

THE MONTROSE DEMOCRAT.

DEVOTED TO POLITICS, NEWS, LITERATURE, AGRICULTURE, SCIENCE, AND MORALITY.

S. B. & E. B. CHASE, PROPRIETORS.

MONTROSE, PA., THURSDAY, MAY 22, 1851.

VOLUME VIII. NUMBER 21.

MISCELLANY.

THE END OF IT!

BY ERASTUS STEPHENS.

(Continued.)

And he did. So far as seeing went, there were very few, at the end of six months from that time, who knew the inner life of the city better. And upon him the effect was beneficial, for his judgment was well matured, and his principles quite firmly settled. Yet this should be considered rather as the exception than the rule; for experience shows that the risk outweighs the possible advantage.

One evening, a friend of Frank's a young physician, proposed a visit to one of the gambling halls, which in greater numbers than in any other part of the city, were to be seen, for his judgment was well matured, and his principles quite firmly settled. Yet this should be considered rather as the exception than the rule; for experience shows that the risk outweighs the possible advantage.

Frank consented, and they left the house for that purpose, at about half past ten the same evening. Walking down Broadway until they had reached the vicinity of the City Hall, they turned into a side street. They proceeded but a short distance from the corner, and ascended the steps of a house some three or four stories high. The doctor opened the door, which caused the ringing of a bell, and this was followed by the appearance of a very gentlemanly servant. The latter, eyeing them both pretty sharply, addressed a few words to the doctor. The reply seemed satisfactory, for he immediately unlocked a side door, and held it open for Frank and his companion to pass through. This door opened into a passage, through which the doctor led the way to another door, opening which, they beheld two spacious parlors, very richly furnished. Chairs and sofas, of rich and costly patterns, pictures in elaborately carved frames, lofty mirrors, and curtains hanging in many a thick and graceful fold, gave an air of elegance and wealth to the apartments.

Frank noticed as he walked leisurely around the rooms, that in the front parlor were small tables, for the convenience of those who might prefer the games of whist, cue, bridge or backgammon. Connected with the back parlor was a smaller room, in which were a side-board and dining table. The latter was covered with a tasteful and expensive service, and every delicacy that the palate of a gourmand might desire. In the centre of the back parlor stood the great centre of attraction, the faro-table. It was in the form of an ellipse, and very large. Around it were collected some thirty men, and the game was at its height, when Frank, having finished his examination of the other features of the room, stopped to notice this. Chairs were placed around the table, which were mostly occupied by those who were playing the heaviest games. At about the end of the shorter axis of the elliptical table, sat the dealer, and directly opposite was one who kept account of the game. Some two or three assistants were among the players and lookers-on. In front of the dealer, was a most beautiful little box, having a small aperture in the top, by which the cards which the box contained were slipped out, one after another.

Around the table were men of every age, class, and occupation; and as they sat or stood there, with scarce a sound, save the everlasting rattle of the ivory counters, as each event decided the gains and losses, Frank began to realize the giant strength of that terrible institution, which will hurry a man into the very jaws of ruin, even when he may be all the while conscious of his danger. There was the man who never before had staked a cent, in his life, who had been induced to visit the place by the request of an obliging friend who had made his acquaintance at the hotel where he was stopping, and kindly offered to show him the city. Deceived by the seeming fairness, and probable success of the game, he had at length been persuaded to try his hand. He has just begun to feel the first thrill of the gambler's pleasure. Perhaps he'll go away penniless, or with just enough won to make him greedy for more, so that he'll come again and be felled.

There were gray-headed men, who had grown old with the terrible passion fastened upon them. There were young men, too, making quick strides towards its acquisition. There were merchants, clerks, book-keepers, salesmen, lawyers. There were speedy, shabby-gentlemen, who had been plundered of all they ever owned—not money alone, but respectability, character, honesty beside—and received in return nothing but a soul-absorbing passion for a soul-destroying habit. They were the hangers-on of such establishments, and lived by small trickery and petty plunder. And, last of all, there were well-dressed, smiling, cold-eyed, and strong-hearted gamblers, who lived by their profession. There were those whom Frank was almost as surprised to see as he would have been to see his own father—men in high repute for wealth and integrity. There was one—a confidential clerk in a large mercantile house—who was playing heavily, and losing, too. And when, twelve months afterwards, he heard of his being arrested upon a charge of embezzlement, he remembered having seen him there.

