

HOW THE DEVIL WAS CAUGHT

A CHESS LEGEND *

BY C. GODFREY GUMPEL.



of ever reaching that standard of skill to which every young Chess-player sanguinely aspires.

Often have I turned away from board and men with the resolve never again to enter a contest, convinced that I never could become a Chess-player of the foremost rank; I consoled myself with the thought that Pandora's box could not possibly deal out to every aspirant the genius necessary to become a Ponziani or a Philidor.

Besides—the grapes were sour—to be a first-class Chess-player, and keep up the reputation of being such, detracted in my eyes from the pleasures which the game otherwise afforded.

The worship of Caissa is, however, so alluring, so fascinating, that the mind, after an interval of repose, returns to it with renewed vigor, greater hope, and redoubled energy, intent on wresting the palm of victory from the majority of opponents.

It would be an injustice to the noble game of Chess, were we guided by momentary results in our estimation of the pleasure

* The greater part of this legend was written early in 1878, and was submitted by the author to Mons. Delannoy for translation into French; but, not thinking the framework of the story suitable for the French taste, that celebrated writer, with the consent of Mr. Gumpel, used the main features of it in constructing a story in his own style, entitled "Mephisto at the Paris Exposition," which was published in *La Strategie* for April, 1878. Since that time the legend has appeared, anonymously and much curtailed, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, London, Sept. 1881, and in a condensed form in the *Chess-Player's Chronicle*. Mr. Gumpel has favored us with the story in its complete form, and, moreover, has carefully revised and corrected the text; and, as it will be new to the great majority of our American readers, we take pleasure in now producing it, for the first time, in a perfect state, and under the name of the author, who now discloses his identity.—[Ed. B. C. M.]

ures and advantages to be derived from the pursuit of this intellectual pastime. We may lose a game, or even a match; yet we have fought well, fairly met our challenged foe, have not blundered, but gained his respect by our doughty combat; and being beaten, we have not hesitated to yield to our opponent in a manly spirit. Such thoughts have often induced me to direct my steps back to the Chess Club, and enticed me to enter again the list of combatants in a tournament; inspired by the intellectual feats of Staunton, Anderssen, and Morphy, I cherished the hope of reaching nearer and nearer the perfection of such masters. When gaining a victory, visions of further successes buoyed me up and refanned my sinking courage; a well-contested but lost game caused me to apply myself to renewed study, and so engaged I often passed the midnight hours in solitude over the Chess-board.

It was after an evening spent at the Chess Club over a match-game which I lost, although (as Chess-players always flatter themselves) I ought to have won it. Dispirited, I wended my way homewards, my heated brain busy with the position of the game, in which I made the move that turned fortune (of course, not my opponent's skill) against me. I must have been thinking aloud, must have been soliloquizing whilst walking along, for I heard a voice near me exclaim: "You can be the strongest Chess-player in the world if you will follow my instructions."

Any other remark would have found my ear deaf; but this so harmonized with the thoughts then occupying me, that I was conscious of hearing the voice very plainly. I turned round to look at the person addressing me, but to my great astonishment I could see no one except two or three human figures flitting along the dimly lighted streets at a distance too great for their voices to have reached me.

I stood still, feeling rather baffled for a moment; then, smiling at my foolishness in allowing my mind to be thrown off its guard by its own wanderings, I resumed my journey. Of course, I thought, this is only a specimen of Dr. Carpenter's "unconscious cerebration," and whilst giving way to a merry laugh, I quickened my steps to make up for the time I had lost so dreamingly on the road.

I reached home later than usual; it was already half an hour past midnight. The servants had strict orders never to wait up for me after half-past eleven, hence all had gone to rest, and I was the only occupant of the lower part of the house. I locked and bolted the street-door, fastened the chain in the usual manner (as confirmed by the servant when questioned about it the next morning), and then looked in at the library, where I opened several letters received by the last post. I could, however, not fix my attention upon either of these letters; my mind was still too much occupied with my defeat; and had I gone to bed, sleep would have kept away from me for hours. So I determined to settle my doubt about the chances I had thrown away in the game played during the evening, by subjecting it to a closer analysis. I arranged board and men, and played the game over up to the point where I could have forced it, my opponent being completely at my mercy. But how could I have possibly overlooked so evident a move at the decisive moment? What made me so blind as not to see that with this one *coup* my opponent's resources were completely gone?

Almost angrily I rose from my chair, fully convinced that, with mind harassed and irritated by an annoying vocation during the day, I could not expect it to be fit for so trying a mental task as a match game at Chess; and I settled the whole question by exclaiming, "I never can be a profound Chess-player." At that moment I felt a draught of air through the room as if doors at each end had been suddenly opened, although I heard no noise, and a voice exclaimed: "But you can, if you will follow my instruction."

I recognized the voice; it was the same which I had heard on my way home, but now it seemed to come from every part of the room, and made me stagger back into my chair. I defy the stoutest heart not to beat quicker at such an unwelcome phenomenon occurring to him when alone during the still hours of the night. No human being was near me when the voice in the street sounded so close to my ear, and no one had followed me into the house, as I myself had fastened the street-door. Besides, I had not been so absorbed in my analysis but that the least noise would have forced itself on my attention.

Yet here was the same voice, clear and sonorous, coming from no distinct part of

the room to indicate the whereabouts of the speaker. I remember shutting my eyes, whilst the idea of unconscious cerebration flashed across my mind, with the conviction that it could not be this. I was far from harboring any belief in spirits or ghosts, and my philosophy certainly excluded animism from its doctrines; hence, spiritualistic tendencies of mind could never have caused my brain to produce unconsciously the speech I heard.

