

LITERATURE.

GEORGE RUTHERFORD;
OR,
THE DEMON OF GAMBLING.

The little tale which we are about to relate, is unfortunately but a too true one, and which might be done full justice to in the hands of a Bulwer or Dickens, or the author of the "Collegians." It is a melancholy evidence of the temptations of city life on the one hand, and the want of the influence of a governing will on the other. It is simply as follows:—

George Rutherford was the only son of a highly respectable merchant in the city of New York. His father, starting on a moderate foundation, had, by industry, assiduity and probity, built up a splendid establishment. As a consequence, a large, and yet growing fortune, kept pace with the attention of old Rutherford. His son George was thus born, it would seem, under auspicious circumstances. But we shall see. Having received the best elementary education New York could afford, he was sent to Yale where he graduated with many honors and won the esteem of both professors and fellow students, as well as the confidence and love of his father. His nature was genial, his manner frank, brilliant and winning, and his person elegant without fopishness, and manly without that rudeness which sometimes links itself with persons of a good stature and address.

It was a matter of serious anxiety with his father, as to what profession he should engage his son in. After much discussion with himself and several consultations with George, it was determined he should enter the counting house of his father, at least on trial, which he accordingly did. His success at College was but a foreshadowing of his success in business, and in less than a year he was taken in as junior partner to his father. He was excessively grateful, and by unremitting attention for the next two years, had won himself—a young man—an honorable reputation on 'Change, and an enviable one with every person who dealt with him in his office. His career promised to outstrip that of his father, who looked on his son with an almost reverent feeling. Much of the business was now transacted by George, and under his personal surveillance, and by the introduction of methods which his clear brain suggested, all went on well.

About this time he contracted an affection with the daughter of a rich merchant, Miss Julia Sommerfield. Both parents approving, the young couple were married, and after travelling for a month or six weeks in Western New York, set up house in one of those magnificent streets which adorn the upper end of the Empire City.

At the end of a year the birth of a son tied the hearts of the loving pair, if possible, more closely, and their happy existence was almost a dream through the attention of the husband, and the affection of the wife.

But a change came o'er the spirit of their dream. Alas, that pen should write it. They had enjoyed their happy wedded life for about two years, when a circumstance occurred which proved the demon that hurried the once gifted, noble and affectionate George Rutherford to an early and disgraceful end.

At a party up town, given by one of the dignitaries of the New York bench, in consequence of the arrival in the city of an old friend and fellow student at law, who had settled out west, and had arisen to a proud eminence; George Rutherford from his brilliancy and engaging manner became quite a lion of the evening, and his conversation was sought after by many persons of distinction. Among others, he was introduced to a very fascinating gentleman, who was represented as the younger son of an English peer, but who being educated in France, looked upon that country as his home, and taking the revolutionary side, and afterward opposing Louis Napoleon in the late struggles in that country, had lost both his position and patrimony, and had come to this country, at least for a time, to see with his own eyes the workings of a true republican country. The chivalrous George became quite interested in his new acquaintance, who in the course of the evening, for a change of plea-

tures, proposed a game of cards. George, eager to show his new friend all the attention possible, soon had an alcove at the end of the parlor furnished with a table and a pack of cards, and the two sat down to converse and enjoy themselves. At first they played without stake, but at the suggestion of the Honorable Charles Fitzroy, a slight stake was laid "just to make the game interesting." George won—Mr. Fitzroy, with a good humored discomfiture proposed to double the stake to give him a chance of clearing, it was done—but George won again; again were the stakes doubled, and doubled, until one thousand dollars were staked—and lo, again George won.

"Ha, Mr. Rutherford, you are in famous luck," said Fitzroy, "but I think we must adjourn. I cannot play with you. Ha, ha, I have no chance."

"Oh!" said Rutherford, "don't adjourn; I assure you I have scarcely ever touched a card. It must be some freak of fortune—you will win your own again, try again."

"Some other evening, you are in too good luck for my purse to-night; some other evening,"—and he took bills to the amount of his loss from his pocket-book and handed them to Rutherford, at the same time they agreed when they should meet.

