been dismissed from their schools? Has a single one of them been dismissed on account of her connection with the Ladies' Deposit? Have the Boston newspapers made any effort to dismiss them? I have not heard of a case. I do not believe a school-teacher has been expelled for this offense. I do not believe the Boston press has attempted to discharge one of these foolish and fraudulent teachers. It is therefore guilty of the unspeakable crime of permitting without protest the young children, the future citizens of the republic, to be committed to the charge of knaves and fools, and to remain in such charge after the knavery and folly were exposed.

Either the newspaper press has slandered the school-teachers, or it has itself been guilty of a betrayal of trust compared with which any pecuniary knavery and folly sink into insignificance.

In its eagerness to rival the exploits of the New York Times with the Tweed robberies, and of the New York Tribune with the Cipher Dispatches, the Boston Advertiser, by strenuous and long-continued exertion, inflated one poor, deaf, illiterate old woman into a formidable and gigantic conspirator. Under the manipulations of the law she was speedily reduced to the more probable proportions of "a crazy old fool." But whichever or whatever she may be, there are no laurels on her brow for a man's wearing. The glory and crown of man is not in the discrimination, the justice, the watchful wisdom, revealed in him by the Ladies' Deposit or by his own. The argument against woman business, woman teaching, woman suffrage, is not that women are dishonest and imbecile, while men are wise and invincible. The glory of men and the safety of women is this: that men have wrought so faithfully, and fought so valiantly, and died so heroically, that security is achieved even for the defenseless; that the pink and pet of Boston, The Atlantic, which may not approve me, in the very heart of Boston which does not love me, gives me, in the chivalrous instinct of fair play, room to say my say, even against those whom it does love and approve; that when an army of men combine in a wild, petty, and cowardly folly, I — alone, a coward and a weakling like themselves — can tell them how poor a figure they make just as plainly, promptly, and safely as if I also were an army with banners!

M. A. Dodge.

SYMPATHETIC BANKING.

The time seems to have come for presenting in a compact form the history of that curious swindle known as "The Ladies' Deposit" of Boston. On the 25th of last April Mrs. Sarah E. Howe, its "president" and head, was found guilty of the crime of "cheating" certain of her depositors; her motion for a new trial was soon after overruled, and though it is possible that some of her exceptions may be sustained, that she may again be tried, and that through some technical defect in statute or indictment she may give justice the slip, — as she succeeded in doing when arraigned for another crime, six years ago, — yet the chances are rather in favor of her final conviction, and at all events the community may be said to have rendered its formal verdict upon her "deposit company" through the mouth of the foreman of her jury. It is not every swindle that deserves a chronicle. But the Ladies' Deposit possesses almost
every feature of interest which can characterize a fraud: it was successful on a large scale; it chose its victims in an original way; it was managed with much adroitness in many of its details; and yet in the total it was one of the most barefaced and preposterous cheats that ever presumed upon the credulity of an intelligent people. The manner of its downfall was also very instructive. So that swindle, swindlers, and swindled are each and all worth a little study. In what follows nothing will be set down as a fact for the verification of which there is not abundant proof: the author’s opinions and guesses—of which he knows there must be many—will be branded with appropriate verbs and adverbs.

Precisely when and how the Ladies’ Deposit came into existence will in all probability never be known. Much of its latest history is obscure, but going backward only a year from its decease, which was accomplished with Mrs. Howe’s arrest last fall, one finds one’s self in a region of myth, and utterly befogged between the mendacity of the managers and the reticence of the customers. Mrs. Howe herself—the very poorest of witnesses, to be sure—has said on several occasions, to newspaper reporters and others, that the idea of her benevolent enterprise originated among the Quakers of Alexandria, Va.; that it was first set going in a small way in Boston by Mrs. Dr. Caroline Jackson, and that she herself was first employed as its “agent” five years ago last autumn, under the “presidency” of Mrs. M. A. Rogers, a lady whom, whether dead or pursuing health in Florida, as she is variously reported—it would not be safe or easy to follow. The date last named is quite incorrect, Mrs. Howe, as will by and by appear, being otherwise occupied in the fall of 1875. Perhaps at that early time Mesdames Jackson, Rogers, and Howe began to assimilate the intellectual material out of which they afterwards spun their web, but it is not until more than three years later that any sure trace of their active operations can be found. Of the hundreds of “bank” pass-books put into the hands of Mrs. Howe’s assignee in insolvency the oldest had for the date of its first deposit April 1, 1879; the title of the concern being then, apparently, the Pacific Loan Company, and the rate of interest paid to depositors two per cent. a week. The experiments upon the name and several other indications make it probable that the business was at that time in its extreme infancy, and that the whole of its rapid little life was included within the space of less than two years. If it existed any earlier, it must have been as a mere germ. The pass-books given to depositors were always of a very cheap and common sort, but those of the initial series were so small, so scruggy in paper and binding, and so illiterate in the style of their entries as to be actually comical. They would discredit the humblest grocer. It was some time before any printing was seen upon them, the “regulations” and promises of the establishment being originally communicated to customers by word of mouth; and when at length the fateful words appeared which have played such an important part in sending Mrs. Howe to jail they were substantially in the form which has become so familiar to Bostonians, and which will presently be reprinted here. The promissory note given to the depositor was also modeled, as soon as a printed blank was used for the purpose, upon the now familiar style, except that the name of Mrs. M. A. Rogers appeared at the top as “president,” and Sarah E. Howe, or S. E. Howe, signed as “agent.” The promise of two per cent. interest per week was soon abandoned, and in its stead the payment of eight per cent. a month “every three months in advance” was undertaken. For about a year—it seems incredible, but it is true—the
Sym pathetic Ban king.

concern carried on business after this fashion, beginning with a few small customers, and increasing its operations steadily but swiftly, without the least public notice being taken of it or its doings. On the 8th of January, 1880, the first newspaper comment ever made upon the Ladies' Deposit appeared in the Boston Herald; and with that event, in which the characteristic alertness and enterprise of the paper were well shown, the mythical period of the enterprise may be said to end and the semi-historical to begin.

