

THE LOADED DICE.

IT was in the Fall of 1830 that the writer of this sketch, while detained at Louisville awaiting the rise of the Ohio river, to begin his journey to New Orleans, first made the acquaintance of Mr. Harris, a wealthy young merchant of the above named city, who had been spending the Summer in Cincinnati, where he had gone to settle up some accounts of long standing. He was now on his way home, carrying with him a large amount of money, which he had collected for the firm of which he was the junior member.

The season had been remarkably dry, and, in consequence, the river was lower than could be recollected by the oldest settlers, but as the Autumnal season advanced, when the semiannual rise of water might be confidently expected, many travelers arrived at Louisville to take advantage of the earliest boats for the lower country.

After many disappointments the river began to rise in good earnest, and all hurried on board of their respective steamers to secure their passage home.

Mr. Harris and I, after having selected our state-room and seen to the safety of our baggage, had leisure to look around us and make the acquaintance of our fellow-travelers. We found to our intense disgust, it had been our misfortune to take passage with a large and accomplished set of gamblers as ever disgraced decent society. They were bound down the river on a "professional tour through the Southern States."

As soon as we were well under way the implements of their nefarious trade were brought forth. "Faro," "rouge et noir," and various other games were exhibited to tempt the unwary to risk their money. At first, many of the gentlemen on board objected to having the boat turned into a gambling hell; but the professionals loudly protested that they played on the square, and furthermore declared, that should one of their number be detected cheating, that the stakes should be forfeited, and he put on shore on the nearest land. After this no more was said, and the numerous games went on without interruption.

For some time Harris, who was known to have a large amount of money in his possession, and who was evidently an object of the gamblers, especial regard, firmly declined all invitations to "try his luck." But one evening, after the supper table had been cleared, he, weary of their importunity, or yielding, as he afterwards told me, to a natural love for the excitement of play, consented to make one of a party of four, who were about to sit down to a game of cards for small stakes, "just to pass away the time."

The players took their seats—the cards were dealt, and the game began.

For a while my interest in the fortune of Harris induced me to remain at his side and watch the chances of the game; but as the sums staked were small, and the parties seemed evenly matched in point of skill, I soon tired of such uninteresting employment and retired to a distant part of the cabin to amuse myself with a book—in the contents of which I almost immediately became absorbed. I read on for some time, probably an hour and a half; but while pausing a few moments to cut the leaves—the book was a new one—I became conscious that an unusual stillness pervaded the room. There was no longer to be heard the rattle of dice, the sharp click of the ivory "faro check," or the subdued murmur of the players. Raising my eyes to see what could be the cause of this unusual silence, I saw that all the "banks" had been deserted and the players were standing motionless around the table, at which I had left Harris and his companions engaged at euchre.

Wondering what could induce men who were accustomed to risk the largest stakes on the turn of a card to take such an interest so small a game, I threw down my book, and approaching the party, soon made my way close up to the table.

I saw at once that a great change had taken place since I had been a looker-on. The stakes were largely increased, and two of the party either unable, or too timid to risk such large amounts, had withdrawn from the table. H. and one of the gamblers, however, still retained their seats, and with eager faces and shaking hands, shuffled and dealt the cards. Fortune seemed to favor Harris, for just as I reached the spot he marked the last point in a closely contested game while the professional, with a fierce oath, dashed down the cards and challenged him to give him his revenge with dice, to which proposition, after a moment's hesitation, Harris assented.

The dice and cup were procured, and the excited gamblers again bet their money, but no longer with the same result. H.'s "good luck" seemed to have deserted him, and his antagonist won stake after stake. H., seemed now wild with excitement. He doubled every time, and at last not less than ten thousand dollars lay upon the table to be won or lost at a single shake of the dice. Again was the gambler successful. H., now sprang from his chair and calling on his antagonist to remain where he was, repaired to his state-room and returned in a few minutes he dashed down upon the table a large roll of bank-notes, saying at the same time to the gambler, "You have

already won from me over fifteen thousand dollars. These bills represent double that amount; dare you risk a like sum and let the ownership be decided by a single cast?" The gambler at once expressed his willingness to do so, but declared he had not so much money in his possession. The deficiency, was, however, made up by others of the fraternity, and they prepared to resume the game. There was a large carving-fork lying near H., which the waiter had neglected to move when he cleared the table that evening. This H., with a careless and apparently (as he took his seat) accidental movement of his arm, drew close to his side.

