

THE
LONDON SPY:

OR, THE

Frauds of London

DESCRIBED:

BEING

A COMPLETE DISCLOSURE

OF ALL THE

DARK TRANSACTIONS

In and about that great City.

BY THE CELEBRATED

GEORGE BARRINGTON,

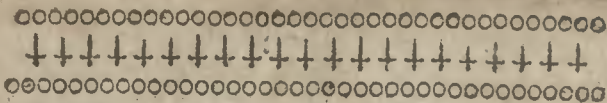
Superintendant of the Convicts at BOTANY BAY.



FALKIRK:

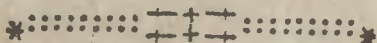
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1809.



THE

New London Spy.



THE many shocking crimes committed in and about London, as well as frauds and cheats daily practised on the unwary tradesman, mechanic, and deluded countrymen, call aloud for detection and discovery.— Much has already been written from time to time on this subject, and, in many instances, with good effect; but, as too much praise cannot be bestowed on Virtue, so neither can too much be written in portraying Vice in its proper deformity, in order to give mankind a detestation thereto; therefore a timely warning against that variety of iniquity and roguery, which at present is carried on by the wicked and abandoned, to the injury and frequent ruin of the unhappy as well as unthinking part of the world, who have the misfortune to fall into their hands, becomes still necessary.

FOR these necessary and salutary purposes the following description was written, to put the unwary on their guard, that they may avoid the snares of deceivers; to display the various practices made use of, to cheat and defraud, and to caution them against credulity and plausible fiction, which too often are productive of as bad consequences as the more barefaced crimes herein specified.

THE reader will observe, that in general I have addressed myself to countrymen and women, for the following reasons: As they are at a distance from London, and, perhaps, having imbibed too favourable and flattering ideas of its wealth, magnitude, and grandeur, may be induced thereby to repair to the metropolis, rather than remain in the country; and, before they have been in town twenty-four hours, are frequently ruined by the sons and daughters of dissipation, who lie in wait to deceive and destroy all who are so unfortunate as to fall into their clutches: In order likewise, to put those whose business demands their presence in London, on their guard against frauds, cheats, and imposters, I have displayed the various new methods they practise in pursuit of their villainous and illicit proceedings, the better to enable my country

country readers to escape the traps laid for them; which, being properly attended to, will enable them not only to avoid, but to detect and bring to justice the violaters of the laws of their country.

GAMBLERS.

THERE are as many kinds of gambling as there are trades, and they move in as many spheres, from the most noble duke or duchess, to the most abandoned chimney-sweeper; pretenders to honour and honesty, versed in various tricks and arts, by which many among both nobility and gentry have squandered away their fortunes in accomplishing themselves for the epithet of *a complete Gambler*, or, in the true sense of the word, *an expert Gambler*.—If instances were necessary to prove the assertion, I could produce hundreds within my own knowledge, many not above a twelvemonth ago, that have been ruined by the pernicious itch for gaming. Young noblemen and gentlemen, just come to clear estates, and affluent fortunes, have, in the hour of dissipation, been waylaid by gamblers, and, through their arts, frauds, and deceptions, have been stripped of the last shilling.—Tradesmen, and others,

others, though not exactly in the same way, yet in ways similar to the before-mentioned, have been tricked of all by the gamblers; the consequences whereof have been emigration, bankruptcy, or imprisonment. The lower class of mankind having had their share of the supposed run of ill luck, or frowns of fortune, as they call it, and not knowing when they are imposed on, have become sufferers in the last degree; many of whom, in order to retrieve their losses, have had recourse to picking of pockets, shop-lifting, and such like offences, till emboldened by success, and for some length of time escaping detection, they have set out on greater exploits, such as breaking into houses by night, robbing on the highway, &c. till at length they finish their career at Newgate, where they have declared, that love of gambling was the first step that led them out to the commission of greater crimes,

I shall now give you an account of the games at which the Gambler is most dextrous, and the means by which he imposes on and defrauds others, the better to put you on your guard against his villainy. — I shall mention several of the most fashionable and alluring pleasures at which their various methods

these methods of deluding and cheating are practised
 with success, viz. Gaming-houses, Horse-
 races, Cock-fighting, Bowling, Billiards,
 Tennis, *Pharoh Rouge et noir*, Hazard, &c.
 together with Routs, Assemblies, Masque-
 rades, and Concerts of a particular or pri-
 vate nature; in the latter of these you will
 find notorious gamblers of the female sex,
 who deal in art and deception, as well as
 some more notorious male cheats, who fre-
 quently barter one commodity for another,
 provided discount is allowed.

