

**AN OLD GAMBLER.**  
**George Devol's 40-Year Career of Crooked Cards.**

For 40 years George H. Devol was a gambler on the Mississippi river, the most desperate, skillful, daring and unscrupulous man who ever stacked a deck, threw the three cards or otherwise fleeced the perpetually present sucker. Here he is in St. Louis to-day, almost 60 years old, with not a dollar of his fabulous winnings, hobknobbing with his old-time friends and trying to sell a book in which he has written, with many curious tricks of gamblers' speech, the record of his robberies. The book is interesting, perhaps the most interesting of the kind ever penned, and filled in part with detailed accounts of stories concerning him, which has been in circulation in the great cities of the country for 20 years.

He can still toss the cards, but monte is played out, and George is getting ready to retire on the proceeds of his volume, "Forty Years a Gambler."

George was born in August, 1829, at Marietta. He went to school, where he distinguished himself as a very bad boy, and finally, in 1839, ran away on the Waconsta steamer as a steward's assistant. When the Mexican war broke out, George started to find glory, but instead, made the acquaintance of a man who taught him to cheat at cards, and he considered himself with this accomplishment fixed for life. He skinned the soldiers out of \$2,700 along the Rio Grande when only 17 years old. He then went home, endeavored to learn the trade of boat calker, but getting angry one day, kicked his tools into the river, and determined to go to gambling and "make money rain." After many adventures, in which he eventually got the worst of it, he landed in St. Louis with but \$40, but he stacked that up against the tiger, won \$780, and started by steamer for St. Paul. On the boat he practiced his fine work to the extent of "doing" a convivial party for about \$1,300 which two boss gamblers relieved him of in a no limit game as soon as he reached his destination. He "carried the banner" awhile but the men who had fleeced him staked him in a keno lay-out and he started into that highly profitable business.

When Winona was opening up he left St. Paul and opened a hotel and gambling house at that place. A drunken man walked into his place and poured a pitcher of water on the fine billiard table, whereupon George caught him a clip under the ear that stretched him, and the man was carried out and died. George did not wait for a post mortem. He skipped, leaving his property in the hands of a friend, who likewise skipped with all George's money. It developed then that the man the young sport had hit had not died of the blow, but of congestion of the brain, the result of alcoholism, so George eased his conscience by giving the dead man's wife \$700, and started to Kansas City, where he won five lots, which he afterward sold at \$10 apiece. "When I last passed through Kan. City," says he, "I saw those same lots bringing \$600 a foot. The man I won them from was named McGee."

"We had a great 'graft,' before the war, on the Upper Mississippi, between St. Louis and St. Charles. We would go up by boat and back by rail. One night going up we had done a good business in our line, and were just putting up the shutters, when a man stepped in and said 'he could turn the right card.' My partner, Posey Jeffers, was doing the honors that night, and he said, 'I will bet you from \$1 to \$10,000 that no man can pick out the winning ticket.' The man pulled out a roll nearly as large as a pillow and put up \$5,000. Posey put up the same amount, and over the card went for \$5,000; but it was not the winner. 'Mix them up again,' said the man, and he put up the same sum as before. He turned, and Posey put the second \$5,000 in his pocket. The man then walked away as if to lose \$10,000 was an every day thing with him. We then closed up our 'banking house,' well pleased with ourselves. The next day we were counting our cash and we found we had on hand \$10,000 in nice new bills on the State Bank of Missouri, but it was all counterfeit. We deposited it in the (fire) bank, as we had no immediate use for it."

