

So all was to go on smoothly as before. Things had been set for an explosion but Edith had simply refused to light the match. She had gone by with her face averted. Perhaps, I thought, that was wise of her. We all ought to keep intact, as far as possible, the things that we value. Miss Kenworthy diverted Herbert's ardors and a great deal of his company away from her, and left her where she preferred to be, in a self-possessed isolation.

Of course it must have been a little trying to her pride to have had to do it. It would not be pleasant for Edith to try to imitate even the handwriting of any one, and most of all of Miss Kenworthy, whom she despised as much for her black satin and her ingratiating manner as for her relations with Herbert. She had, no doubt, practised on several envelopes. "Herbert Fraser, Esqre., Herbert Fraser,

Esqre.," and thrown them afterward into the fire. The ashes of them were probably lying there now, behind Herbert's legs, innocuous, as are all ashes.

And how can it matter to Herbert, I asked myself? He didn't know that his romance had become a little ridiculous, and what you don't know, they say, doesn't hurt you. Herbert was perfectly happy.

But what a horrid proverb! I looked at Herbert who was gazing into the fire with an unusually absorbed and rapt expression on his face. And it wasn't true. Surely some subtle ruination works in things that have been unsealed, then stealthily covered up again——

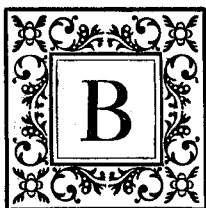
Anyway, after that, I couldn't stay with them. Not knowing why, but feeling that I must, I packed my sponge-bag and my clothes and went home.

## The Poker Game

BY ROGER BURLINGAME

Author of "Susan Shane," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE VAN WERVEKE



**B**ILL WINSLOW came out the door of his bachelor apartment and looked up the street for a taxi. It was a bitter cold night. It was one of those nights when your feet seem to crackle on the pavement, and the circles of your nostrils tighten when the air strikes your face. The street-lights shone very bright and definite, round spots with no diffusion of light about them, and all sounds rang hard and distinct. But Bill Winslow, having come from a room whose warmth still clung to him like a garment, thought, 'It isn't so cold. Wonder where all the taxis are?' and walked to the corner. There the north wind, going at a good rate in preparation for a gale, struck him full in the face and made him gasp. He turned up the collar of his coat and

thought, 'It is cold. Wonder where all the taxis are?'

He turned his back to the wind, braced himself, and watched the sharp lights go by him. "Taxi!" he called, and a boy, going by on the run, a sort of waddle, for his hands were deep in his trousers pockets, turned his head half round and laughed. The boy was the only person on the sidewalk and the cars in the street went by quickly as if the speed kept them warm and they were afraid to stop. It was all very irritating and the wind was beginning to go right through Winslow's fur coat. It certainly was going through his silk socks. 'A man might easily get his feet frozen,' he thought. And then, at last, after much insistent waving of his stick, a taxi drew up and the driver began clapping his hands together impatiently. Winslow climbed in, shouting the address. Yes, the driver knew the Sphinx Club and it was a cold night.

It was warm in the taxi and Winslow thawed, opening his coat and looking down over his dinner-coat to see that everything was properly studded and buttoned. The Sphinx Club made a special point of dressing for poker. It kept up the morale, which was important. Winslow felt in his pockets; everything was there: money, flask, gold cigarette-case.

Older members of the Sphinx had

the ceiling were raised and large round tables placed beneath them; clicking chips, high glasses, ash-trays multiplied upon them, the ashes of cigars missed aim more frequently, the stink of forgotten cigars hung heavier in the air, and the glory of the old Sphinx departed. It was true that the change of money decreased, for the men who had solemnly dedicated ten cents a point to their skill drew back before this blinder luck and passed and



The cars in the street went by quickly.—Page 298.

shaken their heads when a revolutionary meeting had changed the rule forbidding "round" card games. So many heads had shaken, in fact, that the rule had been much modified while it lay on the table and the amended proposition licensed poker (not by name) on Saturday nights only. Gray and sombre men had left the meeting with the knell of the old Sphinx tolling in their ears, and muttering such words as "civilization," "decadence," "destructive generation," determined to restrict their presence in the card-room to the six remaining nights and fill or empty their pockets under the quiet dignity of bridge and whist.

