

MATE IN TWO MOVES.

There is a delusion abroad in the world that chess is a game of Persian origin, but you would do well not to advance this meagre hypothesis in Altpoppendorf. For Altpoppendorf will have much pleasure in proving unto you with hammering gutturals—with hammering fists if you are too dense—that you have simply confounded the two predicative adjectives, Persian and Prussian. The first article of the Altpoppendorffian "*Quicumque vult*" is, that *schach*—or chess—was invented at Altpoppendorf; and those who make a show of not accepting this clause are unpopular at Altpoppendorf.

When you go to Altpoppendorf you can easily acquire and maintain the impression that you have walked into chessland. The village is set in a shallow saucer of a plain that is devoted to the raising of flowers for seed, and up to the close horizon in all directions are laid vast glaring squares of startling variety of hue. The cubical houses, with their white plaster and black timber walls, have the look of fancy chess pieces set ready for some competition of giants. And walking in this land of right angles,—the acute and obtuse variations are unrecognized in Altpoppendorf,—and influenced by the "*Quicumque vult*" of the village, you would not be greatly surprised to see a gigantic thumb and forefinger come out of the clouds, take up by its waist the old gray church tower, and set it down with a thunderous "*Check!*" in a square of marigolds or hollyhocks, or some other flower that is out of men's minds for the year anywhere but at Altpoppendorf.

The moral atmosphere is even more richly impregnated than the material with the fine flavor of the noblest of games. The very childhood's "*Hüp-*

spiel," or hopscotch, takes on the importance of a sixty-four square complication, and chess is in Altpoppendorf an integral part of the primary education. When the infants of Altpoppendorf wend their way of an early morning hour towards the village school,—in long hand-linked files, looking with their light flaxen plaits or close-cropped little round white skulls, their china-bull eyes, and their print garments of faint hue, as if their over-zealous mothers had scrubbed all the color out of them,—the last question shot from the home door after the retreating *Hänschen* or *Gretchen* is, "*Hast thou then man's chessboard?*" A child who at eight years of age does not know as many openings, is sighed over as one who is pitifully backward with the "*Einmaleins*"—the "*once one is one*"—of life. A sound theoretical and practical knowledge of chess, among other things, is demanded of those who present themselves for the degree of confirmation, which in the Fatherland is rather an entrance into this world than a first independent step towards the next, and may therefore without impropriety be accorded as fitly for proficiency in a noble and highly logical game as for the mechanical repetition of "*Vaterunser*" and the articles of faith. Chess is the Altpoppendorffian's main business of life from his cradle, where he endeavors to suck the color out of a coral pawn, to that last tussle with Death, finest of combatants, against whom no man has ever scored so much as a drawn game. And as your skilful player stereotypes more and more opening moves, till at the end he can leap over fifteen or twenty of these and come without vain preliminaries to the heart of the matter, so it is with the Altpoppendorffian in his social relations.

He is chary of words and salutations, does not talk about the weather, and when he has business in a shop, he walks squarely in (castle move), lays a finger on the article he desires, and names his price. If that is not acceptable, he retires,—by the castle move again.

Of course Altpoppendorf has its chess legend, which may be said to be composed of fact and fancy in about equal proportions. Here is the legend as I read it in that old volume of which the pages are memories and traditions, and the book-markers the centuries.

There was much important bustle about the doors of the Altpoppendorf hostelry of the Golden Eagle one spring afternoon, for the Lady Abbess of Quedlinburg had alighted from her litter at the inn door and was enjoying a short repose in the great guest-chamber. Things have quieted down again by now, for that was some three hundred years ago.

The Abbess was a great lady. She was of high, most transparent, birth, for her brother was no other than the Herzog Adalbert von Giltzum, of whom most people have probably never heard, though he was a very considerable person in his way for all that. He could not have been otherwise; for the Abbey of Quedlinburg was rich and powerful, and the Lady Abbess had sway over the rock of Quedlinburg with the Abbey and Castle perched on the top of it, over the town crouching humbly at its feet, and over the wide fertile plain that rock and Castle commanded. And there can be no doubt that the Herzog Adalbert von Giltzum, who could acquire such an appanage for his sister in the teeth of the fiercest competition, was a potentate of great power and influence.

