

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE
GAMESTER.



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THE
GAMER

THE
STORY
OF

Poor TRICKET the GAMESTER.

SHEWING

How he first lost his place by gaming, and then
had well nigh been the death of his wife through
the same cause, and how lastly, his gaming was
the occasion of his being transported as a con-
vict to Botany Bay.

THE
G A M E S T E R.

“**I** CAN’T, for my life, imagine (said Mr. Smith to his opposite neighbour Mr. Tomson) what those fellows can be about on the top of my house. They have been these two days employed there in repairing the damage done by the high wind t’other night; a job which I think might have been done in a very few hours.” “Step over the way to my door,” said Tomson “and I will presently explain to you why the job is so long in hand.” Smith did so—“Turn about and look up,” said Tomson, “and you will see the two men sitting over against each other on the ridge of your house.” Why they are playing at cards!” said Smith—“no wonder my business is so long in doing.” Away went Smith to the master bricklayer to complain of his men. The master was very angry, as he well might be, and dismissed the idle fellows from his service: and as he made known the story, the men found no one willing to employ them, so they had full leisure for their gaming, and Betsworth lost all his money to Trickit—Betsworth’s wife in vain asked him for cash, provisions were scarce, and they had lived on short commons several days. On Saturday Betsworth had

no wages to receive, nevertheless, he desired his wife would get a bit of meat for a hot Sunday's dinner; "for," said he, "we have lived hardly enough this week, and I shall ask my friend Tricket to eat a bit with us." The wife said nothing, but when her husband and Tricket came in to dinner on Sunday, she laid the cloth, and set upon the table a dish with a cover. "What hast thou got under thy cover, wife?" said Betsworth, "something nice I hope." "As good as I could get," said the wife, "had you brought me money, you should have had something better." Upon this he lifted up the cover and behold! the dish contained nothing but some dirty old cards scattered about it! "Is this," said Betsworth "what you provide for me and my friend?" "It is all that you and your friend have left us," said she, "I have nothing to eat myself, and these are the only tools you work with to provide for my maintenance and your own." "Burn the cards," said Betsworth, "they have been the ruin of me; forgive me wife, I deserve a more bitter reproof." "Tricket," added he, "my poor Molly has served us rightly enough; for my part I am resolved to go to my master to-morrow, confess my fault, and try to get his work again; and I hope God will pardon me for the distress I have brought upon my family by my love of gaming; and that he will mercifully strengthen me to resist every temptation to return to such a horrid practice." Tricket did not relish the jest but went surlily out of the house. Betsworth however is said to have taken a hint from this little trick of his wife, and, as far as I have heard, he has never since been found amongst the Gamesters.

I must now proceed to tell you something more of Tricket, who continued his evil practices, and who is the only one of these two Gamesters, whose history I mean to speak of any farther.

Having lost his former gill, whom he tried once or twice to draw in to another game, by saying that the man wanted spirit, Tricket happened to light upon a second brother Gamester, whom he hoped to drain as he had done Betsworth; but either through a sad run of ill luck, or, as I rather think, by his being not a little cheated, he soon lost every farthing of his former booty; and he had nothing now left for him to stake at the next gaming party, except what little he could get by stripping his poor wife of the earnings of her hard labor. She had two children of four and five years of age, for whom, as well as herself, she contrived to get bread by taking in washing.

She bore with patience her husband's spending all he got upon his own pleasures, and leaving her to shift for herself; but when he came home, and tore from her what she had worked so hard for, she could not help weeping and complaining, though her complaints were mild and far from the language of scolding: but her brutal husband, instead of being moved by her tears, only made them a pretence for running from her to the alehouse; "since," as he said, "he could not have comfort at home."

One of the families for which she washed, would often carelessly make her wait a month or two for the payment of her bills; instead of discharging them weekly, when she brought home the linen. This is a cruel inconsiderateness, and very contrary to the merciful spirit of the law of God, which for-

bids to keep back the hire of the labourer. The truth is, persons whose only support is hard labour, can seldom do more than live from hand to mouth, and whilst their pay is kept back by a thoughtless customer, they are likely enough to be starving for want of it.

It happened that she had just received a washing bill of six weeks standing, which she had long been sighing for, and was counting her money, when her husband came home in a terrible humour, declared he had not a farthing in the world, and laid his violent hands on this money, every shilling of which he carried off. She screamed after him, begging that he would leave her some of it at least, or how could she get bread for her children? But he was quickly out of hearing, and hastily returned to his play-mate, who waited for him at the alehouse. Trickit's cruelty struck his wife to the heart; she sat down in dumb despair, and could not ease her full heart by weeping; the children looked up in her face with terror, and soon began to cry, and to tell her they were hungry; this gave a free passage to her tears; she hugged them both to her breast, and told them that they should have all the food their cruel father had left them: she brought out the remainder of her loaf, and divided it between them; for her part she could swallow none.