One incident, the recital of which gives this veteran reprobate great delight, relates to the blowing up of the Princess steamboat. The boat was bound for New Orleans, carrying among other passengers 14 preachers. They were going to a conference. It was Sunday, and the gamblers, among them Devol, were working a roulette game in the barber shop, when of a sudden the boiler blew up and the passengers

were hoisted into the river, the preachers all being drowned and the gamblers all escaping. The way George tells this story indicates that he thinks there's a moral in it. One of old George's best stories relates how a Hebrew, who had beat the bank for \$4,000, wanted to be in with his game on a boat up from New Orleans. The Hebrew was so anxious he took him in, at the same time manufacturing a "sucker" by teaching him how the game would run. The Hebrew was elated with the prospect of skinning the new man that he planked up all he had—\$4,000, his watch and jewels—on Devol's hand. Devol lost, as was prearranged, and the would-be partner dashed to the guard to drown himself. He was prevented, and came to St. Louis and opened a clothing house, at which he was more successful than in gaming.

One night, however, Devol was treated in the same way by his partner, Charley Bush. Bush sat by his side and signaled his hand to Dennis McCarthy, who beat Devol six straight games of seven-up, at \$100 a game. Bush signaled by means of working a toothpick in his mouth, and when at last, Devol having no trumps in his hand, Bush pulled his toothpick out, and Devol "smashed" him and laid him out. On this occasion Devol butted a man named Aderson through a big door. This was Devol's peculiar method of fighting. He would catch an antagonist by the coat lapels or shoulders and but his head right into his face. Devol's head is responsible for the disfigured nose of many an old-time river gambler. He and Bush made up after the latter's betrayal, and were partner's in crime for many years after.

"I caught a preacher once for all his money," said George, the other night, at Carmody's; "likewise his gold specs and sermons. Then I had one of those queer feelings come over me, and I gave him back the specs and sermons." Oceans of wine George must have consumed to hear him talk about ordering whole baskets in order to work his game. He alludes pathetically to his old partners, Charley Bush, Hugh Foster, Eph Holland and the never-to-be-forgotten Canada Bill.

"It is often said that faro banks are never broke, but I recall one incident that will prove the contrary. It was during the war, and a number of us was playing together at New Orleans, at Charley Bush's, my old partner. They were all high rollers, and when one of them, who was a big loser, went to get his checks cashed for \$1,000, the cashier pulled out the drawer and found that the bottom had been cut out, and all the money was gone. Some snoozer had crawled under the table and with a sharp knife cut the bottom clear out. Of course the proprietors were very mad, but the joke was such a good one that it wouldn't keep. Still, in spite of all this, I had rather deposit my money in faro banks than the Fidelity, of Cincinnati, and I guess all honest citizens feel the same way." Of Canada Bill, whose real name was William Jones, Devol says:

"He was the greatest monte man that ever lived, but a fool at short cards. He used to say suckers had no business with money. Bill however, died a pauper, and the mayor of Reading had him decently interred. There never lived a better hearted man. He was liberal to a fault. I have known him to turn back when we were on the street and give to some poor object we had passed. Many a time I have seen him walk up to a Sister of Charity and make her a present of as much as \$50, and when we would speak of it he would say: 'Well, George, they do a great deal for the poor, and think they know better how to use the money than I do.'"

Another side partner of Devol's was "Rattlesnake Jack," whose real name was Jackson McGee, and who earned his sobriquet from the fact that he used to catch rattlesnakes for showmen in the Virginia mountains. The redoubtable Sherman Thurston, now dead, was also a fast friend of this 40 year gambler, and he speaks of him with much affection. He says: "Sherman Thurston was the best stake holder in America. He was death to coat-tail pullers. He had a way of acting as if he were in a terrible passion, and coming down on their feet with a stamp that made them lie quiet. Sherman was a man of hard sense and native resources that rendered him ready for any emergency. Once when we had won some money from a man he began to raise a fuss and carry on like one bereft of reason. Sherman humored him. He locked him up in the car, and told everybody that he was a lunatic who was removing to the asylum—to keep away from him as he was dangerous and entirely irresponsible. Then when the fellow got too noisy Sherman went and said, 'See here, old fellow, you had better keep still, for gambling is a penitentiary offense in this state, and you are just as much implicated as the man who won your money. That settled it, and the man quieted down as mild

as a pet lamb. He was the best rough-and-tumble fighter I ever saw or heard of."