You must not, however, be too quick to envy her Grace the Lady Abbess Dorothea von Giltzum her transparent

birth and her proud position. As she reclined in the great guest-chamber, with her eyes closed and her white hands folded over the Book of Hours on her lap, she was thinking more of the cares of office than of its splendor,—as empty of comfort these latter as the brilliants encrusted in the covers of the devotional volume. Of all her anxieties, the one that recurred most persistently to her mind was that connected with the Graf Albrecht von Regenstein, the most unruly of her vassals, who exercised the honorable profession of Raubritter,—Gentleman-Brigand as you might say,—and from his almost impregnable aerie harried her tenants, intercepted her revenues, and laid violent hands on the merchants journeying under her protection between Magdeburg and Halberstadt and her town of Quedlinburg. You may still see the nest of this mountain eagle or vulture, the Graf von Regenstein, his palace hewn out of the hard sandstone, and the deep well in which the captive merchants sat waiting for death or remittances. A Biergarten—sweet horticultural development!—now graces the spot, and where horrors were done or planned, the stout Herr and Housfrau play the eternal “Skat,” unmindful of the past. But the Lady Abbess had no such lighter associations of the Regenstein rock to cheer her reflections, into which there entered rather a vision of her gallows of Quedlinburg with a Gentleman-Brigand dangling thereon. And yet, alas! he was such a presentable man, this wicked, troublesome Graf Albrecht von Regenstein!

You have probably conceived of the Lady Abbess as an aged and venerable person, weaned by time if not by grace from the vanities of earth and royal courts, and stopping up with a tardy zeal the devotional gaps in a long life of frivolity or high politics. If so, you have formed an entirely wrong impres-

sion; for, let me tell you, there are Lady Abbesses and Lady Abbesses, and Dorothea von Gilzum was still young, still very fair, and, with that, gentle and womanly. Her youth was, of course, not against her, for the faculty of command is hereditary; and even if youth is a fault, the Lady Abbess made atonement in due course. For she lived to a good age; you can see her portrait as a handsome old dame in the Installation Room of the Castle of Quedlinburg, where the lines of the marvellous parquet radiate out from the chair of state to figure the gracious influence that emanated from its occupant. It brings this great lady somewhat nearer to me to know that she painted in oils as shockingly as I should do, had I the mind. In a room, which a glorious Dutch oven renders worthy of more artistic things, they still show one of her productions. In this picture *Delilah*,—and is it not touching to find the simple young Abbess illustrating in oils the life of an extremely improper person?—*Delilah* in fifteenth-century costume is represented as shearing most conscientiously the head of a very anæmic Samson. And despite its glaring errors of design and execution, the picture is, for the memory of the reverend young artist, pathetic and lovable.

Some hours before sunset the Lady Abbess decided to order her litter and continue her journey, for she had still a matter of four leagues to cover before she reached her Castle of Quedlinburg, and even with an armed escort the roads were none too safe, more especially in the night and in the neighborhood of a turbulent Albrecht von Regenstein. The Abbess had just put her hand to her silver bell when one of her ladies entered and asked if her Grace would receive his Excellency the Domberr Heinsius of Halberstadt. Now the Bishop of Halberstadt was a mighty prince, temporal and spiritual,

in the days before the power of Rome was upset by one Dr. Martin Luther, and the Cathedral Canons—the Dombherren—were powers too. It would never do to deny his Excellency an audience; and, moreover, Dorothea von Gilzum had a pretty girlish curiosity to see him, for he had but newly come to the cathedral, and his piety and learning were much spoken of. So she intimated that he should be introduced, meaning to set out on her way in no later than half an hour, Dr. Heinsius or no Dr. Heinsius.

The Domberr entered, and the Lady Abbess had all she could do not to cry out aloud. For she had expected an aged, somewhat decrepid, churchman, bowed with the weight of years and learning, and here was a tall young priest with the face of an angel—and a commanding face—so that she, mistress of life and death in her district of Quedlinburg, lady paramount of so many vassals, spiritual and temporal, was silent, and almost confused before this young Canon of Halberstadt.

