

WINNINGS AND LOSINGS.

(CONTINUED FROM LAST NUMBER.)

This narrative started to tell how Dan Darling, a youth just starting out in life, had won handsomely at the race course. His winnings turned his head; he felt rich; he felt above his duty of weighing out groceries; no more hum-drum life for him; he was smart enough for any of them and could make more in a day at the races than his employer could in a week's hard business. The story related how his literary tastes turned to pedigrees and turf doings; he sported racy clothes, abandoned his former associates and gradually drifted to the public-house where he could meet the men whose habits he had acquired. He could sing a good song and was a hail fellow. He neglected attendance at church, and got so he could cut jokes at religious people and took up with free thinking notions. His employer observed his changed habits and talked seriously to him about it. This cooled his ardour, but unfortunately another lucky bet completely killed his new resolutions, he plunged heavily, inducing his shop mates to follow his example. He now spent every night with the "free and easy" at the "Pub."

"Darling, I made myself quite clear to you, I believe, that either you must change your ways, or your place. You have thought best to cling to your bad ways. I am therefore obliged to give you one month's notice from to-day."

So said Dan's master, with all gravity, one morning when Dan had come late to the shop, and had thought best to resent his master's reprimand. Dan had learned that further accomplishment of being impudent.

This was a more serious matter for Dan than any outsider could appreciate, for, in the ardour of his betting zeal, he had gone so far as to mortgage his very salary for some months in advance. Of course, he might get suddenly on his feet by some lucky speculation, and he lived daily in hopes of doing so. But then he might not, and his sense of sporting honor was so keen that to allow a "debt of honor" to remain unpaid was more than his sensitive feelings could stand.

However, here he was, so to speak, stranded, under notice to leave, and without a character to enable him to secure another berth. Things were growing rather serious.

"I say, Dan, you're wanted in the office."

So said one of Dan's fellow-assistants to him one day as he was returning to the shop from his dinner.

He said it so oddly, and his face was so white as he said it, that Dan began to fancy that there was something very unpleasant to be encountered.

When he entered the office a sharp little man was found to be with his master, and this sharp little man seemed busily engaged with the books of the establishment, and jotting down figures here and there on a separate piece of paper.

"I want your explanations," said his master, very gravely, "of some serious discrepancies in these books which, as you know, have been under your sole care."

Dan's face grew long. A grey, ashy look covered his face. Drops of perspiration gathered on his forehead. His lips grew suddenly so dry that he was obliged to moisten them more than once before he could speak. "There's nothing wrong with the books, I hope, sir," said he at last, in a trembling voice.

"You know best," said his master, turning a stern look full upon him.

Dan quailed under the look.

"They were all right, sir, when I left them last—unless someone has been tampering with them."

"They have been tampered with, Darling, without a doubt, and it is from you we want an explanation."

"Yes, sir," replied Dan, feebly fidgeting from foot to foot.

"Some sums, we find, have been paid and not entered at all," said the sharp looking little man. "Some payments which have been entered show only a part of the money paid. See, here is your receipt for one sum, and here is your entry of a smaller sum. How do you account for that?"

"It's very strange. I can't make it out at all, sir. It must have been a slip of memory, I think."

"We find," continued the sharp looking little man, "that 'these slips of memory' have often occurred within the last three weeks, and that there are a large number of them. How do you account for that?"

Dan mumbled something about being "not well," and "out of sorts" lately. He couldn't account for it in any other way.

"We must try and quicken your memory a little, then, replied his master, sternly.

What was implied in his master's words soon became evident, for in a very few seconds a big official foot was heard tramping through the shop, and a big policeman's form was found in the little office. Then his master's voice was heard sternly saying—

"Constable, I give this man in charge for embezzlement and theft."

Dan's teeth chattered in his head, and when the big policeman's big hand was laid on his shoulder he shrieked aloud, falling on his knees begged for mercy.

"Come on, my man. You may as well go quietly, said the policeman. "I wouldn't make any fuss if I were you."

And so Dan Darling was marched off to the cells to await the magistrate's summons the next morning.

Dan's eyes were opened at last. After being so tightly closed, they needed a great deal of opening. But that "good deal" had been forthcoming, and now Dan toiled about in his prison cell, and saw it all.

That first success on the racecourse had started every disaster that followed. Had he

only failed then, all might have been different. But winning, he had lost all—money, character, situation, and liberty. Fortunate! Lucky! Why, that first "win" had been the greatest curse of his life.

Of course, there was a step further back still which must bear its responsibility. Why had he gone to the races at all? Why had he put himself within reach of the temptation to gamble? Fool that he was? Why had he not stayed away?

Since that awful day he had been like a drugged man—seen everything in a haze and fog, and wandered along as far from the right path as possible. Everything had appeared in an upside-down fashion.

He now saw his sporting friends in their true light. He had been the pigeon, whom they had been plucking so busily, and whom they had now left without a single feather. Was there one of them, he asked himself, to whom he could apply now for some friendly help? Not one.

"What could have possessed me," he asked himself in an agony, "to have embarked on this miserable gambling life? I must have been mad not to see how it would end."

At the trial his master declared that (with the magistrate's permission) he would not press the case. He believed, from his interviews with the young man, that he now saw the error of his ways, and was genuinely penitent. He would prefer not to prosecute, if he might be allowed not to do so. It was the prisoner's first offence, and he believed it would be his last.

The magistrate, seeing the wisdom of this course, consented; but he could not refrain from reminding poor Dan that no fool was so great as a gambling fool, and that if a young man wanted to go to the bad, and to end his days in a prison cell, there was no likelier road than the gambling, betting one to bring him to that destination.

In a distant land there is an eminent citizen who, having steadily won his way to wealth, spends it for the good of his adopted country. A bright Christian man, he overflows with "good will towards men."

But his tender ministries go forth especially to young men, whose interest he fosters with an energy that knows no rest.

People who do not sympathise with his methods declare him to be one-sided and narrow, because he bears with so hard a hand on the "innocent" jollities of youth. They say he is too fierce in his denunciation of gambling and betting, and is merciless in his judgments of those who encourage such things. They lament that he so often loses his temper in dealing with such "harmless" pastimes.

But when I tell my readers, what they already guess, that our anti-gambling philanthropist is none other than Dan Darling, they will not wonder at his zeal, for there is no man who has bought experience more dearly than he, and no one more qualified to say how fatal a thing gambling is.