All now drew near in eager expectation. Harris seized the cup, and shaking the dice violently for a moment, dashed them down before him. I could scarcely repress a cry of exultation when I saw he had thrown double fives, within one of the highest number it is possible to make. The professionals cast uneasy glances upon each other, but H.'s antagonist only smiled scornfully, and drew the ivory cubes toward him. Just, however, as he was placing them in the box, they slipped through his fingers and fell upon the floor; he stooped and recovered them in an instant, but as he reached forth his hand to take the cup, H., whose face had a fixed, determined look, and whose eyes had never for a moment been off of him, suddenly seized the fork, and with a movement quick as that of the deadly rattlesnake, stuck the sharp prongs through his wrist, literally pinning it to the table, at the same time he presented a cocked pistol full at his head. There was a yell from the wounded man, and a volley of imprecations burst from his associates; a dozen of weapons were pointed at the breast of H. He, however, was equal to the occasion. Not a muscle of his face moved and his voice was not raised the least when he spoke.

"One moment, gentlemen," said he. "You yourselves have declared that, should one of your number be detected in foul play, the stakes should be forfeited."

If the dice under the hand I now hold imprisoned be not false, then do with me as you will. If, however, I prove correct in my assertion, I demand the fulfillment of your threat."

By this time every male passenger had collected around the table, and the gamblers saw by their stern looks and drawn weapons that were not to be trifled with. So they were forced reluctantly to admit the truth of what H. had said.

The gambler was held secured in his chair; the fork withdrawn, the dice examined, and found to be loaded—the true pair were concealed in his sleeve. His fate was sealed in spite of his desperate resistance. Strong arms stripped him of his weapons, forced him into a boat and rowed him to the nearest land, a low sand bank entirely surrounded by the river, and whose rapidly rising waters promised soon to submerge it. Upon this island, deaf to his piteous appeals, they forced him; and the steamer resumed her course down the rapid river.

But long after we had lost sight of him in the darkness, there came to us, out of the black night, wild eyes, that sounded in our ears, high above the dash of our ponderous wheels and the rush of the mighty river. Screams for mercy, fearful imprecations, and chilling blasphemous such as might have been uttered by a lost soul when it hears the dread sentence:

"Depart from me ye accursed into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

H. hid his face in his hands and wept like a child. Strong men turned pale, and the very gamblers looked at each other with whitened cheeks and trembling lips.

Of his fate there could be no doubt. The strongest swimmer could not for one moment stem the fearful torrent, and to remain upon the bank was but to choose a lingering and more fearful death.

There was no more playing on board that boat on that trip, and at the first landing most of the passengers left her, fleeing from it as from a place accursed.

Among those who left was Harris. Years had passed when we met again, but he trembled when he spoke of that fearful night on the Ohio, and said he had not touched a card since then.—*Sunday Bulletin.*

A Singular Case.

A singular breach of promise case has occupied the judges in the Court of Error. The question argued was whether a lady to whom a promise of marriage has been made can sue upon it before the time has arrived at which it was to be performed, if her admirer tells her he does not intend to keep his engagement. It arose thus: The defendant, Mr. Frost, a farmer, promised to marry the plaintiff, Miss Knight on the death of his father. Before that event occurred, however, an estrangement arose between the parties, and the gentlemen intimated to the lady that he did not intend to keep his engagement with her. Upon this she at once had recourse to an attorney, brought this action and recovered a verdict. The defendant, however, raised the question of law whether he could be liable on the breach of his engagement before the time had arrived for keeping it. The judges, who seemed to favor the defendant's view, took time to consider their judgement.—*English Paper.*

Disagreeable People.