Dr. Heinsius explained that, being on his way back afoot to Halberstadt from a village where he had had business, he had heard that her Grace was lying at the Golden Eagle of Altpoppendorf, and had ventured, journey-stained as he was, to turn aside from the field paths to pay his respects to her. The Lady Abbess invited the Canon to a seat, and they spoke on and on of many things till the sun was near the horizon. And the Abbess had not yet ordered her litter, for the voice of the young Domberr was like the chiming across the fields of the tenor bell of Halberstadt, and his face was the face of an angel.

Then the eyes of Dr. Heinsius chanced on the Abbess's chessboard, without which she never stirred,—a marvel of silver and ebony, with ivory pieces, that had come overland from China, and had taken two years in

the coming. And the Domherr confessing that he had deeply studied and loved the game, as the highest and purest of all intellectual exercises, they set out the board. The Lady Abbess was renowned for her skill far beyond the limits of her suzerainty, but here she had met an adversary who taxed all her powers. The sun sank below the horizon, and still the mules of the Abbess drowsed in their stalls.

On and on they played, the young Abbess and the young Domherr. The candles that were brought in and set by them enveloped in their golden light the two noble, serious faces and the chessboard and chessmen of marvellous workmanship, and threw restless shadows back up the dark length of the great guest-chamber. All around was the silence of night. When at last one of the candles flickered out in its sconce, the Lady Abbess rose with a gesture of amazement and went to the window. She drew back the curtain, and the clean light of a spring sunrise flooded the room, turning the golden flame of the candles to a sickly fire.

And there was no one but herself in the great guest-chamber!

Only perhaps the outline, fading like a mist on the air, of a tall standing form and an angelic face.

The Abbess rang for her ladies, who came all red-eyed and peevish with sleeplessness. To her inquiries they gave answers that filled her with astonishment. For they assured her that no Domherr, or Herr indeed of any kind, had come to visit her; that, bringing candles to the guest-chamber, they had found her Grace engaged with her chessboard, as if studying some problem; that she had seemed not to hear them when they had hinted at evening bread; and that so they had left her Grace to her meditations. The host, too, knew nothing of the visit of Dr. Heinsius. In great perplexity the Lady Abbess ordered her litter and set

out for home. And when she was come near half way, one rode up to tell her that the Graf Albrecht von Regenstein had set an ambush in her road on the previous evening, determined to take her and hold her to ransom. He had waited till sunrise, when, supposing that she had wind of his scheme, and had gone by another path, he had ridden back to his rock of Regenstein with his army of cut-throats.

Then the Abbess turned off the direct way and rode to Halberstadt. There she called upon the Lord Bishop, and begged him—it was a matter of idle curiosity: she had heard so much talk—to present the new Domherr, Dr. Heinsius, to her. My lord in some astonishment sent for the canon, assuring her Grace with a smile that her expectation might be disappointed. When Dr. Heinsius came, the Lady Abbess found him to be a little, old, bent churchman, with very bad manners and not too cleanly. After he was gone, she told my lord her vision of the night, for a vision it certainly was. And it was evident to both of them that her journey had been hindered by a heavenly messenger, the holy St. Ambrose in all probability, for he was her Grace's patron saint.

The Abbess presented to the host of the Golden Eagle of Altpoppendorf her curious chessboard and chessmen, and they are still to be seen on the occasion of the quinquennial chess tournaments, held for three hundred years in their honor, in the great guest-chamber of the hostelry where her Grace had the miraculous vision. At one end of the room hangs a large portrait of her Grace, another of her favors bestowed on the Golden Eagle.

As for the audacious Gentleman-Brigand of Regenstein, the Lady Abbess let the trumpet be sounded twice before each of the hostelries where her captains lay. Her captains led the

vassals of Quedlinburg against the Regenstein rock and took it, for all its boasted impregnability. They carried the Graf Albrecht to Quedlinburg, and there they built a great wooden cage for him up in the top stories of the Rathaus, where you may still see it. In this cage the Graf von Regenstein sat gnashing his teeth, and trying to cut his way out with a small knife: they show you the notches in the hard oak. But after twenty months the Lady Abbess let the Graf go free,—for indeed he was a most personable man!—under an oath which he made no weak show of keeping.

It is said that the Graf von Regenstein, Raubritter, proposed himself in marriage to her Grace of Quedlinburg; and, if he did, she refused him. A Lady Abbess does not marry a Gentleman-Brigand, especially after she has played chess all night with a heavenly messenger.