The story of the Herald's original attack upon this swindle is highly instructive. Its reporter, who was detailed to attend to the matter, apparently first tried in trousers to get the facts, and succeeded in getting little else besides snubs. He therefore resorted to stratagem, dressed himself as a woman, and in the guise of a possible depositor went to No. 2 Garland Street, the modest brick dwelling-house at the South End in which the Ladies' Deposit first saw the light, questioned the person in attendance, a "tall, slim maiden of thirty summers, with dark hair and keen, searching eyes," — presumably Miss Crandall, who has figured as maid of all work, "clerk," and "bookkeeper" for Mrs. Howe, — and obtained a good deal of the information and no-information which has since become common property. He told his experiences in a very lively "local" article, under the caption How's This for High? Eight per Cent, a Month paid by a South End Bank. For Women Only. How this Remarkable Enterprise is Conducted. And then for the first time the text of the notice, pasted within or indented upon the cover of each pass-book, was publicly printed. This was as follows:

REGULATIONS.

The Ladies' Deposit is a charitable institution for single ladies, old and young.

No deposit received less than two hundred dollars, nor more than one thousand. Interest at the rate of $8.00 on a hundred per month is paid every three months in advance. The principal can be withdrawn upon call any day except Sunday.

No deposit received from persons owning a house.

Office hours from nine to twelve A.M., one to four [or sometimes five] P. M.

The promissory note, also given to each depositor, ran as follows:

LADIES' DEPOSIT.

E. C. Howe [or M. A. Rogers], President.

Boston, — — , 188.

Twelve months after date I promise to pay to the order of — — — hundred dollars. Value received.

(Signed.) S. E. Howe [or J. A. Gould], Agent; or (rarely) A. S. Crandall, Clerk.

The reporter's interview with Miss Crandall was detailed very amusingly, and special attention was called to her answers made to plain questions as to how it was possible to pay such interest, and who her references were: "We never disclose the methods by which we do business;" "We do not solicit;" "You need not deposit unless you wish;" "We never give references," etc., etc. The tone of the article was contemptuous and incredulous, but the fact was plainly stated — and quite properly, too, — that up to date none of the promises of the concern had been known to be broken. On the following day, January 9, 1880, another short "local" appeared, reporting some of Mrs. Howe's own dark sentences, in which she referred to the Alexandrian origin of her enterprise, "which was long known" in Virginia "as the Quaker Aid Society," spoke of it as a charity, and refused to tell how her funds were invested, because she was afraid of the displeasure of her
superior officers. (A remarkably fine touch of invention even for Mrs. Howe!) This second article disclaimed any intent of reflecting unfavorably upon Miss Crandall's personal character, but in a variety of ways expressed or implied the reporter's conviction that the concern was a fraud. On Saturday, January 10, 1880, the Herald — as an act of fairness, no doubt — printed a letter from Mrs. Howe replying to its strictures. This letter is a curiosity, and but for the prime necessity of condensation should be given here in full. In its composition Mrs. Howe probably had much assistance, — not improbably the assistance of some legal gentleman, — and its style is really admirable in respect of vigor and conciseness. The substance of her answer was this: that the men had better attend to their own concerns; that she did not do a general banking business, did not have a sign on her house, did not in any way "solicit" deposits of anybody, kept all her promises, and had been guilty, so far as she could discover, of no offense except that of refusing to disclose to prying reporters the methods by which she managed her private affairs. The master stroke of the letter was in one of its first sentences, in which she spoke of "the writer" of the articles in the Herald as "prudently refraining from any direct charge of dishonesty, while insinuating such a charge." The Herald thereupon dropped the matter, and Mrs. Howe was thus left with the last word, in which she had bidden the paper mind its own business, had assumed a most magnificent air of indifference to public patronage, and had said almost in terms that she was ready with an action for libel against the newspaper which dared directly to assail the honesty of her enterprise. The effect of all this upon many of the simpler readers of the paper must have been to display Mrs. Howe in the light of an injured and defiantly virtuous woman, while it advertised her scheme in a seductive fashion as one which had always kept its splendid promises. Mrs. Howe and her crew have often boasted of the good which came to them from this their first passage at arms with a newspaper. Their testimony is generally of little worth, and the post hoc is not to be confounded with the propter hoc, but it is unquestionably true that the rush of depositors was in the year 1880, and after the publication of the Herald's articles. Of the seven hundred and thirty women who had proved their claims in insolvency against Mrs. Howe's estate at the adjourned second meeting, fewer than one hundred and thirty-five had begun to deposit before the middle of January, 1880. The fact was that in the Herald, as in many other leading newspapers, a sharp distinction was made between the "local news" and "editorial" departments. The story of the Ladies' Deposit was told as a matter of news by a reporter, whose strictures were in fact, in spite of occasional flippancy of phrase, sound, sensible, and full of wise warning. Mrs. Howe's threat was of course beneath consideration, but for some reason or no reason the matter was not taken up editorially, and the Herald as a paper did not throw its weight against the swindle. If in the beginning of the year 1880 it had begun a resolute and persistent attack, there is little reason to doubt that Mrs. Howe and her business would have succumbed in a few weeks, and the honest portion of the community have been saved some thousands of dollars of its earnings.

