



A Disposition to Be Rich: Ferdinand Ward, the Greatest Swindler of the Gilded Age

Geoffrey C. Ward

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A *New York Times* Notable Book

The compelling behind-the-scenes story of the greatest swindler of the Gilded Age, whose villainy bankrupted Ulysses S. Grant and stunned the world of finance—told by his great-grandson, award-winning historian Geoffrey C. Ward.

Ferdinand Ward, the son of a Protestant missionary and small-town pastor, moved to New York at twenty-one and, in less than a decade, made himself the business partner of a former president and established himself as the “Young Napoleon of Finance.” In truth, he was running a massive pyramid scheme. Drawing from thousands of family documents never before examined, Geoffrey C. Ward traces his great-grandfather’s rapid rise to riches and fame, and his even more dizzying fall from grace, in a narrative populated with mistresses, crooked bankers, corrupt New York officials, and a desperate kidnapping scheme. Here is a great story about a classic American con artist.

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