In this great city are several houses not
 only converted, but others built, for the as-
 sembly of gamblers, into which, however,
 none under a certain degree are admitted,
 unless a friend of a subscriber is introduced
 as a novice in the art, in order to be initiated
 into these rules of fraud and cunning they
 square their actions by: his admittance may
 be effected at the expence of five or ten thou-
 sand pounds, and a qualification is given of
 his adeptness in the science, which will en-
 able him to exhibit with *eclat* at Newmarket
 or York races.—These pretenders to honour
 and honesty, have been detected many times
 in practising the vilest frauds at play, parti-
 cularly at the game of Hazard, which is
 much

much in vogue among the gamblers, who carry false dice, which they substitute in the room of fair ones, with so much dexterity and slight, that the cheat is not thought of, nor the dice suspected; for, should you examine them, it would be almost impossible to find out the deception, unless you were versed in their arts and tricks. — Thus set up with false dice, false cards, and a wicked designing heart, they prey upon the ignorant and unthinking: And, as they herd together on all occasions, so they give each other assistance; whilst one gamester is cheating the man of fortune within doors, others are laying traps for them without, by procuring information of his estate or fortune from his servants or acquaintances, procuring stamps to assign over his estate, in readiness, telling the old usurer that money is wanted at B—'s; and if he does not be quick with it, his brother Jew in iniquity, will be before-hand with him. — The sum must be a round one, for the prodigal has many thousand acres to be disposed of, and that immediately. — Away hobbles the old gentleman, who generally receives so much *per cent.* for the money he lends, till between them all, the gentleman is fleeced of part, if not his whole estate.

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The shame of being thought a bubble, and exposed to the town, frequently prevents gentlemen from making use of the statute provided in such cases; rather than their reputation should suffer, they tamely submit to be plundered as aforesaid.

At Horse-races the countryman may be assured of meeting with gamblers, who make a practice of going from one race to another all over the kingdom; and, notwithstanding the country farmer, and breeder of horses, may, in reality, be a better judge of these cattle than the gamester, yet I would caution him against wagering with these gentry, as they, becoming parties in many matches, get information from different hands which horse is, and which is not to win, and by that means generally take you in, as they call it, and laugh at your folly.—They often make bets among themselves, merely to deceive you, and give a preference to the horse they know must lose, in order to draw you in to lay money upon it.—If it happens (which is seldom the case) that an honest match is to be run, of which they are unacquainted, then they make use of the following or like stratagem, to insure their pockets; that is, they lay you a bet, and put the money into
the

the next gentleman's hands to hold, whom they pretend they do not know (though he is at the same time their intimate colleague); if you win, the gentleman is not to be found; if you lose, then one of them meets you, with much concern in his countenance, and says he, by following your example, and laying on the wrong horse, has lost twice your sum; then squeezes you by the hand, and wishes you better luck another time, and so bids you farewell for the present.

COCK-FIGHTING, of all games, is surely one of the most barbarous, and a scandal to those who follow it, both high and low; for, notwithstanding its antiquity, as a diversion, in England, it is a great disgrace to humanity; and surely none but the most notorious gamblers can be elated therewith, or give a sanction to barbarity, that even shocks the wild Indian to hear of.—At these scenes of cruelty the greatest depredations are committed by the attendants thereon; the most profane and wicked expressions made use of, the most horrid and blasphemous oaths and curses denounced against Fortune for the loss of their unlawful expectations.

