

# **LIFE'S LURE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649635146

Life's Lure by John G. Neihardt

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**JOHN G. NEIHARDT**

# **LIFE'S LURE**



BY JOHN G. NEIHARDT

*Poetry*

THE STRANGER AT THE GATE  
A BUNDLE OF MYRRH  
MAN-SONG

*Fiction*

LIFE'S LURE  
THE DAWN-BUILDER  
THE LONESOME TRAIL

*Miscellaneous*

THE RIVER AND I

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

*Life's Lure*

by

*John G. Neihardt*



MITCHELL KENNERLEY  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
MCMXIV

70 VNU  
ABRORLAD

*Copyright, 1914*  
*by John G. Neihardt*

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

## LIFE'S LURE

### PART I

#### I

Drake called for two cards, and with an abortive attempt at carelessness, signalled for a whiskey. When he had drained the glass at a gulp, the bar and the tables and the chairs and the men danced about less giddily—finally ceased altogether, and the babble of rough voices droned into an unnatural silence. But now that the outer world was still, that of the inner consciousness took up the dizzy whirl. Round and round and round spun the inner world—the only moving, noisy thing in the hushed, fixed universe.

"I've got to stop myself," Drake thought dazedly. "How can I ever win the pot if I keep on whirling—whirling—whirling?" The last word developed a life and a personality of its own, joining forces with the devilish gyration. He tried to catch the word, kill it; but its steadily increasing speed eluded him. "It's the last draw—the last hand—



and I can't stop whirling——” The word reproduced itself endlessly. “I've got to take hold of something and stop——”

Two black lights pierced the whirl—and suddenly Drake found himself staring blankly into the dark eyes of the dealer across the table. Drake was grateful for them—they were so quiet, shedding a soft light, like the eyes of a sad woman musing.

Yet they expressed nothing clearly—no passion, no anxiety. They were set in a face of dazzling whiteness; not a careless face, but a face without a mark of care. The brow was broad and smooth, the forehead high and well-formed, the nose slightly aquiline, but the thin straight lips belied the delicate sensitiveness of the nostrils. About the high, well-shaped crown of the head clustered a mass of curling hair—black as the eyes.

“I believe it is your bid, sir,” said the man with the black eyes. “It has been opened at fifty.”

Drake glanced at the jack-pot—a heap of gold and bills. He hungered for it, as a starving man hungers. How much it meant to him! It was life—not only for himself, but for the little woman back East. Would he win?

Hope, like a lamp flame about to succumb to a draught too strong, flares big before it dies. The whirlwind glory that clings about the world's last ditches seized Drake. Of course he would win! Fate may torture a man—but in the end, she is a woman. Fear and anxiety fled; the whirlwind glory

lifted him. He had not yet looked at the cards he had drawn—but why should he? They were just what they were! Seeing the face of Fate in no way mitigates the doom. On, then! One terrific plunge!

"I raise it ten," said Drake. His own voice was strange to him, seeming to grow up out of the hushed spaces about him. He had sixty-two dollars left. Sixty went to the centre, seemingly of their own volition.

"Raise it twenty-five," muttered the hirsute, brutal-faced man next in order. The dealer quietly counted out eighty-five dollars and stayed.

"I see you and go a hundred better," said the next.

"Come a hundred more," said the next, whose set teeth showed unpleasantly behind a curled upper lip. It was now up to Drake.

"I—I—I'm—out," he faltered, grinning nervously. He could feel his face turning green.

"Hundred better," growled the brutal-faced man. He drew a gun from its holster and placing it on the table before him, crouched over it, his big trigger-finger twitching.

"I will stay," said the dealer softly, his black eyes betraying no feeling in the matter.

Round and round the table went the betting. Drake sat stunned, watching the growing pot with hungry eyes, not yet conscious that he had no longer any interest in it. It was a three-cornered strug-

gle, for the dealer contented himself with trailing humbly after the others, not once raising the bet.

"I call you!" cried the fifth. His eyes narrowed wolfishly, his lips quivered, his nostrils were dilated. The man with the brutal face closed his big gnarled fist on the butt of his six-shooter. Two more guns appeared on the table. The dealer sat unarmed. After a rapid glance about the table, he turned his cards face up and reached a white taper-fingered hand for the pot.

"Hold on there!" growled the big man, planting his elbow on the table, and thrusting the muzzle of his six-shooter close to the winner's white face.

The crowd that had gathered about the table to witness the "big game," fell back to a safer distance and waited breathlessly. A deep silence fell upon the room. The dealer, his white hand resting without a tremor upon the stakes, gazed unmoved across the levelled sights into the murderous eyes beyond.

"You damned thief!" snarled the big man; "do you think I ain't seen that little trick before? Turn up your cards, stranger," he added, indicating Drake with a kick under the table.

Drake had forgotten his cards, staring hungrily at the pile of cash. He obeyed mechanically. The bystanders ventured closer that they might read the cards.

The hands spread out on the table were the five highest in the deck, and the dealer's was the highest!