

TALK
OF
UNCLE GEORGE TO HIS NEPHEW
ABOUT
DRAW POKER.



TALK
OF
UNCLE GEORGE TO HIS NEPHEW
ABOUT
DRAW POKER.

CONTAINING
VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THIS
GREAT AMERICAN GAME.

ALSO,

INSTRUCTION AND DIRECTIONS TO CLUBS AND SOCIAL
CARD PARTIES, WHOSE MEMBERS PLAY ONLY FOR
RECREATION AND PASTIME,

WITH
TIMELY WARNINGS TO YOUNG PLAYERS.

ILLUSTRATED.

NEW YORK:
DICK & FITZGERALD, PUBLISHERS.

COPYRIGHT, 1883, BY
DICK & FITZGERALD.

PREFACE.

THIS pamphlet is issued for the purpose of inducing those who engage in this Great American Game of "Draw Poker," to play only for amusement and pastime; and to expose those in our clubs and social card parties who are tricky, or disposed to cheat. Also to show to the American youth the dangers that beset their path when playing this fascinating game.

While we have treatises on this subject, by Blackbridge, "American Hoyle," "Schenck," and others,—all of whom teach the game, *with the rules and laws that govern it*,—it has been left for "Uncle George," in a familiar, conversational manner, to "lay open" and expose this game *as it is* too often played—with its "lights and shadows," its bright parts, and "ways that are dark."

UNCLE GEORGE ON DRAW POKER.

RATHER late, my boy, when I heard your footsteps upon the stairs last evening," said Uncle George to his nephew, while sitting at the breakfast-table on the morning of the 22d of February last.

"Yes, dear uncle, I acknowledge the corn. 'I can not tell a lie,' you know, on this the anniversary of the birth of our Great Uncle George, the Father of his Country, and especially while his portrait on the wall is now looking down upon me. The fact is, I accepted an invitation to dine with a few friends at Delmonico's last evening, and after dinner a proposition was made to have 'a little game of draw' for an hour or two; but the time passed so rapidly, that I confess it was among the 'wee sma' hours' when we broke up. It was much later than I intended to have played, I assure you; but there seemed to be no time when all were ready to quit."

"I know! I know! my boy. It's the same 'old story.' Those who are losers are playing for 'hunk,' as they call it, and those who are winners are too gentlemanly to quit and break up the party. It was the same with your Uncle George fifty years ago. I suppose you mean 'Draw Poker,' my boy?"

"Yes."

"Well, now; you know your Uncle George is an old man, and, as the saying is, 'has travelled'; and having been a man of the world, has seen much of the world's *unwritten doings*. Though you consider yourself *smart*—and I admit you are fully up to the average of those of your age,—yet you would be surprised at what I can tell you, of what is going on all about you of which you know nothing. But as you remind me that this is the 22d of February, and a holiday, and as you have no business downtown this morning, if you are willing to listen to your uncle, he will gladly spend an hour in talking to you about this game of 'Draw Poker,' this 'Great American Game,' so called on account of its origin and its devotees; for at the present time it is indulged in by *all classes in our country*—old and young, male and female, rich and poor, church-goers and professional gamblers; all classes, with '*antes*' varying from a penny

to a hundred dollars or more. Now, as a game for *recreation* and *pastime*, I do not object to it; it is said to possess qualities as an intellectual game, superior even to whist. But when engaged in for the purpose of gambling, I class it with other games in which professional gamblers live and thrive, by cheating and robbing those with whom they play. It has been said there is no such thing as a '*Square Gambler*'; and a well-known Wall Street banker has said: 'Whoever plays poker will cheat.' I can not agree with the latter, but, with my definition of a gambler, I fully agree with the former. I define a gambler to be 'one who cheats in games of skill and hazard.' I know this definition is not in accordance with that given by our lexicographers, but I know it will be accepted by all who play at games for amusement, and object to being called gamblers.

