WHEN MEN PLAYED FOR BIG STAKES

by FRANK J. ARKINS

GAMBLING for big stakes was a common thing in the west a few years ago. In nearly all sections the evil has been suppressed by law. In the few portions where it is still followed it is carried on under cover and in constant dread of police interference.

Not so long ago, however, the cry of the roulette man and the click of the ball could be heard in the lobbies of many of the principal hotels. This was particularly true of El Paso, Cripple Creek, Leadville, Goldfield, Butte, the Coeur d'Alene, and many other sections. The practice prevailed to a greater or less extent in the larger towns. Everybody has money in the early days of a mining camp.

It was an era of speculation. The country had not "been proven," and hence a "find" in a new section resulted in a great rush to that locality. Property changed hands at fabulous prices overnight. The ragged prospector of today might be rolling in wealth tomorrow. It has happened so many times.

When there is money to throw at the birds, the gamblers, like so many vultures, assemble at the point to which it is being cast by the thoughtless and improvident possessors.

Games were played where the stakes ran into the millions. A man wealthy in the morning sometimes had to borrow money to avoid going to bed hungry at night.

A stockman in Colorado "sat into" a poker game in Denver, and by midnight had not only lost all the cash he had with him, but had exhausted a large bank balance.

He owned, on the range in Colorado, the neutral strip ("No Man's Land," now extreme western Oklahoma), and in Texas ten thousand head of cattle, worth twenty dollars a head, or a total of $200,000.

He possessed land in three states and a handsome residence in Denver. He made a bet of a thousand steers—worth twenty thousand dollars—and lost. He continued this until the herd of ten thousand head of stock belonged to another man. Day dawned, and he was still playing. Breakfast was sent in from a restaurant maintained at the end of the gambling hall for just such people.

"Now," he said to the men who had won his cattle, "you have the critters, but no place to keep them. I will play you my Texas ranch."

He lost that. Then followed the Colorado ranch, finally the residence in Denver, together with the furniture, his horses, his watch and chain. At eight o'clock at night—twenty-four hours later—he was penniless, and started for the Rio Grande country of Texas, where he found employment hauling logs to a sawmill. He had lost more than a quarter of a million dollars in twenty-four hours!

"Will you oblige me by taking off your shoes?" asked a road agent politely, while he held a revolver menacingly in the face of a passenger who stood up in a line with others.

The hold-up man had stopped the stage going into Leadville to "collect toll." He had just purchased the road, he said, and needed the money.

He passed down the line and, by means of a pasenger whom he forced into service, gathered up all the money and jewelry, until he came to the last man in the line. Then he asked the man to take off his shoes. He found four thousand dollars under the inner soles!

Several nights later the man who had been outwitted by the hold-up man was sitting in the dealer's chair of a faro game in the "Cloud City," as Leadville is called. Before him sat a man who lost money steadily. The gambler "raked in" the money carelessly and with the utmost unconcern. The player lost something like five thousand dollars and then pushed back his chair.

"All in?" asked the gambler, arching his brows.

"Yep—you've cleaned me out."

"Then we are even for that little incident the other night, when you collected your road tax from me."

"I——"

"Yes, you!"

The hold-up man knocked down half a dozen loiterers in his rush to reach the door and escape.

A well-known mining man, who was noted for his judgment in "knowing a hole in the ground" when he looked into it, had just made a purchase in Cripple Creek. He had money, and he was willing to spend it for anything that looked good. After having tramped over the hills all of one day, he "sat into" a poker game in the lobby of the principal hotel that night, and engaged in a friendly game with a number of acquaintances.

They were playing for twenty-five cents a corner. While the game was in progress a ragged prospector appeared and attempted to inject himself into the company. The mining man explained that it was simply a private game between friends—outsiders, and particularly strangers, were not wanted.

"I have money that has never been spent."

"We don't know you."

"Oh, that's it! Then let me introduce myself."

There was no way to get rid of him apparently. Then, like an inspiration, and in an annoyed manner, the operator said:

"How much money have you?"

"Eight hundred dollars."

"Sit down, and I'l show you how to play poker."