It would never do for the chief of the Altpoppendorfiens, his Worship the Schultheiss, the representative of the village that has such a legend, not to be a leading chess power; and Herr Schmalz, who was in office twenty years ago from this date, was in this respect quite up to the level of his position. He was a small, meagre, light-haired man, of indefinite complexion, with a little Vandyck beard and a scissor-hacked flaxen moustache: he wore gold spectacles, and he walked on his toes with an elastic action. This action was the minor cause of his nickname of "Der Springer," which not only means what it seems to the English eye to mean, but also in chess parlance "The Knight." In its metaphorical signification this nickname was no honorable one, for it implied that the Worshipful Schultheiss had advanced through life by the knight's move—a tricky if artistic one. When Knight Schmalz "sprang," his neighbors never

knew exactly where he would land or over what lines he would travel: the benevolent or malicious ends of his conduct could not be calculated. The former were discounted by a series of preliminary exasperations; the reverse were rendered doubly obnoxious by the memory of the kindly sentiments that had preceded them. The fact of it was that Herr Schmalz had a crease in his character, and he would have been a happier man if nature, instead of this moral endowment, had fitted him out with a club-foot or a Cyrano de Bergerac nose. Herr Schmalz had made and inherited money, and had returned to his native Altpoppendorf, where he had accepted the office of Schultheiss on condition that he was not to be disturbed in it for life. This condition was readily granted, as there is no fevered competition for a post of which the chief duties are the conscientious and rectilineal affixing to a wall of governmental and other notices, the equitable distribution of small fines, and the personal inspection of the village open drain; the only emolument, a fairly free hand with postage-stamps and official note-paper. So Herr Schmalz was Worshipful Schultheiss for life, and not very much was asked of him, as you have seen; but Altpoppendorf demanded of him that he should know all about chess. This Herr Schmalz did—there was no gain-saying it, and his Worship the Schultheiss was the embodied law, the walking book of reference, in the great room of the "Silver Board," to which the Golden Eagle had changed its name after the vision of the Lady Abbess of Quedlinburg, and its very gratifying result for the village hostelry.

Frau Schmalz was a lady who very early in her life had been pushed to the margin of the board of Life, and did not seem very likely to get back into play again. Not very likely and not the least anxious. Providence

had bestowed on her its two greatest gifts—incapacity to shine and indifference to shining.

The third and last member, according to the crabbed historian's reckoning, was the one whom the Altpoppendorfer swains placed first and foremost in it—the charming Fräulein Klara Schmalz. And, indeed, on Life's chess-board Klara was of right a queen, for youth and beauty have their immemorial incontestable prerogatives, and all the grace that we seniors can attain to lies in the bow with which we accept our quite secondary position. Klara was delicious in her summer muslins and straw hats; she was equally delicious in her winter homespuns, great red-lined cloaks, and reckless tam-o'-shanters; and countless lyrics on Schillerian lines, with appropriate similes,—among which that of the Gracious White Chess-queen came forward with the regularity of the cuckoo on a Swiss clock,—fluttered on to the path of this fair young thing, Klärchen, with the dark, wide-open, solemn eyes, as yet half afraid to smile back at Life smiling so gaily at her. She had queen's moves—straightforward practical advances and diagonal flights of sentiment and fancy. For the first, she possessed the grit and solid sense of her nation in a high degree: she would swing up the Brocken like a man, twirling lightly the traditional Wanderstab—pilgrim's staff; and she had banished herself for a year to the kitchens of a great Harz hotel, that when it came to her having a kitchen of her own she might be mistress there, and not a tolerated intruder. As for those diagonal moves of fancy and sentiment, the girl had looked lightly along one or two of them during the five years of her school life in a small provincial town, where gay Gymnasts—mere schoolboys to outward view, but graybeards of the world to their own consciousness—had fluttered and

sighed about the doors of the "Penslong," and played their innocent pranks that are not, strange as it may seem, taken any account of in the Prussian Criminal Code, of which men say the first article is "Alles ist verboten,"—"everything is forbidden." And now, one broiling July, Klara was at home for good, waiting for the great move of her life, and praying that Heinrich Hesselbarth might be inspired to play king to her queen.