There was another—a man of about thirty-five. Frank was not personally acquainted with him, but he knew that he was junior partner in a large jobbing-house in Pearl street—that he was of fine family, was married to a lovely woman, and was the father of two children. Two years from that time, the house sought an extension of payment; and when

Frank heard that the firm had, a few weeks after, made a strictly honorable failure, he recollected having seen this one at the gambling-table. There was another—a clerk in a Wall-street bank—whom Frank had often seen. Six months afterwards, he was all at once dismissed from his situation, and it was rumored that kind friends had made up a deficit in the funds of the institution.

From this table, Frank passed into the other parlor. There were a few seated upon the sofas and chairs, engaged, either in low, but earnest conversation, in watching others, or in deep thought. Some were playing at the tables, and, among these latter, there was one group which attracted Frank's particular attention.

It consisted of four men, one of whom was of rather portly figure, grayish hair, and a very demure expression, dressed in a plain suit of black, with a white cravat—a well executed counterfeit of some worthy Doctor of Divinity. He was about fifty years of age, and well known in sporting circles, for a demure-looking, oily-tongued, cold-hearted gambler. His head was not grayer with years, than his heart, black with iniquity; for he had frequented the haunts of gamblers from childhood, and well as his own alphabet, knew he every devilish art, by which to trap the unwary.

A second was about thirty years of age, dressed in a blue coat with bright metal buttons, a fancy silk cravat, fancifully tied, a massive gold snuff-box, a showy breast-pin, and a heavy gold chain. There was a kind of swell and flashy air about him; and whatever you might infer from noticing, in addition, his light brown hair well oiled, and brushed smoothly upon a face not unattractive, but stamped with sensuality, you only need to see the deep mourning of his nails, as he held up his cards, to assign his correct position in the scale of being. He was a suspicious character at first sight; and his face, and whole appearance, indicated the habitual gambler.

The third evidently could not claim kindred with the aforesaid two, although he handled his cards well, and seemed on intimate terms with them. He was dressed in good taste, and yet he had a rakish, reckless air, which indicated the "young man about town." He was a clerk in a wholesale house, Frank afterwards learned—a fellow-clerk with the fourth, whom we are about to describe, and had acted the part of a roper, in enticing the latter to the place, in order that they might fleece him, and the other three share the profits.

But the most interesting of the group was a young man of about twenty-two, dressed in a suit of mourning, which was very becoming to his pale face, and the cast of his features. His countenance was not handsome, but its expression was intellectual, and at the present time sadly interesting. His thick dark hair was thrown back carelessly from a broad, forehead—his eyes were large, of a greyish color, and full of expression. His mouth was firmly compressed, his lips almost bloodless, while an unwonted wrinkle of the brow, and now and then a deep flush upon his pallid face, told more plainly than words, that he had not been long enough initiated in the mysteries and mysteries of gambling to make his features play the hypocrite.

As we shall afterwards learn, he had visited the place three weeks before, induced, for the most part, by curiosity, and then he had come again, and constant urging had enticed him to play just for the sport of it. Then a little stake had been proposed, only to give interest to the game—and this had been gradually increased, until at the end of playing, he found himself the winner of fifty dollars. This evening, he had been induced to come again, by his fellow clerk Duffon, who had at first proposed his coming, and he consented, but it was with the determination to risk only the fifty dollars he had won, they might win it back, and then re-engage in the game. In his pocket were five hundred dollars, which one of the firm had given him that afternoon, to make a payment. He had been unable to find the person to whom it was due, and had happened to tell Duffon so, as they were coming to the gambling house; and it struck the mind of the latter, that in more ways than one, it would be for his interest to make him lose.

At the time we are describing, drinking was far more common at these gambling halls, than at present. The first move of Duffon, after introducing his companion to the two others, whom he had met there accidentally, was to get him to drink; and when by dint of great persuasion, he had been induced to drink freely, he was then ripe for operation.