All these reflections passed rapidly before me, and made the whole phenomenon still more puzzling, particularly as I perceived that a mephitic odor diffused itself about me. I opened my eyes, and to my horror discovered my light extinguished, while a subdued red glare filled the room. I felt that my mind was laboring under some fearful hallucination, from which I endeavored to free myself by rising from my chair. But my limbs refused to obey my will. I was prostrate, paralyzed, and felt the perspiration pouring down my forehead in cold drops. While in this state of agony I heard the voice addressing me in the following words; spoken in a cynical, sarcastic manner, which made me shudder, and caused my blood to curdle in every part of my body: "First, my dear A., let me allay your fears, which I know, from long experience, torture you mortals in a pitiable degree; take my assurance that I have not come to harm you, however mysterious the manner and form of my approach. Take courage, regain your full consciousness, and believe me, although it may appear incredible, that all you have just experienced in your person is the result of your own weak human nature. Do not be deceived in me and my character, for, I doubt not, we shall be good friends as soon as your eye has become accustomed to my face and figure." These words induced me to take a look at the speaker, who, I felt, now stood opposite to me on the other side of the Chess-table. The first object that caught my sight was his keen, penetrating eye, which appeared to have a singular attractive power—so great, that I felt myself unable to look at any other part of his person. This, however, did not prevent me from observing his tall figure enveloped in a fiery red dress, his biliously tinted features, expressing a cutting sneer and a sardonic smile, his long fingers, etc. All reflection had forsaken me; my blood seemed to have ceased to circulate, and my tongue refused to express the question now tormenting

my mind. But he seemed to guess my thoughts, and forestalled my inquiry by introducing himself to me in the following words: "You will have, I hope, no objection to my taking the seat opposite to you at this table, whilst making you acquainted with me and the object of my visit. You may, in your own mind, have already denominated me the Devil, or Satan; or given me any of the names by which popular superstition designates what it calls an evil spirit. But as I know, my dear A., that your mind is cast in a mould superior to the ordinary type, it is not necessary now to refute any such ideas about my person or origin—for the moment, at least—and I will beg you to accept my presence here as a material fact; leave all scruples and further questions until we have transacted our business, and call me simply Mephistopheles, or, shortly, Mephisto. I can read in your face that you have heard of me before this, no doubt in connection with the life and death"—(a shudder ran through me when remembering of what kind it was)—"of Dr. Faustus; but feel no alarm; I do not wish to practice magical science with you, but have come to you as a Chess-player. You look surprised. Know then, my dear A., that I am as passionately fond of Chess as you are; but I possess the advantage of having practiced the game since it was invented, and measured my strength against all the old Chess masters, from Greco, Paolo Boi and Ruy Lopez down to Philidor and Labourdonnaïs. Not only have I played with them, but most of the ancient players have had to thank me for their skill. Without your knowing it, I have often watched your struggles to improve in this most fascinating mental sport; and having seen and admired your unflagging industry, and, above all, knowing you to possess a mind which engages in subjects of higher import in a free and unbiased spirit, I have long felt a desire to assist you in your endeavors to become a strong Chess-player." He paused for a moment, as if hesitating how to proceed, whilst the smile on his face assumed a truly diabolical expression. I had ceased to rack my brain for a solution of this extraordinary phenomenon, and was sitting motionless in my chair, ready to accept any phase which this adventure might assume, when I heard him say: "Why I appear to you at this hour and in this form I cannot tell you now, as time is fleeting, and I have to be three thousand miles away in the heart of

Asia before the sun is at its meridian there; hence I must be brief to-night, but on my next visit we shall have more time for explanation. Yes, my dear A., I mean to come again, and my visits will, I am sure, become more and more agreeable to you; but we must come to an understanding before we proceed. My presence here is subject to certain conditions; the first, and the only important one, is: that you must not on any account or in any form make the sign of the cross in my presence, or during the whole time that my transactions with you may last. You can, by means of it, break the spell with which I control you at this moment, and you may banish me from your presence; but you certainly do so at the risk of your life. I need not ask you, as I know that you have strength of mind sufficient to promise fulfillment of this stipulation." At these words I felt my whole body shaking, with a peculiar sensation in every joint; it was evident to me that I was free to move, from which I had been prevented by the mysterious influence of my visitor.

"The other point," he continued, "to be observed by you, in order to make my presence and my return possible, is—silence to every one concerning me and my visits. But I scarcely think there is any necessity for me to dwell longer on the fulfillment of this condition, so that I can now revert to the chief object of our interview." Mephisto's piercing glance had so riveted my eyes, and his words had so fixed my attention, that I could not gain a moment's time to attempt an explanation of this apparition; and he seemed anxiously watching me, so as to prevent my thoughts from being otherwise engaged than in the manner he desired.

"From my remarks," he resumed, "you already know that I profess to teach the royal game of Chess; to which I must add, that I can bring my pupils to a degree of perfection which enables them to combat successfully every other living Chess-player. I have, you must know, only one living pupil at a time, and the death of my last disciple in Arabia, who never had an opportunity to measure his strength with European players, has induced me to search for a new candidate. Your earnest desire to improve in the game has attracted my attention, and I now offer you the position of the strongest Chess-player in the world, if you will avail yourself of my assistance for that purpose. Before, however, I receive your reply, it is but fair that I

should acquaint you with the conditions under which I offer my instructions to you, since, as you will perceive, my dear A., even the Devil likes to go to work in a straightforward manner."