By being obliged to trust her customers, she had been reduced to borrow a little from her landlady, and she owed some rent besides, so that she was ashamed to apply to her again, and she had not six pence in the world to supply food or to buy soap for her washing. He who *should* assist her was her worst enemy, and, careless of her wants, took from

her the fruits of her industry to throw it away in gaming and drinking.

This barbarous treatment hurt her the more because, with all his faults, she retained more affection for him than he deserved; and had often cheerfully supplied his extravagance with a share of what she got, when she could do it without starving herself and her children. But now all provisions were so dear that she found it not easy to get necessaries even by working early and late at her laborious business. No money could she get from her husband, and this day his antagonist had refused to play with him any longer upon tick; and the alehouse-keeper, at whose house this gaming commonly went on, would draw no more beer without present pay. His character was become so bad, that he could not get employed when necessity would have urged him to work. In this situation he had come home desperate and provoked at his ill fortune, when he found his wife with two guineas and a good deal of silver before her. The sight of this money renewed his hopes, and his eagerness for trying once more to recover his losses. With this only object in view, he flew like a vulture on his prey, and without a thought of the distressful state of those who *should* have been dear to him as his life, snatched from them all the means of subsistence. Thus does gaming harden the heart and swallow up every good affection! whilst the hateful passions of avarice and envy are continually fed and strengthened by it!

Poor Mrs. Trickit, cold and fasting, put her children to bed, and sat weeping over them, whilst her husband spent his hours in greedy wishes, hopes, and fears; in rage, in oaths, and curses, over his

cards, with the tankard at his side, often drained by the thirsty passion burning in his stomach, and raging in his mind. At past midnight he came staggering home, and found his wife sitting up for him, pale and shivering, and her face swelled with weeping.—“ I thought you had left us for good and all,” said she, “ left us to perish: how *could* you be so barbarous as to rob me of all, and leave me without a penny in the house? I beseech you to give me back some of that money, which was all I had in the world, unless you do indeed desire to see me, and your children die with want.” If that was your *all*,” he replied, “ *die you must*; for it is every penny gone, and more after it than I shall ever be able to pay.” So saying, he turned his pockets inside out, to shew her they were perfectly empty. At this sight the poor woman, whose spirits were before nearly exhausted with grief and fasting, fell in a fainting fit at his feet: as he had never seen her so before he thought she was dead, and alarmed the house with his cries: though he was much in liquor, and his mind almost distracted, yet the idea of having been the cause of her death struck him with horror. The children, awakened by his out-cry, started up, and seeing her on the floor, cried, “ Mammy! Mammy!” with all their might.

This dreadful noise awakened both the landlady, who slept above stairs, and also a widow lady who lodged on the first floor, but before either of these could run down stairs, Tricket was at their doors, crying in a horrible tone, “ My wife! my wife! come to her if you have any pity! I have killed her! help! help!” He then ran back, and found her lying where he had left her, and the two children on

the ground with her, kissing her cold hands and face, sobbing and drowning her with their tears. The lady and landlady reached Tricket's room at the same instant, and looked with amazement on this wretched groupe; whilst the man cried out, "See! see! what I have done! I have murdered my wife!" "Sure you could not be such a monster;" said the lady, "how have you murdered her? where is her wound? help to raise her up, and let us see the hurt." They then lifted her up, and perceived returning life in her. "Where is your hurt my poor dear creature?" said the landlady; "where did that inhuman villain strike you?" The poor woman looked wildly: "what do you mean?" said she, "he did not strike me, though I almost wish he had to the heart." Her husband now, with the most lively joy and gratitude, thanked God that she was alive, and on his knees begged her forgiveness. She assured him, as well as her weakness would allow, that she forgave him all.

The good women now hastened to make a fire, and to warm her bed, for they found she shivered violently; when they had put her into it, the lady brought her a glass of warm wine and water, some of which she prevailed on her to swallow. Tricket, whose anguish had taken off his intoxication, put his children again into their little bed: he gazed upon them and their mother by turns; whilst his heart was wrung with the sense of their wants and his own wickedness. His wife fell asleep soon after the refreshment she had taken; but in a few hours awoke in a burning fever. Tricket watched by her side; when he felt her hand and head as hot as fire, his fears returned, and he ran out of the house to fetch an apothecary; though he recollected that

he had nothing to pay for help, or even necessary food for her: however he went into the street, taking a club stick in his hand, and had not gone half way to the apothecary's, when, on turning a corner, he saw a gentleman walking alone before him. Tricket at that moment looking round the street saw no creature near. Suddenly it darted into his mind, that he might now get bread for his wife and children, and that he could escape home again before any one could detect him; he stopt not for recollection, but striking the gentleman with all his force on the back of his head, felled him to the ground, and was rifling his pockets, when a watchman, turning the same corner Tricket had done, ran up, winding his rattle as he ran.

