

lings a week, and yet play such a game of billiards as I have seen you play?

'Pshaw!' said I; 'billiards are an amusement only; I could not make a living by billiards.'

'The deuce you couldn't! Hark ye, young man, you have the means of independence in your hand, and you don't know it. Now, listen to me. With such skill as you have, and such knowledge of the world as I could teach you, you might gain any amount of wealth you chose.'

'Or, which is just as probable, might lose what little I have.'

'Not at all. If you are afraid of that, I will make you an offer. You shall quit your trade, and place yourself under my charge. I will take you all over Europe; you shall make the grand tour at my expense; I will defray all charges of travelling, living, and clothing; you shall visit all the capitals, shall have your own valet, and live like a lord; and I will give you a clear three hundred a year for yourself.'

'In return for which,' said I, 'I am to play where you choose, to win when you choose, and to lose when you choose!'

'Just so,' said he.

'Thank you; I will have nothing to do with it.'

'You will be sorry for it, my lad; and if you are such an idiot as to go grinding at a beggarly trade for a few shillings a week, when you might realise an independence in a few years, you deserve to suffer.'

'Good-night!' I replied, and strode away home as fast as I could.

I had shaken off the tempter for a time, and felt in quite a virtuous glow as I walked homewards through the dull streets and the drizzling rain which began to fall. Next day, however, as I stood at my work in the dreary, cobwebby shop, the vision which Mr. Crannel's words had conjured up to my imagination returned with double force, and in brilliant contrast to the surrounding circumstances. My avocation for the first time grew distasteful, and I longed for the hour of release. When it came, I sallied out to the seashore, at the old spot, and dreamed away an hour there to the murmur of the subsiding gale. I caught myself once or twice looking round to see if Mr. Crannel would make his appearance again. He did not come, and I suspect that I walked home that night with a feeling of disappointment.

On the following day, Crannel came into the shop while I was left in charge during the temporary absence of my uncle, and bought a few trifling articles, the selection of which occupied him half an hour. He now renewed his offer, and begged me to think of it calmly at my leisure, informing me at the same time that he should remain at the 'Ship' for another week, and should be happy to see me at any moment.

I told him that there was no probability that I should change my determination; but he must have seen that my resolution was not so firm as it had been at our first encounter; and it is likely that he already felt certain that I should swallow the bait. After this, he waylaid me every night in my walks, and thus, in repeated interviews, from which I had not the resolution to refrain, at length won me over to his purpose. I accepted his proposition in terms with which the reader is already acquainted, and we drew up a duplicate agreement at his hotel, which was mutually signed, and of which each of us retained a copy. The agreement bound me to him for three years, though it only covenanted that I should render him my services whenever called upon, for the salary named—no reference being made to the nature of the services.

I had to make up a tale to satisfy my old uncle, who was most unwilling to let me go; but he was appeased at last, and gave me his blessing at parting. It was the second week in December when I stepped on board the steambot with Crannel, and sailed for Calais. I had never been to sea before; the passage proved most tempestuous, and the boat nearly foundered midway. I was miserably sick, and longed to go at once to the bottom. Crannel watched and waited on me with almost a woman's tenderness—got me to bed as soon as we touched the shore, and could not have manifested more care and kindness had I been, as people thought I was, his only son.

A night's repose restored me; and the next morning an 'artist' made his appearance, who took my measure, and in a few days sent in such a magnificent wardrobe, made in the recent Parisian fashion, as qualified me, in appearance at least, for any society in Europe. Meanwhile, Crannel made me aware of the particulars of his plan. I was to assume the character of an English country gentleman of fortune on his travels. I was to be passionately fond of billiards, and about as clever with the cue as country gentlemen usually are—playing a wild game, in a reckless, cautionless way, but, for obvious reasons, playing only for moderate stakes. It would be his part to drop in occasionally during my play, when he would make his own bets, either in my favour or against me, as he chose, and I was to win or lose according to signals agreed upon between us. In order to avoid suspicion, I was to conceal my real strength,

even when it was most required, and to win, when to win was imperative, as if by accident rather than design. With regard to the connection between us, it was agreed that we should not appear too intimate, or, on the other hand, too distant and reserved; we were to be casual acquaintances, on good terms with each other, and sometimes winning each other's money at a quiet morning game.

All these preliminaries being settled, I spent a couple of days in private practice at a French table—the continental tables being very different from those to which I had been accustomed—in order to familiarise myself with their peculiarities; and then we started by separate conveyances, I and my valet leading the way, for Brussels.

To be continued.

Old small potatoes are now regularly manufactured into fresh new potatoes in Paris.