I had by this time regained full control over my mind, and determined to meet my uninvited guest with all the courage and mental powers at my disposal; so I exclaimed (in a voice intended to be firm and fearless, which yet, however, must have betrayed some nervousness, as it brought a smile on Mephisto's face): "Be you man or devil, I beg you to understand that your presence here was never solicited, nor is it welcome; and I trust that, by the same mysterious means that enabled you to effect your entrance, you will—." He would not allow me to continue, but, with his condescending cynical smile, interrupted me by saying: "Stop, stop, my dear A., be not too rash with your threats or your judgment; first hear me out, and then decide. Prejudice and my mysterious approach will, it seems, not allow you to treat me with any confidence; it is hence necessary that we should come to an understanding. I must beg you to divest yourself of the idea, fostered by popular tradition, that my object in all compacts which I make is the possession of the human soul. That is not the case; for the service which I desire to render you—namely, making you the strongest Chess-player—I shall ask in return your services during your terrestrial life; my influence over human beings does not extend beyond the grave, so I leave every one to answer for his own soul hereafter. I shall not press you for a decision to-night, but will give you a week to consider my proposition, which time will enable you to discover that I can fulfill my engagement by making you victorious against any Chess-player whom you may feel inclined to challenge. This day week I shall return at the same hour, when I hope, my dear A., you will be ready to receive me, and, like a sensible man and an enthusiastic Chess-player, you will accept my terms. So, *au revoir*." I felt myself rudely shaken, and appeared just awakening from a dream. I rubbed my eyes and looked round me, when, instead of Mephisto, I discovered my wife standing by my side with a candle in one hand, the other resting on my shoulder. It is needless to relate the gentle reproof I received for my imprudence in spending the hours, so needful for rest of body and mind, over the Chess-

board, and in so exhausted a condition that even an interesting position—still visible on the board—could not keep me awake. I had been asleep, then? Why, of course; and but for some strange noise about the house, which awakened my wife and servants, I might have remained still longer in my unenviable position. I looked stupefied I was sure I had been awake when my mysterious visitor made his appearance; the whole scene was too vividly impressed upon my mind to be the mere remembrance of a dream. Yet it must have been only a dream; and so, harassed by doubts and reflections, I sought the arms of sleep, hoping for a solution of my perplexed state of mind on the coming morrow.

My face must have betrayed the thoughts that occupied me, since my wife during the next following days did not cease questioning me about the cause of the trouble so plainly depicted on my countenance; and what made matters worse was my constant endeavor to avoid her company, that I might brood undisturbed over the nature of my adventure. All my attempts at a solution failed, and I could only shift an explanation of the phenomenon on to the shoulders of Kant, Schopenhauer, Helmholtz, or Zöllner, by assuming Mephisto to be a being of four dimensions, with the capacity of assuming our three-dimensional existence whenever it pleased him. All my cogitations ended at last in curiosity as to my Chess strength. Was I really stronger than I had been before the eventful night? I could easily put this to the test; and if I found myself really stronger, if I could conquer the first-class players all round, this would amount to a definite proof that I had not been dreaming. Impatience to measure myself against the champions of the club, and the Chess-Divan took possession of me; and my most important engagements for the day being satisfied, I hastened to challenge the first strong player I could meet. I disdained to take odds, and nearly offended my opponent by insisting upon playing even. To his, not more than to my own astonishment, I won—won by a combination which took me utterly by surprise, and which had the effect of bringing other players of no mean Chess strength around me, eager to test whether or not my suddenly acquired Chess powers were of a permanent or an ephemeral character. But all had to succumb.

So the week passed on, and the evening approached on which I had to meet my mysterious Chess master. My successes over the board had produced, no doubt, the intended effect. The Chess strength so miraculously acquired, unconsciously excited in me the desire for further powers, a wider knowledge and an extended mental vision. I seemed to long for the meeting with Mephisto, and so presented a frame of mind which made me a ready prey for his crafty snares. When I reached home from the club, rather earlier than usual, I was met by the servant at the door, who, in a trembling voice, informed me that a stranger, a tall foreigner, was waiting for me in the library; that he had gone into the room as if he knew the house, and told her not to trouble herself about him, that master would be home directly, and that she might go to bed; but somehow she did not like his appearance, and felt uneasy. Displeased at her encounter with Mephisto, I reproached the servant for her fanciful ideas, and told her rather sharply to be gone.

I found my visitor standing before a bookcase, so deeply interested in a small volume that he appeared not to notice my approach until I was close to him, when he turned round, and, in a pleasing voice, congratulated me on the contents of my library, and complimented me on the scope and the character of the intellectual food I had stored up; adding by way of comment, and, perhaps, with the view of making my mind more pliable to his subtle influence:

"I observe by the marginal notes in your handwriting, my dear A., that your mind is in advance of your times in judging important questions, which are agitating the present generation, and I fully subscribe to many of your remarks. How true when you say that 'we cannot estimate contemporary controversies better than by comparison with past historical prejudices, running parallel with them,' and again that 'the very same people, who now, through conceit and intolerance cry out, *atheist! atheist! shut him out!* would, in the time of Luther, have been ready to burn the Reformer; and, before Pontius Pilate, have joined in the cry: *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*'

"I shall" he continued, "feelless restraint in treating you with entire confidence, since your unbiased judgment will enable you better to understand what I am about to communicate to you about myself. Know,

then, that I have sacrificed what commonplace people call 'a good name' for the irresistible desire to combat and to punish deceit, bombast, hollow pretence, and, in fact, all humbug used by designing, ambitious men to further selfish aims under the cloak of noble, higher motives. You can well understand that I have been the object of their hatred, and that, in their persecution, they have not scrupled in ascribing to me every vice of which human nature is capable; and you know well how ready evil-doers are to echo such accusations; glad at the chance of shifting their guilt upon others.

"The intimate knowledge which I possess of the forces of nature and their practical application, has enabled me to perform acts and deeds which, by the ignorant, are looked upon as the result of supernatural powers; hence arose the popular idea about evil spirits, and magic art, and other abortions of the human mind. How many human beings have been burnt or tortured by a pedantic, arrogant clique of so-called scientific theologians and professors, simply for having been instrumental in enunciating a law of nature; or, for having explained a physical phenomenon in a common sense way, contrary to the tenets taught by these wise and learned fanatics. So it was in the Middle Ages and so, to some extent, it is still now; but the more the knowledge of physical nature spreads among the people, the more will the conceit and arrogance of these pseudo learned appear in their true light, and the less occasion will there be for me to continue the rôle which I have played among mankind."

