Biggest Wheel of Fortune: Will Allot $60,000,000 in Bonuses for Paris City Bond Issue

At every great war a speculative giant, "Wheel of Fortune," ed. In this country Wall Street and the oil fields, some of them yet undeveloped, afford the chief centres of gambling. In Paris, the city is to attempt an venture or one immense to woo fortune by a kind of bond lottery, in which bonuses running as high as $250,000, and aggregating $60,000,000, are to be given to the holders of lucky numbers.

To do this it was necessary to construct a giant "Wheel of Fortune," and the task fell to M. Vico, an engineer living in Colombes, a suburb of Paris. He is the manufacturer of scientific instruments to the Paris municipalities, and has been instructed to make a hollow vessel big enough to hold several millions of cartridges, into which it will be impossible for a child to insert his hand. The architect, Aastraed, Civil Governor of Paris and district, sent for M. Vico not long since and said to him:

"See here, Vico, you know the City Council has been authorized by the Congress of France to issue a big liquidation loan so as to enable the city to clear off the debt it has contracted during the war. The loan will amount to $300,000,000 (1,000,000,000 of francs) in 5 per cent. 100,000 bonds, to be issued and sold at public auction and offered to the public and offered at $96. That means 3,125,000 bonds."

"All these bonds are to be numbered, and are to be gradually paid off at par, that is, at $100 each, in the course of the next sixty years, by six redemption drawings per annum. The duplicate numbers of the bonds, inscribed in small brass cylinders, must be locked up in a single urn at the time the loan is issued. At each drawing, apart from the several thousand bonds drawn, will also be several hundred bonds to be drawn with important bonuses, ranging from $25,000 down to $1,000 each."

"Now, we want you to make for us, quickly as possible, a vessel or receptacle for these cylinders, sealed up in small brass cases, can be placed. We want the machine so fixed that the ball on the table will revolve so as to mix up the numbers thoroughly inside, and then discharge the balls into the outer Burke means as many of the numbers as are required at each redemption drawing."

"We want it done in a way so constructed that when the numbers have been introduced into the urn it will fall into a little box with a hole in it in which it will be impossible for a child to put them. A child must not even be able to put his hand into the vessel or even look into it."

"Then, we want to get to work and see what you can do for us."

M. Vico, who all his life has been a great admirer and student of Edison, then produced one of the most remarkable inventions in Europe. It is a huge orange-shaped hollow sphere, the framework of which is of steel, filled up with half-inch thick plates of glass so that the contents of the sphere can be plainly seen. The outer sphere or "orange," twenty feet high by eighteen feet broad, is supported six feet from the ground by three large shrouds, and is like a large tree of the sphere at each side. At the top of the sphere is a small aperture from which a ball, when dropped from a man's thumb, and communicating by a short tube with the interior. Into this inner burber or "extractor," the outer numbers of the bonds are shot automatically by means of electricity. When they fall into the extractor, carrying a plug, like the shutter of a camera, and moving almost as rapidly as a snapshot spring, they pass through a small outer brass shudder is clamped and locked with three patent keys specially made into it and sent for the purpose to France. The aperture, thus locked, is sealed with white tape, on which is set the great red seals of the city.

When a drawing takes place the huge glass bowl is revolved by means of small wheels, fixed at each end of the axis, moved by electric power. This moves up the numbers. When the globe comes to a standstill the aperture, instead of being on top, is below, perpendicularly under the floor. The seals are then broken, the outer shutter is unlocked and opened, and an electric "extractor" is still to remove the number automatically locks the extractor to the aperture. The electric current is then connected, a button is pressed, the inner steel shutter flies rapidly on one side, and one of the little brass cartridges falls through a tube into the extractor or magazine. A second electric button is then pressed, and the tiny cartridge falls through the bottom of the extractor into a glass funnel on to a table where a thick glass bowl has been set to receive it.

A committee of six officials, generally selected by ballot for each drawing, is waiting to receive the number. The presiding official opens the "extractor" with a pair of scissors and reads out this first number drawn. The fortunate holder of the bond bearing that number will be entitled to receive a bonus of a million francs, or $250,000. The following couple of hundred thousand will be entitled to receive lesser sums, but still very large amounts. Next the "extractor" is removed, and a large glass bowl is fixed over the funnel. Into this are shot, with the rapidity of cartridges fired from a rifle, all the numbers that tend to be released at par. Before this monster "orange" is squeezed dry, "bonuses" will have been extricated from it to the value of $200,000,000,000."

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