

I was much more pleased when he told the curé that a supper was ready for us in the adjoining room, at which he begged we would excuse his absence; and truly a most admirable little meal it was, and served with great elegance.

"The count expects you to stop here; there is a chamber prepared for you," said the curé, as we took our seats at table. "He has evidently taken a fancy to you. I thought, indeed I was quite certain, he would. Who can tell what good fortune this chance meeting may lead to, Monsieur Maurice! A votre sante, mon cher!" cried he, as he clinked his champagne glass against mine, and I at last began to think that destiny was about to smile on me.

"You should see his Chateau in the Ardèche; this is nothing to it! There is a forest, too, of native oak, and a 'Chasse' such as royalty never owned!"

Mine were delightful dreams that night; but I was sorely disappointed on waking to find that Laura was not riding at my side through a forest-alley, while a crowd of "Piqueurs" and huntsmen galloped to and fro, making the air vibrate with their joyous bugles. Still, I opened my eyes in a richly-furnished chamber, and a Jaques handed me my coffee on a silver stand, and in a cup of costliest Sèvres.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

RECOLLECTIONS OF COLTON, THE AUTHOR OF "LACON."

COLTON was remarkable for the extent and profundity of his talents, the various mutations of fortune, self-entailed, which he underwent, and for his inordinate addiction to a vice of all others the most degrading and destructive to intellectual strength—who was yet great in intellect and purpose amidst all the strange vicissitudes of which he was the self-constituted victim, and beneath the pressure of moral and physical degradation which he would never have undergone but for the influence of one fatal and overwhelming passion. One of the very first objects of my boyish reverence and veneration was, as might be expected with a child religiously educated, the parson of the parish in the market town where I was brought up. Parson C——, who, I believe, held the benefice of St. Peter's in my native place, was a man whom, having once known, it was not very easy to forget. I could have been hardly six years of age when I first saw him without his canonical garb, on which occasion he was playing a trout on the end of his line under one of the weirs in the river Exe. At that time the town was pretty well stocked with French prisoners. The jails were crammed with the miserable soldiery of Napoleon's generals, captured in the Peninsular war, then raging, and numbers of French officers on parole were installed with the housekeepers of the place in the capacity of lodgers. With these our all-accomplished divine was almost the only man in the place who could hold converse.

A part of my father's house was occupied by a couple of Gallic strangers, to whom the parson's visits were many and frequent. As they dined at the common table, their society, together with that of the reverend gentleman, was shared by the whole family, and we thus became more intimate with him than we otherwise should. It is said that familiarity breeds contempt. Certain it is that my father's veneration for the character of his and our spiritual guide and instructor suffered considerable declension from his closer acquaintance. Still, what he lost in reverence he perhaps gained in another way. His kind, agreeable, and social manners won the admiration and good-will of the whole family, and though he had a good many enemies in the town, we could not be of the number. He was a man of eccentric manners and fine genius, and, though then but young, had given proofs of talent of no mean order. He had published a rather bulky poem on the subject of Hypocrisy, a subject with which his detractors were not slow to observe he ought to be very well acquainted. But he was not really a hypocrite in the true sense of the word, if indeed, as may be questioned, he deserved the imputation at all. He was rather the subject of ever-varying impulses, under the instigation of which, were they good or bad, he would instinctively proceed to act without consideration and without restraint. He would be eloquent as Demosthenes in the pulpit in praise of the Christian virtues, and would work himself into a passion of tears on behalf of some benevolent or charitable purpose, the claims of which he would enforce with the most irresistible appeals to the conscience; and the next day he would gallop after the fox with a pack of hounds, fish, shoot, or fight a main, in company with sporting blacklegs, bruisers, dicers, *et hoc genus omne*. But he never made any personal pretensions to religious sentiment that I am aware of, except on one occasion, which, as it tends greatly to illustrate the true character of the man, I shall relate.

Among the companions of his sporting pursuits was a country squire of the neighborhood, a dissolute and drunken specimen of a class of men of which, fortunately for humanity, the present generation knows but little. He had ruined his fortune and nearly beggared his family by extravagance and intemperance, when, after a long course of uninterrupted and abused health and vigor, he was laid by the heels upon a sick bed, from which the doctors had no hopes of ever releasing him. In this dilemma he sent for Parson C——, who appeared forthwith in the chamber of the sick man, and was beginning to mutter over the service for the visitation of the sick, when the latter, belching forth a volley of oaths and curses, swore that he did not send for him for any such purpose; that what he wanted was an acknowledgment from the parson's own lips of the fact which all parsons' lives declared—that their religion, and all religion was a lie. This was an admission which C—— declined to make. A horrible scene en-

