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SIMPSON'S BAD LUCK.

BY ED. MOTT.



one could have been more lucky in love than Simpson was. He had won and married the handsomest and richest girl in the county. Better luck than attended him in business affairs never waited upon any one. He had made a fortune before he was thirty. In politics good luck had smiled on him from his first venture, and he had at last to positively refuse her further offered favors. But at cards he was the unluckiest man alive. No man loved the fascinations of a social game more than he. Whist, cribbage, euchre, poker—he played them all with equal enthusiasm and fondness, and with unvarying bad luck. It was not on record that Simpson had ever got up a winner from a single sitting. “Playing in regular Simpson luck” had come to be a proverb—not only in his circle, but in all that country round.

“I don’t care for the money,” he used to say (nor he didn’t), “but I’d like to be able to say once that I won.”

If he held four of a kind, it seemed to surely happen that no one stayed in with him, and he had only the ante draw to console him—except on one occasion. There was a jack-pot, and it had gone round four or five times, when Simpson opened. He had a right to, for he held three eights, and he made them four on the draw.

One by one the players laid down, until only one was left besides Simpson, and that one was on the point of quitting too. Simpson was mad.

“It beats the devil!” he cried. “You fellows must have some way of knowing when I get a hand, the way you always drop out on me!”

“Hold on, Simpson!” said the player referred to, who was young Frazier, the nervy oil broker. “I’ll stay with you!” and he made good, threw his hand among the dead wood, and called for five cards.

“No!” exclaimed Simpson. “I won’t have that! I’ve got a

sure hand, and I won't take advantage of a five card draw made just because I kicked. I don't want any sympathy stay!"

"Never you mind!" replied Frazier. "I don't have to bet my hand unless I want to, and I won't if I don't think something of it. What do you do?"

Of course Simpson had nothing else to do but bet his hand, which he did with a bad grace, for he felt that he had forced Frazier into the pot, and it wouldn't be any credit to him to win it. He made his bet stiff. Frazier looked at his five card draw, and quickly raised Simpson double his bet. Frazier had some reputation as a bluffer, and it nettled Simpson to think that he was hoping to maintain that reputation at his expense; yet, coming in as Frazier had, he hated to go on and win his money, and he told him so again.

"Never you mind me!" said Frazier.

So Simpson couldn't do anything but give Frazier a big raise back, which Frazier coolly saw and doubled. This went on for some time, when at last Simpson said:

"Oh, what's the use, Frazier? Things are my way to-night at last! I've got to win, but I won't call it a win, either, the way it came about. I call you."

Simpson laid down his four eights and reached for the pot.

"Opened on three," said he.

Frazier laid down four tens and took the pot.

"Got 'em on the draw," said he.

And that was the way Simpson's luck ran at cards. If he drew to a flush and filled, the other fellow would fill a bigger one and get the pot. If he didn't fill his flush and dropped out, he'd be sure to find that his hand would have been better than the other fellow's anyhow. Once, after losing everything for an hour, he said to another player, who had been playing in pretty bad luck, too:

"Let's change places."

They changed. From that time four out of five winning hands fell to the man who took Simpson's place, and he quit 'way ahead of the game. One time Simpson picked up his cards one by one as they were dealt to him. One, two, three, four aces showed up in succession.

"Everybody 'll stay out, of course!" he said to himself. "But if they don't, my time has come!"

It was Simpson's first say. The night was warm, and the windows of the room were up. Simpson sat immediately oppo-

site one. Before making his bet he shoved his chair back to get a drink of water from a pitcher on a stand behind him. A sudden puff of wind came in at the window. It caught Simpson's cards some way as they lay on the table, turned them face upward, and revealed each one to the astonished gaze of the players! Simpson's luck! There wasn't a man at the board who held less than three of a kind to draw to, and one held a pat diamond flush! They would have come in, of course, to a man. Nothing could have kept them out. No one said a word for at least a minute. Then Simpson tossed the exposed cards in the middle of the table and got up.

"I guess I won't play any more to-night," he said. "I'm liable to get four aces again, and if I hold 'em down and get to betting them, someone has got to hold a straight flush against me or the roof'll fall in, just to keep up my record for luck."

