

But the old man almost took my breath away when he raised it five hundred. I saw the chance of a life time and raised him five hundred more. I knew if he went any further he would go his limit and he had now gone too far to back out.

In the heat of the play, I had forgotten my former pity for the old man, but now, when I suddenly pictured in my mind his coming remorse and self condemnation, I heartily wished myself elsewhere. I saw him staggering to his home, (now his no longer) to his reproachful wife and his sorrowing family, there to begin anew the desperate struggle of his early life. Failing in this, I saw his attempt to gain a scant livelihood amid the snares and wickedness of a great city, and, looking further, I saw his now hopeless life in the criminal crowds and paupers, who must end their days in prison or the poor house.

All this and more I saw as he blindly staked his last cent on the altar of the devil and asked to see my hand. I spread out my four old maids and, hardly daring to look him in the face, reached out to rake in the pile. But here I was most grievously surprised. My hand was arrested as I saw that feeble old man rise boldly to his feet, all signs of awkwardness now vanished, throw down four aces and take in the money.

I sat frozen to my chair while he said deliberately, "Well, I played hard, but that's how I make my living. Gentlemen, I am a gambler," and he turned to go.

I looked at Charley. He was still gazing at his victim. Then he turned and glared at me. I never could stand that look and now I arose and skulked out of the side entrance. As I reached the street, I saw our erstwhile farmer, now straight and sprightly, his beard and wig gone, walking rapidly toward the railroad station.

W. C. Nicholas.