By the middle of the winter the rule passed at the November annual meeting was in full sway and the storm of its passage forgotten. On Saturday nights the orange-shaded lamps that hung from

checked and passed and laid down their hands and looked at each other's faces, and the pots ran low in the first months of Saturday poker at the Sphinx and the sums that moved in and out of the bank were low in the Sphinx tradition. Oddly, too, there were few tables; there were nights when only two or three with six or seven at each began the evening and often but one survived the closing time after which the remaining players signed hourly checks for the privilege of keeping a boy from his sleep.

'There won't be many to-night,' Winslow thought. Still you couldn't tell. They all had their cars. There was no reason for just plain cold to keep them at home. If it were snowing now. But just cold. The driver was taking first one hand and then the other off the wheel to attend to his ears. It was a wonder he

wouldn't wear a fur cap and a fur coat in this weather instead of that sweater. He must be cold out there. Give him a good tip. Winslow's hand went mechanically into his trousers pocket where he kept indiscriminate masses of bills easy to get at. They spoiled the fit of his trousers, his valet said.

He buttoned his coat again because little puffs of air were coming against his shirt front. He slid his feet back and forth over the heater. It was taking a hell of a time to get there. There! That fool was turning the wrong way. "No, no, no!" he yelled, pounding on the glass. "Can't you tell east from west?" The driver turned a blue face half round and said something unintelligible. Taxi drivers always answered back that way. . . .

They were at the Sphinx at last and Winslow, on the curb, was pulling first a twenty, then a ten, then three or four fives out of his disorderly pocket. The driver was pinching at his ear, his face very intent and concentrated. Then his hand moved round the circle of the ear, his large fingers pinching at every half inch of it. It was an enormous ear that stuck out like a sail from the side of his head.

Winslow said, "Here, here," waving a five-dollar bill. The driver turned his head to the meter, his hand still gripping the ear. "Seventy-five," he said, slowly. "Well," said Winslow. "Ain't got no change," said the driver. "All right, keep it," said Winslow, "it's a cold night," and turned away.

The taxi driver looked at the bill a moment and burst into a loud laugh, the end of which Winslow heard as the door closed on him. 'What's funny about that?' he thought, and felt a moment's discomfort as he went up in the elevator to the card-room.

When he got there he found the chips clicking on four tables. The heavy room was full of spasmodic sound. The older men sat, by careful prearrangement, nearest the fire and the youngest by the north window where even the heavy plush curtains moved slightly when a heavy blast of the howling north wind struck the window and little fingers of cold shot abruptly through and the men with their backs to it shivered from time to time and rang for White Rock.

There was a little burst of greeting as Winslow neared the table of the youngest, some of the men looking up cheerily with, "Well, if it isn't Bill, the old bum!" and others simply said "Lo Bill" to their cards. It was a matter of a few seconds to negotiate his chips and pick up his hand. Yes, the old stuff was back to-night: ("three twos, I'll fill it if it's true to form, two cards please, yes, there they are, pair of fives, keep your face straight, you damn fool!").

The card-room boy moved silently about with bottles; a small boy with eyes slightly ringed from suppressed sleep and a face mildly withered. He had learned the trick of seeing every hand at the table without ever quite looking at any of them, without ever a flicker on his tired face or a halt in his busy, methodical step. He always seemed to be present, too, when the money was passed, his little bloodshot eyes becoming hard steely points at the sight of the big bills. He moved now, silently, stopping behind one of the chairs. "No ice, sir," he whispered, taking a glass off his tray. The man in the chair made no sound, laid one card on the soft green baize, moved the glass a little and glanced quickly round the table. The boy had difficulty removing the cap from the bottle because he was not looking at it. Then, an instant, he caught a flashing eye across the table and looked down, and faint color came into his face. If Mr. Hartshorne would pour in the whiskey now, he could fill the glass—that would take time. The man on Hartshorne's left pulled out a silver flask and poured into Hartshorne's glass. The dealer was looking successively at the men and flicking cards at them. The boy had got the cap off. He moved the bottle so that his hand touched Mr. Hartshorne's arm. Hartshorne jumped at the touch.