"In my talk with you this morning, I shall take it for granted that you are acquainted with the manner of playing the game, as it is played at the present time; for you must know, it's not the game of poker your Uncle George played, years ago, upon our Western waters. It was then called 'Bluff,' and we knew nothing of 'Straights,' 'Straight Flushes,' 'Blazes,' or 'Jack Pots.' The game was known simply as 'Bluff' or 'Straight Poker.' The value of the hands in order was 'One Pair,' 'Two Pair,' 'Triplets,' 'Flushes,' 'Fulls,' and 'Four of a kind.' Your hand was made on the first deal; no discarding and drawing to fill afterwards. I suppose, my boy, you are familiar with the present game, with all its innovations. All this you have learned from your experience at the clubs and social card parties, and from works of instruction. But what I desire to impress upon your mind this morning is:

"*First*.— The fact that gamblers, according to your Uncle George's definition, are found in the clubs and private card parties, all over our city and country; respected as gentlemen, with 'Honorable' and high-sounding titles attached to their names. And yet these men are cheating you every time you play with them. A case in point: I read in the *Century* a few days ago, where a game was being played between Col. Randolph Snaught and Major-General Brown, a brief extract of which I will give you, in order to show you how even a Major-General could stoop to employ the crookedest kind of aid to gain his ends. As far as my memory serves me, it was in this wise:

"The Major-General was a man of smooth and courtly phrase,
Who had most charming manners, and winning little ways.

The hands he held were wonderful,—beyond all sane belief,—
As Colonel Randolph Snaughter found, to his exceeding grief:
For, though he play'd a dashing game, and did not want for pluck,
He stood no 'kinder sorter' chance against such awful luck.
He lost the money in his purse, he lost his watch and chain;
And then the cause of Brown's good luck to Snaughter was made plain,
For while he held *three* aces, the General he held *four*,
And could, had he deemed proper, have held as many more."



"I want to impress strongly upon you *the fact* also, that the game of Draw Poker is an *expensive recreation*. It's only a question of time, and means at your command, as to the amount of money you will lose. The longer you play, and the more means under your control, the more you will be out of pocket in the end. Like the 'Outside Public,' in Wall Street, it is only a question of time. At some other time, my boy, I will talk to you about Wall Street, but not now. With many, the loss of money at Draw Poker is the smallest item. There are those who become *infatuated*, and the result is not only loss of money, but loss of time, character, business, position in society, and often ends in dissipation and crime. Let me warn you, therefore, my boy, of the danger of becoming too much attached to this game. When you find you have neglected to perform some duty, or to keep some business engagement, in order to play; when you find yourself

playing into late hours, as you confess you did last night, or when you find you are losing more than you can well afford, with your salary, quit it!! quit it!!! I say, don't wait for all three of these warnings, but quit it on the first show of either; for you are then on dangerous ground. The charm of the gaming snake is beginning to produce its effect, and your only safety is in throwing off the influence of the charmer. Any delay or procrastination *now is almost sure destruction*. There is no game of chance or skill that brings out one's real nature, one's ownself, as much as Draw Poker. Where players all stand well in a community, the game is expected to be fair and honorable; hence a good opportunity is offered for those who are *disposed to cheat*, to do so. I would rather play a few games of poker with one whose character and disposition I would like to learn, than to receive a basketful of recommendations. I admit there are games played in which all are gentlemen, and no one under any circumstance could be induced to take any advantage of another. But, my boy, such cases are rare. Want of opportunity, and fear of the eyes of others, are what keep many players honest. Now, with these introductory remarks, I will say, that it is to guard you against the acts of such players that I shall talk to you for a short time, feeling sure that, if you remember well what I say, it will be to your eventual great gain.