From that hour a strange demon seemed to possess young Rutherford. The first unkind word was spoken that night to his loving wife, as she bent over his shoulder and asked him to leave the card-table. The excitement of the game made him stolid to all else. On their way home, she spoke to him affectionately of the effect of being seen for three hours at a card table, and moreover, hinted her dislike of the new formed friendship, and abjured her husband to beware of a man who could take pleasure in such a practice, much less to introduce it in a strange house. Woman is always true in her conjectures on the nature of man. And would to God that the husband had taken her advice that melancholy night. His answers were petulant, and he abused her for that she attempted to think wrong of any one he thought well of. They reached home, not speaking to each other. That night he dreamt of nothing but money-getting, the Demon of gambling held revel on his brain, while beside him his tender wife slept not, but poured the overflowing of a heart too full for utterance, in sad—sad tears upon her pillow. * * * *

Rutherford met Fitzroy at the appointed time. Other gentlemen were there, friends of the latter, to meet his generous friend, the former. The cards were introduced; they played. Fitzroy won back at first, but the tide of damnation turning, he lost all, and went in debt five thousand dollars to his opponent. Wine was introduced, and Rutherford in the heat of his success, drank deep. Large bets were lost and won on him and Fitzroy. Many times, here and elsewhere, did the once innocent George meet those gamblers, for such they were. Often they kept the play up all night, so that he could not attend to business next day—then he sought the roulette and faro table to make amends for the probable loss of business, and on he went from day to day, from night to night whirled, he dared not think whither. Meanwhile, his fond wife pined. Her home became lonely, her husband careless of her, and in this dreary state of affairs she bore him a daughter.

He had become a confirmed gamester in spirit, though not in art, and could not refrain from visiting those halls which are burning in our midst, seducing youths, as the wild light on the lagoons, until at last they are nothing but pathless, outcast wanderers. * * * *

Rutherford had been losing heavily for several nights, and was wound up to a dreadful pitch of excitement. By his inattention he had met some severe losses in business, and many of his friends had dropped off, seeing, but not accounting for his fitful visits to his counting house. His father questioned him, but was answered in such a manner that it stung the old man to the heart, and he forbore to ever make another inquiry.

He had been losing for some time, and made up his mind for a large venture to recover his losses. That night it seemed as if all the pow-

ers of hell were against him; he lost stake upon stake, and at each loss became more intent on winning, until he had lost everything he possessed in the world, his furniture, his wife's jewels, all, in the hope of recovering his loss by some tide of fortune. A dead silence followed the turn of the card, which left him a beggar. His happy life passed in rapid review, his lonely wife, little children—homeless all, cursed and smote him to madness, and he would have departed in a silent rage, but that the untimely jeers of some of the party provoked him to say something rash. They little minded his ravings; Fitzroy tauntingly asked him to "stake his damned pretty little wife, (without the young ones,) against one thousand dollars," which so roused the beggared man—for he was not entirely bereft of honor—that he instantly caught the speaker by the throat, and but for the interference of other parties, would have strangled him. However, the fight did not end here. Rutherford accused the gambler of robbing him by his arts; the whole party now became his enemies, and after some recrimination a row took place, in which Rutherford left one of the gamblers for dead, with a stroke of a chair, and seriously maimed another. Escaping, he flew through the back streets,—he dared not meet the face of day (it was morn), in the wide and public thoroughfares. He sought his home, and his incoherent ravings frightened his wife.

"Hang you—why—why—Oh, God! what have you done," and his poor wife fainted in terror. * * * *

Flying from Justice with his still affectionate wife (how little men know of the truth of woman's love), and her little ones, they assumed an humble disguise and repaired to a garret in South street. Collecting his thoughts, and hastily turning whatever valuables he conveniently could into money, his first idea was to sail for California with his little family. His arrangements were easily made, for he had no luggage to bring, but he was recognized by a porter in his employ, who not knowing his master's dreadful case, accosted him with surprise at finding him in such a guise, Rutherford hastily darted from him. The fear of being caught and hanged like a common murderer, crazed him. He wildly sought his wife and hurriedly bade her move all from that cursed place. He paced madly up and down the little apartment, swearing he would shoot the first man who entered. He stopped short there were footsteps on the stairs—

"Julia, it must be the police: I dare not face one, I cannot die—oh, God! no, not on the scaffold. I have wronged you, and robbed my little ones; forgive me. God—" The handle of the door turned, he raised a pistol to his head, and fell a corpse as his father entered.

THE MASSACRE OF THE VAUDOIS.

