

Landesbibliothek Oldenburg

Digitalisierung von Drucken

Frailties of fashion, or, the adventures of an Irish smock

interspersed with whimsical anecdotes of a Nankeen pair of breeches

Containing among a great variety of curious connexions between the most celebrated Demi Reps and Beaux Garçons upon the ton, the secret memoirs of Madame D'Eon as related by herself ...

London, 1784

Chap. IX.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-17699

C H A P. IX.

*The humours of an E. O. table, with
some well known characters in the
gambling circles.*

O tempora!—O mores!

Or the world as it goes.

MANY of our country readers,
(and we flatter ourselves that
this work will be read with avidity in
all parts of the globe) may not be ac-
quainted with the nature of a game,
which for some time past has been the
most fashionable, and the most fatal
of any that has fascinated not only the
dupes in the vicinity of St. James's, but
merchants and tradesmen in the pur-
lieus of Covent-garden, and even jour-
neymen and mechanics in the neigh-
bourhood

VOL. I.

F

bourhood



bourhood of the Fleet and the Old Bailey. We shall, therefore, attempt to convey an idea of an E. O. table, which is the irresistible magnet of the blind votaries of blind fortune.

An E. O. table, is of a circular form, between three and four feet in diameter, the interior is divided from the exterior, and turns upon an axis; this mutuable center contains forty niches, or partitions, marked alternately E. and O.; a kind of gallery surrounds this part, which forms a declivity, round which a small ball is circulated, while the interior part of the table is in motion, and the wager is determined by the ball falling in one of the niches. So far the game appears very fair and equal; but when the reader is informed, that the boxholder, or proprietor of the table, reserves

serves to himself two holes of the forty, on condition of answering all bets proposed; the great disparity of chance will easily appear, as when the ball falls into either of these niches, called bar-holes, the box-keeper sweeps all the stakes. Thus it appears the box-holder has a pull or advantage of five per cent. every time the table goes round, which is in less time than a minute; so that upon the supposition that the play continues eight hours, and there are a hundred pounds every time depending, the box-holder must, according to calculation, which in the long run never fails gaining 2400 pounds, agreeable to gamesters reckoning calculation. But admitting that not near so large a sum is invariably played for, and that the play does not continue eight hours, the advantage on the side of the box-holder remains proportionably the same.



Our readers distant from the metropolis, or those who have not caught the rage of the fashionable vowels, as they are stiled, will be astonished that any rational beings, who know that two and two constitute four, would risk their money, and their ready money, for all stakes are deposited, at so very great a disadvantage. It is true that some modest box-holders, in order to gain more custom than their fraternity, have, in circular hand-bills, which notify the places of these associations, reduced their advantage to a single barhole; but though this reduction of the former pull still evidently gives a most intolerable advantage to the box-keeper; it has not been adopted but by a few of the inferior sort of table-keepers. But their latent pulls are still greater than all the rest; as

as it has been clearly proved, that in their bar-holes are concealed real magnets, and in the balls are inserted small globes of steel.

To conclude this descriptive account of E. O. I shall only add, that it owed its origin to what is called gold and silver, or G. S. instead of E. O. but a late act of parliament having particularly specified that game among the number of unlawful ones; to evade the penalties inflicted by that law upon the table-holders, as well as players of that game, the letters were changed, and some are G. R. tables, and a ball instead of an index made to determine the fate of the wagers.

So much for the history of the game; I shall now introduce the reader into company with my master, to a celebrated E. O. rendezvous under the Piazza, Covent-garden.

The first person we saw was an actor ranting in true tragic numbers in one corner of the room for the loss of his last shilling : he had narrowly escaped from the house and the bailiffs, whom he had reason to think were waiting for him below stairs. Perceiving my master enter, he recovered himself, in some degree, and in approaching having made him acquainted with his misfortunes, I felt a hand come into the right-side pocket, when half-a-guinea was extracted, and secretly conveyed to the unfortunate son of Thespis, who returned to the table, and, by reverse of fortune, in less than an hour, not only recovered all the money he had lost, but was ten guineas gainer.

In the mean while, Frank was not unsuccessful ; for I found my burthen greatly increase, while I doubt not his
heart

heats lightened. Just as I found my stock had been encreased by an additional five guineas, a pistol was heard to go off in the æra, which greatly alarmed every one present; and information was immediately brought up stairs, that the young man who had been so remarkable unfortunate all the evening, and was supposed to have lost near a thousand pounds, had gone down stairs, retired backwards, and there destroyed himself.

The consternation was very great amongst all the parties present, and the more judicious judged it highly prudent to retire, it being imagined, as soon as information reached the peace officers in the next street of what had happened, some of the myrmidons from that quarter might appear, to make enquiries, not only into the cause
of

of the deceased's death; but might also take into custody such as were present, and confine them all night, to give an account of themselves the next day.

In this opinion my master and Bufkin retired, and meeting with poor Sam Scribble under the Piazza, they took him into the Shakespear, where a good supper was ordered, a circumstance that threw Sam into very fine spirits, as he acknowledged he had not yet broke his fast that day, though he had not been thus abstemious according to proclamation.

After supper, Sam was very entertaining, and gave some anecdotes of his life, which we shall reserve for the next chapter, as the conversation was interrupted by the master of the house, who, upon introducing a *magnum bo-*
num,

num, and drawing the cork, gave a lamentable account of the catastrophe which had happened next door.

He said, the young man who had shot himself that night, had been brought in there, and that by the papers which were found in his pocket, he appeared to be a banker's clerk, and had been collecting cash for his master that morning, to the amount of above nine hundred pounds, every shilling of which he had lost, and which had, doubtless, driven him to execute the rash deed he had perpetrated.

This information induced the company to go and view the body, when my master and Buskin recognized him, though they had not taken particular notice of him at the table. This melancholy affair damped the conversation, and made the company retire.

NOT

not early, but positively sooner than they otherwise would have done.

CHAP. X.

The morning.—A visit from Sam Scribble—His history—Literary adventures in Dublin—His reception by the Irish booksellers.—Resolves to visit England, and repair to the Emporium of learning, wit, and genius—as well as wealth.

WHEN my master returned home at night, he examined the contents of my pockets (which the reader may think, perhaps, was making very free; but as we had but one purse between us, it occasioned no difference) and to his inexpressible pleasure found he was forty-four guineas in pocket, besides