

The Convex, or Dog Eat Dog.

I will here give a description of very ingenious thing used by gamblers, called a convex, which is about the size of a half dollar, and is a very powerful magnifying glass, used only in cases of playing single handed, and is placed upon the knee, and as the cards are dealt off, one at a time, the person having the convex can see the face of the card magnified, which is a very great advantage, but it is of very little use in playing four handed, as it is very likely to be seen, but single handed, it is of great help to the gambler.

I was once traveling from St. Louis to Peru, at the head of the Illinois River, some ten years since. Among the passengers was quite an aged man, who allowed he could beat any man on the boat at Seven Up, providing he could play his own kind of cards. There were several gentlemen aboard

who had tried him, and he was some four hundred dollars winner. I asked him to let me look at his cards; I examined them very closely, but could not discover any stamp or marks upon them, and it was quite a mystery to me, how he should have such extraordinary luck. I still thought he could be beat. I told him after tea I would try him a few games, and he appeared to have plenty of money, but I did not take him to be a gambler. I went to the Captain and asked him if he knew the old man? He said he had seen him often on the river, but did not think he was a gambler. But I thought he might have taken higher degrees in gaming than I had, and I was rather suspicious of him; however, after supper was over, and there had been several games started, I told him we would go away by ourselves, as I could not play where there was a crowd; he said he preferred being alone. We then went away by ourselves, and sat directly under the chandelier, where we had plenty of light, and commenced playing at ten dollars a single game, and he won several games in succession.

I was then satisfied that he was playing some percentage on me but was at a loss to detect him. I made an excuse

to get up and get a drink of water, and stepped out on the guards and into my state-room and opened my trunk, and got my convex, and went back and told the old man he was the hardest man to beat I ever saw; he said it was all luck. I asked him if he could play Poker with the same luck; he said he knew no other game; we then played another game for ten dollars, and I lost as before. I then proposed doubling the stakes, as it might change my luck; he said it was immaterial to him as he would just as soon play for a hundred dollars as ten; we then made it fifty dollars a game, as it would make a shorter game. I then dropped one of the cards, and while picking it up, put my convex on my knee. We then commenced playing — he winning the first game; he was then one hundred and ten dollars ahead of me; we then kept playing until about twelve o'clock, when the steward came to us and said it was twelve o'clock, and it was against the rules of the boat to play longer. I said we had better wait until morning, and get a good night's sleep, as we would feel better; he wished to continue playing; I said we had better conform to the rules of the boat; he said he was willing if it was the rules of the boat, but he had traveled the Western

rivers for the last twenty years and had never heard of such rules before; I was then convinced he was an old gambler; but, before that, I had made up my mind I would play no more with him after that night; we then took a drink and each went to bed; when I got into my state-room, I found I was seven hundred and fifty dollars winner of him. The next morning, after I arose and got my breakfast, a gentleman asked me how I came out with the old man; I told him I had won a little; he asked me how much; I told him I did not exactly know, but in the neighborhood of a hundred dollars; he said I was a lucky man, as I was the first man he ever knew that won a dollar of him; I asked him if he was acquainted with him; he said he had known him for the last twenty years, and told me his name, and when I heard his name, I remembered of hearing of him before as an old gambler, who had ten years' experience to my one; but the improvements of the age had got the start of him, as he had been travelling through Mexico for the last five years, and was not posted. Just before the boat reached Peoria he came to me and asked my name; I told him; he asked me which way I was going; I told him I was bound for Chicago;