AS TO THEORIES IN POKER.

THE GAME NOT TO BE LEARNED BY STUDYING PRINTED PAGES.

One Appleby Tried It in Arkansas Till Old Man Greenhut Felt Sure He Came to Grief—Jake Bluntbottom's Reason for Saying That No Good Come on Poker Estate.

"I hear that some o' these people as thinks the world can't go round without more books is makin' a fuss over a fool question about is makin' a fuss over a fool question about whether it's worth while to be chew" said the old man Greenhut, as he carefully cleaned out a big dentilichin that had once held chawbey, and poured the water under the bar where nobody could see whether it went into the sink or through a funnel. "Years they've been discussin' of it quite a spell, an' galoots is still writin' books about it. I reckon they must ha' run out o' ambitions an' then feelin' as though there was a howlin' necessity for books, they must ha' set down an' figgered out that any old thing would do to write about 'a long's they o'd only write. It's all right enough, I reckon, in places where there's more folks 'n there is business. A man must do somethin', an' if he hain't no proper callin', an' there's other fools enough to buy his books, so's 't he can make a livin', I reckon, o' course, he'll write books. Not but that there's books enough an' has been, always. The Testament an' McGuffy's Readers is all that's reely necessary. No man don't learn how to play poker nor handle a gun out of a book. An' when you come to look at it, none o' the reel essentials o' good North American livin' comes in books. You take the genuyne husky citizen that does some good in the world an' keeps things stirrin', an' does things, an' he don't fool away no time on books. He gits right out an' hustles. I ain't seed no book that'll tell how the ole Mississippi is goin' to change her channel over night so's't a pilot's got to go forty miles out o' his way to find water enough to navigate in, when he comes along next mornin'. Nor, similar, I hain't come by no knowledge of ary book that'll tell how fellers is goin' to vote to a primary.

"It takes good horse sense an' a quick finger on the trigger to get a man through any reel serious emergency, an' I hain't found that no book is goin' to fill up his head with sense, nor yet convey that suppleness an' active motion o' the fore finger that is reely essential to his weill-bein' when it comes to a time when he's got to look out for hisself."

Here the old man paused and looked around, as he sometimes does, to see if anybody in the room was likely to argue the question with him, but no one cared for a discussion, and presently he walked around to his favorite seat by the window and smoked a while in silence. Then he began talking again:

"I ain't one as runs down the advantages of edukation. There ain't nobody in this free an' enlightened country as'll do that, 'thout's it's dunces an' Indians an' sich. Edukation is the makin' of a man, but the great mistake folks is makin' that edukation comes f'm books. You take a young feller that's just startin' out in life an' teach him how to feed an' write an' cipher an' then give him a 'testament, an' he won't have no more use for books. His edukation is all right enough. He'd oughter learn how to shave hisself with cold water an' without no glass, an' he 'd oughter know how to ride a hoss. Then he must practise a good deal with a gun, so's 't he won't be none too late when he comes to use it, an' he'd ought to be able to shoot. He'd oughter know enough to vote the straight Democratic ticket every time, an' take his part in the primaries when primaries is necessary, which they ain't frequent in this part o' the country, thank the Lord!

"Beyond that he'd oughter know enough to drink 'thout settin' drunk, an' he should learn how to play a good stiff game o' poker, an' then he can fairly call hisself edificated. Them rudiments an' good horse sense'll fit him for any station in life, so's 't he can go ahead an' shine in any reelm' that the Lord sees fit to assign him. An' I'd like to know what books is got to do with all that.

"Newspapers is different. A man had oughter read his newspaper every week regular. It's a mighty poor community that can't support an editor, an' editors is valuable citizens when they 's some sense stuck to 'em, an' knows enough to keep the community stirred up. If it wasn't for newspapers we wouldn't git no reliable information o' hoss races, nor prizefights, nor none o' the interestin' crimes o' the day, an' 'twould take a month or more to find out how elections went. But these fellers that sits up nights readin' books makes my feet twitch.

"There was one of 'em come here to Arkansas t'iv a few years ago that was most particular awesome to me, an' I don't remember any occasion that cheered me up more than when he got wiped out, a trifin' to make a practical application o' theories about the game o' draw poker that he'd picked up out of a book that some sharp wrote about the game. Appleby his name was—George Appleby, an' he was one o' these fellers that wants to be sporty, but hasn't no natural aptitude. He was dead set on tryin' to smoke, just naturally, when he got to a place where everybody smokes, an' he bought a pipe an' tobacco, but he had to throw 'em away 'cause the rice made him sick. Then he got some cigars that was warranted not to hurt a suckin' babe, they was that mild. I thought they was made o' hay, but he used to wrap cigarette paper 'round 'em 'cause the tobacco, he said, made his lips smart. Still he wanted to be a sport, all right. One day he was settin' here by the fire an' some feller come in an' left the door open, an' Appleby looks up an' hollers out, 'shut that door by a damn sight.'