Of course, Devol, in the nature of things, did not everlastingly get the best of it, and this is how he relates the way his partners did him up in Chicago. It is a relief to come across such an incident in the midst of his unbroken record of success:

"Sam Houston and Harry Monell, a St. Louis boy, were in business with me working the Missouri Pacific, and we were very successful, making a great deal of cash. During the summer we played the bank, and in the winter operated on the river and southern roads. Immediately after the big fire we resolved to go to Chicago, but at the last minute Houston was unable to go; but I told him he should be in with the play and share the profits as if he were along.

"Monell and I started, and made a few hundred dollars, and when Houston joined us he received his share of the spoils. We were all stopping at the Tremont House on Lake street. We made a little money, and one Sunday morning I arose early and resolved to go out on the road about twenty miles. While waiting for breakfast I made the acquaintance of a gentleman from Texas who had just sold some cattle that he had brought with him. We had a cocktail together, and I sent the porter to awaken my partners, whom I duly introduced to the stranger, letting them know that he had money and to keep a sharp lookout on him until Monday morning. When I returned at night I found that my partners had beat the Texan, and he had Houston locked up in jail. I carried him down a good supper from a restaurant and then hunted up the Texan who told me that he had started in betting, and at first won, and then lost \$7,600, and that his only object in arresting Houston was to scare him so as to get his money back. The other man he could not find. He said he had gambled when in Texas, but these fellows were too smart for him, and that he could not afford to lose the money. When the case was called for trial, the judge dismissed it on the grounds that they were all gamblers. Nothing was said about the settlement of the game for a couple of days, when one morning they both arose, paid their bills and skipped, and I never received a red cent of that money."

The book abounds with stories of how the author "bested" the best gamblers in the country by his superior shrewdness. He took a particular delight in doing up a "sure thing" man by means of his being the possessor of a surer thing. Here is an incident:

"At one time I was going down the river below Baton Rouge and there were a lot of raftsmen on board. They all loved to gamble, so one of them opened a chuckaluck game. They were putting down their money with both hands, and the game was over \$400 winner. I thought I would give him a little play, so I went to my room and got a set of dice the same size as he was using, and then changed in a five without winning a bet. Then I asked him if I could shake them once for luck. 'Oh, yes,' he said, for he was playing on the square. I came the change on him, then I put \$100 inside of a \$1 bill, and put it on the five. He shook them up, when lo and behold, up came three fives. He picked up my money, and when he saw the \$100 he looked worse than a sick monkey; but he paid up like a man. I then came the change back and quit. A man should learn all the tricks in his trade before he takes down the shutters."

Here is a story about our own Dick Roche that will interest nearly all St. Louisans, who either knew or have heard of the pool-alley king.

"While playing one night in St. Louis, at old Mr. Peritt's game of faro, and Dick Roche was dealing, luck ran dead against me, and every play I turned up loser, when in came a drunken man who was quarrelsome and insisted on annoying me. I told him that I was in no condition to have anybody clanking me around. Then he got mad and wanted to fight. I said nothing and stood it as long as I could, when I got up out of my chair and hit him a slug in the ear that curled him up on the floor like a 'possum. Then I cashed my checks and went out for a walk. I knocked around for about half an hour and got to thinking about how much money I had lost, and resolved to try my luck again. There was no other bank open, so I went back to Peritt's game, and there, sprawled out on the floor, lay the big lubber that I had knocked over, and Roche was kneeling down by him rubbing him with ice water and a towel, so I resolved to take another walk, when Roche, catching sight of me, said: 'Devol, I guess you owe me something for taking care of your patient, and if that's the way you hit I don't want you to hit me. I've been rubbing this fellow ever since you

left.'"

To give an idea of the peculiarly interesting incidents, accidents and anecdotes with which this old gambler's autobiography bristles would be impossible in any limited space. Nearly all the gamblers of the good old river days are made to act and talk and live again in those pages. All the tricks that were used are explained at length and very clearly, and there is on it all a stamp of truthfulness that makes it entertaining. It is written in the same strain as the author may be heard talking any day as he meets his old friends over a social glass. His book is well worth its price, if for nothing else than its unique style, and the author hopes to dispose of many copies here where he blew in his earnings in the days when he was in clover and bore the title of King of the Gamblers.