WITH respect to other diversions, such as Bowling, Billiards, Tennis, &c. they have each their different pleasures, and, in themselves, are very inoffensive, genteel, and manly; but, like others, are frequented by gamblers, and therefore to be shunned. The frauds practised in the above games are various, and depends much upon the skill of the gamester, who becomes proficient by his daily practice, and, in order to make a good market, can play at them either well or ill, and gets or loses, as he finds most conducive to his interest; for, as he lives by cheating, to lose sometimes may lead to his winning at others; or by agreeing to take your part against his brother gamblers, which being yielded to, he first loses that he may afterwards win a part of your money, which is divided amongst them when you are gone.— Should you play at these diversions, let it be only, for trifles; but, above all, beware of betting or engaging in company you or your friends have no knowledge of; for, if you do, ten to one but you are *bad*, a cant word they make use of, instead of saying, as the truth is, *we have cheated him.*

SHARPERS.

THE Sharper, who has got a genteel education, and has a good address and conversation, has more the power of delusion at will than the unlettered cheat, devoid of address, and other requisites, to complete the pretended gentleman; and therefore should be more carefully avoided. — These villains, having run through their fortunes at an early period of life, by associating with professed gamblers and sharpers, who, having eased them of their money, in return complete them for the profession by which they have been ruined; thus qualified, they set up for themselves, throw aside honor and conscience, and quote the *lex talionis* for deceiving others as they themselves have been deceived.

THESE gentry are to be met with at all public places of diversion, the Horse-race, Cock-fight, Billiard, and Hazard-tables. — They pretend to be men of quality, or independent fortunes; many of whom keep their equipages and *filles de joye*, without a foot of land, or shilling in the funds, merely by dint of industry, in *taking in* the unthinking spendthrift, just come to possession of his estate,
and

and so qualifying him for the same laudable profession on the expenditure thereof, to enable him to *rab* through life by the art of calculation.—Being, by theory, as well as constant practice, complete proficient in the different games they play, these cheats are seldom deceived in the skill and management of their antagonists, and in a very short time can discover whether they are accomplished professors, or only novices, and accordingly play the game to advantage.

On your entering the tavern, coffee or gaming-house, the sharper views you with attention, and is not long before he becomes acquainted and very intimate with you: If you agree to his proposal to play, if he cannot beat you by fair, he will by foul means; rather than lose, he will elude your attention, or raise your passion sufficiently to put you off your guard, while he plays his underhand game, and cheats you before your face: and though you are sensible of being cheated, yet you shall not be able to discover by what methods it is effected. — So fallacious are these Sharpers, that they will prey on their friends and nearest relations, rather than be idle and unemployed; yet seldom engage each other unless for instruction, and to keep them-

themselves in practice. — The generous and unsuspecting gentleman is often fleeced of his birth-right and inheritance, by entering into partnership with the Sharper, who is artful and industrious in losing to his associates, and cheating the friend that intrusted him, who paid a regard to his instructions, thoroughly convinced of his pretended rectitude and honesty. — The game being over, and the gentleman gone, the Sharpers divide the spoil amongst them, and laugh at the inexperience and folly of the deluded, ending with, “He does not yet *know life*.” — Some Sharpers, in high life, will invite their acquaintance and neighbours to dine or sup with them, for no other purpose than to make them pay severely for the treat, by proposing a game at cards after supper; which is generally done by one of the accomplices, and agreed to by another: the master, upon these occasions, sometimes, is left out, the better to carry on the design, and prevent suspicion of foul play, or, at least, of his having a hand in it at the time; that he sometimes makes one, but generally loses with every partner he engages, till the company are bankrupts, and the Sharpers the only gainers thereby. Many a round sum is raised by them in this man-

manner, to save them from a jail, or to support the luxurious and abandoned lives they lead, having every delicacy in season, with which their tables are furnished, and cellars stored as a bait to catch gudgeons, who are easily allured thereby. — Their consciences being seared, regardless of the censure of the world, or dictates of humanity, and plunged in different vices, without moral sentiment or honour, is it to be wondered at, if even they cheat their father or brother at play, much less their friends, acquaintance, and mankind in general?

If you associate with Sharpers, you must not only expect, but deserve, to be cheated by them for your credulity, insufficiency, or stupidity: for who would go, with his eyes open, into a den of thieves, but in expectation of being robbed? Or, who would herd with Sharpers, and not expect to be cheated? Therefore, my advice is, to shun these reptiles of the creation, fraught with guile, and artful as the serpent, to delude. Beware of their conversation, shun their company, take no notice of their tricks and fancies, nor be baught with their wheedling professions of friendship: listen not unto them or their enticements, if you would pre-

preserve your peace and property. Be not fond of making new acquaintance with persons whose characters you are strangers to, however genteel in appearance and behaviour; for many a Sharper lurks under the disguise of our modern fine gentlemen, as daily experience fatally shews.

