

The Orphans' Friend.

VOLUME II.

OXFORD, N. C., WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1876.

NUMBER 37.

A STORY OF ALDERSHOT.

During the steeple-chase week at Aldershot, some years ago, I was introduced by a young friend, in whom I took a great interest, but over whom I unfortunately possessed but little control, to accompany him one evening to see some roulette played.

My friend, whom I shall call Herbert B—, was an impetuous, warm-hearted Irishman, generous to a fault, and as fine a young fellow as you would see in a day's walk. He was, however, like many of his countrymen, thoughtless to a degree, and seemed always quite unable to resist the impulse of the moment, whatever it might be. Knowing him to be in debt, and dependent almost altogether on his pay, I tried my best to dissuade him from going; but it was no use; so I determined to go along with him, to try to keep him as much as possible out of harm. For all I could do, though, as it turned out, I might as well have remained away.

Every one, I suppose, knows what roulette is; but in case this should meet the eye of "the exception," I will endeavor briefly to describe it.

Four things are chiefly necessary for its performance. First, a board of peculiar and complicated construction—of which more hereafter; second, a cloth half red and half black, with sundry numbers and cabalistic characters painted on it; third, a professor of legerdemain, to manipulate the wheel; and finally, the "flats" to be pillaged.

Herbert B—represented the last item to perfection, except that he had very little to be pillaged of. In a few minutes all his available capital had melted in almost equal proportion on both the red and the black, which colors he backed impartially, but generally with the same result, for he nearly always lost. His last coin having vanished he rose to go, remarking incidentally that he had brought no more money with him.

"Won't you take a glass of champagne, sir?" said an oily voice at his elbow; and turning round he beheld a sleek, close shaved, Methodist parson-like individual, who was rubbing his hands in an apparently nervous manner, and smiling abjectly.

"Well, I suppose I may as well," replied Herbert, as he followed the other to the sideboard.

"We'll be happy to lend you any money you like, Captain, to go on with," insinuated the greasy owner of the oily voice, as the bottle was being opened; adding, as the liquor formed into the tumbler: "Your luck has been dreadful bad, to be sure; but it is sure to turn; and with the steady games you play you stand an uncommon good chance of winning, I can tell you, though I say it who shouldn't, if I consulted my own interest."

But why dwell on my poor friends folly. He gulped down the stuff they called champagne, borrowed ten pounds, and returned to the table.

When he left the house some hours later he had written checks for five hundred pounds in favor of the oily one, and to meet these

checks he told me he did not possess five hundred farthings.

I was, unfortunately, poor myself, and could do nothing for him; so, advising him to go home and try and get some sleep, and come to me in the morning to have a talk about his affairs, we separated; he went to his hut in the North Camp, and I to my quarters.

I never saw him alive again. The following morning when I awoke I saw my servant standing by my bedside.

"You know Mr. B., sir?" said he. "He shot himself dead last night."

"Shot himself! Impossible! What on earth are you talking about!" I exclaimed, jumping out of bed.

"It's quite true, sir. His servant is here."

Yes, it was true. My poor friend, in a moment of desperation, which, as the jury truly said, was temporary insanity, had committed the rash act for which there was no remedy.

About a fortnight afterwards I heard at mess the following story, which I will give in the words of the narrator:

"What about the roulette bla'guards? Haven't you heard? Oh, I'll tell you with pleasure."

"You know Blan's billiard-room, I suppose? Well, the beggars had established themselves there, and carried on their little game on the billiard-table, from which they had removed the cushions. One night I strolled in by accident, and found the room crowded with fellows, some sitting on the table itself, and more standing round it, but nearly all dropping their coin like smoke. In the middle stood the roulette-board, flanked by heaps of gold and silver; and on each side of these were cloths, with the numbers and zeros painted on them in the usual manner. French, of the 22d Lancers, was being bled to a frightful extent. He would persist in backing the red for fivers; so, when I tell you the black passed four-and-twenty times, you may imagine it was rather hot for him. At Hamburg the longest run on record is thirteen or sixteen, I forget which; so this alone ought to have made the fellows smell a rat; but they didn't, apparently, for they went on playing as long as they had any money to lose.