The Ladies' Deposit now began to bud and bourgeon like a healthy young bay-tree. In the spring of 1880 Mrs. Howe found her quarters in Garland Street quite too contracted for her business, as well as for her personal comfort, and looked about her for a more spacious and elegant establishment. She discovered a house suited to her mind in a beautiful block on Franklin Square,
and without an instant's haggling about price agreed to pay the owner— a gentleman of high standing, who knew at the time nothing of her except that she was a little deaf, very civil, and exceedingly flush with her money — the sum he asked, which was twenty thousand dollars. Her only stipulation was that he and his family should vacate the premises within a fortnight, it being, as she said, necessary that she should take possession at once. Serious illness in the gentleman's family made his prompt removal impossible, and he supposed their business relations had been ended at once and forever: but Mrs. Howe, with scarcely a pause, renewed the negotiations, which at a first interview she had begun but never completed, for the purchase of another and still finer house belonging to the same gentleman and in the same block. His price for this building and its lot — which were situated at the corner of Washington and East Brookline streets — was forty thousand dollars. He mentioned this as the sum which he wished to get, the amount being considerably less than he had originally paid, and used no persuasion or argument whatever. Indeed, he needed to use none; he had scarcely named his price before Mrs. Howe had closed with him, and but for his scruples would have paid him a considerable part of the purchase money on the spot. Within a day or two she did pay him the entire amount due for his equity — twenty thousand dollars — in hundred-dollar bills, bunched together with rubber elastics, and produced, apparently, from the depths of a bureau drawer. A few hours later she had also settled with the mortgagee for his twenty-thousand-dollar claim, and the house and land, No. 2 East Brookline Street, Boston, were the unencumbered property of Sarah E. Howe, wife of Florimund L. Howe, then registered by herself at the City Clerk's office as a married woman, carrying on the business of "financial agent." The estate was assessed that year at twenty-six thousand dollars, but Mrs. Howe, as can readily be imagined, was quite indifferent to any trifling question of fourteen thousand dollars, more or less. The deed was passed May 13, 1880, and directly afterward Mrs. Howe, her retinue of female servants and assistants, her husband, her Ladies' Deposit and its funds and effects, were transported to their sumptuous new quarters. A good deal of money had been expended on repairs, on a new conservatory, and on plants, pictures, plate, and furniture. The entire establishment, real and personal, must have cost at least fifty thousand dollars. Nothing succeeds like success, and business now increased enormously. Branch offices were established at New Bedford, and at No. 77 West Brookline Street, Boston. Mrs. Howe, who had previously seemed a little shy of the eye of society, during the summer of 1880 ventured into a modest watering-place or two; everywhere living in a generous way, spending freely and with kindly ostentation, and, as the almoner or cashier of an orientally munificent charity or bank, bearing her blushing social honors — with becoming indifference — thick upon her. The autumn came, and with it a killing frost, which nipped the root of all her gains and glories.

The destruction of the Ladies’ Deposit was the remarkable result, as The Nation well expressed it, "of a conviction by newspaper." The truth about Mrs. Howe was simply this: that she was a miserable old rogue, who, beggared in reputation and poor as a church mouse, had opened a swindling savings bank, and caught the savings of depositors by a promise, which she could not perform, to pay a hundred and twenty-six per cent. interest a year; capital she had none, save her own inventive impudence and audacity; she had no more hold upon the Quakers than she had upon the Pope; and the "charity
fund of a million and a half," which she had often declared to be the support of her institution, was a pure fabrication of her brain, there being no such fund of the amount of even a five-cent piece. The object of the whole scheme was just to enable her and her satellites to live easily on other people's money. All this is quite plain now, and many a reader of The Atlantic will say, with a shrug, that it was equally plain to people of common sense nine mouths ago, or the moment they read the "regulation" promises of the Ladies' Deposit. No doubt; but many things which are plain to the sensible and thoughtful require demonstration to the foolish or heedless. The task undertaken by the Boston Daily Advertiser last fall seemed formidable then: the intelligence of the community was all arrayed on the side of the paper, but the amount of dullness and folly to be encountered could be gauged by the fact that nearly a half of a million of dollars had been actually intrusted to Mrs. Howe by her dupes. And she and her gang defended themselves, of course, to the very best of their ability; not very cleverly, it is true, but with some low cunning, and with the fury of rogues who knew that their all was at stake. The Daily Advertiser, as it happened, practically sustained the burden of the struggle in behalf of the public,—many other journals giving their countenance and timely sympathy, but none other keeping the sword in hand,—and the triumph of the paper bore striking testimony to the power of the press in America when wielded vigorously, persistently, and courageously, in the interests of honesty and sound sense.

The chronology of this campaign against evil is worth a glance. On Friday, September 24, 1880, the Ladies' Deposit was at the acme of its prosperity, having, according to the best estimate that can be made, about twelve hundred depositors, to whom it owed about $500,000, and was attracting new customers at the rate of about a dozen per diem. On the next day (Saturday, September 25th) the Advertiser printed its first article upon the swindle, and for the succeeding three weeks never once intermitted its attack. On Tuesday or Wednesday (September 28th or 29th) a "run" began upon the concern, which continued throughout the week, reaching its height on Friday, when the sum paid out amounted, according to Miss Crandall's subsequent sworn testimony, to about $40,000, and resulting in the return to depositors of a probable total of nearly $80,000. On Monday, October 4th, Mrs. Howe announced a partial suspension of payments; and this proved to be final, except as to the payment of interest and of principal due, according to the terms of her promissory notes, all of which were for one year, and very few of which had then matured. A pronunciamento that she would pay all claims "legally due" was made through the Boston Globe, and was evidently framed after taking legal advice. Not sound advice, however; and on Saturday, October 9th, the Advertiser published an opinion of seven of the foremost lawyers of the city, to the effect that, notwithstanding her one-year notes, she was immediately liable for principal deposited, on the printed promise of the pass-books, "The principal can be withdrawn upon call any day except Sunday." There was then a three days' lull, of the sort which precedes a thunderbolt. On Wednesday, October 13th, two attachments were put upon her real and personal estate. On Thursday, October 14th, a storm of legal process burst upon her; her gorgeous house, with its contents, came into the hands of the deputy sheriffs, and the Ladies' Deposit was no more. In just two weeks and five days from the publication of the Advertiser's first article, the destruction of the preposterous fraud known as the "Ladies' Deposit," or "Women's Bank," was
achieved. Fortunately for the interests of justice, the one thing which remained to do was done; and on Saturday, October 16th, Mrs. Sarah E. Howe and Mrs. Julia A. Gould (the latter a woman who had held the position of first mate in the pirate ship for several months, and whose signature as “agent” was upon most of the deposit notes) were arrested at the instance of the district attorney, upon the complaint of several of their victims, were held to bail in the sum of $20,000 and $10,000 respectively, and in default of such bail were sent to the jail of Suffolk County.