As if guessing my momentary thoughts and anxious to prevent me from questioning him, Mephisto continued, after taking a seat opposite me: "I can understand that you are desirous of comprehending now what this rôle is, in fact what the nature of the assistance is, which I should ask of you in return for the services I propose to render you. I cannot explain this better than by relating the affair in which I have been engaged during the last few days, to give you an insight into, what are popularly designated as, my diabolical deeds.

"In a large city called New Babylon, probably not unknown to you, a quack has preyed, for a considerable time, upon the bodily afflicted by a novel system of treatment; and although this system is contrary

to all physiological laws and to common sense, and ruins and kills many patients, whilst it cures none, this professional medicine-man has by its means accumulated a large fortune, chiefly owing to the truly disgraceful ignorance concerning the laws of health pervading every class of society; and also owing to the fact that our hero was an acknowledged son of *Æsculapius*. He was a quack within the profession, and to illustrate one of your own remarks, he was tolerated by the faculty, as a heretic in the Middle Ages was and probably now still is, left undisturbed so long as he remained in the Church. Giordano Bruno was left alone in his heresy whilst he remained in his call at Nola; but when he separated from the Church he was persecuted and ultimately burned. How many quacks outside the profession are at the present time cried down, who could point to their prototypes within the ranks of the learned as equally guilty? The 'doctor' in question possessed a wonderfully plausible tongue, combined with the necessary arrogance and self-assurance, by means of which he was enabled to persuade the ignorant patient that he had discovered a new method of treating all ailments with unfailing success. It consisted in enveloping the patient in cotton wool and plaster of Persia, and he had the effrontery to promise the cure of a great number of different diseases, from a crooked nose and blindness, down to corns and contracted toes. Not only did he fleece his patients of piastres (or guineas), but he undermined the constitution of many poor sufferers to such extent that they ultimately sank under the treatment, without suspecting the real cause of their decline.

"I could not," he continued, "resist the temptation of checking this *Bombasto* by accidentally mixing with his plaster of Persia an ingredient that acted so unmistakably on the patient's health as to open the eyes of the public to his nefarious doings. Legal proceedings were taken against him; a riotous crowd demolished his dwelling, and to save his life this professional quack had to flee the country.

"This man, no doubt, will cry out against the Devil as being the cause of all the evil done, and his consorts in similar lines of professional trading will heartily join in the cry. You see, dear A., how easy it is for me to get a bad name, and how difficult to gain the confidence of those even who are capable of judging in an independ-

ent and unprejudiced spirit. I hope, however, that my story will convey to your mind the nature of the assistance which I have to ask of you, provided we can come to an understanding about the other points of our compact."

"But I am anxious to learn," I impetuously interrupted him, "under what conditions or by what means you intend to let the compact be decided."

"Precisely so, my dear A.," he replied, "and but for your impatience you would have heard me explain these to you. You will, during the past week have experienced the Chess powers which I have imparted to you, and you can try these powers in a contest with me to determine whether your services shall be at my, or my services at your, disposal during your lifetime. I propose that we shall play three games at Chess, one game a week; if I win all these games, your services shall be mine: in which case I shall provide you with ample funds for the remainder of your life, and keep you free from all harm which any undertaking on my account may subject you to, besides making you the strongest living Chess-player; and should I fail in this, even in one instance, our compact shall be considered canceled. If, on the other hand, you can succeed in drawing even one of the games, and so prevent me from winning all three, my services shall be yours in any way you may decide. I have only to repeat what I said at our first interview, as a primary condition, namely: *that you must not on any account or in any form make the sign of the Cross in my presence, or during the whole time that my transactions with you may last*. I cannot explain to you now for what reason I make this request; suffice it for you to know, that if you make this sign you may banish me from your presence at great risk to yourself; and that should I myself even inadvertently make the sign in any way or form, I forfeit the control of certain natural powers which now I am able to call to my aid. Such, my dear A., are the stipulations of our agreement, and it is for you now to declare whether or not you will accept the position of Chess champion of the world, with an ample competency for the remainder of your life, under the conditions I have named; with the chance of gaining my services, should the Chess contest decide in your favor."

Here his speech ended, while his keen eye was fixed on me as if searching for a

reply. I had sunk into reflection which made it impossible for me to answer as quickly as he perhaps desired. He evidently noticed this, for he turned towards the bookcase whilst telling me he would give me ten minutes for considering the question.

Already during the past week had I, in anticipation of this moment, weighed the pros and cons of the offer made me, and had as often decided in the negative as in the affirmative, as either cool reflection or the intoxicating pride of a Chess champion took possession of my mind.

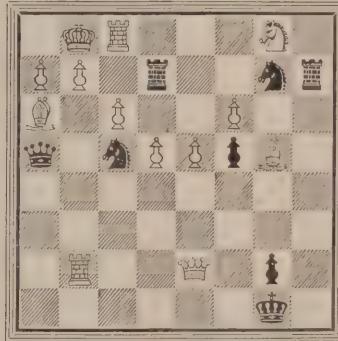
But what at this moment influenced me most was the prospect of winning against Mephisto with one drawn game out of the three. Surely, I thought, the Devil's Chess play cannot be so far beyond my powers as to prevent me even from effecting a draw, particularly if I concentrate all my powers on this alone. Chances were greatly in my favor; and should fate be against me in this contest, my ultimate lot appeared not a very hard one; so I decided to reply in the affirmative.

Mephisto's account of himself had, no doubt, had great influence in inducing me to treat him with more confidence than I felt towards him in the first hour of our interview; and he had brought my mind into such a condition, that he knew well, probably, how I should decide. Upon informing him of my willingness to agree to his terms, and to engage in the match, he seemed not in the least surprised, and showed not the least sign of rejoicing; but quietly took his seat at the Chess-table, and expressed a desire, if I had no objection, that the first game might be played that same evening, although it was late. I consented, having previously taken the precaution of persuading my wife to spend a short time with friends in the country, so that I might be left unfettered in my movements at home.