In less than fifteen minutes the prospector withdrew.

Shortly after he returned with a thousand dollars more. This was interesting. He lost it. Then he lost a diamond pin, following it with a watch and his "cayuse."

When he pushed back his chair the operator asked:

"Are you broke now?"

"I have a claim over on the hill."

"What do you value it at?"

"One hundred thousand dollars."

This staggered the mining man for a moment.

"You have been a good loser; I'll put in with you and play a hundred thousand against your claim."

The prospector lost the claim.

"Now I will play you for your services tomorrow to show me where the claim is and where to open the ore. For that I will consider that you have five thousand on the table."

The prospector lost that.

The next day he traced out the lines of the claim for the winner, who organized a company, with a stock of one million, the shares of which went for sixteen dollars each!

Millions were taken from the mine within a few years. It became one of the most famous in the entire Rocky Mountain country.

In the early days of the Comstock Lode, in Virginia, Nevada, some men made money so fast that they did not know what to do with it. Those who were not making it spent their time devising ways and means to talk the others out of a portion of their wealth. Gamblers were in full evidence, and there were some big stakes; but it remained for a bunch of Mexicans to play for the largest stake on record in the United States—without the use of cards.

One of the many claims, located in the midst of the district, had not shown any ore. Even the men who had millions hesitated to sink a shaft on it. The people were in a fever of excitement. The Mexicans owned practicaly nothing. In fact, the "greasers" could not get a "look in." Altogether it was very discouraging—to them.

Then it occurred to some bright genius to capitalize the labor of the Mexicans. Gathering a bunch of them together, it was proposed that they sink a shaft on one of the well-known claims, which was twelve hundred feet in length.

"For each foot you sink, we will give you a one-foot surface interest in the claim," they were told," provided you sink to ore."

In other words, if they abandoned the work at any time before reaching ore, they would get nothing, and the owners would have the shaft. It looked like a cheap way to prospect.

The Mexicans pow-powed and jabbered at one another for half a night and then started to work.

Everybody laughed. They were comparatively poor men. They could ill afford the expense they were undergoing. They drilled by hand, fought the hard granite, and gradually lowered that shaft. They bailed water that flowed in so fast that it threatened to drown them, but they stuck to the work with desperation.

At three hundred feet they uncovered the richest portion of the world-famous silver deposit, and, from the vein they opened, more wealth was taken out than from any other portion of that richest single mile of ground in the world.

The Mexicans' share was one-quarter. Nearly one hundred million dollars came out of the hole they sank! It was a gamble pure and simple. They played for high stakes—and won.

In the Coeur d'Alene, of Idaho, when that mining region was the center of the earth, there were some big games. The story is told of one man who conceived the idea that he could make money in gambling faster than he could take it out of the ground. It was so much easier. With what cash he had, after selling his mine, he could count up to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

He had evolved a wonderful system.

"I simply can't lose," he told his friends.

His plan was to play steadily for sixteen hours daily, and, by a complicated series of bets, to retrieve when he lost.

Everything went along swimingly for the first few days. At times he was as much as twenty-five thousand to the good.

Nine days after he started top lay he suddenly found that he was just where he had started—he had one hundred and fifty thousand dollars when the cards came a certain way, which would involve, according to his system, betting the entire amount on a single "turn." He played the queen to win, and the fickle creature played false to him.

"Women are the cause of all trouble, anyway," he muttered, as he rose from the table. "I ought to have known better than that, for that was the queen of spades, and I should not have made that bet except when all the queens except the queen of hearts was out."

It was the irony of fate that, when the queen of hearts came out of the box, it so happened that it won.

In the days when Cheyenne, Wyoming, was the headquarters for the cattlemen of the northwest, gambling ran wide open. When the cowboys came to town they made things hum. Money grew on trees. The gaming spirit was in the air.

A dealer standing behind a roulette table one night suddenly motioned the proprietor. A few moments later he was paid off. It is customary to pay a gambler his salary at the end of each day. Many of them have the faculty of losing it back over the very table where they know the odds to be against the player.