Leaving these two ladies thus securely lodged for a little while, let us now return to the story of the downfall of the “bank,” and the intellectual and moral phenomena connected therewith. But first it seems proper to show, so far as may be, the nature and scope of Mrs. Howe’s fraudulent undertaking, and something of the career and character of the woman herself. The trick, it is to be noted, is not a new one, but has been played successfully at least once within the past twenty-five years in each of the countries of France, Italy, and Bavaria. Its latest European form, the “Dachau bank” of an ex-actress, Adèle Spitzeder, which was operated in Munich from 1869 to 1872, and by which the Bavarians were cheated out of millions of dollars, is intrinsically the most interesting of these swindles, and is specially so to us because it had so many points in common with the Ladies’ Deposit of Boston. No one, indeed, who has studied the stories of the two together can doubt that in some way or other, directly or indirectly, Fräulein Spitzeder’s plan was the inspiration and model of Mrs. Howe’s. Both opened banks of deposit, promised preposterous returns of interest, and successfully invited loans of money from the public. Neither had any pecuniary capital, or offered any security, the sole and sufficient reliance of each being upon her own impudence and the combined cupidity and credulity of her customers. Each made friends by playing the Lady Bountiful upon occasion, had a mixed party of gulls and knaves committed to her cause, drew herself out of poverty and into luxurious comfort by means of her bank, ended her career in prison, and left assets enough behind her to pay her creditors a dividend of about five per cent. The absolute essentials to long-continued success, as each swindler knew, were the prompt payment of the ridiculous rate of stipulated interest, and the prompt punishment in a depositor of any want of faith by a return of her principal and a haughty refusal ever to resume business relations with her. This latter operation, a very shrewd kind of moral “bulldozing,” Mrs. Howe and her assistants used to perform magnificently and with great effect. Each counted with certainty upon a very rare withdrawal of principal, so long as the extraordinary interest was paid and the customer’s confidence was unshaken. Many persons — and the writer admits to being one — at first found a little difficulty in understanding how such a concern could pay twenty-four per cent, a month quarterly in advance, even for a couple of years, without investing its funds or receiving help from without. But the explanation is really quite simple: when once the popular faith begins to be established in such a bank, the principal flows in for some time in an ever-increasing stream, and for quite a long period there is more than enough money always on hand to meet the current demand for interest, and leave the operator a handsome margin for silks, jewelry, hot-house flowers, and all other proper living expenses — although, of course, at every moment the concern is in fact utterly insolvent. In the case of the Ladies’ Deposit some of the figures already given illustrate this well enough: the number of depositors in 1880 was
five times as great as in 1879, and the receipts from the first quarter of the former year were therefore far more than enough by themselves to meet all the demands for interest then accruing on deposits of 1879, to take care of the usual small withdrawal of principal, and to give Mrs. Howe and her friends everything which they needed for their comfort. To keep such a concern alive there must be a like increase of deposits upon a geometric ratio all the time, and such a rate of advance cannot possibly be maintained for many years. The longer the thing lasts the wider is the circle of its final disaster and injustice, and the duty, therefore, of every honest man, whatever the duty of honest woman may be, is to destroy such an enterprise as soon as it is unearthed. Mrs. Howe quite surpassed Miss Spitzeder in scrupulous obedience to the spirit of their common scheme. The latter sometimes — though rarely, to be sure — made investments of her deposited funds; the former never did such a thing, excepting once, when she lent a few hundred dollars to a furniture dealer; and her Ladies' Deposit had not a single cent of "income," in the banker's sense of the word. Mrs. Howe, in fact, carried on her business in all its branches with appropriately Spartan simplicity. She took her depositors' money; kept it in the drawers of a chiffonière in the business parlor by day, as Mrs. Gould has often said, carried it off in baskets at night, and put it somewhere — probably under her bed — for safe keeping; paid out interest and principal from it when there were calls for such disbursements; bought her own house and land and furniture and fixtures with it; and always treated it entirely as her own, — which, indeed, in an important sense, it was. For this sort of banking none of the frippery of modern masculine book-keeping was needed, and none was used; the accounts of a Fiji Island fish dealer could not have been kept more simply than those of Mrs. Howe, the Boston "financial agent," and Miss Crandall, who testified in court that she did not know the difference between a day-book and a ledger, was the very woman to serve as her chief clerk. Such a system of accounts works peculiarly well when the bank ends as the Ladies' Deposit ended. At the adjourned third meeting of its creditors eight hundred and eighty-one claims, aggregating just about $271,000, had been presented; it may be guessed that about three hundred depositors have got the $100,000 or so which was due them in full, and that perhaps two hundred others have never offered their claims. On the credit side there is — or rather was — the forty-thousand dollar house, which has recently brought, by its sale at auction, $21,000, out of which $1000 has been paid to Mr. Howe for the release of his courtesy, and $5000 obtained from the sale of the furniture; only that; and nothing more. How the rest of the money went the "books" of the concern of course give no idea, and nobody knows or will ever know; Mrs. Howe and her followers and friends had two jolly years out of it, at all events, and some of them very likely could account for certain thousands, if they had a mind. Mrs. Howe's scheme also worked a peculiar kind of inverted highwayman's justice, as we know: she took from the poor to give to the poor, so that divers of her early customers got their money back again twice over; and perhaps some of her humble depositors, who lost all they gave her, can derive a little cool comfort from the thought that a portion of their hard earnings were handed over to a fellow-toiler who had previously drawn two hundred per cent. on her principal. In audacity the German operator somewhat surpassed her American imitator, but in cunning the latter absolutely excelled. Mrs. Howe — or whoever elaborated the original conception of her bank — recognized
the decided superiority in sensibility and inquisitiveness of the average Bostonian over the average Bavarian, and her operations were conducted, especially at first, with an almost exquisite tact. The air of reserve and coyness with which the management enveloped itself acted like magic upon the credulity of the ordinary uneducated woman. Miss Susan Smith went to the Ladies’ Deposit with her two hundred dollars in her pocket, a little timorous, somewhat dubious, rather incredulous. To her surprise, she found that her patronage was by no means solicited, — was not even wished, unless she was exactly the right sort of woman and precisely met some four or five conditions. In a few moments she began to burn with desire to enter the inclosure thus jealously guarded; and if she succeeded —as she generally did in the end— in persuading the person in charge to take her little all, she departed with a sense of deep gratitude that she had been permitted to become a depositor. The same idea, a little varied, was beautifully carried out in the request, delicately but firmly made in almost every case, that the customer would not gossip about the Ladies’ Deposit. If, indeed, she had a particular female friend, who was excessively worthy and greatly in need, and who happened to have two hundred dollars or more, such a friend might, as a favor, be very quietly informed of the privileges of the establishment; but there was to be no babbling into the world’s rude ear about these sacred mysteries of Eleusis. All this showed a fine knowledge of human nature, and in practice worked charmingly; the method resembling that often used in selling tickets to a charity ball, where it is mysteriously whispered to a few that the company will be very select, and admissions very hard to procure. Nice little points were also made in fixing the minimum deposit at two hundred dollars, and the maximum at one thousand dollars. Mrs. Howe did not propose to bother with the small savings of the virtuous poor, — only with good large lumps; and the naming of the larger sum seemed business-like and harmonious with the “charity” idea. The story about the huge Quaker fund upon which the establishment rested, and the accompanying theory that the Ladies’ Deposit was a charity, appears to have been Mrs. Howe’s one concession to the reasoning powers of her customers: it was a small concession, and, as Mrs. Howe now sees, ought never to have been made. The scheme of the Ladies’ Deposit as a business enterprise was on its face so monstrous and so hopelessly incapable of explanation that its manager seems to have doubted its ability to stand alone in Boston. Spitzeder, who never conceded anything to the intelligence of her clients, could have given our countrywoman a lesson on this point. Mrs. Howe should simply have replied to all questions, “I do not disclose my methods of doing business, and I do not care for your patronage;” in every other respect she should have done exactly what she did. The prosperity of the Ladies’ Deposit would have been a little slower in coming, but it would have come; and, though the bank must of course have exploded just the same, its president need never have suffered the disgrace of imprisonment for “false pretenses.” There was, however, one feature of Mrs. Howe’s plan which was both masterly and unique, and which gave what the patent lawyers call “novelty” to her improvement upon the Spitzeder invention. The Bavarian took money from high and low and rich and poor, from men, women, and children; the American kept a bank of women, by women and for women, simply and solely. Mrs. Howe, whose contempt for her sex’s powers of understanding was evidently thorough and profound, reasoned out the most original feature of her plan in this way:
"To achieve success in a community so shrewd and enlightened as this, I must confine my dealings to those who as a class are in business affairs the most credulous, the most ignorant, and the least protected,—that is to say, to unmarried women and widows, in humble or moderate circumstances." If it had been practicable to weed out fathers, brothers, sons, and sweethearts, as well as husbands, from among her constituents, she would, no doubt, have been glad to do so; but such a wholesale exclusion would have been suspicious, and would have left her very few patrons; single women and widows, on the other hand, were numerous, and naturally the recipients of "charity." But Mrs. Howe always remained true to her distrust and dread of the creature man, and in many cases, when her fingers must have itched to get hold of a bunch of bank bills, she prudently "forbore" their "touch upon her palm," because she discovered in the background the shadow of some vigorous male personage whose influence with the female applicant was ominously great. It is putting it mildly to say that the success of her enterprise did not discredit the wisdom of its most characteristic part.