"A few won, of course, and Smith of the — was one them. The little beast was as pleased as Punch, and kept sticking half-crowns on whichever color was not otherwise backed, till he had quite a heap beside him. He was right enough, perhaps, but it made me savage to see the only cad there winning.

"Well, matters went on like this for a goodish bit, and champagne was flowing all over the place, when in walks Robinson of the —th, who had just rejoined from sick-leave, surrounded by a lot of his pals.

"As soon as he saw the new arrival, the fellow who was twirling the board gave a little start, and became visibly paler. He, however, kept on as usual, called the game steadily—twenty, red, even and over—raked up the winnings, and paid away a few half-crowns, and was just pro-

ceeding to give the wheel another turn, when Robinson, who had strolled quietly round to his side of the table, coolly shoved him on one side, and drawing the board over to himself, called out in a loud voice: "Gentlemen, allow me to explain the mechanism of this swindle."

"There was, of course, a tremendous row immediately. The rest of the gang closed up from their outlying posts about the room, and before you could say knife, the whole of the money disappeared. Two or three of the swindlers then tried to get hold of the board, and the mean beggars who had been collaring their half-crowns backed them up, and were loud in their cries of shame and order; but Robinson stuck to the timber like a good one, and being supported by his friends, soon carried his point, and obtained a hearing.

"In two minutes the whole dodge was explained and practically illustrated, so that even the half-crown fellows were obliged to admit they were convinced.

"This is how it was done. You know the little partitions which divide the holes the ball settles in, from each other? Well, these were all movable, and Robinson showed us how, in the act of setting the wheel going, while he whirled the ball in the opposite direction, the fellow who operated could raise with his finger whichever partition he liked, to the extent of about the sixteenth of an inch above the rest. If he wanted black to win, all he had to do was to elevate the partition in front of one of the red holes; and as the ball kept on rolling round and round, it would naturally and necessarily stop eventually where it met most resistance, and thus remained in whichever color or number the scoundrel had, as it were, set it for. To do this so as to avoid detection required, of course, considerable sleight of hand; and it was on this account, no doubt, as Robinson pointed out, that, though the gang numbered some seven or eight in all, it was invariably the same individual who presided.

This explanation occupied some considerable time, and caused, as you may imagine, no end of sensation, particularly among those fellows who had been losing heavily. Immediately there arose a cry for vengeance, and the only one of the lot who could be found was forthwith seized by a dozen pirate warriors, who with one voice demanded satisfaction. The poor wretch, a low-sized greasy man, tried in vain to make himself heard, and shrieked aloud for mercy. None, however, was shown him; for first his hat was playfully kicked about, and then his coat was torn off piece-meal, revealing remarkably dirty undergarments. His waistcoat disappeared next, and finally his trousers and boots vanished. His costume then consisted of a dilapidated flannel shirt and filthy socks; and it was lucky for him that these articles were in such an uncleanly state, for it was that fact alone which saved him from being turned adrift on the streets of Aldershot as naked as he was born.

"It wasn't a bad lark, was it? But I forgot to say, that in the fellow's breast-pocket there was a wallet of ponderous dimensions, and in it a number of checks and bills, which a man, whose name I won't mention, but who you all know, made a small bonfire of, on a tray in the center of the billiard table.

"Well, I must say," said our Colonel, who had been an attentive listener, "that I am surprised you should have gone to such a place under any circumstance; but to go so soon after the terrible affair in North Camp!"

"I beg your pardon, sir, interrupted the narrator of the story: "but all this happened the night after poor B—'s death, the particulars of which had not then oozed out. Had the circumstances which led to his sad end been known, it would have fared much harder with the greasy man. But it is satisfactory to know, isn't it, that he did get some punishment?"

