

Beat The Brace Game

A Detective's Yarn of the Early Days of the Mississippi

It was Sunday afternoon and the "gang" sat in the major's office telling "experience" yarns, some of them blessed with a semblance of truth and others reeking with suspicion. The "old detective's" turn came around, and, taking a generous bit of the weed, he began:

"The tale I am about to relate," said he, reflectively scratching his off ear, "occurred on the old Mississippi a year or two 'befo' de wah.' I had taken passage on the steamer Alice Brown, and was bound for Mobile to look up a gang of illicit distillers that had been defrauding the poor government of much needed revenue for some time. There were, perhaps, twenty through passengers on the steamer, and having nothing to do during the trip I took a great deal of interest in studying my 'shipmates,' as it were. The usual coterie of Mississippi gamblers was on board, and they seemed to be reaping quite a harvest off the suckers of whom the supply was unlimited. This kind of business was not only countenanced during those days, but looked upon as an ordinary method of amusement, and always took place in the main cabin. My attention was particularly attracted

TO TWO GAMBLERS,

who were not genuine Southerners, to my mind, though, to be sure, they dressed in the slouch hat, black Prince Albert coat, open vest, low collar and flowing necktie. From the first I had become suspicious of their actions, and took a strong dislike to them. One evening in the cabin my suspicions were confirmed. There was on board a young Southerner, who was on his way home from a trip through the West, and had plenty of money. These two gamblers had their eyes on him and I dropped to their game when they began to honey around him. The evening I mention they succeeded in drawing the young man and a friend into a game in the cabin. The entire crowd of passengers gathered around to watch the game. I knew a great deal about the pasteboards myself, and this and other good reasons made me one of the spectators. At the first hand I saw that the young fellow was a victim and was playing against a 'brace game.' They of course allowed him to win at first, but in a few hours they skinned him of about \$2,000 and an equal amount in diamonds and jewelry. The young man had lost all he had in the world, as he remarked, when he quietly arose from the table, but added:

"Gentlemen, I have lost fairly and do not propose to do anything rash."

I was burning with indignation and had decided to set down with the precious couple and expose

THEIR PRECIOUS SIGNALS,

etc. When I was about to set in the game, I was quite astonished, together with the rest, to see a handsome young lady step to the front and remark:

"I dispute the young man's remark, that he has lost fairly. I would like to take a hand there

myself.” She was highly indignant and the gamblers arose to their feet angrily at what they termed an insult.

“Oh, sit down,” she said, “this is everybody’s game.”

They could do nothing else, and the game began. The gamblers were wary and for a time played fairly. Finally all the money was on the table and it was “win or lose all” for somebody. The spectators were breathless with excitement, and the final hand was dealt. The young victim’s partner dropped out and the other three were left to fight it out alone. The young lady was white to the lips. She had three kings, an ace and a jack. The gambler next to her had three queens, an ace and a ten spot. He dexterously signaled his partner that he wanted another ace and the signal was obeyed. One gambler dropped out and the betting of the other two ran high. A confident smile appeared on the face of the remaining shark and an equally confident one on the face of the lady. Finally he called her hand. She threw down a full, three kings and a pair of aces, while he showed up his original hand. Quick as a flash he

PULLED A REVOLVER,

but mine had covered him, and his partner looked into the muzzle of another held by the lady.

“You’ve cheated,” gasped the loser.

“You lie,” she replied, “the card your brother shark handed you dropped into my hand instead of yours.”

“A wild cheer went up. The boat was stopped and the two shame-faced sharks put ashore with sundry kicks. The lady restored the young man’s money and jewelry and it was rumored that a marriage followed some time after. I never found out who she was.”

Nothing was heard save the soft purr of the major’s cat and the muffled snores of the sleepers.

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