In roulette there is a distinct percentage in favor of "the house." Everybody knows that.

This dealer took a seat in front of the table and in the course of a few hours had won fifty dollars. Then he stopped. He would pass in and out a dozen times a day, play a little here and some there, but always he would bring up in front of the roulette table, and more often than otherwise left it winner. His luck was amazing. He started a bank account. He was saving his money to get into business with, he said.

He won so steadily that it made the proprietor of the place shiver every time he came in.

One day, while the ex-dealer was playing, an old man dropped in and, glancing around the room for a moment, asked:

"Who runs this place?"

"I do," answered a bewhiskered individual who was watching his former employe rake in the cash.

"Will you do me the favor to tell me where you got that wheel?" he asked, pointing to the one that proved such a hoodoo.

"I know it's a Jonah. That fellow over there wins all the time."

"So?" said the stranger.

He walked over and watched the man lay his bets.

Returning to the proprietor, he said, as he passed out a card:

"I represent this house, which, as you see, deals in gaming devices. I take it that the man sitting at the wheel makes a 'killing' every day?"

"He does, stranger, to the tune of fifty or a hundred."

"For a thousand I can tell you how to bust his luck and make him look the living picture of remorse. You would have to agree to purchase a new wheel from me, also."

"If you show me, I'm game."

"It's a bargain," said the drummer.

Walking over to the wheel, he waited until the ball dropped, stopped it, and turning to the proprietor asked:

"See anything strange with that wheel?"

"No."

"Well, see, there are two nineteens and two twenty-threes on this wheel. They are unusual numbers—so that the fellow who plays them has about the same percentage in his favor, on those numbers, that you have when a man plays on a regular wheel. We made this wheel more than thirty years ago. It was sold to a house by a couple of 'sure thing' men, who almost broke the outfit. Then we lost track of it."

The ex-dealer had noticed the double numbers, and therein was the secret of his "luck." How the numbers had escaped attention so many years is one of those mysteries of gambling that can never be explained.

When Seattle was the big noise in the Northwest gambling world, and the primeval forests were closer to her doors, some big games were played.

One night a stranger stepped into one of the principal houses and took a seat at a faro table. An hour later he had lost more than five thousand dollars. The proprietor sent him a fifty-cent cigar. A few moments afterward the stranger had a couple of hundred dollars, and within an hour had regained his five thousand. Then commenced a streak of luck that has seldom been witnessed in any gambling house. The "roof" had been raised "to the sky" and Mr. Stranger "coppered" the king and doubled a bet of five thousand. He tried it again for a repeater, with ten thousand, and drew back twenty yellow chieps, worth one thousand each.

After that he made bets of a thousand each, and before he had smoked the cigar he was twenty-eight thousand to the good! Then he quit.

Who he was, where he came from, where he went, no one ever knew. His coming and going were as mysterious as his winnings were sensational.

Probably one of the greatest stakes ever hung up was raked down on a mule race in Arizona. A man owned a "hole in the ground." He was satisfied that it was worth a fortune. His friends thought he was crazy. He refused to go to other "diggings" where the prospects were better. He was more than twenty-five miles from water, which had to be carried in on the hurricane deck of a mule. He worked away, nursing his claim and sticking it out alone. Then he went to a settlement some distance away. He became excited over the performances of a mule owned by another man, and in a moment of exuberance bet his claim against one owned by a prospector from another section that his mule could outrun the other fellow's. He lost.

He had the privilege of piloting the winner to the "mine" and saw him take more than seventy thousand dollars' worth of silver, net, out of a pocket, almost on the surface of the ground! Since then the property has produced millions. It all came about because one mule could not run so fast as another.

In the PUBLIC EYE

J. H. HAMMOND WOULD PACIFY YAQUIS

John Hays Hammond has asked the Mexican government to permit him to go, unarmed and accompanied only by an interpreter, into the mountainous stronghold of the Yaqui Indians in Sonora, to pacify that turbulent tribe. The government of Mexico has fought the Yaquis for thirty years, but today the Yaquis are unconquered.