sued, of impotent rage and blasphemy on one part, and shame and confusion on the other. It ended in the death of the frantic and despairing drunkard, in the very presence of his ghostly adviser, whom he cursed with his last breath. This deplorable climax to such a scene of horror, it may be readily imagined, had a powerful effect upon the impulsive and excitable nature of poor C——. He left the chamber of such a death an altered man, and, proceeding homeward, shut himself up in his closet. On the following Sunday morning he took occasion to preach impressively, from the most solemn text he could select, upon the uncertainty of life. In the course of his sermon, he called upon all present to prepare for the doom which none could escape—which, inexorable to all, might be immediate to any, and therefore demanded instant and energetic preparation. He wound up his discourse with the extraordinary declaration that he, for one, had made up his mind upon the subject; that he had seen the error of his ways, and determined to abandon them; and that he was resolved thenceforth, with God's help, to devote the rest of his remaining life to his own preparation, and theirs, for the dreaded hour. He then called upon his auditors to bear witness to the resolution he had expressed, and to aid him in carrying it out. There was something like a commotion even in the church when this announcement was concluded; and the sensation and excitement it occasioned in the town, for some time after, only subsided as the parson's resolution waned in strength, and its effects became less and less observable. For some months he held fast to his purpose with the most laudable tenacity. It was in the spring of the year that he made his public declaration; and though the old friends of his follies laughed at it, and laid heavy wagers against his perseverance, he held on his way steadily. He began a course of pastoral visitation—sought out and relieved the poor and afflicted—parted with his fishing-tackle, and commenced an enthusiastic canvass for a dispensary for the poor. Of his old friends among the "ungodly," and his old enemies among the pious, few knew what to make of it. The Parson C—— of old time was no more; but, in his place, a new man with the same face was every where active in the cause of charity and Christian benevolence. Those who knew him best doubted most of his stability; and among these, I remember my father's expressing his conviction that the reformation was "too hot to hold." So it turned out in the end. Three, four, five months of exemplary conduct, and then came the first symptom of declension, in the shape of the parson's gray horse harnessed to a dog-cart, with his gun and brace of pointers, in charge of a groom, the whole "turn-out" ready for starting, and waiting at the entrance of the church-yard on Sunday evening, the last night of August, to carry the parson, so soon as service was over, to a celebrated shooting-ground, five-and-twenty miles off, that he might be on the spot, ready by dawn for the irresistible 1st

of September. Those who prophesied from this demonstration a return to old habits had speedy occasion to pride themselves upon their augury.

The Sampford Ghost soon after came upon the stage, with his mysterious knockings and poundings; and defied all objurcations and exorcisms, save and except those of Parson C——, at the sound of whose classical Greek, or gibberish, as it might happen, he absconded to the bottom of the Red Sea, as in duty bound. Here was food for wonder and gaping superstition, to which the reverend divine condescended to pander, by the publication of a pamphlet supporting the supernatural view of the subject, which, being on a marvelous topic, sold marvelously well, and brought grist to the clerical mill.

Of the subsequent career of this eccentric genius, from the time I ceased to reside in Devonshire to that when I encountered him in Paris I have no personal knowledge. I only know that he afterward obtained a benefice in the neighborhood of London; that in the year 1820 he published a work which has run through many editions, is in high repute with a certain class of readers, and is said by competent judges to manifest a profound practical acquaintance with the philosophy of the mind, and to contain more original views in relation to that science than any other work of equal dimensions.

I have already hinted that my vocation as a teacher of English introduced me to a new order of French humanity. Among the various pupils who sought my cheap assistance in the promotion of their studies was one Maubert, a young fellow of four or five and twenty, who was contemplating a removal to London in the exercise of his profession, which was neither more nor less than that of a gambler. He had a relative in one of the hells at St. James's, who had offered him a lucrative engagement so soon as he was sufficiently master of English to be enabled to undertake it. I was astonished to find a person of such mild, meek, and almost effeminate manners engaged in such a pursuit, and still more to hear that he had been brought up to it from boyhood, and was but following in the steps of his father, who was employed in the same establishment in a situation of great trust and responsibility.