Mrs. Howe's own personal history now demands a paragraph by itself. The chronicle is unpleasant in many ways, but it will not be necessary to offend the taste of the reader with its most unsavory particulars. Sarah Emily Howe was probably the daughter of a man named Chase and a woman named Burr, and was probably born in Providence, R. I. The date of her birth is of no particular consequence to the public, but, as she has quite forgotten it, and represented on her entrance into the jail last fall that she was fifty-four years of age, perhaps she may herself be interested to learn that she is at least sixty-two years old, having been married in Seekonk, November 28, 1835, to one James M. Solomon, a half-breed negro or Indian, who is now living in Rhode Island. With this man she lived some thirteen years, and then the pair separated, the marriage being undoubtedly null and void, because the ancient statute against the union of persons of different colors was in force at the time the ceremony took place. She next contracted a marriage with a man named Lane, or Chase, Mr. Solomon — and this is the only thoroughly droll incident in her career — playing the part of a most active and diligent promoter of her second union. Mr. Lane is reported to have died at sea; her third marriage, which was with her present husband, Florimund L. Howe, took place in Manchester, N. H., in 1852, where he was pursuing the double vocation of house-painter and dancing-master, she the allied trades of clairvoyant and fortune-teller. All her early life is enveloped in an atmosphere of petty crime, of which it is not worth while to give the particulars. After her final marriage she and Mr. Howe wandered about the country for several years, picking up a precarious subsistence. He served in the war as a musician, was honorably discharged in 1864, and soon after the pair came to Boston, where they were befriended by relatives. Her behavior, which had often been "queer" before, soon took on such extraordinary shapes that an application was made by some of her acquaintance for her commitment as an insane person. Her case was tried before Judge Ames, of the probate court, and after a long hearing—in which she stoutly, and with the help of able counsel, resisted the complainant's charges—she was on the 20th of April, 1867, found insane by a jury of six men, and sent to the State Lunatic Asylum in Taunton, whence, after a confinement of about two years, she was, it is understood, discharged as "well." This is believed to be the only case ever yet heard in Suffolk County by a jury of six, under the statute of 1862, touching insane persons. In 1871 she was
again in Boston with her husband, and did business as a "female physician" and clairvoyant, told fortunes with cards, cast horoscopes at twenty-five cents apiece, and in short practiced all the arts she knew, but was pitifully poor most of the time. In 1875 she committed a very elaborate set of frauds, which carried her before the criminal courts. She had bought a few hundred dollars' worth of furniture from a respectable lady, — one Mrs. M., — and was to give back a first mortgage for most of the purchase money. Just as the furniture was delivered Mrs. M. fell sick, and the making of the mortgage was delayed for a month or two, at the expiration of which time Mrs. Howe, upon request, executed the promised conveyance. In a few weeks, however, it appeared that Mrs. Howe had slipped in no fewer than four earlier mortgages to two other persons, without disclosing the fact to Mrs. M., having executed one pair of deeds as Sarah E. Howe, and one pair as Sarah E. Chase, to the great discomfiture of the person who lent to her under the latter name; and she capped the climax by giving a sixth mortgage on the same property, signing thereto the name of one of her neighbors. It would be hard to say how many different crimes Mrs. Howe committed in this affair, but she was complained of for only one, — that of "unlawfully conveying mortgaged property," — was tried before the municipal court for criminal business in Boston, convicted, and sentenced to "one year in the common jail." From this judgment she appealed to the superior court, was held to bail in the sum of five hundred dollars, and, being so poor and friendless that she could not procure bondsmen even to that amount, was obliged to go to jail, and there to remain for six weeks, pending her appeal. In the superior court the indictment was found to be faulty; the jury, by instruction of the judge, brought her in "not guilty, by reason of a variance," and she was suffered to go free. In 1879, when the surplus funds of the Ladies' Deposit began to be available, she settled with Mrs. M. for the sum out of which she had thus previously defrauded her. She was suspected, with the best of reason, of several other serious offenses, but was never convicted of any others, to the writer's knowledge. This is not the career of a great criminal, but of a miserable adventuress, of a woman always sorely distressed to get a living, of one wretchedly brought up and much to be pitied. She had very little early education, and remains to this day illiterate, and in many ways very ignorant; but she has always been a keen observer, a quick learner, and a shrewd student of human nature. It would be more nearly correct to call her unmoral than immoral; for from her extreme youth she appeared to have a serious constitutional difficulty in discerning the difference between right and wrong, between her own property and her neighbor's. All her thieving has been marked by a grand air of unconsciousness rather than by eager, covetous greed. Her disposition seems to be somewhat good-natured and generous, and to show a kind of native bonhommie, and at the height of her prosperity as a "banker" she became very popular with a certain set, which was especially rich in mesmerists, fortune-tellers, and female physicians of an irregular sort. In one respect, as all disinterested persons who have known her well will testify, she is really distinguished: she is one of the most exuberant, spontaneous, imaginative, and unnecessary liars that ever breathed, decidedly preferring falsehood to the truth even when the two seem equally serviceable. She has a great natural gift of utterance, and a singularly plausible manner, and has often overpersuaded the incredulous in the very teeth of their better judgment. There is a touch of craziness every now and then in her looks and words which is quite
suggestive of the Taunton episode, but which is not inconsistent with her possession of abundant cunning. That she is not a rogue of the first order can be inferred from her investing in her own name in a house, and from her paying out so much of the Deposit money during the run, instead of eloping with it. Having sailed prosperously so long, and weathered one heavy gale, she evidently thought she could save her ship even in a great typhoon; a clearer-sighted rascal would have seen that the game was up. Besides this, Mrs. Howe was ignorant enough to believe that her house could not be taken from her so long as she had the deed of it in her pocket. There is of course great doubt whether a person of her calibre could have conceived and operated the Ladies' Deposit without help from some mind of greater strength, and more erudition in the art of cheating, and this is a doubt which will very likely never be solved. Up to this time Mrs. Howe is the only person who can be certainly identified as the brain and fingers of the swindle.