Mr. Hammond expects that the Madero government will give him the permission which he desires. His program is based on his belief that, as a result of his life and work in Mexico, many years ago, the understanding between him and the Yaquis is so thorough as to obviate the risk of his being injured or killed. Major Burnham, the famous American and South African scout and fighter, will accompany him.

Last July Mr. Hammond wrote to Senor Calero, the Mexican ambassador to this country, outlining his wishes to pacify the Yaquis and his plan for accomplishing that object.

The Yaquis maintain in their stronghold at this time, in addition to their warriors, a force of 1,500 men armed with modern rifles. They are absolutely impregnable. Diaz tried to bring them into submission, but failed.

WOULD EDUCATE MAN BEHIND THE PLOW

To carry knowledge of scientific agricultural methods directly to the man between the plow handles, and thereby increase the agricultural products of this country by at least 20 per cent, Senator Hoke Smith in a speech in the senate the other day urged the passage of the Smith-Lever bill to establish agricultural extension departments in colleges of agriculture.

"The annual value of our agricultural products is, in round figures, $9,000,000,000," Senator Smith said. "If the increase as a result of this work were only 20 per cent we would have an increased value of $1,800,000,000, or a sufficient sum to meet the proposed appropriation for 600 years."

Senator Smith pointed to the passage of the Morrill bill for the establishment of land grant agricultural colleges in each of the states of the Union, and of the Hatch bill for the establishment of an experiment station in each state. Upon them the government is now spending about $4,000,000 annually. Much of this money and of the $15,000,000 appropriated each year for the exclusively agricultural work of the department of agriculture, he stated, is spent in investigating and experimenting to show how the best and greatest crops can be raised.

"According to the plans of the bill," he continued, "the representatives of the colleges in the various states will enlist farmers who, under the direction of the representatives of the Agricultural college, will test the value on their own land of the information brought by the representative of the college."

MME. JUSSERAND BARS "FREE LUNCH"

Mme. Jusserand, wife of the French ambassador, and new doyen of the diplomatic corps at Washington, has decreed the abolition of the diplomatic "free liunch route," which is the undiplomatic designation of that indiscriminate and uncensored list of hostesses from whom the attaches of embassies and legations have been wont to accept luncheon, dinner and dance invitations.

Henceforth there will be a rigid adherence to diplomatic and social lines by the young diplomats who have entered too much into the spirit of our democratic institutions and gone to those entertainments where he spirit of conviviality led them.

The gossip in diplomatic circles is that there has been not only a weakening of discipline, but that the young bachelor set, not provided with the large expense account of the heads of legations, have found in the bountiful hospitality of Washington means whereby they have been able to piece out their meager incomes by saving what otherwise would be spent at hotels and restaurants for food and cheer.

MISS BOARDMAN LAUDS BOY SCOUTS

Miss Mabel T. Boardman, secretary of the American Red Cross association, has sent a message to the 400,000 Boy Scouts of America. She rejoices in the good deeds that the Boy Scouts are doing. She compares them with the knights of King Arthur of old.

"The Vision of King Arthur" is the title of Miss Boardman's article in Boys' Life, the Boy Scouts' magazine. Miss Boardman pictures the dying King Arthur, and says: "Something held his clear blue eyes—not glittering armor nor helmet with its visor down—only a boy in simple brown, who stopped to lift a little fallen child. And there! Another guided a blind man through the dangers of the noisy street, and yet another, with kindly mien and friendly stroke, soothed some poor, bewildered dog, his master lost. Here one took from her trembling hands the heavy load of some old dame and bore it for her. Another darted swiftly through the town to call the doctor to the aid of some one who was ill. Not here, not there alone, but everywhere, through northern winter snows and under sunny southern skies, the king beheld these knights in brown. Bending over some injured comrade clustered an earnest group. With skillful fingers the wound was dressed; with arms that were strong yet tender the boy was carried home, and on the porch from which the aid was given, behold, a cross of red."

"This is a little story for your Boy Scouts," continues Miss Boardman. "You are the knights in brown. The bold Sir Belvedere thought the true old times were dead, but you have brought them back to life again."