In the course of our bilingual conversations, I made no scruple of expressing my perfect horror of gambling, at which he appeared to be heartily amused, and attributed the feeling I manifested not so much to moral principle as to constitutional peculiarity. It soon became apparent to me that he had not himself the slightest idea of disgrace or discredit as attachable to the profession of a gambler, so long as it was carried on upon principles of honesty and fair-play. "What is gambling," said he, "after all, but a species of exchange, skill for skill, or chance for chance? It is true, there is no solid merchandise in question; but, since you are determined to consider it in a moral point of view, what, let me ask, does the merchant or the shop-

keeper care for the goods that pass through his hands? Is not his sole object to profit by the transfer? Does he not speculate to gain? and is not all speculation, morally considered, gambling? Now, all the professed gamester does is to get rid of the lumbering medium of trading-speculations—to clear the game, which all men are willing to play, of the cumbrous machinery that clogs its movements when played upon commercial principles, and to bring it to a crisis and a close at once. You talk of the misery and ruin entailed upon families by gambling; but depend upon it the same men who ruin themselves and families by play would do precisely the same thing were there no such thing as play. For one Frenchman ruined by hazard, ten Englishmen are ruined by commerce. In fact, as a people, you gamble much more than we do, though in a different way; and when you choose to gamble *as* we do, you do it to much greater extent, and with a recklessness to which our habits in that respect afford no parallel. There is an Englishman now in Paris who has repeatedly won and lost ten thousand francs at a sitting, and whom you may see, if you choose to come with me, any evening you like.”

“What is his name?” I demanded.

“C——. He is a priest, too, I have heard, and of course, when at home, a preacher of morality.”

“Well,” said I, “with your permission, I shall be glad to have a look at him.”

“Very well; you shall dine with me to-morrow at the Salon Français. Meet me there at six, and then, after dinner, I will accompany you.”

“Agreed.”

And so it came to pass that, about nine o'clock on the following evening—for we had dined at most gentlemanly leisure, and followed up the dinner with a complete debauch of sugared water—I entered, for the first time, one of the saloons devoted to gambling on the first floor of the Palais Royal. There was not so great and gorgeous display of taste and expenditure as I had expected to see; though every thing was substantial and elegant, nothing was pretentious or superb. Tables arranged with a view to convenience rather than order or regularity, and covered with the means and materials of gaming, were surrounded, on three sides, by persons already engaged at the sport. We passed through several rooms thus furnished, and more or less tumultuously filled. Hazard appeared to be the most favorite game; as I noticed during my stay that the tables where that was played were first in full occupation, and throughout the evening were more crowded than others. Maubert led me to a room, which must have been the fifth or sixth we entered, and, pointing to a table at the further end, upon the centre of which rose a brazen dragon, with a pair of emerald eyes, a yawning, cavernous jaw, and a ridgy tail, whose voluminous folds coiled round a column of polished steel—told me that there I should find my man in the course of the evening, though I

should have to wait for him, as he had not yet arrived. He informed me that I could act as I chose, without being questioned; and then took his leave, as his services were wanted in his own department. I amused myself for nearly a couple of hours in contemplating, *en philosophe*, the scene before me. I had heard and read much of gamblers and gambling, and here they were in multitudes to test the truth or falsity of my impressions. I noticed particularly that, while the younger players acted throughout as though gaming were a frolic, and welcomed both their gains and losses with a joke or a laugh, the older hands maintained a perfect silence, and accepted the decrees of fortune without betraying the least emotion. The table near which I stood was appropriated to the following purpose: A ball, or rather solid polygon, of near a hundred sides, each side colored blue, red, or black, was dropped into the mouth of the dragon; and while it was rolling audibly through the long folds of its tail, the players placed what sums they chose upon red, blue, or black-colored spaces on the table. Whatever color the ball, upon emerging from the tail and finally resting, showed uppermost, was the winning color; the rest lost. The first operation of the manager, after each throw, was to rake into the bank in front of him the several amounts placed on the losing colors, after which he paid the winners, doubling the stake for black, trebling it for red, and multiplying it by five for the blue. Most of the young players began upon the black; but whether they won or lost, and the chance was equal for either fate, they invariably migrated to the other colors; or, in other words, doubled or quintupled their stakes as their passions became heated by play. The old ones, on the contrary, kept mostly to one color; and, in pursuance of some cunningly-concocted plan, frequently consulted pricked or penciled cards, upon which they had perhaps made previous calculations, or chronicled the course of play as it went on. The physiognomy of these old stagers certainly afforded a rich variety of exceedingly ugly faces. Disappointment, however, was not the prevailing expression; and, from what I observed of the general manifestation of their hardened visages, I was led to the conclusion that your calculating gambler, who has his passions under control, is *not*, in the long-run, a loser, but the contrary; and that the support of the bank, and the whole establishment, is derived from the swarming flights of raw, inexperienced, and uncalculating pigeons which every day brings to be plucked. One old fellow walked off with a bag of five-franc pieces, which could not have been worth less than twenty pounds English, accumulated in little more than half an hour; and others pocketed various smaller sums, and then withdrew. An English gentleman lost several five-pound notes in succession on the blue, and, continuing the stake, recovered them all with a profit. An Irishman who had been playing for silver on the black, attempted to do the same; but his heart failed him, or else his pocket, after the loss of his second note, and,

with a guttural oath, he retired in a rage. To win at gaming, it would seem from such examples, requires but a large amount of courage and capital; and it must be from this fact alone that, where the game, whatever it be, is fairly played, the bank which has the courage to challenge all the world, and unlimited capital to support the challenge, is so largely the gainer. The natural advantage of the bank may, however, be met by calculation and cautious adherence to system in playing; and instances are not wanting where the bank, though well stocked, has been broken, and the whole funds carried off, through the success of a deep-laid scheme.