"Herbert B—'s checks were probably among those that were burned, for they were never presented. Poor fellow! I tried hard, that fatal night, to get him to stop at my quarters; but he insisted on going home. If I had only known what was about to happen! But who can tell what a day—or a night—may bring forth?"—*Chambers' Journal*

ORCHARD GRASS.

Flowers in dense cluster. Its stem is erect, and grows three feet, and in good soil has been known to grow as high as five feet. Root perennial. Flowers in June and July. This is one of the most valuable and widely known of all the pasture grasses. It is exceedingly palatable to stock of all kinds. Its rapidity of growth, the luxuriance of its after mast, and its power to endure the cropping of cattle, commend it highly to the farmers care, especially as a pasture grass as it blossoms earlier than timothy, and about the time of red clover; it makes an amiable mixture with the later plant to cut in the blossom and cure for hay. As a pasture grass it should be fed close, both to prevent its forming thick tufts, and to prevent it running to seed, when it loses a large proportion of its nutritive matter, and becomes hard and wiry.

All kinds of stock eat it greedily when green. It grows remarkably quick when cropped by cattle—five or six days in summer sufficing to give a good bite. Its good properties more particularly consist in its early and rapid growth and its resistance to drought, but all agree that it should be cropped close. Sheep will pass over every other grass to feed upon it. If suffered to grow long without being cropped, it becomes coarse and harsh. It is suitable to all arable soils. Two bushels of seed are requisite for one acre when sown alone, one half this quantity when sown with clover. The seeds are very light, weighing fourteen pounds to the bushel. It should be cut early for hay. When grazed down, and the stock

turned off, it will be ready for regrazing in less than half the time required for Kentucky Blue Grass.

In summer it will grow more in a day than blue grass will in a week. Orchard grass is naturally disposed to form and grow in tussocks. The best preventive is good preparation of the ground, and a sufficiency of seed uniformly sown. It is less exhaustive to the soil than timothy. In a porous subsoil its fibrous root extend to a great depth. Its habits of growth unfits it for a lawn grass.—*N. C. Farmer.*

RUM'S DOINGS.

A woman went to a wood-yard on a very cold day and asked to see the head man. He came forward. "Sir," said she, "can you let me have a quarter of a cord of wood for that?" handing him a piece of money; my children are freezing."

The man looked closely at her. "Why, are you not Seth Blake's wife?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I am," said the woman.

"How does it happen that you are in such low circumstances?" asked the man.

"Sir," answered Mrs. Blake, "rum did it."

"That's bad," said the man.

"Yes, sir, it is bad. My children are starving, and rum did that. My children are ragged, and rum did that. My children are growing up outside of church, outside of the Sabbath-school, outside of the day-schools, and rum does that. My husband, once kind and industrious, is now a vagabond, and rum did it. My heart is broke and rum did that. And the poor woman sank down on a log of wood, the picture of want and woe.

Nor did the rough woodman keep his eyes dry, for he remembered the time when Seth Blake was a promising young printer. He married a nice woman, and the young couple started in life with as fair a prospect of comfort and happiness as a young couple could well have. They had seats in the methodist church too, and used to be seen listening to the Word of God.

But Seth had a weak point. He would sometimes 'drink.' He did not quite believe in total abstinence. "Touch not, taste not, handle not," was not his motto.

The habit gained on him. It mastered him; it ruined him; and what is worse, a drunkard's family has to share a drunkard's shame and degradation; and worst of all, drunkenness ruins the soul.

Touch not, taste not, handle not, boys. That is the only safe ground. Any other may sink you.

It is said that the grasshoppers are damaging the crops in Mecklenburg county.

The first bale of N. C. cotton was sold in New York last week for 12½ cents per pound.

Three hundred thousand trade dollars per month are being coined at San Francisco, to meet the demand for export to China.