there is trouble:

Cleveland, O.

Dear Sir:

I am writing in regard to a number you guaranteed to hit on Sat. Sept. 23 and which did not hit.

My husband is a disabled War Veteran and unable to work and all he has is a bare existence for himself and family. You come along and give him all the hopes of winning a little money for a few pleasures and the necessities once more in this dreary life of his. The right thing for you to do is return that \$2.00 you collect for a number that did not hit.

Mrs. ———

Needless to say, the war veteran's widow didn't get her money back. She never got any reply. Merchants of luck are easily offended by ungrateful correspondents.

The conventional big-time blast requires some 30,000 select names. The whole operation follows a standard arithmetic. A really live list rents at the top asking price of \$30 a thousand. This means an initial investment of \$900. The job of addressing envelopes requires another \$150. The circulars are printed in a bootleg shop trusted by the operators at a cost of about \$50. The postage comes to about \$700. These major disbursements total \$1,800. The minimum expectation in returns is 10 per cent, or 3000 clients paying \$2 each — a cash total of \$6,000 — better than a three-to-one return. The speculation in-

volved is reduced to the minimum, for the list owner frequently carries the tipster's credit or post-dated check until the returns roll in. The whole operation consumes about a week. This virtual partnership is an association of knaves sharing guilty secrets that would, if revealed, clear up many unsolved felonies cluttering the files of the nation's postal inspectors.

The profits in the manufacture and sale of occult goods are as large as those in the selling of numbers. The Power Oil, alleged to have been used by mesmerists of classical times to achieve control over anyone, is a colored aromatic oil poured into two-dram bottles at a cost of seventy-five cents a dozen. It retails for fifty cents each. The sachets and incenses yield the same handsome margin. The Black Number Candle, said to have been used by ancient cabalists, retails at fifty cents, though its identical twin

sells at the Woolworth stores for five cents.

The sale of books of superstitious lore runs into the hundreds of thousands. *Seven Keys to Power* alone has enjoyed twenty editions since 1936 and is now well over the half million mark. It is still going strong. It costs the publisher eight cents to produce it. He gets twenty-two cents from wholesalers who buy quantities of a thousand or over. And the retail price is one dollar! It is probably the most advertised book in America — a full page *must* in every catalogue. Its 102 pages of amazing revelation constitute the chief reading matter of millions of Americans. The author of this masterpiece is "Lewis De Claremont," *nom de plume* for some hack writer. He probably gets more letters of congratulation and condemnation than any other author in the United States — and it helps to keep the invaluable sucker list alive.

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## *Fourth of July Message*

BY THOMAS JEFFERSON

**E**VEN should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and liberties of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them. In short, the flames kindled on the 4th of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them.

► *A multitude of new uses for mankind's oldest material.*

## THE WONDERS OF WOOD

BY EGON GLESINGER

THE war has compelled all countries to expand the uses of locally available materials. Since it is generally abundant and easily available, wood has been the special object of enforced resourcefulness. Traditionally the most versatile of raw materials, the last few years have seen an extension of its use that is truly startling. Already people wear wood and eat wood and turn it into alcohol, gasoline and a variety of other strange products. What is more, experimentation now under way in many nations holds the promise of ever more amazing conversions.

What does this resurgent demand represent? Most massively wood has served as construction lumber for cantonments, hangars, warehouses, war workers' dwellings, factories, docks, shipyard structure and the myriad service buildings required by a nation at war. Shipyards also use immense quantities

of wood: 300,000 board feet to launch a freighter and many thousands more for deck planking, superstructures, and interiors of airplane carriers and warships.

Demand for both sawn lumber and plywood for airplane construction has increased with advances in aircraft engineering, not only for our own services but for our Allies. England's new Mosquito bomber-fighters is a recent example. Fastest of its type in the world and most durable combat plane in the British airfleet, it is built of wood grown and harvested in the forests of America's Pacific Northwest.

Our Army requires wood for more than 1200 other uses. The Navy's list is even longer, and the catalog is extended by the Marines, the Coast Guard, the Maritime Commission. These are ordinary uses of unprocessed lumber. The forest contributes to the service of war supply in a vast number of dis-

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