

## How the Sugar Trust fooled the Custom-House Clerks.

And how Richard Parr, a Custom-House Employee, Received a Reward of \$100,000 from the U. S. Government for the Discovery of the Colossal Fraud.

The American Sugar Refining Company—alias in common parlance the Sugar Trust—owns at Williamsburg, in Brooklyn, the largest sugar refinery in the world. At its extensive docks are landed yearly more than a billion pounds of raw sugar brought from the ends of the earth. As the sugar is landed it is weighed, for the computation of the duties, on big platform scales—seventeen in number—whose recording beams are inclosed in narrow scale-houses, spaced at regular intervals along the docks. In each scale-house sits two men, a Custom-House employee known as the Government weigher and a sugar company employee known as the company checker. The former does the weighing—adjusting, as each truck-load or draft of three bags is run upon the platform, the poise on the scale-beam, reading off the weight, and recording it in his book. The latter is supposed to watch the weigher and record the weight of each draft in a book of his own.

On a day in November, 1907, one Richard Parr strolled on to the Williamsburg docks. Parr was an employee of the Custom-House who had some time before encountered signs that seemed to indicate that all was not right in the method of weighing the dutiable sugar. On going to headquarters with his suspicions, he was directed to follow up the trail he had come upon. The trail led him to the docks on this particular morning, and this is what ensued:

A cargo of sugar was being discharged from the steamship *Strathyre*, and four of the scale-houses were in active use. Parr suddenly appeared at the door of one of the houses, and directed the Government

weigher, who rose to meet him, to finish the weighing of the draft of sugar which was just at that moment on the platform. He had already told another Government employee who was at work on the dock to stop the two drafts that had just been weighed. All three drafts were then reweighed, with interesting results. The truck-load which was on the scales when Parr appeared weighed exactly the same; but the other two truck-loads weighed fourteen and eighteen pounds more respectively than their previous weight as recorded in the Government weigher's book!

Meanwhile the company checker, a man named Kehoe, sat in his chair, his left elbow on his knee, his left hand out of sight in the corner, and a flag of distress flying in his face. Parr ordered him to get up, sat down in his place, reached down in the corner, where he found the end of a narrow steel spring loosely fitted into a hole through the stanchion of the scale. The inner end of the spring rested upon the walking beam of the scale, with the general effect that it made a truck-load of sugar apparently weigh from ten to twenty pounds less than its actual weight. Manipulated by the checker, the scale behaved normally when the truck was removed. The illustration on the next page, which is taken from the *New York Outlook*, shows how the arrangement worked.

The developments from Parr's discovery in 1907 are now matter of history. The frauds, it appeared, amounted in the aggregate to millions of money filched from the revenues of the United States. Step by step complicity in the crime was fastened upon the employees and