Heinrich Hesselbarth, on his side, was only too ready to move. But there were certain obstacles in his way.

Only a few days before, old Herr Kantor Garsuch had died. The title of Kantor—or precentor—dates from the days when the village schoolmaster was organist first and pedagogue second: now his educational duties claim his chief attention, and he leads the worship of "unser Herrgott" when he has time or is not on the Brocken. Some predecessor of Kantor Garsuch had quaintly indicated his attitude towards his double office by inscribing on the gallery door of the church the text, "My mouth shall sing the praises of the Lord," and underneath the words, "Closed during the school examinations and vacations." And of another dimmer predecessor it has been put on record that so little worth did he attach to his sacred duties that he stole from the church a great wooden statue of St. John, and lit the school fire with "Jögli," for the weather was bitter and "Jögli" seemed to be superfluous. Kantor Garsuch had been an indifferent precentor, a passable schoolmaster, and a chess-player without reproach. Altpoppendorf still speaks in its humid moments of a game that the Herr Kantor and the Worshipful Schultheiss played and drew during one school holidays—a game that Altpoppendorf, in its simple way, tots up to one hundred and seventeen Schoppen, or tankards, and twice that number of

eight-pfennig cigars. Now Death, the great Springer, whose moves are formulated in no chess annual, had taken old Kantor Garsuch and put him away with all the other captured pieces in the little Friedhof. And Herr Assistant-Kantor Heinrich Hesselbarth hoped to reign in his stead.

When, three years before, Herr Garsuch was considered to have got beyond his work, Heinrich Hesselbarth had been sent down to assist him. Hesselbarth was then a man of twenty-two, nervous and excitable, whose constitution had been too severely tried by over-pressure and under-feeding in boyhood, the rigorous training for his profession, and the exertions of military service. It was perhaps only the excitement of his life that had kept him in it at all, for, with a hysterical nature like his, there is no mean of existence between the extremes of absolute vegetation and the hurry-scurry of physical and mental activity. He was of a romantic nature, and probably the science of the future will analyze the romantic tendency as a common rash following and relieving an undue taxation of the nervous system. Certainly creatures of calm, torpid existence exhibit no such symptoms. When he came to Altpoppendorf, the romance of his nature found its outlet in an admiration that grew to love for the charming Fräulein Klara. Nobly, in the stillness of his room, did he tear his passion to rags, this tall, lean youth, with wild blue eyes and light hair tossed in confusion about a shapely head. Queen Klara, as we know, thought very favorably of him, mentioned him in her "Abendgebet," and sighed about him to the moon. For marvellous was the contrast of those stormy blue eyes of his with the fine, ascetic lines of his face. King Heinrich, too, was the only intellectual equal of Queen Klara here in this quiet village of Altpoppendorf, which, if it

gave chess to the world, exhausted itself mentally for good and all in the effort.

There was but one obstacle to Hesselbarth's succession to the Kantorship of Altpoppendorf, but that was a serious one. He was a comparatively poor hand at the noble Prussian game. Elsewhere he might have passed muster, but here, on the very temple steps, his miserable inferiority could not escape observation. He was only too conscious of his weakness. He remembered how more than once he had failed ignominiously to solve the weekly problems preliminary to confirmation set by Herr Garsuch to the upper classes, and what disgraceful defeats he had sustained at the hands of the scholars whom it should have been the pride and privilege of his position to put to a friendly rout. He had no head for the thing, though he had worked at it till his brow was red-hot iron and his feet two blocks of ice, and he had been obliged to restore his circulation to its normal course by warm footbaths. It was a serious matter for him: it was everything for him. The Worshipful Schultheiss did not indeed appoint the Kantor, but his recommendation had the greatest weight; and would he recommend a man whose knowledge of openings was ludicrous, and to whom he could give a castle? If Hesselbarth was not appointed, he must leave Altpoppendorf: that was nothing. He must leave Klara,—there was desolation in its most horrid shape! Can you wonder that the poor fellow upbraided the memory of her Grace of Quedlinburg, who had done such an inconsiderate thing for Altpoppendorf, and looked with hostility on her Grace's portrait that hung in the great guest-chamber of the inn?

