



IGBY +

CHES PROFESSOR

—BY—

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Ζατρίκιον

Digby: Chess Professor.

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I.

*The interior of the old Digby mansion in
Hempstead, Long Island. Count
Stephano, of Nice, having ac-
cepted Mr. Digby's chal-
lenge, now sits with
that estimable young
gentleman at the
boards.*

*In which Mr. Digby
insists upon giving a
chapter of the early
history of his illus-
trious house.*

“Yes, Monsieur Count,
I come from a long race
of chess-players — from a
people who swore by the knights, pawns
and castles away back in the classic groves
of Arcady, for aught I know. As for my
immediate recollection, my father and

grand-father were both eligible chessmen, and doubtless, I inherited something of that strange individuality which the phrenologist discourses as serving a capital to that imperial column of the nose — as seated in that predominance between the parted eyebrows which generally in a man of my temperament is strongly marked for life by two furrows running crow-foot-like across the brows, and down thence on either side of the Wellington proboscis Take another cigarette, Count ; they are the best we can do and if not quite up to your education in cigarettes —”

“Ah, Mistair Digby, I beg of you. They are quite acceptable ; no apologies — no apologies —”

“Well, as I was saying, Nature — kind dispenser of patrimonies — snatched for me from the spirit of my forefathers a sufficient amount of that quality which insures success at the chess-board, to make me in love with the game, and perhaps, too — though I would not like to have it forstall your combatant nature with too great a sense of self-possession — to pursue an antagonist with a gallantry worthy

a readier wit than mine. That I play the ancient and mystic knight and pawn with the heat of a lover is all I need say to assure you of my success; for men are rarely for a long period content to encourage accomplishments they have signally failed to acquire proficiency in."

"You air quite correct, I take it, Mistair Digby; quite so. Ze sing I am ze mos' fond of nex' to my chess, and — eh, well, my wife, of course — ze ladees always in ze compliment — is, I may zay, *le duel*. You, I dare zay, Mistair Digby, never fight *le duel* — no? Ah, well, —"

"Only over the chess-board, Count, only over the chess-board."

"Ah, yes, I zee, Mistair Digby. You have *un gran* hobby, as you zay, and I have *un gran* hobby, too. You fight ovair the chess-board, I fight ovair ze field of honair. Both air mos' honor-rable, both *chevaleresque*. *Mais*, Mistair Digby, ef I lose at ze game of chess, having accepted your estimable challenge, will you not accep' mine challenge to fit ze honairable game of *le duel* in ze case zat I lose? — eh? . . . no? Wherefore, Mistair Digby?"

"Because, although the most generous

and obliging of hosts and all that, I do n't propose to work my brains into pulp to conquer you at chess, and then to stand up and abandon my sacred person in the service of a pin-cushion for you to punch full of holes just to satisfy your longings to indulge your hobby, or any reprobate spirit of retaliation which you may harbor against me. I asked you over the briny water, Monsieur Count, to beat me a game of chess—if you can; not to take my scalp back to France with you if you did n't. See? Now let's begin. White or black?"

"I will take ze white — ze white horse our beloved Napoleon rode to ze battle on, sir."

"Look out that you do n't strike your Waterloo, Count, you and your white horse. But let's prelude it with a little of the nectar of Samos; it's a favorite with me. You know in the Island of Samos whenever a child is born to the household, the parents at dead of night bury a huge jar of new wine; when that son or daughter marries twenty years or so later, this wine, the hiding-place of which is unbeknown save to the parents,

is resurrected and placed upon the feast-table. Grand idea, is n't it."

"Indeed, Mistair Digby, I congratulate you."

"Well, this is some of the feast-wine that I purchased there of the luckiest young bridegroom I have met on the two continents as far as — hello!....Well, who is it, Margery?"

"Wan of thim chiss-divils, sir, as comes here —"

"'Chiss-divils' — eh? Well, I like that. Just keep on with that sort of vernacular, and we'll let you go back and kiss the Blarney-stone by the next steamer. Why, the idea!"

"What is zat, Monsieur Digby? She talk so fast I not catch her."

"Oh, a call from one of my friends who meets with us over the boards. I suspect him to be....yes, of course let him in, you stupid impertinent! Do you want to keep my old friends out there in the snow — there! She's gone. She does exasperate me beyond measure....I will present him to you. It's Whigley, probably. Fine fellow, but no chess player. He's the President of our chess club.