Mephisto himself proposed that I should have the choice of men, and the first move in the first game; and not seeing any reason why I should refuse, I accepted, thinking that I certainly gained a chance of either bringing the game to a decisive position in my favor or securing a draw; so I chose the white men, and opened with the usual moves leading to the Giuoco Piano, which gave me a safe position. I obtained what appeared to me a formidable attack, and gave myself up to the idea that I had an easily won victory; but Mephisto's tactics were evidently to allow me

to deceive myself. He played simply a defensive game, reckoning upon my over-certainty of winning, and then gradually brought his pieces into a safe position, ready to take advantage of any oversight of mine. So the game must have lasted about three hours, when I considered my attack upon my opponent overwhelming. I had my King safely sheltered, was a piece and four Pawns ahead, and threatened mate on the move, as the following position will show:

"A" (White).



"MEPHISTO" (Black).

Whilst already congratulating myself upon certain victory, I heard my opponent coolly remark, that, although I had played in a most creditable manner, he could now announce a mate in seven moves. For the moment I mistrusted my senses as to whether I had heard correctly, and indulged in a smile of doubt. Mephisto, observing this, repeated his announcement, made the first and indicated the following successive moves, to convince me of the certainty with which he had calculated the issue of his strategy. I stared at the position, my burning head leaning on my hands, whilst I was wrestling with the desire to express in angry words my chagrin at the result; when, with a pitying smile, and in a tone which jarred upon my ears, Mephisto expressed his gratification at finding me so strong, and prophesied better success for me with all mortal opponents. "Meantime, dear A.," he continued, "take matters calmly, and do not yet despair of being the winner in our contest. I shall return in a week's time, and hope to find you complete master over all your faculties. Till then, farewell." So absorbed was I in contemplating the position that I forgot the ordinary civilities which a host owes to his guest, and he made his exit unattended.

(To be continued.)

BRENTANO'S CHESS MONTHLY.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY, 1882.

No. 10.

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(Continued from page 433.)



HEN I found myself alone, a paroxysm of rage for a moment took possession of me, perhaps not so much in consequence of the loss of the game, as because of the patronizing tone in which my opponent addressed me, after having himself escaped by a hair's-breadth from the fate which he inflicted upon me. In this frame of mind I retired for the night, but it was many hours before my mind became oblivious of the troubles of the day.

Two days elapsed before I found courage to look at a Chess-board again, with the object of pondering over the game played against my mysterious visitor; and the more I looked at the position, the more clearly it became apparent to me that my own impetuosity and over-confidence in my safety had caused the loss of the game. With a mate on the move, I forgot my wily opponent, who so manœuvred that, by the sacrifice of his Queen and two Rooks, he inflicted defeat on me in seven successive checks. Had I kept my Queen at home, and opened my game by advancing my Pawns, it was evident that I could not have failed to secure victory. The oftener I analyzed the game the more convinced I became that Mephisto depended rather upon my over-confidence in attack than upon my want of combining-power and circumspection; and this reflection seemed to renew my courage for re-engaging my adversary in the remaining games of our match. I purposely avoided the Chess-board, and spent a few days in the country, thereby gaining vigor of body and clearness of mind before returning home to meet my opponent.

On the day of our next appointment, I arranged the table with Chess-board and men in readiness for the arrival of my

visitor. I was desirous that Mephisto should not suspect the slightest hesitation on my part to meet him in our encounter. He arrived in good time, and entered the room unannounced. A pleasing, self-satisfied smile was on his face, which made me remark, that he no doubt felt sure of his victim, but that it did not require any special politeness on his part to confirm me in my resolution to abide by the stipulations of our compact. "My dear A," he replied, "you are in error if you think the emotions expressed in my features are caused by our meeting. What makes me feel happy is the result of my latest adventure; and when I relate it to you, I doubt not that you will rejoice with me at the deserved fate dealt out to one of the worst human beings, a Spanish priest, who, under the cloak of religion, ruined a whole family to possess himself of their property, and place the daughter in his power for his own villainous purposes. I befriended this scoundrel and persuaded him to seek a quiet retreat in an isolated mountainous district, whilst at the same time informing the sons of the whole transaction. Disguised as brigands these latter waylaid our worthy priest, deprived him of the purloined property, freed their sister from an ignominious fate, and left this highly respectable hypocrite in a helpless condition in a lonely spot, where death from starvation must be his ultimate fate. Having seen the remnant of this once happy family fairly on their way to a sea-port for transhipment to a foreign land, I hastened here to meet you at the appointed time, and I must apologize, dear A., if I am late."

Mephisto's confidential tone had the effect of making me feel freer and less constrained in his presence; so much so that I could not resist the desire to question him on his occupation generally. "Then, you have," I exclaimed, "not always been the dark spirit of evil, the sworn enemy of

mankind, that history and tradition have presented to us?"

"Dear A," he replied, "the time will soon arrive when I shall make you fully acquainted with me, and when you will learn with surprise that my history is closely interwoven with the history of the human mind; that as this latter widens its field of inquiry and its depth of comprehension, to that extent will my *raison d'être* vanish, and my whole character be understood. But more of this anon; let us proceed to our game, as time is pressing with me, and I should not like to be guilty of hurrying you in your moves."

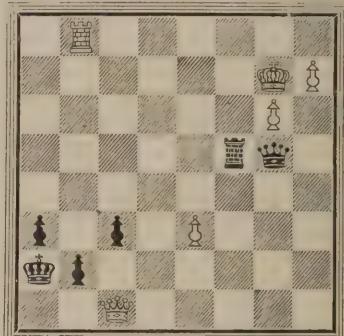
Mephisto had the first move; and on my replying with Pawn to K 4, &c., he led up to a Ruy Lopez. I took advantage of the analytical studies of our modern masters, especially Steinitz and Zukertort, who have thoroughly exhausted this opening in both attack and defence, and defended myself in a manner which caused my adversary to study carefully these, to him, perhaps new positions.