They seated themselves at the table, and what was proposed. They threw for partners, and the flashy gentleman and Duffon were against the other two. At first, luck seemed to attend the latter, for in a short time they had won two hundred dollars. Then, when the fumes of the liquor he had drunk and the excitement of the game had caused him to lose utterly his self-control, the tide of success began to turn. In a shorter time than he had won it, his winnings were transferred to the others. Then, all the money he had with him, about seventy-five dollars, followed. Then he staked his watch, and lost it. Then a gold pencil case; and that followed the rest. In his excitement, he scarcely knew what he did, and cared less, and drawing out his pocket-book, took fifty dollars from the roll of five hundred and staked it. He lost, but kept playing; and won, and lost, and won, until only a fifty dollar note remained; and he was playing for his last stake when Frank observed him.

Near, upon the table, stood a wine glass, which he drained as often as those with him—whose heads were cooler and whose hearts were blicker—sipped theirs. How his hand trembled—how the cold sweat stood upon his brow, as he shuffled the infernal cards! The stakes are each a hundred to his fifty, and perhaps he'll win; why shouldn't he? He holds a capital hand, and plays a good game. It's a miserable "perhaps," for, play ever so well, what does it avail him, when his partner is in league with the others; and even were he not, when every card may be told by its back, with certainty. He is playing against fearful odds, and he sees one trick after another taken, and now the game is thier. Yes, he has lost it, and with it perhaps character, and self-respect, and situation—all in consequence of the five hundred dollars he has squandered in a fit of drunkenness.

"Well, Harry my boy, I'm sorry for you. You play a capital game, but luck went against you. Never mind! You'll be able to redeem all to-morrow night. Let's go and get something to eat."

"I can't wait, George; I must go."

"Well, good night!"

"Good night, Mr. De Lancy," said the others with whom he had been playing.

"De Lancy?" repeated Frank to himself.—From the first he had been struck with a resemblance to some one he had seen before, and as he heard his name he recollected at once to whom it was. He had called at the house, whose number was upon the card which Mary De Lancy had given him, but very much to his regret ascertained that they had removed, and since then had been unable to discover their residence. Instantly a strong impulse seized him to follow the young man from the house, in order if possible to ascertain his residences, and assist him if he could. He therefore apologized to the Doctor for leaving him at that time, and then went from the room.

"By Jove," muttered Duffon as De Lancy left the house, "you're in a pretty fix. Gad, won't old W.—to-morrow! Perhaps he'll think there's some truth in that letter."

"Suppose we settle up?" said the gambler who had been De Lancy's partner.

"Very well. We can go and eat something and settle at the same time." The three yoked into the supper room and seated themselves at the table.

"How shall we manage about this watch and pencil?" said the ministerial gambler.

"Let us bid, and the one that bids highest 'ave 'em," said Duffon.

"Very well," and starting the pencil at five dollars, and the watch at twenty-five, they were bid off by Duffon, the first at ten and the other at forty. Both winked at each other, as Duffon took his third of the money, less fifty dollars, as much as to say they had "come it over him." But for once they were mistaken. Duffon knew that both were presents from De Lancy's father, and his affection for a buried parent would afford a fine opportunity for successful speculation.

"A pretty good evening's work!" said the flashy gambler with a self-satisfied tone.

"But I vow, Duffon, there isn't much fun in plucking the feathers off of such a spoony as that chap. If he had been one likely to be shy, it wouldn't have done to have been so hard on him. But such a nervous man as he is mightily easy game. You can hunt him right down."

"I don't think he'll ever come back," replied Duffon.

"Don't you believe that. I'll bet you thirty dollars against that watch, that he'll be gambling again in less than a week."

"Say forty-five dollars, and I'll take it."

"Forty-five? You didn't give but forty, and that is ten dollars more than it is worth."

"It's worth a hundred to the man we won it from."

"Why?"

"It's a watch which his father gave him before death."

"The—what is it? I wish I'd known it, don't you Deacon?"

"Yes."