MEAN people are very disagreeable to honorable, high-minded persons. A liar is contemptible, and beneath the notice of truthful, pure-hearted men and women. A news-peddler or scandal-distributor is certainly the lowest order of the three, and to be avoided as one would avoid a pestilence or plague. But meaner, more contemptible, more poisonous than either, are those people who come to you wearing the mask of truth and honesty to torture your hearts with disagreeable truths. There are people among the acquaintances of every person whom they know to be incapable of telling a lie, yet they always manage to torture your heart by some disagreeable truth.—One can meet a false accusation or implied falsehood with the silent contempt it deserves, and be none the worse for its having been uttered. But how can one manage those terrible people who wear the mask of friendship, and at the same time manage to place you in perfect misery. They come to you when you are at peace with all the world, and yourself in particular. They chat pleasantly of the weather, the news, and every little item of mutual interest for awhile, but somehow, in the most natural way, (how you are never able to remember) they introduce the unwelcome subject that is to leave such a heart-felt sting, after they are gone. It may be some cruel thing one of your neighbors or friends has said about you, or it may be something vaguely hinted at, not explained, but that truthful, frank, open-hearted friend [?] doesn't believe a single word of it, only repeated it to show you how abused people can be, etc., smiling serenely at the "good joke," and finally going away, leaving your sky that was so cloudless when they entered your presence, overcast with shadows, and all its brightness faded. Philosophers may tell us to be above noticing these little things, but I know it to be a fact that cruel words will leave a heart-ache, in spite of the most heroic resolutions to care nothing for them. What excuse can there be for the mischief-making meddler who comes to us repeating what a friend has said, in a hasty moment? Does that person think to prove that the true friend is the one who brings to us the bones from the table of scandal? Indeed the sages of the past left us the proverb: "The dog that brings a bone will carry one;" and a true friend will not repeat anything to wound the feelings of another, unless by so doing the benefit to the wounded heart is apparent and unmistakable. Deliberation and reflection have established in my mind the belief that it is not one's friends who repeat to them the unkind remarks others make about them. I have my idea of true, pure friendship, but there are few hearts capable of appreciating real sentiment, in this busy, whirling restless age of the world.

It is not safe to trust what you have not tried, and yet it sometimes takes years to prove a friendship true. How are we to manage those beings who profess friendship for us, settle themselves cozily at our fireside, partake of our hospitality, and pretend to defend us from the slanders of our enemies? They tell us every thing anybody says about us—although it is a mystery how they know so much—and while they deny any suspicion in their own hearts, as to the truth of what they have heard, they are serene in contemplating the indifferently concealed misery which they have given by their communication. People who dare be original, are sometimes severely criticised, and if they have one of these serene, smiling, disagreeable friends, to report to them all the criticisms of the world, if their heart is the least sensitive, they have a prospect of being miserable a greater portion of the time, for bitter words will leave a sting.

In the early stages of his ministry, the celebrated Dr. Strong, of Hartford, Connecticut, preached some time in a neighboring village. One day a committee called upon him to settle with him for his services; and, after stammering a while, signified to him that his further services were not desired.

"What does this mean, gentleman?" asked the Doctor.

"Why," replied the spokesman, with some hesitation, "the people have got the impression that you are inclining to universal salvation."

"Gentleman," answered the Doctor, "I never have preached that doctrine; but, if I ever should, I promise to make the people of this town an exception."

Remarkable Climate.

Professor Gould who has gone to superintend a new observatory, founded by the Government of the Argentine Republic at Cordova, in his remarks about the climate, gives a few particulars which exemplify its extreme dryness. "A bowl of water," he says, "left uncovered in the morning is dry at night; ink vanishes from the inkstand, and becomes thick almost by magic; the bodies of animals, left exposed, dry up instead of decomposing; and neither active exercise, nor exposure to the sun's rays causes perceptible perspiration."