"I begin by repeating the advice of the father to his son. Said he, 'My son, if you play cards for gain, you will surely lose in the end; but if you will see that the *cards are cut* immediately before dealing every time, your money will last you longer.' This was good advice, and just as good now as when first given. There are card players, or 'card sharps,' as they are called, who can shuffle cards so adroitly as to '*put up a hand*' right before your eyes, and you not know it. Even a 'bungler' can shuffle so as to give himself a 'pair,' or at least to have knowledge of what cards are left on the top or bottom of the pack, which knowledge he can make useful in many ways. For instance, after the deal, he finds in looking at his hand that he has a pair that match the card he knows is on the bottom of the pack. In helping himself, he takes this bottom card; he 'does his work so fine' you can not discover the cheat. And if he has a 'four straight,' a 'four flush' or 'two pairs,' and the bottom card will fill his hand, he takes it, as I have said, making his 'straight,' or 'flush,' or 'full.' Many other points under this head could be given you, my boy, why the cards should be cut the last thing before being dealt. Strictly, the *blank card* of the pack should always be the bottom card of the pack being dealt.

“*Second.*— Whenever the cards are cut, be sure and have the *two separated parts of the pack put together* before dealing. An old gentleman once said to a young man, ironically, who was dealing from a part of the pack, ‘Young man, you ought never to play cards until your hands have grown sufficiently large to hold the whole pack at one and the same time.’ The reason is this: The party shuffling has a chance to know what cards are on the top of the pack, and by holding only the cut portion in his hand while dealing, knows into whose hand these cards fall, or if they should fall to himself, he would know how to discard, so as to have his hand helped by drawing. You see this gives the dealer an advantage over the other players.

“*Third.*— The pack, or any undealt portions of it, should at all times remain in sight of the players, and *upon the table*, and held by the dealer only *while actually engaged in dealing or in helping hands*. This is to prevent the dealer from obtaining knowledge while holding the cards on or below the surface of the table.

“*Fourth.*— In gathering up the discarded cards for the purpose of shuffling, be sure that the faces of the cards are turned from the shuffler; for otherwise the party shuffling gains an advantage, by knowing the position of some of the higher cards, and besides, it gives him an opportunity of ‘putting up the cards’ while shuffling. In no instance, however, should the discarded cards be gathered up while some are still engaged in playing their hands.

“*Fifth.*— In helping the players after discarding, always give the number called for, *together*, as they come from the pack, and not *singly*, one by one; for this reason: There are persons who can with their finger-nails, or ring, or by a slight bend, so mark the cards, as to know them whenever these marks are seen; and in dealing they can only see the marks by dealing the cards off one at a time, and not together. And besides, if the dealer deals them off *singly*, and knows the bottom card, he can, as I have said, help himself to that card, which he could not so well do by dealing them off together. Again, some dealers are so expert, that they can deal continually the *second card* from the top of the pack; they can give you any number called for, *one at a time*, without disturbing the top card, which top card the dealer, of course, wants himself, to help his hand. This could not be done, if the number called for were dealt off together, and not one at a time. This is called, ‘*Dealing Seconds.*’



“Sixth.— Discarded cards should be left upon the table, and never touched until all have been helped; they should be discarded to the person whose duty is to gather them up for shuffling. By observing this direction, it will be found difficult for a player to discard a different number from the number he draws, without detection. Any dealer who is ‘Playing in’ with another, and helping his ‘Pard’ to extra cards, and receiving the same number in discard, can avoid detection by immediately gathering up the discarded ones, and putting them on the bottom of the pack from which he is dealing. I repeat, therefore, that discarded cards should be left on the table, until all are helped.

“Seventh.— Always look with suspicion upon one who wears eye-glasses while playing, and who wears them at no other time; or upon the player who habitually calls for more light—who wants the gas turned on, or the window-shades raised, when there is sufficient light already. Our playing cards are large print. A man nearly blind can distinguish the cards, and

ordinary eyes can read them distinctly at twilight. In such cases the probabilities are, that the one desiring more light is dealing with *marked cards*; the marks are so fine that strong light and magnifying-glasses are necessary to see the marks. I say, my boy, you must keep a sharp look-out for all such players.

