

The scheme was for Charlie to lose and me to win. Thus, while keeping our friend about even, we could encourage him to play more freely. This he did and we made alternate large winnings, Charley losing steadily and grumbling about his luck. Under the influence of frequent drinks, he became quite hilarious and played recklessly until finally he discovered that he had lost several hundred dollars. This brought him to his senses and he talked of quitting. I saw then that I had gone too fast if it were to be a complete success, for I hoped to get his entire pile. So I let him win a few hands, which put him even with the board. This made him quite hilarious once more, but he was now ready to quit. It looked as though we had failed after all; so we made a last effort, and persuaded him to play just one more. Our scheme now was to get all we could out of him in this one round and then let him go.

He upset our plans still more at the outset by demanding that we let him deal (for such had been his inconceivable greenness and ignorance at handling cards that he had allowed one of us to deal for him). But we smiled at each other, for we knew it would be a simple matter to exchange cards and make up a winner between us. Indeed, it seemed almost ridiculous for him to attempt to deal, for he was awkward in a way that beggars description. His attempts to shuffle the cards, and his quaint vexatious swearing at their obstinacy to come together, was funny in the extreme. And his fingers, especially in his tipsy condition, were almost uncontrollable.

But at last, after much mixing and bungling, he got them all straight to his satisfaction; and of course we acquiesced, knowing that even if they were not shuffled at all, he was too simple to give himself any more chance in the draw than we would have. This was especially evident when I looked at my hand. There were three queens and a chance to draw, so I gave Charley the wink and held my cards with three fingers on the back. This was our system;—one finger for aces, two for kings, three for queens, etc. If Chick drew any he would pass them to me.

I made it ten to play. Chick growled and held one card for looks; and the old man drew three. At the same time he seemed to grow reckless again, and very clumsily displayed three aces. I could not see the other two, but this gave me the hunch, for I drew the other queen and felt sure he would play heavy.

I began with a hundred and Charley stayed in, still for looks.