S W I N D L E R S.

OF all the vices, frauds, and cheats, related and exhibited, there is not one that has been more successful, and of old standing, than that of swindling; which, like the plague, still rages thro' these kingdoms with devastation, to the great wrong and injury of multitudes, both in town and country. To expose their pernicious practices, and the bad effects produced thereby, may in some measure stop the progress of this growing evil, and tend to crush the hydra before it has power to do further mischief: I shall therefore be as exact as possible in relating one or two of the most glaring and flagrant deceptions practised on the unwary, in order to give the reader an insight into the nefarious and audacious proceedings of Swindlers, that they may be

be enabled to prevent any future attempts of the like nature upon them by these pests of society. This new species of knavery, carried on by Swindlers, appears specious in itself, the practitioners thereof setting themselves up for men of property and integrity, the more easily to defraud the unwary and ignorant out of their substance and effects; to obtain which, among many, the following is practised: A number of them, being connected together, take a genteel house in a reputable part of the town, and divide themselves into classes of masters, clerks, out-riders, shopmen, porters, and servants. From their making a shew of opulence, they easily obtain credit, and lay in goods of every kind, which they send into the country, and sell or barter for other commodities, which they bring up to London and sell for ready-money, generally taking in exchange double the quantity, and paying for the same with notes of their own drawing, indorsing, and fabricating, for the purposes of cheating the poor deluded farmer, shop-keeper, and tradesman, in the interior parts of the country. With respect to tradesmen in town, the goods they take of them on trust, they dispose of to Jews, and

and other receivers of stolen goods, at about thirty *per Cent.* under value, for ready-money, nay fifty *per Cent.* rather than not have the cash: And, as their stay in a place cannot safely be above six months, on account of their creditors calling in their debts, and their country notes becoming due, they make all possible dispatch to dispose of the various articles, and evacuate the premises before detection. This done, they play the same game elsewhere, when, Proteus-like, they change shapes, and disguise themselves so, as not to be known, and carry on another house, but in a different name and manner; the master becomes the rider, the rider the master, the clerks descend to footmen and porters, the porters and footmen to clerks, and so on throughout, till they have drained many parts of town and country, to the ruin of many worthy and honest men in business.

THESE Swindlers have been very artful in evading the law, in negotiating the bad notes they had circulated about the country. They are generally done on copperplates, as neatly as the banker's: some of them are drawn at sight, others at a longer or shorter date, as suits their conveyancy: the

the drawer carries them about him all over the country, and disposes of them, a second indorses, a third accepts, but none to pay.

BUT notwithstanding all the arts and insinuations of these Swindlers, they are easily singled out in company, from a pretended hurry in business, and fear of detection; eyeing every person askance, doubtful, of having seen them before.

PICKPOCKETS.

THERE are more Pickpockets in and about London, than in all Europe beside, that make a trade, and what they call a comfortable living, by their employment.—The Opera, Play-houses, Capital Auctions, and Public Gardens, swarm with them; and, of late years, they have introduced themselves into our very Churches, in which they have not been less successful, at a charity Sermon preached by a Romaine, or other noted orator, than at the Theatres, at a Benefit, when the principal parts have been played by a Kemble, Siddons, Jordan, Inledon, Munden, and other first-rate performers. To set forth the different ways
by

by which they succeed in their nefarious practices, would be tedious; therefore I shall only observe, that in general two go together, one before and the other behind the person whose pocket is to be picked; the former of which stops the person, either in a croud, or by a pretended accident, while the other effects the business. Therefore it would be prudent, when in crouds, to keep one hand on your money, and the other on your watch, when you find any one push against you: But, should you be robbed for want of taking proper care to prevent the same, take no notice till you see some person near you stealing away, when you are to secure him or her, and ten to one but you fix on the right person. You must, however, be careful to lay hold of their hands, for fear of their conveying your property to an accomplice, who is always ready to receive the same, and set off with it. Some Pick-pockets are very dextrous in this way, by introducing their hands, without being perceived, into the very bottom of the breeches pocket, and taking out the money. None was more so, than the celebrated Miss West. Others, in introducing their hands up Ladies' petticoats, taking hold of the pocket, and mak-

making an incision with a knife or scissars, and letting out the contents into their hands without discovery, which they immediately deliver to their associates without stirring from the place, to prevent detection.