“*Eighth*.— Look out for that player who is continually fussing with the pack. I think it is called ‘Monkeying with the cards.’ The probabilities are that he is ‘putting them up.’

“*Ninth*.— Look out for that player who invariably, when he picks up the pack to deal, looks at the bottom card, or shows it to the player at his left. Also for the one who is always precise in cutting the cards at some particular place in the pack. These are all indications of the party’s trying to take advantage, and must be looked upon with suspicion. The last is called ‘*Cutting to a break*.’

“*Tenth*.— Watch very closely an *uneasy* player, one who is almost constantly on the move; using the cuspidor often, though neither chewing nor smoking; his hands and arms continually on the move, while they ought to be quiet on, or above the table. The probabilities are that such a player is taking cards from the pack, and secreting them in some place on his person—inside of his neck collar, under his handkerchief, in his lap, up his coat-sleeve, or holding them in the bend of his knee, and using them whenever the hand dealt him can be benefited thereby. At other times, two or three cards of like denomination are held in the palm of the hand, to be used with the next hand given, in helping to make a very large hand. This is done by many so cleverly that it is impossible to see the cards so held. This is called ‘*Holding out cards*.’

“*Eleventh*.— You have undoubtedly noticed, my boy, hanging in the saloons of our River and Sound steamers, a card on which is printed these words: ‘Beware of well-dressed persons who invite you to play euchre.’ Now these well-dressed persons are known as travelling ‘Card Sharps.’ They are always well dressed when travelling, for their dress is their card of introduction to their fellow-travellers. If you should accept an invitation of one from these, and sit down with two others to a game of ‘Euchre,’ or ‘All Fours,’ it will *always result* in the cards being ‘put up’ at some stage of the game, so as to have you receive a very large *poker* hand, and one of the others a *larger* one. Although professing to be entire

strangers to each other, the fact is, they belong to a gang, who travel for the purpose of playing and robbing others, as a business. The whole plan now is to induce you to bet on your hand as a '*poker hand*,' which, in your verdancy, you would be tempted to do, *but surely to lose if you did*. Parties have often been taken in, in this way, and been known to lose all the money they had with them, together with their watches, and other valuables about their persons. These fellows, and their game, are becoming so well known that they find it difficult to pick up a 'Greeny,' or 'Flat,' or 'Sucker,' as they call their victims. Your Uncle George was attacked by one of these gangs once, while on the cars, coming from Albany to this city. Knowing their game, he allowed them to go on, until he got the *large poker hand*, and their offering to bet on theirs being a better one. Thinking it had gone far enough, he looked at them all squarely for a moment, and then said: 'You think you have got the best *poker hand*, do you? Well, now; I give you just one minute to "*git*," all of you'; and they did 'git,' too. While leaving, one grumbled out to another, in an angry tone, 'You must be a d——d fool to take that man for a "Flat."' They all left the train at the next station. I would have informed the conductor, but it is said that some conductors are afraid of these fellows, or, worse yet, are 'in with them,' so I said nothing."

"Well! well! uncle, I should think you *had* travelled. And now, as I have been a good deal puzzled over an incident that occurred only last week, the thought strikes me that you can explain it; so, if you will allow me, I will relate it.



“A friend of mine said to me one day: ‘Charlie, I have an intimate acquaintance in Pine Street, who has a small back office, and does a commission business on foreign account. Though his commissions are heavy, yet he has much spare time, and is very fond of playing poker, although he knows nothing of the game.’ Said he, ‘This person thinks no more of losing a thousand dollars than a dollar; and I have a plan by which I know we can beat him sure, without taking any risk.’ I’ll give you his plan, uncle, in his own words. Said he to me, ‘I will stand *behind*, and so as to see my friend’s hand, and will telegraph you with my fingers, whether he has one or two pair, triplets or better; and with this knowledge of course you can beat him, *sure*.’ His proposition and plan seemed somewhat mixed to me, and besides, I didn’t like it; so I excused myself, saying I had but little time for playing the game, and when I did play it was only for recreation, with a made-up party of friends, or at the club. But I have thought of the proposition of my friend many times since, and have wondered what it meant.”