This is one of the most fearful episodes in the history of human crime. It was perpetrated against the peasant inhabitants of the Canton of Taud by the Pope's Legate Cataneo. The tragedy is thus related in a work just published:

"The Vaudois, feeling that they could not resist a force twenty times greater than their own, abandoned their poor habitations, placed their old people and children in their rustic carts, with their domestic utensils and such provisions as they could collect, and driving their herds before them, and singing canticles, retired to the rugged slopes of Mount Pelvoux. This part of the Alps, which has since been named the Visal Brianconnaise, rises more than 6,000 feet above the level of the valley. A third of the way up there is an immense cavern called Aigue-Froide, from the cold springs, nourished by the snows, which are found there. A sort of platform, accessible only over fearful precipices, extends at the mouth of the cavern, the majestic vault of which, after subsiding into a narrow passage, expands once more into an immense hall, of irregular form. Such was the asylum which the Vaudois had selected. They placed at the extremity of the grotto, the women, children, and old men; the cattle and sheep occupied the lateral cavities of the rock, and the able-bodied men posted themselves towards the mouth of the cavern, which, after ha-

ving first barricaded with large rocks the path that led to the grotto, they had walled up with similar materials. Cataneo states, in his Memoirs, that they had with them provision for more than two years. All their precautions thus taken, they deemed they had nothing to fear; but in reality they had to fear this very confidence in mere human precautions. Cataneo had with him a daring and experienced leader, named La Palud. This captain, seeing the impossibility of forcing the entrenchments of the grotto on the side by which the Vaudois had reached it, led his own men back into the valley; then, with all the ropes he could collect, he ascended Mount Pelvoux, and, making his way to the precipice overhanging the entrance to the cavern, descended, by means of the ropes, to the platform. Nothing could have been more easy than for the Vaudois either to have cut the ropes, or to have slain each soldier before he reached the ground, and then hurled them into the abyss; but a panic terror seized the unhappy besieged. Some who rushed out from the cavern precipitated themselves down the rocks: those who essayed resistance were slaughtered by La Palud, who then, not venturing to involve his men in the depths of the cavern, piled up all the wood he could collect at the entrance, and setting fire to it, those who attempted to issue forth were either destroyed by the flames, or by the sword of the enemy, while those who remained within were stifled by the smoke. When the cavern was afterwards examined, there were found in it four hundred infants suffocated in their cradles, or in the arms of their dead mothers. Altogether there perished in this cavern more than three thousand Vaudois—including the entire population of Val-Louise. Cataneo distributed the property of these unfortunates among the vagabonds who accompanied him, and never again did the Vaudois church raise its head in those blood-stained valleys."

A THRILLING INCIDENT.

The first settlers in Maine found, beside its red faced owners, other and abundant sources of annoyance and danger.

The majestic forests which then waved, where now is heard the hum of business, and where a thousand villages stand, were the homes of innumerable wild and savage animals.

Often at night was the farmer's family aroused from sleep with the noise without, which told that Bruin was storming the sheep pen or the pig sty, or was laying violent paws upon some unlucky calf—and often, on a cold Winter evening, did they roll a larger log against the door, and with beating hearts draw closer around the fire, as the dismal howl of the wolf echoed through the woods.

The wolf was the most ferocious, blood-thirsty, but cowardly of all, rarely attacking man, unless driven by severe hunger, and seeking his victim with the utmost pertinacity.

The incident which I am about to relate occurred in the early history of Biddford.

A man who then lived on the farm now occupied by Mr. H—, was one Autumn engaged in felling trees at some distance from his house. His little son eight years old, was in the habit, while his mother was busy with household cares, of running out into the fields and woods around the house, and often going where the father was at work. One day, after the frost had robbed the trees of their foliage, the father left his work sooner than usual and started for home.—Just by the edge of the forest he saw a curious pile of leaves—without stopping to think what had made it he cautiously removed the leaves, when what was his astonishment to find his own darling boy lying there sound asleep! 'Twas but the work of a moment to take up the little sleeper, put in his place a small log, carefully re-place the leaves and conceal himself among the nearest bushes, there to watch the result.

After waiting a short time he heard a wolf, distant howl, quickly followed by another and another, till the woods seemed alive with the fearful sounds.

The howls came nearer, and in a few minutes a large gaunt, savage looking wolf leaped in the opening, closely followed by the whole