It would be vain to attempt, in the space that The Atlantic can spare, a minute account of the newspaper work of the three weeks in which the downfall of the Ladies' Deposit was wrought. Nothing at once more exciting, varied, amusing, pathetic, instructive, and satisfactory has been known in the history of our journalism. There were good things about the matter in all the Boston papers; bright bits came from the country towns, from New York and the West, and the Advertiser was filled from day to day with interesting and clever articles. Such a rallying in of volunteer correspondents was certainly never seen here as to quality. Bright men started up like the seed of Cadmus, each with some keen, or sensible, or witty, or learned contribution to the war against fraud. Amongst them the story of all the European prototypes of Mrs. Howe's bank was vividly told; several of them, who had previously looked into and seen through the swindle, told their experiences with the lady "managers;" one of them, who signed himself "Drowsy State Street," showed in figures which must have given Mrs. Howe a cold shiver exactly how her scheme could be made to work in practice. Yet some of the argument made both by the paper and by its special contributors seems almost childish now. In hundreds of different ways the intelligent reader was entreated to take notice of the fact that two and two make four, always made four, never made five, or sixteen, or three hundred, or seven thousand. Mrs. Howe was handled rather gingerly at first, as if there were a bare possibility that she might be something better than a thief. Her Quaker fund of a million and a half was discussed at times almost gravely, and readers were requested to consider whether it was likely that such a sect ever had such a fund, or would ever have such a fund, or would intrust such a fund if they had it to such a woman as Mrs. Howe, or would leave it without watching it, etc., etc. Pretty soon Mrs. Howe was challenged to tell what her investments were, who subscribed to the Quaker foundation, how she had climbed from penury to luxurious ease in three years, and where she got the money to buy her fifty-thousand-dollar house. The air, indeed, was vocal with challenges to common sense, and dumb while the answers were awaited. In spite of the self-control generally practiced, the thorough contempt of most of the male writers for the credulity of the female victims often cropped out. It had come to light that Mrs. Howe's customers—who, although principally in Boston and its suburbs, were scattered widely through the rest of Massachusetts and New England—were counted by hundreds, and included many ladies of good social position, some teachers, and a few authors and artists; that for about six months there had been a per-
fect craze among women to become depositors; and that divers of them had begged and besought their male friends to lend them money at six per cent. in order that they might live on the ninety per cent. of profit to be made by the deposit. One old woman was discovered who had mortgaged all her worldly possessions for a thousand dollars, and handed the sum over to Mrs. Howe without a tremor. One person, who had made a like deposit of all she was worth, was reported to have gone to Europe, where she found it easy to live on her income of nine hundred and sixty dollars per annum. The idea that there was any degradation in being pensioners upon "charity" never occurred, so far as the writer has heard, to any of Mrs. Howe's customers,—not even to those who were well to do and quite capable of taking care of themselves. The men sneered at all this so contemptuously that the spoken rejoinders were generally meek and timid. Generally, but not always. Not a few of the customers mustered the courage to say their souls were their own, and some of them even went farther than that. At the bank itself, every day, in the very midst of the "run," dozens of energetic females were to be seen, furious at the papers, sorry for the "persecuted" manager, and firmer than ever in their faith in the Ladies' Deposit. It was not uncommon for them to lift their hands to heaven and implore its continued blessing upon Mrs. Howe's head and the "divine charity" of which she was president. Very often they gave expression to the pleasure which they had taken and still expected to take in transacting business at the Ladies' Deposit, for Mrs. Howe, with excellent judgment, had grown franker, easier, and more friendly as her circle of operations had widened. One elderly woman at one of these séances sketched in very vivid language the difference between the treatment she received at the men's savings banks, where they grabbed her money without a thank you, and threw her her pass-book without a word, and at Mrs. Howe's, where she was urged to take a chair, kindly thanked for her deposit, encouraged to present the questions connected with her "winter suit," and where, as she expressed it in one felicitous word, the banking was "sympathetic." On the other hand, the male writers not only sneered at the women who deposited for their ignorance and credulity, but lectured them for their dishonesty in accepting or seeking an amount of interest which of course must be stolen from some other women,—a charge, in the writer's opinion, most unfair and unkind, for no woman whose understanding allowed her to trust the Ladies' Deposit could have been capable of grappling with the question as to where her interest came from. There was one class of Mrs. Howe's adherents who surpassed any who have yet been mentioned: a couple of hundred or so of these to this day admit no decline in their faith, and say that if Mrs. Howe were allowed to go free she would soon pay all she owes to such as had always clung to her. Many of these persons are evidently "stool pigeons," and perch suspiciously near to the "president," but some of them are as evidently sincere, and their existence proves the power of Mrs. Howe's personality as well as the fathomless folly of human nature. Out of these devoted dupes the attempt was made,—and for a little while with some promise of success,—to raise a subscription fund of $1000, in order to secure the services of General Butler in defense of the woman who had robbed them. Of any one of this sort Mrs. Howe might say as Iago of Othello,—with a very slight change of Shakespeare's text,—"I have made her thank me, love me, and reward me for making her egregiously an ass, and practicing upon her peace and quiet." The most ludicrous features of the whole business were the suggestions that the hostility of the men grew out of their
jealousy at female success in financiering which they could neither understand nor equal, and that a feeling of "galantry" ought to have deterred them from so vigorously attacking the schemes of a number of "ladies." It looked a little as if some rather intelligent women were touched by the latter idea. But it was too absurd a point to argue: the policeman who stops the hand of a murderess or even of a female pickpocket may surely be pardoned for deranging her crimps. On the 2d of October, it is to be noted, Mrs. Howe appeared in her own defense in a long communication addressed to the Advertiser, in the composition of which she had plainly been helped. This letter was simply a piece of insolent vulgarity, without argument or even sense, and showed from beginning to end the hand of a desperate adventuress. It followed hard upon the appearance of a certain carpenter at the Advertiser office, whom Mrs. Howe had sent to the editor upon a vain message of peace, and whose services as ambassador she had secured by the payment of five dollars in advance.