"What's that—oh!"

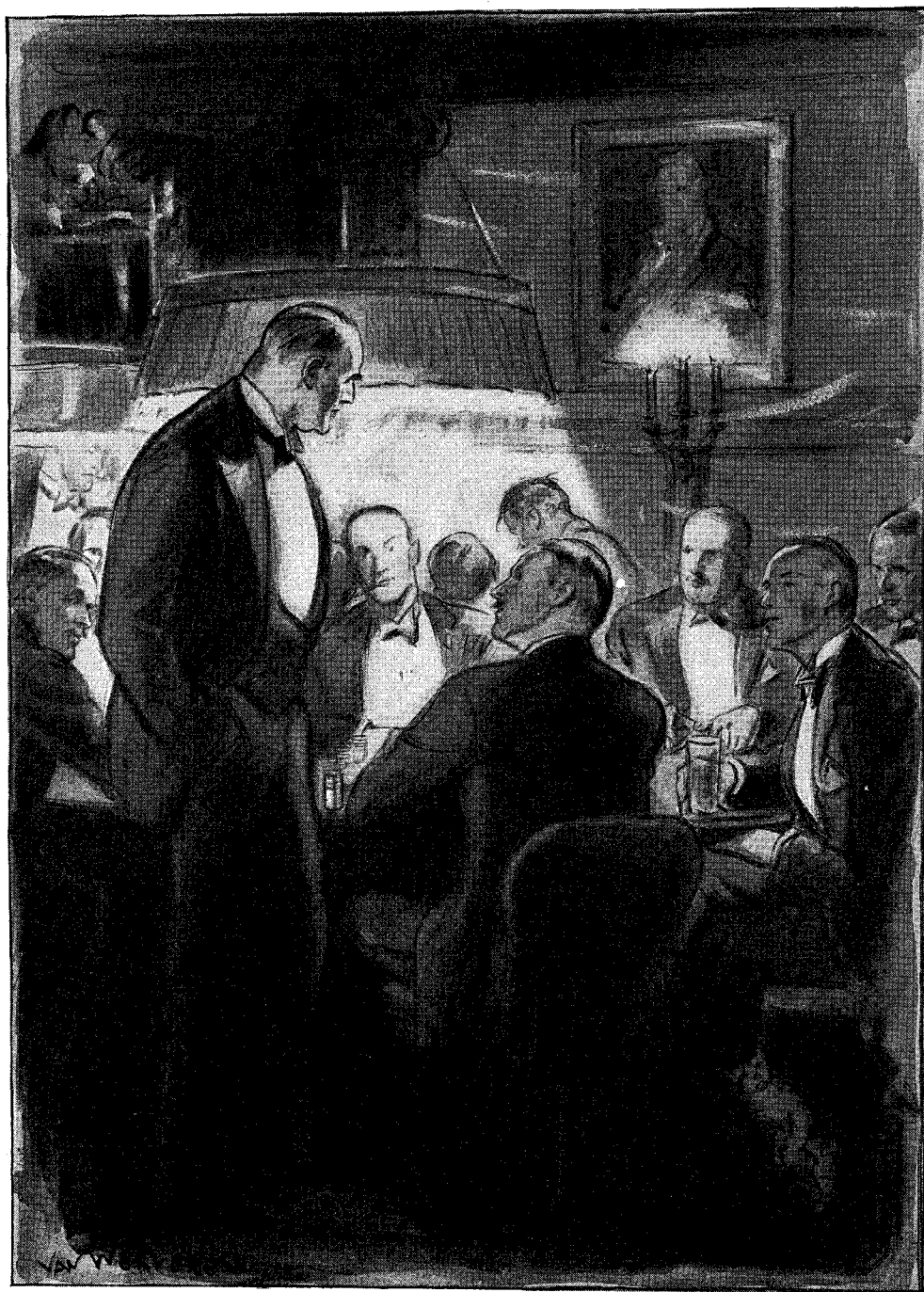
The words, "Shall I fill it for you, sir?" hung on the boy's lips and he stopped them with a shudder clean down his little frame.