“Well! my boy, I am delighted to know that you had moral courage enough to refuse. It was a guilt-edged temptation, and the thousands who have taken in the bait will die with the secret of their losses, and the way it was done, remaining in their own breasts untold. A friend, was he? May God deliver you, my boy, from all such friends! This is an old trick. This friend is your worst enemy. He is ‘in with’ this ‘Pine Street commission merchant,’ as he calls him, and the plan is to *rob you*. This is the way they do it. Back of where you sit at the table, and so as to enable a confederate to look through from an adjoining room and see your hand of cards, is a small aperture in the wall or ceiling, and by this means your hand is seen and telegraphed, under the table, to your opponent, *so perfectly*, that this ‘merchant on foreign account’ knows the exact value of your hand, from one pair, up, and *down*, to any *card high*.

“Now, this advantage will invariably beat you; for your friend, as you call him, telegraphs you as to *one*, or *two pair*, *triplets*, etc., held by your adversary; while his confederate in the adjoining room telegraphs him the exact *size* of your hand; even, as I have said, to the highest card, when you held no pair. This robbery is carried on quite largely in this and other cities; and large amounts lost, without the fact ever being told of; for the reason that the one who has been taken in, and lost, must, if he attempts to expose, acknowledge that he himself yielded to the temptation to do wrong. Your friend’s friendship is like that of the spider to the fly. The Pine Street office is the parlor, and your money is the fly, which walks in, but goes out as yours, no more. I am very glad you have mentioned this incident, and I know you will not forget my explanation of it.

“*Twelfth*.— I will now speak of the ‘Jack Pot.’ This is an innovation of a late date, and is very much against the interests of a poor player, or one who, for the time being, is in bad luck; for it compels all alike to put into the pot the amount of the ‘*ante*.’ Yet in a square game it has its advantages; for if your bad luck should turn to good, two or three hands would bring back all of your losing, and make you ‘hunk.’ While playing ‘Jack Pots,’ you must watch: *First*, those who are behind-time, and have to be reminded that they have not ‘*put up*’; and, *Second*, those who throw their chips into the pot *indiscriminately*, or who occasionally make the wrong change, or who are habitually changing the chips in the pot with their own—large ones for smaller, or *vice versa*—or who are accustomed to say: ‘Well, I am in. I owe so much to the pot.’ These are all wrong, and

done in many cases,—not in all, I am glad to say,—for the purpose of *saving or making wrongfully*, and deserve to be called ‘petty thefts.’ The only right way, my boy, is for all who have an interest in the pot, to promptly ‘put up’ the full amount required in the centre of the table, in front of themselves, and separate from the pot; and under no circumstances allow the chips in the pot to be handled. The dealer should never commence to deal the cards until the bets made are all in for the *full amount* and *no more*,—having nothing due *from*, or *to*, the pot. This regularity will save misunderstandings, disputes, and oftentimes animosities between the players.

“A quarter of a century or more ago, your Uncle George cut a slip from *The Spirit of the Times*, headed ‘Hints to Poker Players,’ an extract from which I will read, as it bears so strongly upon what I have said to you:

“... Never “pip” up in the pool when you can avoid it—it is a useless drain upon one’s money, and can always be avoided, thus: When all are in but yourself, place your fore-finger firmly upon a chip of the pool and exclaim, “Somebody ain’t up!” “Pip up!” etc. This will of course compel any one who may be undecided whether he “pipped up” to do so again; in case he swears to it, or has proof, that he has put up, then give in like a “lamb,” and put up a chip—like a martyr.