Meantime De Lancy had left the house, and gone out into the street. It was a clear, cold winter night, and the bracing air recovered him from his partial intoxication. He felt for his watch, but it was gone, and then he remembered he had lost it—gambled it away. He remembered, too, that upon the back was engraved, "Henry L. De Lancy, from his father, upon his fifteenth birthday day," and he felt then as he had not felt before, his losses and his situation. There was a lamp post before the door, and he leaned against it in the very feebleness of agony, as one thought chased another, with the speed of lightning, through his mind.

He had lost five hundred dollars of his employer's money. How could he replace it? If not replaced, what account could he give of its loss? He could give none but the true one, and that would cost him his situation, and what was more, his good name; and what was money and situation compared with that? It would cost him a mother's sad face and aching heart. It would lose him the good opinion of the only sister, whom as his own life he loved. It would gain him a dishonored name, and instead of being able to tread life's highway honored and respected by those who journey with him, he must endure taunt and gear and jibe, when he had lost the jewel reputation, and become a beggar. Even in the cold winter breath that fanned his fevered brow, there seemed a whisper of reproof. From the pure heaven, the moon looked down coldly and reproachfully upon him. The myriad twinkling

lamps hung in the blue dome of the great temple of the universe, had no ray of gladness that could cheer and comfort him. And more than all there stole in upon his memory the recollection of one summer evening, when there was scarce a breath of air to rustle the curtains of a sick room; when a mild voice had spoken the last words of advice, and a thin hand had given its last clasp, and the dimming eyes of a pallid face had looked its last farewell; when promises had been made, since then though spoken in a faltering voice; when the face had been turned to the wall, and while the prayer was being offered, while the pent-up tears refused longer to be repressed, and were eloquent of sorrow, which seemed mocked by the cheerful sunlight, and the glad song of birds, his father had gone home.

"Great God! what shall I do?" was the exclamation that his seething soul could not repress, as he left the place where he had stood, and walked slowly on.

He was standing there when Frank came from the house, and the latter would have walked out of hearing and waited till he left; but he saw that his coming out was not noticed, and so he stood concealed in the shadow of the building watching him all the while. When he uttered that exclamation he heard it, and when he had walked a short distance off, he followed slowly after him. De Lancy walked very slowly, as if thinking what to do and where to go, and very soon he stopped again. Frank then went up to him and touched him lightly upon the shoulder. De Lancy had not heard him as he came up, and he started as Wilnot touched him.

"Your name is De Lancy, I believe, sir?"

"It is."

"And mine is Wilnot, though I can't suppose you have ever heard of me before."

"I never have."

"Can I be of any service to you?"

It was an abrupt question, and although no time could have been more appropriate for confidence, advice and assistance from an intimate friend, none could have been less so for the advances of a stranger, and therefore De Lancy replied, "Thank you, sir. I certainly can have no claim upon you, and I don't know that you could render me any assistance."

And with this we would have bid Frank good evening, and left him. But the latter prevented his doing so by saying:

"You will excuse my intrusion, Mr. De Lancy. I think you are in difficulty, and I would consider it a favor if you would allow me to assist you in it."

Frank spoke with a sincere voice. De Lancy could not fail to perceive that he was in earnest, and though he very much doubted his ability to assist him, he could not do anything which resembled a repulsion of his kindness.

"But what led you to suppose that I was in any need of assistance?" said he to Wilnot.

"I was at the gambling-house with you. I knew of your losses, have observed you since, and have inferred so from all I've seen."

"Your supposition is all very correct. I am in trouble, and in very great trouble—so great that I very much fear you will be unable to help me. But still your kind sympathy deserves entire frankness upon my part. Saying this he took Wilnot's arm, and as they walked slowly on together, he detailed to him all that we have stated generally. By the time he had finished, they had reached De Lancy's residence.

"I am very much obliged to you for having given me your confidence so fully," said Frank after he had concluded. "If you will excuse advice from one so little older, would recommend that you go home and retire immediately. Try to forget what has happened, say nothing to any one to-night, and come and see me to-morrow morning. Here is my card with my residence. Come at nine o'clock. I have no doubt I shall be able to help you out of all difficulty. Good night."