Heinrich Hesselbarth was sitting, on a sweltering July afternoon, in the half-dismantled schoolhouse of Altpoppendorf a few days after the funeral of

old Herr Garsuch, wondering what destiny had in store for him. Blissful dreams alternated with dismal visions,—dreams of Klara and love; visions of unhappy, purposeless exile. A loud rap broke in upon his reflections, and when he went to the door there was Paul Hiemer, grinning over the top of a note from the Schultheiss. Heinrich disliked almost involuntarily this Paul Hiemer, the pride of the school, the infant chess prodigy; and he had never been able to satisfy himself whether this dislike had its foundation in the youth's unctuous manner or in his superior knowledge and employment of chess openings. But to-day, when all Hesselbarth's nerves were fine-wire filaments, tense and red-hot, the face of the boy jarred him painfully. He took the note without a word, and closed the door sharply upon the astonished messenger.

"Very greatly honored Herr Assistant-Kantor Hesselbarth," ran the note, "can you give me the solution of the following problem?—White, so-and-so; black, so-and-so. White to play and mate in two moves.—Yours, Schmalz, Schultheiss."

Hesselbarth got down his board and set out the pieces. White to play and mate in two moves. It looked easy enough; but in an hour all the blood had gone to Heinrich's head, and he had not yet found the solution.

He pushed back his chair, catching for breath, and went to the window. The heat of the day was overpowering; there was an intolerable buzzing in the stagnant air; burning breaths came in from the torrid harvest-fields; and a blinding glare beat up from the white dust and cobbles of the village street. The great seed-flower beds stretched their rectangles of blazing, torturing color to the quivering horizon. No-where in this slake-oven of a world was there rest for aching eyes and hissing brain and panting lungs. And here

on this day of merciless heat he was set to play against destiny, against a black, hostile destiny that had pursued him through the early years of high pressure and semi-starvation, through long night-wrestlings with complicated, uncongenial, unpractical subjects of study, and through the too cruel tortures of the military service. Two moves! Klara, position: those were the two moves. If he could make them, his Life's Problem was solved: the White had beaten the Black for good and all. He went back to the table and sat before the board. But the heat-demon rose up at him and laid its searing fingers on his brain; his eyes swam in a tide of blood; and the chess pieces came confusedly out of a red mist, monstrous, writhing, and distorted semblances of old Herr Kantor Garsuch, of the Worshipful Schultheiss, of the unctuous, grinning Paul Hiemer, of her Grace of Quedlinburg,—all pressing in between him and a sweet, cooling vision of a girl's face with lips half open. . . .

Now the Worshipful Schultheiss had begun this day from a square of the foulest temper, under the influence of which he had sat down and composed a particularly nasty chess problem for the benefit of the person upon whom he should decide to vent his spite. Then an irritating and pressing business matter had brought the Herr Springer on to a second square of foul temper, and caused him to subtract a white pawn from the problem,—which was thus no problem, but a heartless snare,—and to send it to Herr Heinrich Hesselbarth by the hands of Paul Hiemer. "The fraud is so palpable," said the Herr Springer to himself, "that even a good fool like Hesselbarth cannot be taken in by it; and if he is, then he does not have my recommendation, that's all. We have never had an idiot here at Altpoppendorf, and,

donnerwetter! we are not going to begin now."

But after his siesta and his four o'clock coffee, the Worshipful Schultheiss, springing at a tangent, lit on a benevolent square. He put on his great straw hat and called to his daughter Klara to come with him. They went together down the village street, where the children were languidly resting under dark doorways from the protracted delights of the Long Holidays. The westerling sun was lengthening the shadows, and the tired oxen came lumbering in placidly from the fields. It was a peaceful scene; and down from the Harz stole cool evening air-currents, promising invigorating slumbers to sore-tried mortals.

The Worshipful Schultheiss took his way to the schoolhouse and went up the steps to the door on his toe-tips. He knocked, gently, loud, louder; but no answer came. Then he stealthily turned the handle and peered in. He looked back over his shoulder with a smile and beckoned Klara to come up. They stood together for a moment on the threshold, the little dried-up old man and the fresh young girl. The Assistant-Kantor had fallen across the table with his head upon his arms, the chessboard pushed to one side and the pieces tumbled anyhow on it.

