

## *Gaming*

At Spa, Count Zenobio related to me an incident that he witnessed here a few years ago, which had produced most uncommon interest and effect. A short, thin man, whom nobody knew but by sight, suddenly became a constant attendant at the gaming tables. This man during a whole fortnight, continued, night after night, in the most extraordinary manner to win enormous sums of the faro bankers, as well as the surrounding betters. He wore spectacles, and appeared so short-sighted that he was always obliged to touch the counters with his nose before he could distinguish the card. Such was his luck, that whatever card he backed was sure to win. On the last night of his appearance in Spa, one of the gamesters, a young half intoxicated Irishman, had lost an unusually heavy sum. His temper was quite gone, and he vituperated his lucky opponent in a style that might have edified the most abusive fisherwoman in Billingsgate. "D—n you old dog," he cried, "and most particularly d—n your spectacles! By the powers, see if I won't try my luck myself in your cursed spectacles!" and snatching them from him he put them on his own face. At first he could distinguish nothing, but on approaching the cards within three inches of his nose, he discovered that the spectacles were strong magnifiers. His suspicion and curiosity were immediately excited, and he turned to demand an explanation of the wearer, but he was gone. An examination, then commenced, and the cause of this wonderful continuity of luck was speedily discovered. The cards in Spa are not bought of shopkeepers, as in England, but every autumn the proprietors of the gaming tables repair to the grand fair in Leipzig, and there purchase their stock for the year. Thither the spectacle gentleman had also hied, not as a *buyer* but as a *seller* of cards; and at such a reduced rate, and of such excellent quality, that all the purchasers resorted to him; and all Spa and several other towns were literally stocked solely with his cards. At the back of each of these, concealed among the ornaments, and so small as to be imperceptible to the unassisted eye, was its number with a particular variation to denote the sort. Then the rogue came to Spa disguised, with blackened hair and spectacles; and there, as a *gentleman* gambler, would have broken all the banks in Spa, but for the fury of the enraged Irishman. As it was, he decamped with several thousand pounds. *Reynold's Memoirs*

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