

GAMING.*

To go one step further, and show the brutalizing effects of gaming on the human mind, I introduce the following melancholy, I might say astounding, story, translated from a French weekly periodical, called "Le Voleur," of November 10th, 1834, and it will appear to bear the stamp of veracity. The occurrence took place, it is true, some time back—in the year 1788; but that does not invalidate the fact, nor lessen the interest attached to it. Man is the same now as he was then,—ay, the same as he was in the days of Solomon,—equally prone to do wrong, and kept in check only by an appeal to his reason and experience. The story runs thus:—

"A few years before the dreadful insurrection of the negroes at St. Domingo, that beautiful French colony was at the height of its grandeur and prosperity; and its cultivation and industry had been the means of introducing into it more gold than the mines of South America had even furnished the avaricious Spaniards with. This precious metal, indeed, circulated there with the greatest activity, and with it luxury and extravagance, as usual, kept pace in every kind of pleasurable enjoyment. Neither is this to be wondered at. Under the burning atmosphere of the tropics, the passions, naturally quick, become ardent, and even volcanic; whilst riches, which in great measure give rise to them, offer every means of gratifying them.

"At the period to which we allude—namely, the year 1788—the most predominant passion of the wealthy inhabitants of St. Domingo was the baneful and pestilent one of gaming. Still, the games of calculation, in which address and skill neutralise, in some degree, the chances of fortune, were not sufficient for the grasping inquietude and covetous ideas of its votaries. They looked forward to those games in which the fascinating expectations of gaining a large sum by a few throws of the dice were most likely to be realized, and a fortune made or lost in the course of a few hours. So far indeed was the thirst for gaming carried, that it was not an uncommon occurrence to see houses and estates, with the complement of negroes belonging to them, depending on the throw of the dice. They (the dice) were placed upon the table by dozens, when the player picked out three, and commenced his acts of desperation, submitting himself to the power of fate.

"In the year 1788, one Captain St. Every, the son of a very rich Sugar proprietor, was about twenty-six years of age; and, although possessed of an immense fortune, had embraced the profession of arms, and was serving in a regiment at Port-au-Prince. In the management of the sword and pistol, he was quite without a rival, and brave even to temerity. Still, he took nothing like unfair advantage of his dexterity; and when engaged in a conflict, he generally contrived slightly to wound his opponents. In this he was lucky even to insolence; although he had been himself occasionally wounded, and in his numerous duels, had left many traces of blood in the society of St. Domingo. He possessed many amiable qualities, although he was more feared than loved; forasmuch as his upright conduct and prepossessing manners could not make amends for the impetuosity of his character, his propensity for duelling, and his attachment to gaming: for it is, unfortunately, necessary to add, that he was a gamester.

"One evening, in a house of public resort for gaming in Port-au-Prince, a few of the inhabitants were seated round a table, waiting until a sufficient number of persons arrived to enable them to commence play. At length one of them called out, 'Who will play?' 'I will play,' said the Captain of a French frigate, who happened to be at that time in the town; and taking the box, threw the dice, to win or lose, as he thought, the amount of a small sum of money which was put upon the table. Of course he was ignorant of the game—at all events, of the stake—about to be played.

"'Monsieur le Commandant,' exclaimed Captain St. Every, 'you have won; take up your winnings:' at the same time pushing towards him several bags of gold. At

the appearance of their contents, the Captain of the frigate shrank back with astonishment, supposing he had only run the risk of winning or losing the small sum he saw on the table, which did not exceed a few crown pieces (probably counters); and gently pushing from him the bags, addressed the party thus:

"'Gentlemen, I should be wanting not only in good manners, but in common honesty, if I were to appropriate to myself these sums, the winning of which I never in the least degree contemplated; having only, as I thought, played for the trifling sum I saw lying on the table. I cannot therefore, look upon this enormous quantity of gold as properly my right.'

"'Sir,' said Captain St. Every, you must take it; for if you had lost, you would have been obliged to pay the same sum.'

"'You are mistaken sir,' replied the naval captain, if you think so. I do not conceive my honour endangered in refusing to pay a debt which I never contracted, nor in refusing to accept of so large a sum, which I never entertained an idea of winning.'

"'Monsieur le Commandant,' rejoined Captain St. Every, elevating his voice to the highest pitch, 'if you had lost, you should have paid: I would have made you do so.'

"There was in this language, and in the tone in which the words were delivered, an evident desire of provocation, which could not escape the notice of the naval captain; and he answered it in a similar manner. The result was a challenge, which the exertions of the bystanders were not able to prevent.

"'Sir,' said Captain St. Every, to his adversary, as I do not wish to take any advantage over you which my known ability in the use of the sword and the pistol gives me, I will offer you terms of equality. Let a pistol be brought here instantly, and charged; and the chance of the dice shall determine which of the two shall blow out the other's brains.'