The great grain fields of Nebraska seldom exceed forty, or at most, eighty acres.

LOST BUT SAVED.

BY SIGNOR BLITZ.

ONE night while in London, upon returning very late to my boarding-house, I found, on arriving at the door, pacing up and down in evident distress of mind, a young man, the son of my worthy landlady, whom I had learned to look upon with a great degree of interest, by reason of his uniform gentlemanly deportment and the affectionate solicitude he ever exhibited for his mother. He held a fine position as clerk in a large house, and was one in which his employers reposed the utmost confidence.

"Why Harry! what is the matter?" I asked, not a little alarmed at this sudden scene. "What are you doing here?"

"I am a lost man, ruined, eternally ruined, and my poor mother—"

"Ruined, lost, what do you mean?"

"I have lost everything—my salary, my mother's little jewels which my father gave her—and, to complete my guilt, I have robbed my employers."

"You! you! robbed your mother, and your masters! When, and for what purpose?"

"Yes, I have done it—and not an hour since I staked the last crown of my thievings on the card table at— I—I am damned forever," he cried wildly, throwing himself upon the doorstep, in an agony of grief.

Here was a scene indeed; a young man, before whom; but a few months since, there were the happiest prospects of an honorable life—a mother's only hope, and the esteemed confidant of an honorable mercantile house, lying abjectly upon the earth with every darling hope in his silence, his moodiness, and his late hours.

I saw it at a glance, and as quickly did I resolve to save him if possible. After some little entreaty, I persuaded the young man to leave the place where he was, and go with me to some secluded locality. On my way I learned the whole story. It was a simple one, and just such as happens every day.

The young man, by the invitation of a friend, had been induced to visit—to see the place; next to take a game or so for the pleasure of the thing; soon, to make it more interesting, small sums were staked, and lost of course; next to win them back, debts were incurred, which, if not paid, would lead to exposure. Poor Harry! he saw his position, but how could he return. His salary was small, and only came on quarter-days.

The friend suggested borrowing without asking a loan—for he could replace it in a few days, and no one would be the wiser, for luck would turn. It was as ever, the old story over again—and he fell into the snare, first, by robbing his mother, then, on this day he had taken fifteen pounds from his employers.

After listening to his tale, I knew at once how he had been duped, and proposed that he should go with me to— "where," said I, "though I never gamble, yet I hope to teach a lesson that shall cause you never to put your foot within this, or any similar place again. Come, it is now near morning, and if you wish to save yourself, do as I direct and perhaps it can yet be done."

My companion led the way to the saloon where I was to be introduced as a special friend. All, of course, were glad to see me, and with the young man near I set down to one of the card-tables and commenced to play. For a time I lost, but soon the game began to take a more favorable turn, and after an hour's play, I arose from the table, and left the place with above a hundred and fifty pounds in my pocket.

After I had gained the street, and was a considerable way from the house, where my visit had not been a very agreeable one to some who wished me to remain longer, I turned and said, "There, Harry, you see what I have done. This fortune, as you gamblers call it, is a cheat, and the money which I have taken from those scoundrels who robbed you, was done in accordance with their own principles. Here are the cards I played with, and beneath the light of a street lamp I showed him a pack of cards, so arranged that I could always hold the game in my hands. Besides I designated marks by which I knew the character of every card in the hands of my opponents. "There," said I, "in those and similar ways, lie the art of gambling. You have been duped, but I know you will not be so again."

"I see it all—but now it is too late!" exclaimed the poor fellow. "Now I see my disgrace."

"Not yet; promise me but one thing, and you shall be saved."

"What is it? I will do—say, be anything, only for my poor mother's sake."

"Give me your word of honor, then, that you will never again touch card or dice-box, and here is the money which I have won. Take it; pay back the money you have taken from your employers—make what honest and true account you can to your mother, and remember as long as you live, the night of the 10th of March, 1829."

The young man promised and I never had occasion to doubt but that he kept his word.

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