“If you can manage to conceal four aces of another pack in one of your boots or about your person, and dexterously draw your hands thence of course, do it; if caught, make it appear a joke.

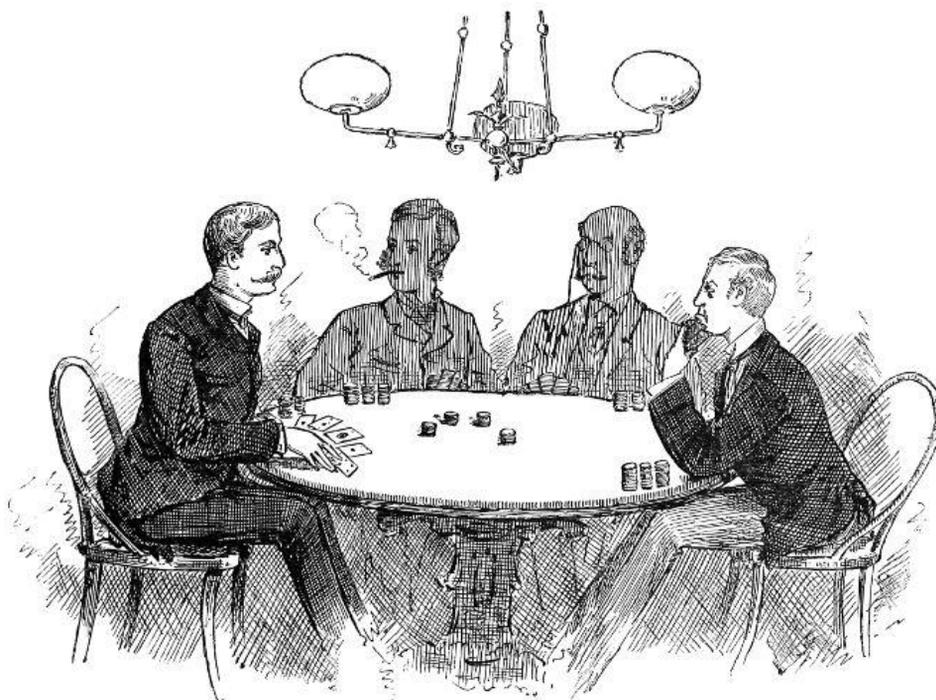
“If you have a bad hand quickly mingle it with the pack, swear you had six cards and draw your “ante,” or rather some one’s else, as you did not put up. In this way you win one.

“If you have a good hand get mad, slam down your cards, swear luck is against you, but you’ll “go in a V, if you lose it,” just by way of a “flyer.” Your opponent takes the bait, and, thinking you are bluffing, goes a V better. Now you’ve *got* him, go the V and an X better; if he has a tolerable good hand he’ll see you and “call.” Say at first, “a small pair.” If they are good take the pool without discovering what else you may have; but if he has more than you first, show your triplets or two pair, as the case may be, and let all see it, that they may know that you did not cheat them, at least.

“If you “go in one” and are called, say in a very desponding tone while shuffling your cards, with the pack, “Only a pair of aces,” as if you had not the remotest idea of their being good,—but it’s a pretty safe hand, and if your opponent says they are good, take the pool; if not, then examine his hand to see if he outholds you.

“Having had a pretty good run of luck and finding it changing, draw your watch, swear that you have an engagement at such a time, which of course is now past; you are sorry, but will have revenge another time, change in your “chips,” pocket the “ready money,” and go on a “bender.””

“This bit of sarcasm well delineates the methods of some players at this day.



“*Thirteenth.*— Whenever you find yourself between two parties who ‘raise’ each other while you ‘call along,’ until this ‘see-sawing’ process finally drives you out, and the other two come to ‘a call,’ be sure and have the *defeated hand exhibited on the table*. The probabilities are they are ‘playing in together,’ and that there is but one *good* hand, if even that.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