While I was indulging in these speculations, in which I have no desire that the reader should place implicit faith, the personage whom my curiosity had led me hither to meet, entered the room, and made toward the place where I stood. The long interval that had elapsed since I last saw him had effected such an alteration in his appearance that it is probable that, had I not been expecting him, he would have passed unrecognized. As it was, the first glance assured me of his identity. From added years, or from long-enduring sedentary habits, he had acquired a slight stoop, and the old sprightly elasticity of step had given place to the sober foot-fall of mature age; but the face, though of a somewhat darker hue, and now lined with faint furrows, bore the same contour and much of the same expression as of yore. There was the same classic and intellectual profile, and the same commonplace and rather sordid indications in the full face, which had formerly given rise to the saying among his flock, that "The parson had two faces, one for Sundays and one for working days." He took his seat at the left-hand of the money-raker, and, presenting a paper, probably a check or foreign note, received a pile of gold and silver, which he spread before him. I had intended to watch his game, and perhaps, if occasion offered, to speak to him; but the sight of the very man from whose lips my infant ears had caught the first accents of public worship, preparing to take part in the debasing orgies of the pandemonium in which I stood, so revolted my feelings—and his action, as he bent over his pocket-book in search of something he wanted, brought so forcibly to my recollection his old gestures in the pulpit—that I resolved to spare myself the witnessing of his degradation, and accordingly walked away, and out of the accursed den, to the side of the fountain in the quadrangle, in the cool spray of which I sat for an hour, *not* enjoying my reflections upon the past.

I learnt from Maubert subsequently, that, though C—— played the boldest game, he was far from being a welcome guest at some of the tables he chose to patronize. He won, occasionally, large sums; and, if he lost them again, as from his known difficulties at certain seasons it is pretty sure he did, he did not lose them at the public tables, but at some of the private gaming-houses of the nobility which he was known to frequent. That he was occasionally reduced to

unpleasant straits I have reason to think; because, long after the encounter above related, I met him at a place whither I had resorted for a cheap dinner, and where we dined together on a deal table from soup and *bouilli*, for a sum not to be mentioned in connection with the repast of a gentleman. On this occasion, I somewhat alarmed him by inquiring, in a broad Devonshire accent, if he could inform me of the address of M. V——, naming one of the French prisoners with whom the parson had been especially intimate in the time of the war. He stared at me fixedly for a minute, and then, with a voice like one apostrophizing a spirit, said, "You are ——, the son of Thomas ——. I know you from your likeness to your father. Do not know me here. Let me have your address; I should like to talk to you. M. V—— is dead—dead! And your father, is he yet living?"

I was going to reply to his queries, but, snatching the card I presented, he bade me hastily adieu, and disappeared.

It was rumored about that he won a large sum of money previous to the breaking out of the Revolution, and that, having accomplished his object, he withdrew from the gaming-table. But he had played the game of life too fast, and, in desperately acquiring the means of expenditure, had lost those of enjoyment. In the published work, to which allusion has been made, is the following sentence: "The gamester, if he die a martyr to his profession, is doubly ruined. He adds his soul to every other loss, and, by the act of suicide, renounces earth to forfeit heaven." It is wretched to think that the writer put an end to his own existence, after a life devoted to the very vice he so powerfully deprecated. He blew out his brains at Fontainebleau, in 1832—it was said, to escape the pain of a surgical operation from which no danger could be apprehended.

NEVER DESPAIR.

THE opal-hued and many-perfumed Morn
From Gloom is born;
From out the sullen depth of ebon Night
The stars shed light;
Gems in the rayless caverns of the earth
Have their slow birth;
From wondrous alchemy of winter-hours
Come summer flowers;
The bitter waters of the restless main
Give gentle rain;
The fading bloom and dry seed bring once more
The year's fresh store;
Just sequences of clashing Tones afford
The full accord;
Through weary ages, full of strife and ruth,
Thought reaches Truth;
Through efforts, long in vain, prophetic Need
Begets the Deed:
Nerve then thy soul with direst need to cope;
Life's brightest Hope
Lies latent in Fate's deadliest lair—
Never despair!