Good business head, but not for chess, I am afraid."

"What is ze name of him?"

"Whigley—Morton G. Whigley."

"He is gon', sir."

"Gone, is he? of course he's gone; do n't you know my friends yet? He was n't going to wait out there in the snow for you. What did he want?—leave any message."

"Yis, sir. Ye must kim to the club to-night, sir, to mak' a speech."

"To mak' a speech—eh? Is that all?"

"Yis, sir."

"Ah, Count, that will be a splendid opportunity to meet the members of the Zatrikion Club. All generous, fine fellows."

"Ze what Club?"

"Zatrikion : Greek for chess or rather the corresponding game played in the time of Pericles.... Say Margery, please close that door, will you."

"Yis, sir...."

"No, I do n't mean that. Open it again. Thanks. Now get on the other side of it.... Yes, thanks. Now close it. Thanks.... Stupidest girl in the world,

that Margery is. If I told her to leave the room, she'd fling a chair at me. I have to coax her to do my bidding by making her believe it is the rarest of privileges. One must take human nature as one finds it, filling this one full of buckshot and that one full of wine and honey to insure the identical results. I have been using the wine and honey regime with her for a month ; I think I'll now try the buckshot. No, I have it ? — "

"What haf you, Mistair Digby?"

"The idea !"

"Ze idea of what !"

"Of getting even with Margery. Come ! we will play the game out : if you win, the medal is yours. If I win — "

"Well, what zen ?"

"Then I let you fight *le duel* with Margery."

II.

*The reception rooms of the Zatrikion Club.
Chess-tables at regular intervals. Games
completed, players relaxing noisily.
Bread, cheese and mugs of ale take
the place of chess-boards. Cigars
are passed around amid gen-
eral confusion and with
much hilarity.*

*Wherein Mr. Digby
recites a chapter
from his private
chronicles.*

"THE gentlemen will
please come to order!"

"Smithson says so — it's all alie. Jack-
son can't play chess with Steinwich —
thinks it broke his heart to get beaten
— I hear Williams Junior is insane over
— serves him right ; beastly player — Rob
— rip! — rattle ! — clink bumm ! — "

"The members of the club will please
come to order!"

"Order — order! Solve the problem
yourself — take the bet, Jack, I'll back
— Good game when he's sober, but —
Gone to Liverpool to play — Sizz! —
slap! — rumble! — whack — rubble — "

*"The gentlemen of the Zatrikion Club will
please come to order!"*

“Rap — rapity — tap, tap, tap — And beaten by a woman, too! — Order! — order! — whizz! — wretched ale; this! — Silence! — You can’t checkmate your adversary’s — hi! more cheese here! — Buxton’s sister married a Count — you try it and see — rubble! — rubble! — rubble! pur-r-r-r! tap! — tap! — rapity tap! — tap! — tap! — Order! — order! — order!”

“THE MEMBERS OF THE ZATRIKION CLUB WILL PLEASE COME TO ORDER!”

“Order! — order! — order!”

“Go on, Mr. President.”

“Go, on? why, gentlemen, this is a perfect Bedlam. How think you I can be heard in this roar? If you persist in turning this honorable chess club into a Bacchanalian Saturnalia —”

“‘Bacchanalian Saturnalia’ is good! — Go, on, Mr. President! — You’re out on your classics, Whigley! — Order! — order! —”

“ Why, then, I shall be obliged to resign the honorable eminence to somebody who can wield the gavel like a slugger! ”

“Hear! — hear!”

"I'm no slugger, gentlemen, and I do n't propose to waste my lungs howling you down, nor pounding a hole in this table to call you to order —"

"Oh, do n't get angry, Willie! — now, Willie, do n't! — Silence! — Hush! — order!"

"And if you gentlemen persist in making a *rudis indigesta moles* out of this honorable body —"

"Excellent! — go on, Willie — Silence! — Order!"

"Why then, I would respectfully ask the appropriation committee to consider the advisability of exchanging this gold-mounted, ivory-handled, tears-of-joy-be-sprinkled mallet presented us by the Boston Bèsique Club, for a sledge-hammer and a fog-horn, and hire a new President on a fixed salary to run 'em both!"