"One."

Mr. Hartshorne picked up the card. The boy poured out the sparkling water and moved on softly.

'Supposing I'd said it,' the boy thought, sitting on the bench outside, and he doubled up with nervous horror at the





*Drawn by George Van Werveke.*

"The attitude of the gambler is a contempt for money."—Page 302.

thought. "Fill it for you, oh my God!" He writhed a moment and then leaned back and all his tense muscles relaxed. Hard to keep eyes open, sleepy, so sleepy, up! Wake with a jerk! Was that the bell, no, no, sleepy, dreaming, five aces. Up! No, no, can't be five, so sleepy. . . .

On the left of the dealer Jimmy Sprague passed and Chuck Giles next him threw out a chip. Hartshorne laid the nine, ten, jack, and queen of clubs along with a two of hearts face down and picked up his glass.

"Damn that boy," he said. "Thanks for the drink, Chuck. Twice two much fizz." But Chuck was raising the limit and only the click of his chips answered. Through all the play little words came out thus; no one answered, no one heard. Barton Darrow next the window said, "It's getting cold," and Bill Winslow next him said, "Funny how it runs to-night," and Harvey Jones said, "Three. That's queer, it's empty," and shook his flask, and then every one heard Jimmy Sprague say, "Dealer takes two cards." Cards fell, round the table, two chips raised, one called, Sprague threw down three fives and then every one looked up and saw Judge Milliken.

"Good evening, Judge. Sit in awhile?"

The judge was a large man with straight, heavy black eyebrows and thin, straight lips. He spoke seldom and men listened to him. He had a trick of clearing his throat and then every one listened. It was a resounding noise his throat made when he cleared it; not a long rasp; a kind of monosyllabic throat-clearing like a gong or a gavel on a large empty desk.

But now he stood silent with his hands in his pockets.

"I believe you were opposed to this new rule, Judge."

"Not in the least. I take no part in club legislation."

Several men at the next table looked over at the sudden sound of the judge's voice. Sprague stopped shuffling the cards and looked up, a little embarrassed. The others moved their glasses about and one of them was disordering his chips into piles of mixed colors. Sprague put down his cards and took a long drink. It was his seventh so he put the glass down carefully.

"Judge Milliken, what is your feeling?"

Darrow thought, 'What a fool!' and Chuck Giles, who was the youngest, thought, 'He's had too much to drink,' and felt a little proud as he thought it.

"My feeling about what?" said the judge, biting out the words. The men at the next table, being at the end of a hand, turned a little in his direction, and the table by the fire went on playing.

"About—well—er—gambling," said Sprague.

The judge cleared his throat.

"It's a form of profanity," he said. There was a short silence. The boy slid by with a tray. A gust of wind came sharp at the window and one loose pane vibrated like a siren. One of the men at the table by the fire said, "It's getting late," and there was a moving back of chairs and a buzz of talk, then silence again while they counted chips.

"Profanity?" said Sprague.

The gavel boomed again.

"Irreverence. Money is the exchange of life. We must, eventually, translate everything into terms of it. The attitude of the gambler is a contempt for money. He treats it with disrespect. Money must command respect and must be treated with reverence as a symbol and as a fact. You men, passing it back and forth in these games, are thumbing your noses, to use a vulgar expression, at a term of life, a symbol of life, and an inseparable fact of life."