I succeeded after the eighteenth or twentieth move not only in making the game even, but in forcing the exchange, and my attack assumed an apparently overwhelming character. Mephisto, however, proved himself a wonderful Pawn player, and evidently endeavored to gain the advantage by pushing a Pawn to Queen; to prevent which, I was obliged to give the exchange. This, as well as his excellent manœuvring of the Knights, enabled him to ward off the immediate danger, and bring about an equality of pieces, as shown in the following position:

We were both left with Queen, Rook, and three Pawns, but the advantage of position was greatly in my favor. I threatened mate on the move, which could only be avoided by an exchange of Queens; his Rook was *en prise*, and I had a free Pawn at K 6 ready to go to Queen. He could not possibly escape this time, particularly since any attempt on his part to mate me could only result in a draw, owing to the position of my King. I must have involuntarily evinced my delight at the apparent certainty with which I thought I had caught the Devil, because Mephisto looked at me with a sneering smile, and said, "No doubt, my dear A., you look upon our contest as coming to a favorable conclusion through your unquestionably excellent play; but I am sorry to inform you, that you mistake the issue of this game. You must observe that

it is now my move; and taking advantage of it, I can mate you in seven moves at latest." "Never," cried I, excited; "I play my K to R 3 and back to Kt 2, and you can but draw the game; and if you prevent the mate I threaten; then the exchange leaves me with a clear Rook." "I have too high a regard for you," he replied, "to do more than indicate the exact position in which I produce the mate." I saw it; saw only too plainly that, with all my good play, I was conquered—conquered by a wily stratagem, of which none but a diabolical Chess-player could be capable.

"A" (White).



"MEPHISTO" (Black).

Disheartened, I sank back in my chair; and whether sleep, swoon, or Mephisto's magic power overcame me, I know not—but I lost my senses for a time. When I regained consciousness, I found that my mysterious visitor had disappeared, having left the position on the board as it was at the moment when he announced the mate—a mate, strangely enough, again in the fatal seven moves. Yes, whichever way I played, with the best reply on my part, it was, either way, mate in the same number of moves; and my short-sighted assumption, that his checking would lead to a draw, was blown to the winds. In a fit of anger, I swept the men off the board, took my hat, and sought to cool my heated brain in the night air. Who can depict my astonishment when I found the street-door properly locked, bolted, and chained! It made me halt, and sobered my anger considerably; for it forced on my mind the recognition that I had to deal with a superior power. What had become of Mephisto? How had he made his exit? The impossibility of answering such questions, except by guesses, made me discard the attempt; and instead of roaming about the streets in

the night, I turned back and went to bed, endeavoring to forget my disappointment in sleep.

The next few days found me gloomily pondering over the adventure in which I had so foolishly engaged; and the question constantly recurred to me: How will Mephisto dispose of my services, should fate decide against me in our contest? It was of course now too late to raise this question with the view of evading the consequences of his winning the third game; but the greater the probability of the match being decided in Mephisto's favor, the more did my mind dwell on the nature of my connection with this mysterious being. I could not but admit that, so far, his whole appearance and his actions had removed from my mind any fear such as a spirit of the traditional type would have inspired. Mephisto's true nature seemed an enigma which closer acquaintance alone could solve, and the prospect of thoroughly analyzing so mysterious a being, who apparently had played so important but dubious a *rôle* in the world's history, fascinated me so much, as to overcome even the slightest hesitation to carry out our compact in the strictest sense. That he was in his nature and character different from what popular credulity had painted him, I was fully convinced; and I was, furthermore, prepared to believe that his so-called supernatural powers were nothing but the most extended knowledge and practical application of natural forces, which humanity laboriously acquires by slow steps. So, the more I reasoned upon my adventure, the less restraint I felt in meeting my Chess-master for the third and deciding game.

The eventful evening arrived, and I had everything in readiness for the reception of my visitor. When he entered the room, he approached me and cast a searching glance as if to read my thoughts; but seeing me look calm, and, if not exactly cheerful, at least without any indications of depression of mind, he began chatting about the events of the day in an indifferent manner, until suddenly he turned round and asked significantly, "And you are quite prepared, my dear A., to engage in the last game of our contest, in order to decide in what relation we shall stand to each other during the remainder of your life?" "Oh, certainly," I replied; "do not, pray, imagine that either fear or mistrust would make me break my word in regard to our compact. Let us proceed, if you are willing, to the

Chess-board at once, and you shall find that I intend to do battle with you till the last chance of my winning has disappeared."

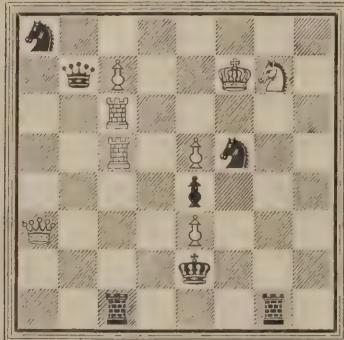
Mephisto looked at me in an inquiring manner, as if to detect a little bravado as the basis of my speech. A smile stole over his face whilst taking his seat opposite me, and he remarked: "Whatever the result of this game may be, I can give you the assurance that you shall never have occasion to regret the manner in which you have confided in me. But," he continued, after a short pause, "let us proceed with the game, and reserve all further explanation until the result of our contest has been decided. I shall have more to say to you then than I can utter at present; so, dear A., make your move."

I adopted this time the Vienna opening, and played a careful, steady game, always looking more to safety at home than to attack; but my wily opponent took every opportunity to make me aware of the weakest point in my position, and by this means harassed me. However, his several attempts at breaking into my camp failed, and the battle was in consequence prolonged for many hours. No decided advantage was gained on either side; but, as I had to watch for every opportunity that the varying position afforded for drawing the game, so my opponent had to be upon the alert to prevent this. I began to feel the effect of this continuous strain on my mind, and became alarmed lest my adversary should succeed in beating me through my lack of physical endurance; hence I determined to make one great effort to force the position, so that, by the exchange of pieces, the game should become less intricate. I endeavored to get his Queen out of play, and was prepared to exchange Rooks, in which case my extra Pawn would have won the game, as will be seen from the accompanying diagram.