**Who Buys Costly Garters?**

Whoever walks up Broadway from Twenty-fourth street to Twenty-third street will notice that the fashionable jewelers are all displaying ladies' garters among the pins and bracelets, chains and brooches in their windows. These garters are all of the old-fashioned kind, simple bands of elastic, with ornate buckles and clasps of gold, sometimes set with jewels and sometimes merely chased. They cost all the way from \$25 upward. The revival of the old idea of a plain leg band suggests two queries to the average male mind. The first is why is it revived, since every one agrees that it disfigures the limb on which it is worn and hinders free circulation of the blood? The second is, what sort of women buy jeweled garters?

One answer to the first question is that simultaneously with the appearance of these expensive garters, cheap ones of the same pattern have become a leading article in all the great ladies' shopping stores. Trays heaped with them are to be seen in all these places. Some are mere loops of elastic, with the clasps hidden under bows, some have brilliant buckles of burnished steel, and some have both clasps and bow knots, or buckles and bow knots. They cost from 25 cents to \$1.50. They must be coming into fashion and must be worn by many women or they would not be on sale.

The queer thing about these garters is that not every woman could wear them if she would. They are worn above the knee, between that member and the fullness of the upper leg, as high as possible, in order to keep the top of the stockings from turning over. The modern stocking is so long that garters can not be worn as school girls wear them, below the knee, because then nearly half the stocking would fall down over the garter and almost to the shoe top. It is notable, therefore, that the person who wears these newly revived leg belts can not excuse herself even on the shal-low grounds that she likes to see herself prettily adorned, for the garter is hid under the further covering of the limbs.

Two of the Broadway jewelers were asked what sort of women buy these costly garters, and both said that they had never known a woman to buy or even to price them. They are purchased by men, apparently to make gifts of them. One jeweler said that he thought the principal market for them is for men who make a great deal of money suddenly, and who are bent upon celebrating the gain among their friends. A broker who makes a lucky turn, a sporting man who wins heavily on the races, or a college youth who has a quarter's spending money in his pocket, are the men who buy these jeweled garters. To whom do they give them? The jeweler did not know.—New York Sun.

**Electric Power.**

The utilization and distribution of electric power are stated by Mr. F. L. Pope to have reached by far the greatest development in Switzerland and the United States. In the former country electricity is transmitted to considerable distances for large motors. At Solothurn a manufactory of machine screws is driven by an electric motor of 50 horse power, which derives its energy from a turbine wheel more than five miles away on a mountain stream. At Derendingen a delaine mill of 35,000 spindles is driven by a pair of electric motors 280 horse power operated by a turbine wheel twelve miles away. At Lucerne 130 horse power is similarly carried half a mile and 250 horse power a quarter of a mile. In the United States no electric motor of more than 60 horse power is known to Mr. Pope, but there are as many as 6000 small motors in use, a favorite size being 10 horse power. It is predicted that in cities electric motors will soon practically supplant steam engines of less than 50 horse power.

**Children Cry for**

**Pitcher's Castoria.**

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And McMinnville is the county seat and metropolis of the Banner county.

This city is receiving deserved comment from the press of the State, and it is the intention of the proprietors of

## The Telephone-Register

To issue on February 1st a Mammoth edition devoted entirely to McMinnville. Her business interests and business men will each receive attention in their respective columns in the issue, together with a history of the town from its first settlement to date. The educational facilities will receive their portion, together with interesting statistics, Banking, Commercial, Express, Freight, Municipal, Building, Religious and Fraternal will given. Articles by prominent people; sketches of the Lawyers, Doctors, County and City officials are being prepared, making it, as a whole, a paper which should be read and distributed throughout the State and Union in order to give the outside population a correct picture of McMinnville, the banner town of the banner county of the banner state.

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