"But after all," said Sprague, "it's all relative. I mean it's not wrong if you can afford it."

"The fact of money is absolute," said the judge—his voice mounting to its court-room resonance, "right and wrong are relative in most cases and we can judge only by the law. The facts are thus and the law is thus and our judgment in court is based on the relation of the facts to the law. But the law does not consider what I am speaking of here. I am speaking of an attitude. Real right and wrong which transcend the law are matters of attitude. Contempt for money; should I say, perhaps, irreverence for money is an attitude of blasphemy. It is, in a manner of speaking, a sin against the Holy Ghost. Good evening, gentlemen."

The men looked at the table and, when the judge was gone, smiled at each other.



“Have you lost something?”—Page 304.

Sprague cut the cards, slamming half the pack down and the baize muffled the sound.

“The Holy Ghost,” said Darrow.  
“Hum.”

“Fine chap, the judge,” said Chuck Giles.

Sprague thought, ‘That’ll be a good thing to tell my boy when he grows up. I’ll be through with all this, then.’

Harvey Jones thought, ‘The old fool. Men when they get rich think money is God.’

Bill Winslow was running his eyes up and down the piles of his chips trying to count them without appearing to count them. He had been doing this while the judge had talked, taking advantage of the others’ diversion. ‘Four hundred,’ he thought, ‘and a hundred to start with and there’s at least two hundred in the whites; it’s a clean-up, that’s what it is, a clean-up, if I just go easy for the rest of the evening now. . . .’

The men next the fire left early and



gradually the other tables were deserted; the fire died down, and the play at the window table went on dimly in the haze of smoke. The spots on the cards danced before the players' eyes. The boy came in and handed about checks to sign. The whiskey gave out and the boy was sent to the telephone and after a time an old man came in with packages and looked eagerly at the piles of chips and shuffled out again smoothing crumpled bills in his rough hands.

Darrow said, "Let's move over by the fire," but no one heard him and after a time he said it again and no one heard him, so he poured out a stiff drink and drank it neat. The smoke was so heavy over the table they could hardly see across it, and every little while a narrow thrust of wind moved the curtains and bored a little tunnel through the smoke. When the checks came back for the second signing, Sprague looked at his watch and whistled.

"Let's make it five hands more," he said, and Chuck Giles cupped his single pile of chips in his hand and grunted and looked round the table to see if any one had noticed his gesture.

At the door they exclaimed at the sharp blows of the wind and one of them ran up the street shouting "taxi" after a big limousine. Bill Winslow came out last, having stopped to wake up the boy and buy a cigar, and drifted slowly down the pavement with his hands in the pockets of his fur coat. The tingle of the whiskey was in his feet. 'It isn't so cold,' he thought. 'Seven hundred and fifty; good evening. Funny, I was going to stay out of those last hands regardless. Funny thing, never pays to be cautious. Oh well, easy come, easy go. What was it the judge said? Thumb your nose. Thumb it at the world. Money be damned.'

At the corner a man was bent over the curb, poking in the gutter with his stick. Winslow moved by him and turned to look back. The man had no overcoat on, and one hand was in his trousers-pocket and the other with the stick was shaking in a regular rhythm. Winslow stopped at the curb and watched him. After a moment the man looked up and saw Winslow.

"Got good eyes, brother?" he said.

"Have you lost something?"

"Not much," said the man. "Just a dime. 'Tain't worth botherin', I guess. I can't see very good. It was right here it must have fell. I had it in the wrong pocket and I heard it clink. Must have been about here somewheres. I stopped as soon as I heard it clink."

Winslow unbuttoned his coat and pulled out a bill from his trousers pocket.

"Here, don't bother," he said.

The man straightened up as far as the chronic curve of his spine would permit and looked sharply into Winslow's eyes. His face was an odd mass of unsymmetrical little bones with curved lines in his skin circling about them. His chin was very round and red and bristled with hairs of uneven length and color. It was a face that had intended to be fat and genial and had undergone a series of failures in this intention. It was an ugly face and, at the moment, more than necessarily distorted.