During the three weeks in which the Ladies' Deposit was the subject of all this varied comment, not a person of any recognized position in the world of society, of business, or of thought had a word to say in support of the fraud, or attempted to weaken the attack upon it, with one notable exception. On the 5th of October, there appeared in the columns of the Advertiser a letter signed by Miss Mary Abigail Dodge, of Hamilton, in which the critics of the Ladies' Deposit were criticised, and the concern and its "president" defended. It appeared at first to those who read this letter that there must be some mistake about its authorship. To be sure, there were touches in it of Miss Dodge's keen wit, traces of her shrewd humor, many of her characteristic vivacities of style; but where were the clearness of sight, the swift intuition, the "saving common sense," by which so much of her writing had been distinguished? Where, indeed? Anger seemed to be the inspiration of the epistle, and in many places its words "breathed a kind of fury," and struck here, there, and everywhere, like the blows of a man blind with impotent rage. What the production as a whole meant, or was meant to mean, few persons after reading it could tell, unless it were the old familiar truth that the men were a poor set of sneaks, incapable through their dullness of comprehending feminine enterprise, through their baseness of appreciating feminine benevolence. Miss Dodge's comments upon the Advertiser's articles were very amusing. Its trustworthiness in reporting she pulverized by triumphantly showing that the paper had contradicted itself as to the regulation hour of closing the bank for business, and had in one place insisted that that hour was five, when in point of fact it was four! The chronicle of Mrs. Howe's career she characterized as "scullery scandal," — though every word of it was true, and its most important statements could be verified by reference to court records which were cited, or to living persons whose names were given. Finally, in one peculiarly unfortunate sentence Miss Dodge let it be seen that she had a very faint conception of what she was talking about. She quoted from the Advertiser, "Every one with a moment's thought knows it is impossible to fulfill its [the Deposit's] extraordinary promises [of interest] except for short periods," and this was her reply: "Very well. It is only necessary to fulfill them for short periods to secure every one against loss. How short? In nine months and two weeks every woman receives her whole capital back again." "Bredren, if ebery one of you would jus' come early, ebery one of you could have a front seat," said a darkey preacher to a crowded congregation that complained of insufficient sittings; which anecdote coupled with
Miss Dodge's own words "is enough" and "will serve," as Mercutio says, to demonstrate just how well she understood the situation at Mrs. Howe's bank. It is not the writer's purpose to moralize Miss Dodge's letter, and her sufferings from press and magazine ridicule just after its publication must have expiated any fault she committed; but no record of the decline of the Ladies' Deposit would be complete without a mention of her contribution. The truth seemed to be that Miss Dodge had attempted, with some personal sacrifice, to help certain poor acquaintances to comfort by depositing for them in this bank, and that the newspaper attacks which soon followed ruined her kindly projects. She was naturally disappointed, and perhaps not unnaturally angry. But the extreme rage even of a clever woman will not enable her to write a sensible letter on a difficult subject of which she has no knowledge. Afterward, in the Boston Journal, Miss Dodge hedged a good deal,—so much so, indeed, that her last utterances were darker than Delphic oracles. In the light of subsequent events her public attitude has an intensely comic look. One may picture the situation as something like this: Miss Dodge, clad in flamboyantly feminine garments, surmounted by a brilliant sunshade of a golden red, sits tranquilly in the midst of a plain upon a camp-stool. She is presently aware of a squad of journalists rapidly approaching from the front. "Madam or Miss," says the chief of the troop, "permit us to inform you that a furious cow is making at your rear, with intentions evidently hostile to you and your parasol." "And why so officious?" sniffs the lady; "why so critical of the conduct of a cow? Poor spiteful man, look to your own sex. Are the bulls all peaceful and harmless? Answer me that?" "They are not, I confess it," the journalist replies, "and numbers of them now gore at large; but really, Miss, this cow, which is now quite near you, has a very bad reputation, and—" "Indeed!" Miss Dodge interrupts, "has she so? And how did you learn that? Have you seven affidavits in your breast-pocket to make good your charge?" "Not quite seven," the reporter stammers, "but I have three, and very strong ones, too." "Tell me, then," rejoins the lady, "what color do you claim that this animal's eyes are?" "Dark green, I should say," gasps the penman; "but really I have not"—"I thought as much," shrills Miss Dodge, "miserable lying caitiff, with your three little wretched bits of scullery scandal trying to ruin the fame of a cow that has sky-blue orbs! And has it occurred to you that the presence of you and your low companions might excite a beast otherwise harmless to injurious rage? I can inform you, however, that the cow which you thus cruelly asperse is the most gentle and charitable quadruped—" And upon this word the catastrophe comes, Miss Dodge and her theories go up together, and her parasol is carried off on the animal's horns. We chastely avert our eyes. The lady herself must be on her feet again very soon, and it will be interesting to know which of her theories survives the shock, or whether she admits that she and they were tossed at all. Most men will probably remain firm in the opinion that her disaster was the result of her sex, her parasol, and the cow's disposition combined.