"Good night," said De Lancy, who began already to feel better in spirits, although he could scarcely tell how, for Wilnot had given him no positive proof either of ability or desire to assist him. But he shook his hand warmly and thanking him over and over for his kindness, they separated.

Punctually to the hour, De Lancy knocked at the door of Wilnot's room the next morning. Frank was seated at a table, reading in his dressing gown, as he entered.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. De Lancy. Pray be seated."

"You have a very pleasant room, Mr. Wilnot."

"It is a very pleasant one to me, sir. I find my comfort depends very much upon having a comfortable place to take comfort in."

A few more remarks of a general character passed between them, and then Frank said: "You told me last night, Mr. De Lancy, that you would be obliged to make up a deficit of five hundred dollars this morning."

"I did sir."

"I suppose that as we were strangers until last evening, you would hesitate somewhat at accepting it from me."

"I should most certainly."

"But I hope you would not object to my loaning it to you in the ordinary business way. I should, in that case, be conferring no favor, and you would incur no obligation. I have drawn up a note for five hundred dollars, and have left the time in blank. You will do me a great favor by signing it, and accepting the loan of that sum from me."

The delicacy manifested by Frank, in thus proffering a kindness, so opportune yet so unexpected, completely unmanned De Lancy, and for a few moments he could scarce trust himself to speak.

"I should differ from you very much with regard to my incurring no obligation, Mr. Wilnot. And if it were not that I could not doubt the sincerity of your offer, and that I might wound your kindness by refusing it; I certainly should hesitate very much about accepting it. As it is, I will do so, with more gratitude than I can express, and while I shall never forget this act of kindness, I could not however think of accepting the loan for a longer period than three months."

"I should much prefer you would allow me to fill it up for a year; and without waiting for a reply, Frank put twelve months in the blank space, and handed it to him to sign."

De Lancy did so, and said as he handed it to Frank, who, at the same time placed in his hand a check for the amount, "I wish there was some return I could make to you. Isn't there anything I can do to help discharge this debt? Words are a very poor equivalent for so great a favor."

"There is no return to be made," said Frank, "but if you will not think me asking too much and will not consider me as obtrusive when I say I do it for your own sake, I wish you would make me one promise."

"Name it."

"Give me your word of honor, that you will in future avoid all gambling resorts, and never gamble again while you live."

"I will, most readily."

"I am very glad," said Frank. "You have made the same promise which I made to one of the best mothers in the world, when I left home to come to New York. I never had reason to regret it, and I don't think you ever will. I have an appointment for half an hour from now. Shall we walk down together?"

"If you please. Shall I have the pleasure of a call from you very soon, Mr. Wilnot?"

"I'm at Bleeker street, and should be most happy to see you at any time. Can't you come to-night?"

"Thank you. I think I will," said Frank. Both left the room and proceeded down town together. When they had reached the corner of Wall street, Frank left to fulfil his engagement, and De Lancy who was somewhat behind his time hurried to his store.

"Good morning, De Lancy! You're rather late," said Duffon to him as he entered the store of W. & Co., a large silk house in Pearl street.

"Good morning, Mr. Duffon," said De Lancy, as he went past him with no further notice, and going into the counting-room, found Mr. W. sitting there reading the paper. He had been an intimate friend of De Lancy's father, and felt in consequence a deep interest in his son.

"I was unable to find the gentleman whom you wished me to pay last evening, Mr. W. As he said this he handed the latter the check, which he had forgotten to get cashed.

"I believe I gave you bills, Harry, whose check is this?"

The question embarrassed him somewhat, and he could not avoid changing color. He did not answer the question directly, but said: "I will go and get it cashed, sir."

"Oh, I've no doubt it's good. Mr. Brown, give me the turning to the book-keeper, let Joseph get the money upon this when he comes in. Harry, I should like to see you for a few moments alone."