Simpson was noted for his persistence in coming in. He always drew cards, trying all sorts of combinations and chances to make a hand. He liked five card draws, especially after his experience with Frazier, but his anticipations of them provokingly failed to realize. The one single time that he declined to take a hand is one of the memorable incidents in his record. He had been playing with his usual luck. Finally a hand was dealt him that wasn't as good as eight high. He dealt it himself. When it came round to him to draw he declined.

"What!" said a player. "Pat?"

"No," replied Simpson. "I'm going to have good luck for once and stay out!"

There was some stiff betting on that round, and the winner raked in five hundred dollars on a ten full. Simpson turned up the five cards he would have held had he gone in, and simply said:

"My luck, that's all."

They made a king full.

Well, you might say why was Simpson so much of a chump as to keep on playing against such uniform and invariable bad luck? Suppose he didn't care for the money. Didn't he have any pride in himself that he was content to sit and see himself made the sport of chance night after night without the poor satisfaction of now and then getting even a temporary advantage by some display of skill or judgment? Wouldn't a man of pride and strength of mind quit playing when he found luck always pointing the other way?

Any man but Simpson, perhaps. It was just because he had pride and strength of mind that he kept on playing.

"You don't catch me knocking under to bad luck," he used to say. "As long as I'm a loser I intend to play. The first night I make a good up and up win out, then I quit."

Simpson made a trip to Europe. He met, as all voyagers so inclined do on ocean steamers, choice spirits who enjoyed cards. He played with his usual luck on the way over. That night, when he was to quit, was as great a distance away as ever, so far as all indications went. On the return trip Simpson met other choice spirits, and but little time he spent on deck. One night, in mid ocean, they were at the height of a particularly interesting game of perennial, never-wearisome, but often capricious poker. Simpson had filled a hand which seemed to disturb him. An officer of the steamer had just come down from the deck. Simpson lay his hand on the table, and turning to the officer, said :

"What sort of a night is it?"

"A glorious one, sir," replied the officer.

"Any sign of a storm?"

"Moonlight, not a cloud in the sky, not a ripple on the ocean, not a speck on the horizon."

"No chance of running into a waterspout?"

"Not the slightest."

"Nor danger of lightning from a clear sky?"

"None whatever."

"Then," said Simpson, returning to the game, "I can't imagine anything else that might do me up, and I can say right now that this will be my last game of poker! I'll explain later, gentlemen."

The betting went on. Simpson never knew what hands were out against him, but they must have been strong ones, the way they were played. He knew what he held, though. A royal flush! He held the winning-out hand that night, and he knew it. The chips were piled high and higher on the table, and no one seemed inclined to quit.

"I've knocked my bad luck in the head at last!" Simpson kept saying to himself, as he tossed in his bets, bigger and bigger.

All other tables were deserted, and the excited players grouped about this one. The nerve tension of many was becoming strained almost to its limit, when suddenly there came a tremendous crash, a confusion of voices in tones of terror, and

words of hurried command, a total darkness, and a score or more of frightened men, struggling in an entangled mass here and there, whither they had been hurled by the shock. In the scramble and aimless rush in the darkness that followed the regaining of feet in the cabin, Simpson found himself hurried along until he stood on deck, where the ship's officers were actively engaged in assuring the terror-stricken passengers that there was nothing to fear—the danger was past. The moon was still shining brightly, not a cloud was in the sky, not a ripple on the ocean. But off the port bow, a quarter of a mile away, loomed a great gray object, that gleamed and glimmered and glistened when the moonlight fell upon it, towering aloft, peaked and minaretted like some architectural pile adrift from oriental shores.

“And what do you call that?” asked Simpson of an officer, grimly.

“An iceberg, sir,” was the reply. “It came up suddenly ahead of us, as if it rose from the depths of the sea in our path, which, as a matter of fact, it did—a submerged one, sir, suddenly freed and booming upward. We had nearly time to clear it entirely, sir, but not quite.”

Simpson went back to the card room. The lights had been renewed. Scattered about the apartment like wind blown leaves were cards and chips, in a hopelessly mingled mass, entirely unrecognizable as to form or ownership.

“I might just as well have held six high!” said Simpson, as he viewed the wreck. “But this is the last! I wouldn't have been surprised at tempests, waterspouts or lightning, but when they begin to dig icebergs out of the depths of the sea, and play 'em against me, I think it's time for me to quit!”

And he quit. Was there ever such bad luck as Simpson's?