PICKPOCKETS do not confine themselves to London, but travel all over the country, to fairs and horse-races; and are to be met with on the stands, and in the booths, to the experience of many gentlemen and others, who have lost purses, watches, rings, and pocket-books, of which they never received any account. Pocket-books are only secure in the inside pockets, and the coat buttoned. Watch-chains should be run through a small loop, contrived for the purpose of securing the watch in the fob, which many practise. But, at these public places, it is necessary for all persons to be upon their guard, as they cannot be ignorant of the gentry they have amongst them, from the many losses sustained by them.



MONEY-DROPPERS.

THESE gentry generally ply at the most public places in town, and also at fairs and country markets, consisting of three or more in company. The dropping of money is the lure to inveigle countrymen into company, and is accomplished in the following manner: The Dropper, when conveniency suits, lays down a guinea, or other piece of money, close to any country-man; then, in a voice of exultation, exclaims, I have found a guinea! Upon which a second comes up, and says, Where is it? or, I'll not believe it. Here it is, cries the former, and appeals to the country-man for the truth of his picking it up; who answering in the affirmative, the second claims a share, as they were in company together; upon which the first retorts, If any body has a right to a share, it must be this honest country-man, who saw it on the ground as well as myself.— By this time they are arrived at a house of resort, and the Dropper proposes giving them a treat out of it, if they will walk in; intimating, at the same time, that he intends to consider the country-man as a party concerned,

cerned, who has a right to a share thereof. This bait taking, in they go, observed by the third, who hitherto had appeared to take no notice of the others, then call for a room and something to drink. The Dropper then asks the country-man if he has gotten any silver to give in change for the guinea? And according to his answer they order their matters. While they are engaged in sharing the money, the third enters, who sits down, without seeming to know any one present, or their business. On the Dropper's saying he will go out and get change, the second replies, It is scarce worth while for seven shillings; and seeing a pack of cards on the chimney-piece, proposes cutting of them for the sum, which the other accepts; the second loses, and the country-man is asked, if he will risk his seven shillings, who, thinking he can be nothing out of pocket if he loses, accepts the challenge, and wins two or three times, when a game of Whist is proposed, and agreed to, if a fourth could be found. The pretended stranger says, if they will accept of a bad player, rather than spoil sport, he will make one. The Dropper and country-man agree to be partners; down they sit: the country-man and his
part.

partner are successful; they wager on the odd trick, the best trump, double and treble the stakes, till, by sad reverse of fortune, the deluded country-man and his artful partner are stripped of the last farthing.

RING - DROPPERS.

THESE are a set of cheats, who frequently trick simple people, both from the country and in London, out of their money; but most commonly exercise their villainous art upon young women. Their method of proceeding is thus: Privately to drop a ring, just before such persons come up, when they accost them as follows; Young woman, I have found a ring, and believe it is gold, for here is a stamp upon it. Immediately upon this, an accomplice joins him, who, being asked the question, replies, It is gold. Well, says the former, as the young woman saw me pick it up, she has a right to half of it. As it often happens that the young person has but a few shillings on her, the Dropper says, If you incline the ring, you shall have it for what you have got in your pocket, and what else you can give me:— which sometimes proves to be a good handker-

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kerchief, cloak, or other apparel. The young woman being just about to take the ring and give the money and things for it, the accomplice says, You had better ask a goldsmith if it is gold; but looking about, he perceives the shops are shut up, being late. Upon which they conclude it is gold, and so part. The deluded creature then shews the ring to a person in the street, who informs her she is cheated by sharpers, for the ring is not worth twopence, being only brass gilt, and a false stamp put on to deceive the unwary.

THE above relation is a fact, and the fraud was practised by these pestilent harpies on a young woman in London.

To avoid such company in London, much more gaming with them, strangers ought constantly to be on their guard, and immediately abscond when they meet with such characters.

F I N I S.

T. Johnston, Printer, }
Falkirk. }