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Poker as a Fine Art.

A paper read by Sam J. Callahan, before the Clifton Kalkos Klub, in Clifton, in the early 80's. Callahan was a printer on the old Clifton Clarion. The club, as well as the Clarion, is now only a thing of memory:

"Poker as a fine art is something I know very little about. My poker knowledge has been acquired with great difficulty, and more or less expense; my education in the game is a practical one so far as it goes, and my experience has been a sort of pull Dick, pull devil one, from beginning to end.

"I like the game. No one can deny that it is in its very nature an elevating art, every one who ever engages in it, at some period of his career, being raised clear above all minor considerations of life—raised in fact till he could stand to be raised no more.

"Poker was introduced into the United States about fifty years ago, and at once became very popular—especially along the Mississippi river and the South generally. It was formerly played with twenty cards—excluding all below the tens, the players not being allowed to draw in order to help their hands after the deal; but that form of the game, known as twenty-deck poker, never attained much favor in this country, and was soon superseded by the good old game of draw, which, with a few slight variations, has held its position—unchanged in theory and unrivalled in the hearts of the people. In poker proper, and the way it is played in the East, sequence flushes beats fours and straights beat two pair—the latter consideration, I will add, making a pat flush a mighty interesting thing to hold in a good live game. Sequence flushes are played in the East because most people there are church members, and think it would be wrong to rake in a deacon's cash on four aces, with no possibility of a better hand being against them. In the West, however, the people are more liberal in their views, and don't think any more of drawing down a man's money on an invinc-

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ble hand than they would of downing him in any other transaction wherein he was entirely helpless. I saw a talented gentleman show down four aces t'other night and scoop a \$142 pot, and when I looked to see if any qualms of conscience were reflected in his intelligent countenance, I read there as plain as if it had been printed in eight-line pica boldface, 'Why didn't I bet him more?'

"A good stiff game of poker makes a man experience a greater diversity of emotions in a given length of time than anything known. In playing poker, a man will feel at one moment like he is the smartest man on earth—and in fifteen minutes more he will think he is

the biggest fool in town—and everybody knows it. Then they'll turn the low card for the drinks, and he'll get stuck, and he'll take whi-ky straight, and in all that man's memory there will not loom up a single recollection of anything he ever undertook that fortune smiled upon—and he will put the question to himself if he is not a jackass on general principles, and the ayes will have it by an immense majority. But there is no more pleasant triumph in a man's life than when he stands a \$3 raise on a four flush, and catches his injun, and passes, and the other fellow bets \$7.50, and another fellow calls it for a bluff, and he backs in and bete \$12.50 more. Oh! I