

THE WRONG BOX

A number of sprightly youths (the more the merrier) put up a certain sum of money, which is then funded in a pool under trustees; coming on for a century later, the proceeds are fluttered for a moment in the face of the last survivor, who is probably deaf, so that he cannot even hear of his success—and who is certainly dying, so that he might just as well have lost. The peculiar poetry and even humour of the scheme is now apparent, since it is one by which nobody concerned can possibly profit; but its fine, sportsmanlike character endeared it to our grandparents.

When Joseph Finsbury and his brother Masterman were little lads in white-frilled trousers, their father—a well-to-do merchant in Cheapside—caused them to join a small but rich tontine of seven-and-thirty lives. A thousand pounds was the entrance fee; and Joseph Finsbury can remember to this day the visit to the lawyer's, where the members of the tontine—all children like himself—were assembled together, and sat in turn in the big office chair, and signed their names with the assistance of a kind old gentleman in spectacles and Wellington boots. He remembers playing with the children afterwards on the lawn at the back of the lawyer's house, and a battle royal that he had with a brother tontiner who had kicked his shins. The sound of war called forth the lawyer from where he was dispensing cake and wine to the assembled parents in the office, and the combatants were separated, and Joseph's spirit (for