"'Accepted!' replies the Captain of the frigate.

"A feeling of horror agitated the whole of the society present; several persons left the room, trembling for the consequences, and resolved not to be witnesses of the bloody conflict; whilst others, more hardened in their nature, and excited by a brutal curiosity, approached nearer to the combatants, who were sitting exactly opposite to each other, and separated only by a table four feet in width. Whilst a third person was loading the pistol, the silence of death pervaded the assembly, and the calm was only interrupted by some words which passed between the adversaries, but not of an aggravating nature; for it was observed that they alone preserved a coolness of temper in these fearful moments.

"When the pistol was charged, each of the parties minutely examined it; and finding it in proper order, one of them placed it on the table on which were lying, in two heaps, the dice. Each drew out three, and it was decided that the naval Captain should have the first throw. He took up the box with a firm hand, and putting into it the instrument, which were to award him either his life or death, he shook them, and threw eleven!

"'That is a good throw, Commandant,' said Captain St. Every, suspending for a minute his own throw. 'The chance is in your favour; but listen to me: if it turns out as it appears to me it will, that fortune has favored you, I beg you will have neither mercy nor pity upon me: for rest assured, you shall have none from me. Moreover I should consider either as a coward that would think of sparing the other.'

"'Sir,' observed the Commandant, 'I do not stand in need of your impertinent remonstrances to teach me how to act in this or any other affair.'

"St. Every then took the box, and having put into it the dice, threw them: they numbered fifteen!!

"The company present were now horror-stricken. Monsieur le Commandant calmly rose from his seat, and

presenting to his antagonist—or rather, to his enemy—the firm attitude of a brave man, was thus addressed by him:

"'Your life belongs to me, Sir,' throwing down the dice on the table, and taking the pistol in his hand, 'Recommend your soul to God!'

"'Fire sir!' replied the Commandant, placing his hand on his heart; an honest man is always ready to — He was not allowed to finish the sentence. St. Every's ball scattered his brains about the room, and also upon the persons of several of those who were present!

"After this horrible catastrophe, on which the public voice was most loud against Captain St. Every, that officer was no longer looked upon but with horror, and was avoided and shunned by almost every person in the Colony; which treatment he acknowledged by expressions of hatred and disdain. At length, on the breaking out of the insurrection at St. Domingo, he entered the service of the enemy (i. e. the English), and served as captain under the orders of General Sir Thomas Maitland; in which he displayed proofs of great bravery, as well as the most consummate ability in the art of war. The insurgents owed almost all their success to his talent, even to their last battle at Ivois, near Tiburon, where he was killed by a ball in his ribs, at the very time when victory was declared for him."

OCEANIC ANIMALCULE.—The ocean teems with life; the class of polyps alone are conjectured by Lamarck to be as strong individuals as insects. Every tropical reef is described as bristling with corals, budding with sponges, and swarming with crustacea, echini, and testacea, while almost every tide-washed rock is carpeted with fuci, and studded with corallines, actinie, and mollusca. There are innumerable forms in the seas of the warmer zones which have scarcely begun to attract the attention of the naturalist; and there are parasitic animals without number, three or four of which are sometimes appropriated to one genus, as to the Balæna, for example. Even though we concede, therefore, that the geographical range of marine species is more extensive in general than that of the terrestrial, (the temperature of the sea being more uniform, and the land impeding less the migrations of the oceanic than the ocean of the terrestrial,) yet we think it most probable that the aquatic species far exceed in number the inhabitants of the land. Without insisting on this point, we may safely assume, as we before stated, that exclusive of microscopic beings, there are between one and two millions of species now inhabiting the terraqueous globe; so that if only one of these were to become extinct annually, and one new one were to be every year called into being, more than a million of years would be required to bring about a complete revolution in organic life.—*Lyell's Geology.*

Mrs. Hale says in one of her sensible essays: "How unfortunate it is for the real happiness of young females, that since to understand household affairs is such an indispensable accomplishment for women, it cannot be made a fashionable one."

MODESTY.—Modesty is not only an ornament but also a guard to nature. It is a kind of quick and delicate feeling in the soul, which makes her shrink and withdraw herself from every thing that has danger in it. It is such an exquisite sense, as warns to shun the first appearance of every thing that is hurtful.

THREAD OF THE SPIDER.—The thread of the silkworm is so small, that many folds are twisted together to form our finest sewing thread; but that of the spider is smaller still, for two drachms of it by weight would reach from London to Edinburgh, or four hundred miles.—*Arnott's Physics.*

* From an article in Fraser's Magazine for September, entitled "The Anatomy of Gaming," by Nimrod.