Saying this he led the way into a small room, connected with the counting-room, where he was in the habit of seeing customers and others upon private business. Offering De Lancy a chair, he seated himself at the desk and said:

"You know I have always felt a deep interest in you, Harry, both for your father's sake and on account of your faithfulness and diligence, while you have been in my employ. I am free to say that so far as the discharge of your store duty is concerned, I have found in you very much to approve, and nothing to condemn, you can imagine then, how surprised and grieved I was at receiving this letter a few days ago, and as he said this, he took one from his pocket which he unfolded and handed to De Lancy, who read as follows:

"New York, 15th, 18—

Mr. G. D. W.—

"DEAR SIR—A sincere regard for your welfare must be my only apology for addressing you. I regret saying anything to injure the reputation of any individual, especially one in whom you have an interest; but it has come to my knowledge, sir, that Mr. Henry De Lancy, a clerk in your employ, is of intemperate habits and very much addicted to gambling. His courses are fast ruining him, and lest he should prove injurious to yourself I have taken the liberty of making this statement. I am sorry that circumstances compel me to withhold my name, and only wish that my motives may not be misapprehended, and that my information may prove of service."

"I remain yours with great respect."

Nothing could have astonished De Lancy more than the perusal of this letter. But little as he was prepared for it, he was still less so for what followed. He had hardly finished reading it, before Mr. W. went on to say:

"I have a very poor opinion of anonymous communications. My first impulse was to

show this one to you. Upon second thought I came to the conclusion that if you were really as the letter represented, it would be easy to invent some story or means of allaying my suspicions; and if you were not so—how would be done you, except the slight satisfaction I might feel for a time. In the hope, however, of ascertaining something I have been engaged for two or three nights past in visiting some of the gambling resorts in the city. I last night went with a friend to visit one in — street, not far from Broadway. I was so dressed that it would have been impossible to recognize me. I had been in the room but a short time only, when you came in with Duffon; I saw you drinking pretty freely, and went after, and saw you when you sat down to play. Watching you very closely, I could see that you were successful at first; but at length fortune turned and your losses amounted to nearly six hundred dollars, besides your watch and a gold pencil case. That is a large sum than young men can usually afford to stake; and recollecting that I had given you five hundred dollars that afternoon, to make a payment with it, occurred to me that you might have staked that. After you had left the room, wishing to know whether you had or not, I went to one of the gamblers and asked him if he could change a hundred dollar note. He told me he could, and among the bills which he took out, were some which I was certain I had given you. Indeed, he gave me two of three of them."

"Here, then, De Lancy, all my information proved correct. You had gambled and drank in my eyesight, and I had every reason to suppose that you had appropriated money which did not belong to you. I think that you how much grief I felt for I saw that I could that it would probably be necessary for me to discharge you. I never had reason to regret it, and I don't think you ever will. I have an appointment for half an hour from now. Shall we walk down together?"

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"I'm at Bleeker street, and should be most happy to see you at any time. Can't you come to-night?"

"Thank you. I think I will," said Frank. Both left the room and proceeded down town together. When they had reached the corner of Wall street, Frank left to fulfil his engagement, and De Lancy who was somewhat behind his time hurried to his store.

"Good morning, De Lancy! You're rather late," said Duffon to him as he entered the store of W. & Co., a large silk house in Pearl street.

"Good morning, Mr. Duffon," said De Lancy, as he went past him with no further notice, and going into the counting-room, found Mr. W. sitting there reading the paper. He had been an intimate friend of De Lancy's father, and felt in consequence a deep interest in his son.

"I was unable to find the gentleman whom you wished me to pay last evening, Mr. W. As he said this he handed the latter the check, which he had forgotten to get cashed.

"I believe I gave you bills, Harry, whose check is this?"

The question embarrassed him somewhat, and he could not avoid changing color. He did not answer the question directly, but said: "I will go and get it cashed, sir."

"Oh, I've no doubt it's good. Mr. Brown, give me the turning to the book-keeper, let Joseph get the money upon this when he comes in. Harry, I should like to see you for a few moments alone."

Saying this he led the way into a small room, connected with the counting-room, where he was in the habit of seeing customers and others upon private business. Offering De Lancy a chair, he seated himself at the desk and said:

"You know I have always felt a deep interest