The remainder of the story may be quickly told. On the 18th of October, 1880, Mrs. Howe and Mrs. Gould were brought up in the municipal court of the city of Boston for criminal business, waived examination, and were held to bail for their appearance in the superior court in the sums specified at the beginning of this article. In a few weeks they both obtained bail and were set at liberty; but a little later Mrs. Howe was surrendered by her bondsmen and returned to jail, where she has spent
most of the time since her original arrest. Her trial in the superior court before Mr. Justice Aldrich occupied several days, and she was defended by A. O. Brewster, Esquire, and C. H. Crosby, Esquire, with all possible vigor and devotion. The indictment against her was in five counts, and charged her with "cheating by false pretenses" — a crime distinguished in our statutes from "common cheating" — five different depositors. The false pretense alleged and proved was her statement of the existence of a Quaker fund of a million and a half upon which her "bank" was founded, which false pretense induced the women named in the indictment to give her their money. The government did not ask for a conviction upon the fifth count. The judge conducted the trial with the utmost care and with scrupulous impartiality. The government was ably and powerfully represented by Mr. M. O. Adams, the assistant district attorney. The jury took a little more than an hour to deliberate, and rendered a verdict of guilty upon each of the first four counts, and of not guilty on the fifth. The prisoner's exceptions to certain of Judge Aldrich's rulings are still pending, as has already been said. A "true bill" was found by the grand jury against Mrs. Gould, but she has not yet been tried. Soon after Mrs. Howe's arrest her depositors attempted to find and take her property, and various legal proceedings were begun for that purpose, in all of which Mrs. Howe, aided by her attorneys, was as obstructive as possible. It was not until November 5, 1880, that she was adjudicated insolvent, under the "involuntary" process; and a fortnight later Augustus Russ, Esquire, was appointed her assignee, with results which have already been substantially set out. From the first to the last of the whole business the police and detective force of the city of Boston stood simpering by. The matter transcended all their experience and precedents, and they were as helpless, as useless, and as mute as so many oysters in the bed of Charles River. This is not the first instance, nor is it the tenth, in the history of this country in which crimes have been discovered and criminals brought to justice through the agency of the newspaper.

Henry A. Clapp.

PHILIP'S DEATH CELL IN THE ESCORIAL.

HERE Philip died. A dark, low-vaulted room,
With one cramped window, void of heaven or day,
Through which a vision swells of columns gray
Lifting a great gray dome; and in the gloom
Rise jasper altar-stairs. Above them loom
The stretched arms of the Cross,—Life, Truth, and Way
All centred there to him who, dying, lay
Here where I stand,—dying with Herod's doom
Full fastened on him. And I seem to be
Alone with Philip's presence, and to grow
Incorporate with the time and man; to see
With clearer eyes how hate to man may flow
From love to Christ outpoured mistakenly,
And ask, Shall such be crimson, or as snow?

A. A. Adee.