A sea captain trading regularly to the coast of Africa, was invited to meet a committee of a society for the evangelisation of Africa. He was asked, among numerous questions touching the habits and religion of the African races, "Do the subjects of King Dahomey keep Sunday?" "Keep Sunday!" he replied, "yes, and everything else they can lay their hands on."

A countryman, who had never paid more than 25c. to see an exhibition, went to a New York theatre one night to see "The Forty Thieves." The ticket-seller charged him 75c. for a ticket. Passing the pasteboard back, he quietly remarked, "Keep it, mister; I don't want to see the other thirty-nine," and out he marched.

A correspondent gives the following account of an incident that happened to one who preached in the open air, and placed his hat at his feet to catch the lawbees, which those who stood to hear, or some passing, dropped into it. This man stood with his back to St. Mungo's Church, or, as many of the old people still call it, the Ram's Horn Kirk. It was a windy, gusty day, and while the man preached the hat and the lawbees were carried away by the wind. One of the parish ministers was passing the one way, and Dr. Warlaw the other; both with sad the preacher's misfortune, and saw the man stop his preaching and run after his hat. "Oh! Dr. Wardlaw," said Dr. B., the parish minister, "there goes the voluntary principle." "Not at all, sir,—not at all; the man's pursuing for his stipend."

The brigand Spanos, chief of the gang by whom the English tourists were murdered, must be a cool scoundrel. We learn from a letter of a traveller in Greece that amongst the packages sent from Athens to the captives and their captors was a quantity of tobacco. Spanos sent it back again, it being "too poor in quality" for his smoking.

Cricket eccentricities have commenced in the English metropolis. Eleven pensioners, one-legged, and eleven one-armed, have had a match. The public go to grin at the mishaps. At the dripping Pan, we are informed that the twenty-two clowns, who played on one side, afforded much amusement. The scene on the cricket-ground reminded one of the arena of a circus, the clown party amusing themselves and the spectators during the game with turning summersaults, dancing, turning themselves into gigantic frogs, making grimaces, and other grotesque and laughable feats all over the field, while the more serious part of the game was being carried on. Harry Croueste made himself peculiarly conspicuous in the "motley" line, while acting as bowler, by occasionally turning a summersault immediately before delivering his ball.

A rather interesting and high-sounding matrimonial advertisement appears in a Vienna paper:—"I am young, handsome, well-made, fascinating in manners, sweet disposition, not unlearned, descending from a noble family; have a nice little country property near Vienna. I desire a wife. Send photographs, which must show beauty, and she must be rich and cultivated, but must not object to my being, as I am, a baker."

Some time ago the Governor of the Bank of Brussels received a packet with an inscription outside, to the effect that it was to be opened in three months, if not previously claimed, and its contents to be considered as a restitution. When that period had elapsed the directors assembled to the examination. They at first believed the whole affair to be a hoax, but were astonished to find, carefully enveloped, eighty-one thousand franc notes of the Bank of France.

A placard having been put up at the Edinburgh College gate by the official who writes out such notices, reminding students that if they appeared at the funeral of Professor Simpson they should do so "in mourning," they felt insulted by such an instruction being specially addressed to their class, as if they had not as much common sense as to know that without prompting, and, therefore, added to the placard "Professors may attend in REFRING JACKETS."

The chairman of a vigilance committee, which had been appointed to duck an obnoxious citizen, in Iowa, thus reported to his fellow-citizens:—"We took the thief down the river, made a hole in the ice, and proceeded to duck him; but he slipped through our hands, and hid under the ice, and as he has been there over eight hours, it is supposed he is drowned."

A Parisian *gandin* recently gave a certain lady, Madame—, a very pretty little pet monkey, called Jacque, which she showed to her friends, extolling its beauty and docility. Happening to bite a male visitor, he has taken his revenge by sending a paragraph to a paper and hoaxing it in the form of an announcement of a birth. Thus, "Monsieur— and Madame—" (mentioning the names, and the residence of the latter), "of a son, which has been named Jacque."

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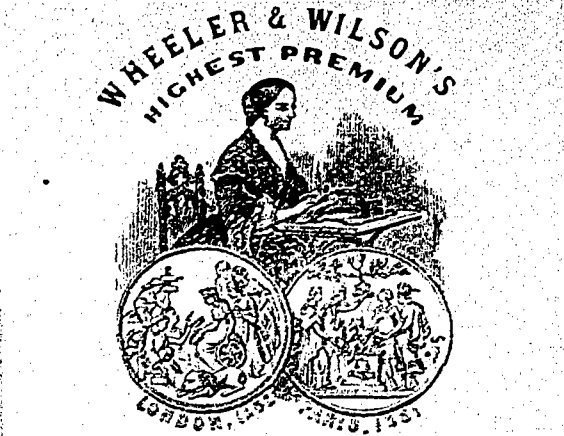
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