"Well, nothin' would do him but he must learn to play poker, which he couldn't have learned in a thousand year, not being gifted with the right quality of intellect, though, just naturally there wan't nobody 'round that took the trouble to explain that to him. I'wan't because the boys didn't take no interest in him. They was all deeply interested. There wasn't a man in town that wan't willin' to set with him by the hour, an' let him practise with the cards. They would explain the points o' the game to him, as patient as a Sunday school teacher, an' nobody ever showed the least bit o' temper when he'd go ahead an' make some outrageous play that 'ud bust the Comstock Lode if played persistent. Appleby had quite some money when he come, an' the boys recognized the makin's of a good citizen in him, an' there wan't one of 'em that ever said a word to discourage him, specially in the matter o' learnin' the game o' draw poker.

"I never tried to discourage him myself, though I never had no confidence in his ever learnin' the game proper, for I couldn't help but admire his pluck, an' then he was dead easy for the boys, but he was an all-fired proud spender, an' I says to myself, just naturally, that it would be a cruel shame to do him up sudden an' oust him on the world penniless when he could be nursed along for a consid'able spell, an' contribute to the general prosperity of trade in the quarrytime. So I says to him, now an' again, 'It no use for you to try to push things along too speedy, Appleby. Just go easy an' play light till you get on to the intricacies of the game. Draw poker,' I says, 'is toleirable intricate, an' 'tain't to be expected,' I says, 'that you can start in at the beginnin' an' hold your own with men as has been caught up to the game. Keep on playin' all the time,' I says, 'for that's the only way you can ever learn, but don't never imagine you're goin' to clean out the crowd on anything short of a straight flush, an' don't bet too heavy.'

"Well, Appleby he was a middling sort of a chap an' he realized his own shortcomin's too well to take offence. 'I can see,' he says, 'that I ain't really what you'd call an expert, an' I'd be a chump,' he says, 'to think I'd get in an' beat the gang.' But I can learn, can't I, Grover?' he says, keep on playin' there ain't no reason why I shouldn't get to be a player, is there?' An' I hadn't the heart to tell him what a blame fool he was by natur,' an' more'n that I hadn't no one to quench the spirit fire, so I just says to him again, I says, 'You keep on playin', Appleby, an' you'll move out.' So he kep'on, an' the boys kep' givin' him lessons, as oblitin' as could be, every time he wanted to play draw poker.

"One afternoon he come in an' told me he'd got a book that had up about draw poker in it, an' he was studyin' up on the principles of the game, so's't he could play a reel scientific game. He was as tickled as a boy with a new Barlow, an' couldn't seem to set still while he talked. 'I don't calculate to play any more,' he says, 'till I've mastered the science of draw poker, an' when I come in I'm just curiously interested in the game. Oh!' I went on a thing to em but make 'em wish I'd never come to Arkansas t'iv.

"Well, just naturally I was a bit skeered myself for I never set no store by book learnin', an' I reckon I'd put it all in a book wasn't any feller what studies the game can play a remarkable good game, who'll set down the noble North American pastime to the dead level of public pastime, an' make it a matter of science, an' reduce it down to a level where any other galoot that knows enough to read print can learn it all out of print as pat as much science as the other feller has.

"I don't mind ownin' up I read was skeered I says to myself, too, that if there was a book that could do what he said, why, 'tain't there was more use in coukin' books than I'd ever thought there was. An' altogether I was pretty near upset in the back wagon.

"Howsiever, he went off home an' said he was going to study up a bit, an' he'd come back before comin' around to play, an' when he did come I could look out for a big pilgrim. He kind of a chicken livin' to think anything could really be true. An' the more I thought about it the less I liked the looks of it.

"Well, it didn't seem right, if there was any such catastrophe as he described a-hoovin' over the community, for me to keep still an' not give no warnin' to the boys o' the doom that was bangin' over 'em, so that night I up an' told 'em what Appleby said. There was quite a crowd in that night, for it was a cold night, an' the boys was willin' to git warm at my fire. I'd kind of expected Appleby would come along an' take a hand in the game, but he didn't come, an' I reckon he was afraid I'd told 'em what he had in his head. Howsiever, I told 'em what Appleby said, an' I spoke up as sure as a prophet an' says, 'Boys, there was a right smart jet more n silence in the room.

"A jet a while for him to explain hisself, but he didn't, an' I says, 'Jake Bluntbottom, don't you believe he's got no book, or what?'

"'He may have a book in some sort,' says Jake, 'but it stands to reason that no feller ever wrote a book tells how to play poker, an' tellin' it right, cause if he knowed how to tell he'd know how to play it, an' if he could write a book he'd be able to win poker, unless the man's natural nature had, an' he was a natural born fool, it stands to reason he couldn't learn how to play poker.' As similar if he didn't know how to play an' wrote a book about it, the hoss sense would git away.

"'Well, that sounds dead easy when we come to think it over,' I says, 'but I'd like to know what books is got to do with all that.

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