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# DOOMED BY CARTOON



How Cartoonist Thomas Nast and *The New-York Times*  
Brought down Boss Tweed and His Ring of Thieves

JOHN ADLER  
with Draper Hill



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This book contains more than 160 different cartoons and cartoon extracts drawn by Thomas Nast. Its primary objective is to provide you with the same background understanding and vision that contemporary readers of *Harper's Weekly* had for the fifteen years from 1863 until 1878 when they saw Thomas Nast and Boss Tweed in action.

Early on, you will be introduced to 20 of Nast's Cast of Caricatures—17 Bad Guys and 3 Good Guys, including Nast himself. One of the so-called Good Guys—Samuel J. Tilden—later was portrayed by Nast as a Bad Guy, so his Cast is predominantly villains as befits a cartoonist.

The early chapters are intended to familiarize today's readers with explanations and relevant cartoons (or parts of cartoons) dealing with the political, ethnic, religious and journalistic topics and environment of the time. The cartoons illustrating these topics have been selected without regard to their chronology in *Harper's Weekly*.

Beginning with 1866 and the early days of the Tweed ring, and continuing through its downfall in 1871, Nast's cartoons are shown in serial sequence as they reveal his lonesome campaign before the *New-York Times* joined the battle in September 1870. After that, the tempo picks up through the decisive election in November 1871.

After the Ring's collapse, the book follows what happened to each of the 17 Bad Guys—with Tilden now a Bad Guy, it's really 18—and Nast himself. The chronology follows each of the principal characters individually—over as many years as necessary to conclude their caricatured careers.

On occasion, Nast's cartoons have been used more than once to illustrate a particular topic or person, as well as the serial portrayals of individual Bad Guys after the Ring began to fall apart in September 1871. When textual references are made to earlier or later cartoons or topics, relevant page referrals have been incorporated into the text.

With a bow to the page-numbering modification that *Business Week* adopted in 2007, the page numbers in this book have been enlarged and put on the upper sides of each page. That should enable readers to refer to previous or later references more easily than with standard page references.

After the Table of Contents (which follows this page) is a list of cartoons in chronological order, along with page references for the entire cartoon or for extracts of specific cartoons. Many of the extracts are blown up, so the subtleties of Nast's peripheral vignettes can be appreciated. Numbers in bold text denote pages which include explanations of the cartoons or extracts on those or adjacent pages.

The key to understanding the context of Nast's cartoons and the story of the Tweed Ring relates to the cartoonist's serial approach to portraying events. While this book's approach may seem unusual, we believe it is the best way for today's readers to appreciate Nast's unique talents in what he, with the help of the *New-York Times*, ultimately accomplished.