Tricket tried to escape; but the rattle brought watchmen from so many quarters, that he was soon secured; whilst some of them conveyed him to the round-house, others assisted the gentleman to rise; having been only stunned, he soon recovered his speech, and directed the men to lead him to his house, which was not far off. There they asked him whether he was robbed? and, on examining his pockets, he found that he had lost his watch, and his purse, both of which he particularly described. The watch he could swear to, if he saw it; and he told the colour of the purse, and what money it contained, of which he gave the watchman a memorandum. They then returned to the round-house, where, on searching the prisoner, the watch and purse were found upon him. He would not answer any of their questions, but remained in gloomy silence.

When the day was more advanced, they carried him before a Justice of the Peace, and gave in their

information. Trickit was now obliged to speak; and seeing clearly that he must be convicted, he burst into an agony of grief, and confessed the whole; but he pleaded the distress to which his wife and family were reduced; which alone," he said, "had led him to this rash action: and he repeatedly observed, that since he was driven to it by *necessity*, he hoped that both his Worship and the Gentleman would let him go: and he protested, that, till the fatal moment when he saw the Gentleman, and thought he might rescue his wife from death, and his children from starving, he had never entertained a thought of committing such a crime.

In answer to this speech of Trickit, the Justice, (who was well acquainted with Trickit's whole character and history) remarked, "that although the crime in question was committed on the sudden, and though it arose out of the man's distress, yet, that distress had been brought upon him evidently by gaming." "My friend," said he, "you have gone from one step to another, as almost every other person has done, that has been brought before me. First, when you were in a good place you were negligent of your work through *the love of gaming*; and when for this cause you lost your employment, you then took to gambling more desperately than ever, through a *necessity* which you brought upon yourself. Your *necessities* next led you to take from your wife her little earnings, and when you had thus nearly driven her to distraction, then it was that you began to feel for the wants of your wife and children: and thus you were driven by another *necessity* of your own making to rob on the highway for her relief.

"I cannot help therefore tracing your crime entirely to your gaming, for it is this which has brought you into temptation; and no man can tell when he has once trespassed, as you have done, to what lengths the Devil at one time or other may suddenly drive him. Instead, therefore, of excusing yourself, let me advise you to consider how happy for you it is, that the gentleman whom you struck is not killed; for in that case you would have been brought before me, not for the robbery and assault only, but for murder."

Poor Trickit was much affected by these remarks, and did not utter a word more in the way of excuse for his crime; but he begged and prayed the Gentleman, for his dear wife's sake, not to hang him. Upon which the Justice interfered, and told Trickit, that "as to the nature of his punishment, that must depend upon circumstances that would appear on the trial;" and he immediately bound the Gentleman over to prosecute.

While this scene was passing at the Justice's poor Mrs. Trickit was left in a doleful case. She was told by her husband, when he went away, that he was only going to run to the apothecary's, in order to bring some help to her, and that he would be back instantly: two hours passed and she heard nothing of him: she began to suspect something dreadful, and her mind grew so agitated, that her brain seemed on fire, and her senses forsook her. It happened that a gentleman who had been present at the Justice's (having been drawn thither by the croud) called, from motives of humanity, in the course of the day, to inquire into the state of Trickit's family; and he was the first person who brought intelligence of the horrible event that had taken place.

As Mrs. Trickit was so ill, the only step that could be taken at present, was to bring the apothecary to her; who, by laying on a blister, and giving her proper medicines, abated the fever, and took off the delirium: but as her reason returned, her anxiety about her husband returned also, and she incessantly begged to know what was become of him. Still it was thought that the dreadful truth must not be told her, lest it should bring back her distraction; and it was not till three days after, when the apothecary declared her to be much better, that the sad condition of her husband was revealed to her.

No sooner was this affecting discovery made to Mrs. Trickit, than she grew eager to get out of bed, to go to her husband in the prison; but her weakness made it impossible. It was with great difficulty that she was kept in the house after she was able to rise; and the first moment that she could extort from the apothecary permission to stir out, she put herself into a coach (for she had not strength to walk) and leaving her children in the care of her humane landlady, arrived at the prison. The sight of her threw Trickit into an agony, yet he was glad to see her alive, and by degrees was soothed and comforted by her kindness and affection. She entreated him with many tears to make his peace with God by sincere repentance, and to trust in his mercy for forgiveness. She then through her natural fondness and partiality for her husband, endeavoured to find out some circumstances of mitigation; and particularly remarked, "that since it was his affection for her and for his starving family, that had put him on this rash action, she hoped that when the trial came on, the Judge would shew

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