In fact, the position appeared to me such, that I felt my opponent could not succeed in doing more than draw the game, which was equivalent to my winning it. It was Mephisto's move now, and he took some time to decide what to do. He looked intently at the position, and seemed to count. "Aha!" I thought; "he is aware that he cannot escape; he sees, no doubt, how futile is the attempt to ward off the undoubted issue of the battle." I was in my own mind curious how this amiable Devil would behave under defeat; how he would admit that he was beaten,

and that his services would be at my disposal. He seemed to guess my thoughts, and looked me full in the face in a friendly, serious way, as much as to reproach me for rejoicing at his misadventure. I felt a little ashamed, and was on the point of excusing myself, when Mephisto addressed me in the following words: "You have, no doubt, in your experience found that Fate often appears to deal with us as if purposely to test our mental and moral qualities by promising us the easy achievement of our desires, and, at the moment of accomplishment, causing disappointment in an unexpected manner. Well for him who has sufficient fortitude to take life as it comes in welfare and adversity, deter-

"A" (White).



"MEPHISTO" (Black).

mined to do the best he can, since thereby the battle of life is half won. It is for you now, my dear A., to test the qualities of your mind, by accepting the decision of our contest as revealed in the position on the Chess-board before us. You are confident the game is in your favor; and if you had the move, you could no doubt bring the battle to a successful issue; but as it is my turn to play, I am enabled to mate you (if you make the best reply) in seven moves, and I beg you to examine the inexorable fate which gives me the power to demand your surrender." Stung by this patronizing admonition, I felt that desperation and a spiteful sentiment had so possessed me as to prevent me from quietly considering the state of the game to ascertain how far Mephisto was correct; so I told him rather impetuously, as if ignoring his announcement of mate, that he had better play, to bring the game to a conclusion. Without apparently noticing my temper, Mephisto took my Knight with his

Rook, giving check, forcing my King to B3. White, "A." Black, Mephisto. R takes Kt (ch) K to B3

He now sacrificed his Queen by taking my Rook, checking, and the game proceeded:

R takes Q	Q takes R (ch)
Q to K 3	R takes R (ch)
P takes R	R takes Q (ch)
	Kt to B 7

Although now fully aware that my position was hopeless, I played on, making my moves mechanically and quickly, goaded by Mephisto's brusque manner, which he had assumed whilst these moves were being played. I had nothing left to do but to push my Pawn, which he took with his Knight, checking,

P to K 4 Kt takes P (ch)

and I as readily and quickly played my King to Q 3; whereupon Mephisto grasped his Rook to give what I saw at once was a neat and finished mate.

My fate was decided, my services were assigned to the Devil, and the deserved reward of a foolish freak made itself painfully felt. All this flashed instantaneously through my mind, and in despair I was on the point of sinking back into my chair, when I saw my opponent, to my great astonishment, allow the Rook to drop out of his hand, whilst a fiendish laugh, which sounded like a yell of agony, shook the room and the house to its foundation. Utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of this finish of our game and the paroxysms of rage to which Mephisto gave vent, the reflections upon my fate became doubly painful. My diabolical master seemed to gloat over his conquest, and by his manners to prepare me for the tortures of But where was Mephisto?

Neither sight nor sound revealed his presence to me. His disappearance heightened the mystery of the whole scene; so much so, that I at first hesitated to raise myself out of my chair. It was quite evident that he had suddenly disappeared, but I failed to perceive the cause of this. Before leaving, he had swept the Chess-men off the board—contrary to his former custom, when he had left me the position to study. Curiosity made me play over the game, bringing it again to the position in which he had announced mate in seven

(oh, that ominous number!) moves, and I carefully repeated the continuation as recorded until I came to the last. The whole secret lay revealed! Mephisto could not, or would not, make the move! Why? Dear reader, I cannot tell you why; but if you take a Chess-board and men, go into your chamber, lock the door, set up the position as shown in the diagram, and make the moves as stated, you will understand why Mephisto could not, and I dared not, make the final move.

Astonishment at the turn my adventure had taken made me for the moment quite overlook the consequences. Mephisto, not having completed his last move, had not mated me; so, of course, according to his own stipulation, I had won the match: and in the excitement of the moment I cried aloud, "The Devil is caught; henceforth his services will be mine, and I shall chain him to the Chess-table to play for my amusement."

I had scarcely uttered these words, when I discovered Mephisto standing by my side, his piercing eye fixed on mine; and he replied, "I take you at your word; be it so; but why for your own amusement only, when there are so many devotees to the game who will be anxious to measure their Chess strength against me? You look at me in astonishment, no doubt, hardly realizing the idea of my being publicly exhibited; but sit down, and I will tell you why I suggest this.

"You have, during my absence just now, discovered the reason of my inability to mate you in the number of moves I declared to do; hence I accept the game as a draw, and the match as decided in your favor.

"Fate has declared against me; and although I might have chosen a different course, it would have entailed upon me a sacrifice too great to be compensated for. I therefore assign to you my services, the nature of which you have already indicated. I can," he continued, "read in your face your surprise at the readiness with which I submit to the conditions of our compact; and to explain this, as well as to prepare you for the relation in which we are to stand to each other in the future, pray listen to the following: I have already informed you that my superior knowledge of the forces of Nature and their practical application enables me to produce phenomena which appear to the ignorant the result of supernatural powers, and that I

have used this physical advantage for the gratification of my desire to combat and punish deceit, pretence and arrogance. It is not surprising that in return I should be reviled as the origin of sin, and that my control of the natural forces should be adduced as a proof of my wickedness. The earliest record of the world's history gives proof of the fact that ignorance on the one side and cunning on the other combined to ascribe to me the cause of all evil in the world; and although the ideas about me, my form and activity, may have altered during the last centuries, it was not until a superior mind, about two hundred years ago—Baruch Spinoza—proved, and endeavored to convince his contemporaries, that the existence of an evil spirit interfering in the world's development was incompatible with the existence of an Almighty ruler of the universe. He was rewarded by expulsion from his community. Other enlightened minds followed, who attempted to free the public mind from the disturbed ideas about my being; who showed the absurdity of the horns, cloven hoof, and tail with which a diseased imagination had pictured me, and who combated the persecutions of witches as the outcome of overstrained fanaticism.