"Hesselbarth," said the Worshipful Schultheiss, pulling off his great straw hat, for the remembrance of the heat of the day came suddenly upon him, "I wanted to explain. It was a little jest, that problem, you know. But, Hesselbarth, Hessel-ba-a-a-r-th!"

There was still no answer. Herr Schmalz smiled again at his daughter, and walked with his Springer action across the room.

"Hesselbarth," he said, standing over the young man and shaking his shoulder, "it was a little joke, I say."

Heinrich Hesselbarth raised his head

slowly and looked at the Worshipful Schultheiss. There was something in the young man's eye that brought home in a flash to Herr Schmalz's mind the execrable taste of the practical joke, even when connected with the noblest of games.

"Little joke, eh?" said Hesselbarth confusedly. "Why then, that is one of your accursed chess humors, I see. And," he added with a startling grimace, "you want my answer. Well, take it."

He jumped to his feet and caught up the chessboard, from which the pieces went flying in a black and white hail all over the room. Herr Schmalz would have fled, but surprise and fright chained him there to the consequences of his little jest. Up and up went the board in the Assistant-Kantor's lean, nervous arms; up and up so high and so long that the Worshipful Schultheiss had time to think of all his sins and to repent of the majority of them. Then it reached its zenith and descended with terrible force and rapidity flat on the Herr Springer's head. The Worshipful Schultheiss went to earth in a heap.

Hesselbarth threw himself down in his chair, shrieking with laughter.

"It looks like one of those Chinese punishments," he gasped, pointing to Herr Schmalz, who was sitting half dazed on the ground with the ruined frame of the chessboard about his neck, and the blood making picturesque little red streaks in his light hair at twenty different points.

"Doesn't it, Klärchen?" asked Heinrich, for she had come in and was kneeling by her father. "You know; you have seen the pictures. Oh, it is . . . it is . . ."

Then suddenly the grim meaning of the situation dawned on his fevered understanding.

"Klärchen, love, what have I done?" he cried.

And lie whimpered weakly.

Bui Herr Schlunax had come to himself—that better self of his that he and his neighbors had somewhat lost sight of for a considerable number of years: such a salutary working had the shock already had on that crease in his character.

“Never mind, Hesselbarth,” he said; “you haven’t hurt me. And it served me right. I was a fool. I won’t remember this, and I promise I will do my best for you in every way.”

And he kept his word.

Some years after this an article appeared in “The Magdeburg Times,” throwing doubt on the Immemorial claims of Altpoppeudorf to the Invention of chess. The anonymous author proceeded to pooh-pooh Altpoppendorf’s chess legend, and advanced one of a different complexion to the following effect:—

In the evening of the day on which that Graf Albrecht von Regenstein, Raubritter, proposed to carry into effect the abduction of her Grace of Quedlinburg, a stranger rode up to the gate of the Castle of Regenstein and asked for an audience with the lord of the stronghold. Introduced into the Raubritter’s presence, he recounted that the fame of his lordship’s prowess at chess had come to his ears, and, being of the mind to try a bout with such a renowned champion of the noble game, he had turned aside from his road in the hope that his lordship would not

disappoint him of a trial of skill. Graf Albrecht was at that season in want of a worthy opponent, for he had been unfortunate enough lately, when in his cups, to hang his chaplain,—the only one of his suite who could bring things even to a draw against him. So the board was laid out, and the Raubritter and the Stranger set to. They played all night; and when the sun rose—her Grace the Abbess being now safe within her walls—the mysterious unknown vanished,—not so quickly, however, but Graf Albrecht had recognized in the strong morning light the grinning and distorted countenance of his late chaplain. And when the attendants came in to their master, his hair was white.

The anonymous writer was refuted with great skill and boldness by the Herr Kantor Heinrich Hesselbarth of Altpoppendorf, son-in-law of his Worship the Herr Schultheiss of Bichinala. The Herr Kantor, who, by the way, is renowned for his skill as a chess-player beyond the bounds of his village,—they say at Altpoppendorf that his wife has made him what he is, and he does not deny it—drove the nameless enemy in disgraceful rout. The history of the discussion is too long to enter into here; but, generally speaking, Herr Hesselbarth showed conclusively that the new-found legend was never drawn from that old volume of which the pages are memories and tradition, and the book-markers the centuries.

Charles Oliver.