Bill Winslow shoved back the bill abruptly and shifted his eyes from the old man's steady anger.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"I may look poor," said the man and stopped. Winslow looked slowly up him from the split toe of his right shoe to the missing button at his stomach where frayed black worsted stuck through.

"That's why I—I beg your pardon."

"I may look poor," said the man, "but I ain't no beggar. I earned that dime. And I earned this one too." He fumbled a long time at all his pockets, and Winslow waited uncomfortably because he could not make his feet move away. After much fumbling the man brought out a hand with a coin shining in it. He had meant to show it on his open palm but the fingers would not open. Now they closed further for the hand was shaking, dangerously. "I earned this one," he said, "and I'll earn the next one."

And he turned sharply and walked, too briskly for his age, down a side street and his stick clicked for a long time on the pavement while Winslow stood with the whiskey mounting into his head. "Disagreeable bird," he said aloud. "Was only trying to—" He stumbled toward the curb and, as he passed, a sharp glint in the gutter stopped him. He stooped slowly and picked up a bright dime and looked about him, but the long streets ran

empty between the festoons of the arc-lights.

He looked a moment at the coin in his hand as he moved on up the avenue. He slid the dime in his overcoat pocket, then, after a block or so of walking, he stopped.

"It'll bring me bad luck," he said. He pulled out a handful of change. "Which one was it?" He stood poking over the coins with a cold finger. One of them dropped and then with a sweeping gesture he threw the handful broadcast.

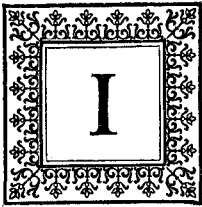
"It's gone now." He laughed and his laugh rang loud and lonely in the vacant street. He thrust his hand into his trousers pocket among the crisp hard bills. "Just as soon throw it all away. What was it the judge said? Irreverence. No, I'll keep it. Might as well get some fun out of it. I'll keep it and play it. Keep it and play it. Keep it and play it."

The words kept time to his step for a while and then the wind came sudden and hard in his face and frightened him a little.

## What Is "English"?

BY GORDON HALL GEROULD

Professor of English at Princeton University; Author of "Youth in Harley," etc.



It happens that by the operation of choice and circumstance I bear the title "Professor of English." So do a great number of other men—and a considerable number of women. We are perhaps not a large body in comparison with lawyers and bricklayers and realtors, but in the academic world we are relatively numerous. There are more of us, for example, than there are professors of Greek, or professors of art, or professors of electrical engineering, and quite as many, probably, as in any of the so-called departments into which our American love of system has divided the field of knowledge. Academically speaking, we are important.

Yet we are as recently invented as are the professors of natural science. English is a comparatively new "subject," to use the technical parlance of the schools. First there appeared in our colleges professors of rhetoric and oratory—retired clergymen, most of them; on their heels came professors of the English language and literature; and presently the great company of professors of English—English neat, one might have said in other days—was established in the land.

I am not proposing to attack or de-

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fend in any way this eminently useful and, on the whole, rather distinguished body of citizens. Association with them and with their work for some thirty years convinces me that they are perhaps quite as sensible and efficient in their way as any other set of men that could be cited for examination. Although they are given more gratuitous advice by outsiders than any other group I can think of, they seem to me very capable of managing their own affairs. Only—and here is the question I wish to put—what, precisely, is their business? What are they supposed to do for and with the hordes of students to whom they minister? They are called professors of English. But what, exactly, do they teach?

To begin with, they are expected to train their pupils to write. For some reason a little difficult to get at, since the use of the mother tongue ought, one would think, to be a matter of concern to all professors alike, the department of English is held responsible not only for instruction in writing but for any correction of his faults as a writer that the student ever receives. In some institutions, to be sure, the teachers of rhetoric and composition form a separate staff; but such professors certainly regard themselves—and with good right—as professors of English. Only in rare cases, more-