"Most of these men, whose views and ideas were in advance of their times, had to suffer for their boldness in combating the prevailing popular superstitions. Still, these numerous attempts to destroy the belief in the existence of an evil spirit which acts independently of the Almighty have not been without effect in enlightening the minds of the present generation; and the liberal views entertained on this subject by your men of science and by the clergymen of the Protestant Church, for instance, induce me to believe that the time has come when I may boldly show myself in public. Let my presence in your midst be a proof of the fact that, whatever is done henceforth in the world, the Devil has had no hand in it, and that any attempt to shift the guilt upon me should be looked upon as an indirect admission of the accuser's own guilty conscience. In this way will my presence here contribute to enlighten the public mind and destroy all superstition, and with this view, I am willing to be chained, as you express it, to the Chess-table. With amusement we can combine instruction and promote the practice of the Royal Game; a dissemination of it can but have beneficial influences, as is so well expressed

in the following lines which my fondness for the game made me indite to a friend, who published it in the *American Chess Monthly* some years ago.

"Chess is a representative contest, a bloodless combat, an image, not only of actual operations, but of the greater warfare which every son of the earth, from the cradle to the grave, is continually waging—the battle of life. Its virtues are as immeasurable as the sands of the African

poverty, and the rich to be careless of their wealth. It admonishes Kings to love and respect their people, and instruct subjects to obey and reverence their rulers. It shows how the humblest citizens, by the practice of virtue and the efforts of labor, may rise to the loftiest stations; and how the haughtiest lords, by the love of vice and the commission of errors, may fall from their elevated estate. It is an amusement and an art a sport and a science. The



Sahara. It heals the mind in sickness, and exercises it in health. It is rest to the overworked intellect, and relaxation to the fatigued body. It lessens the grief of the mourner, and heightens the enjoyment of the happy. It teaches the angry man to restrain his passions, the light-minded to become grave, the cautious to be bold, and the venturesome to be prudent. It affords a keen delight to youth, a sober pleasure to manhood, and a perpetual solace to old age. It induces the poor to forget their

erudite and the untaught, the high and the low, the powerful and the weak, acknowledge its charms and confess its enticements. We learn to like it in the years of our youth; but as increased familiarity develops its beauties and unfolds its lessons, our enthusiasm grows stronger and our fondness more confirmed.

"But whilst ready to accept the challenge of all comers, let me, above everything, maintain silence—silence in every tongue—since my natural tendency to expose im-

position and conceit would make enemies, which must be avoided; but we can admonish the boastful by defeat on the Chess-board."

Here Mephisto finished, placed himself on the chair at the Chess-table, and, with his face bent over the board, remained in sullen silence. In vain I attempted to elicit some further remarks from him about the many enigmas surrounding his whole being and his past career: his tongue was tied.

He is now ready to do battle against all comers, the best opponent that any player was ever engaged with. He always smiles at his adversary, has no annoying habits,

shows no temper, and when he has defeated his adversary, he merely looks up in acknowledgment of the honor shown him.

Who can solve the mystery?

Some readers may think they discover in the positions of the first two games, well-known problems by Mendheim and Lolli; but there can be no doubt whatever that, when composing the problems in question, these two famous Chess players had the advantage of Mephisto's assistance, because he knew the positions so well, and the solutions of them are so truly diabolical.

CHESS LETTERS OF CELEBRATED MEN.



ERY few men of science have acquired more celebrity in their professions than Professor Schumacher, the Prussian Astronomer Royal, who for many years was the Director of the Altona Observatory. He has left a name behind him which will ever shine in the firmament of science with a brilliancy like that of the suns he delighted to survey. To contemplate such a man finding his relaxation in the game of Chess from the strains of his serious mathematical and physical investigations, is a spectacle gratifying to every lover of that incomparable pastime. To know his opinions of events which have become history, but which were enacted in his time, is of interest and value to all. The private correspondence of a Chess-player is the best source of information concerning him in that relation, and when the writer is a man of Prof. Schumacher's ability and station, such correspondence becomes invested with inestimable importance. We have in our possession a large number of letters written by Prof. Schumacher to the late William Lewis, the Chess portions of which we intend to lay before our readers from time to time. The many glimpses we get in them of famous players are quite delightful, and the insight we obtain of the sedate Professor himself, his ardent love of the game, his enthusiasm for solving problems, his opinions of Deschapelles, La-

bourdonnais, Staunton, Von der Lasa, Horwitz and other notabilities give these letters a charm which their publication will make general. We have preserved the German notation in the games which some of the letters contain. To have rendered them in the English notation would have caused incongruity.

We have also many most interesting letters from Von Heydebrandt und der Lasa, who, by the way, is the person so often alluded to in Prof. Schumacher's letters as "Mr. Heydebrandt;" we hope to be able to obtain permission from the celebrated author of the *Handbuch* to lay before the public so much of them as relates to Chess. These were also written to Mr. Lewis, and were part of the Chess collection of the late Rimington Wilson, Esq., of England, as also were the following:

SIR:—Though I have no introduction to you but the love of that noble game in which you excel, and the gratitude with which I have learnt of your publications, I venture to address you, supposing that there is a kind of freemasonry between us, by which each may claim the assistance of the other. My request is that you would be pleased to inform me what newspaper or what journal I have to take in order to have a perfect knowledge of what is done in Chess in England. For Paris it was the *Palamede*, but this paper appears now so irregularly and contains so many things unconnected with Chess that it hardly answers any more its original purpose, and perhaps will do so less after M. de Labour-

By Fritz of Goljerdstone



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