"Hear! — hear! Excellent! — go on, Willie! — Hush, silence! —"

"The honorable gentleman whom I have just waxed at a game of chess, who now presides so ably at the cuspidor in the corner, and who persists in hailing me as 'Willie,' will please remember that I preside at the President's chair, and

that the difference in the *locus standi* does not admit of my stepping from my classic pedestal, and administering the touching rebuke which would be quite in keeping with my mood at the present moment—”

“Good!—hear!—hear!”

“Now, gentleman, I propose that this hour after each meeting shall be a sort of general-experience time, and that each in his turn shall give up a sort of private history of his chess-career, his tribulations and his triumphs. Now, gentlemen, I have a list prepared for to-night, and I shall expect each of the five herein named to do us the honor of a little secret bit of history which shall interest us. The president assumes the right to rap down any irrelevancy, any too touching pathos, any improprieties, and all verbiages that may be inflicted upon the honorable assemblage, and no questions asked!”

“Hear!—Hear! Do n't call on me first, Willie! Silence!—order!”

“No; the honorable gentleman in the corner is safe; and the high and noble *prestige* of the Zatrikion Club is also safe as long as that honorable gentleman's

secret history remains undisturbed — ”

“ Hear!—hear!”

“ Now, gentlemen, our esteemed friend and fellow-founder, Mr. Silas John Digby is with us to night, and as he was the first enthusiast of the club, and also by right and title a professor of chess — ”

“ Hear—hear!”

“ I would respectfully ask the honorable member in behalf of the club for a little draught of the vast fund of his personal reminiscence for our general edification and amusement!”

“ Here!—hear! Speech!—Digby!—Speech!—rah!—rah!—rah!— Order!—order!”

“ Mr. President,—Gentlemen of the Zatrikion Club: Our estimable chief and able diplomat in the chair, left word by our stupid—famously stupid—servant-girl this afternoon that I was expected to address you to-night. He left no further particulars nor instructions as to what would be expected of me, nor upon what topics I was to address you. The motives of our Killarney maid of Athens for not even permitting our estimable president to pass the threshold

cannot be divined ; and while rendering an apology in public, I would respectfully beg him and any other of the members of this honorable body who has occasion to call upon me, to be accompanied hereafter by a club, and apply persistence and vigor in its use. Perhaps an audience with him you honor as a co-founder of this estimable body will be vouchsafed him."

"Hear! — hear! Go on Digby."

"But I made one or two fortuitous guesses regarding the requirements of the evening, and ransacked my memory somewhat, to at least honor the estimable gentleman presiding at the highest post of dignity, with a word or two. I had hoped to have the pleasure of presenting to your acquaintance to-night a French Count, of Nice, who answered my challenge in a New York daily, and who came all this way to accept it, but that most worthy and titled exotic has flown to his sunny land again, with laurels which he bore as a tribute from me, and a black eye which was presented him as a tribute by our Kil-larney female fire-eater at the threshold as he departed. The bearing away of the

laurels will be readily explained when I make plain to the patient members of the Club that this splendid-physiqued adversary from Gaul persisted in the conviction that chess was not his *forte*, but that *le duel* was where he was especially at home ; and if I waxed him at my game, he proposed to wax me at his. I thought it advisable to stick to my own game even if I lost ; hence, was it, gentlemen, that I yielded up five straight games to the noble Count, and then unchained my Irish setter and bade her 'do her duty' as the noble Wellington hath said. Thus is it that I am obliged to deprive you of the delight you would experience in the halo of so grand a personage, and rob myself of the honor of presenting him."

"Thanks for the sparing!— More ale, here!— more cheese!— Hi, waiter!— Go on, Digby."

"Gentlemen will please come to order, and allow Mr. Digby to proceed."

"Order!— order! . . ."

"The formality with which our venerated president has called upon me to deliver up the secrets of my heart, rather arraigns upon me the principal of estop-

pel, as they say in law, wherein anything affirmed or denied in the past now becomes void, and I must stand one and apart from my former self, and bid the estimable gentlemen who know me at my own hearthstone to forget that fact, and take all evidences and confessions as irretrievable testimony. And now I would beg the liberty of remonstrating with a few of the honorable gentlemen against a practice which has risen secretly in our genial midst threatening things dire and calamitous, and that is the putting up of money as stakes to the winner of games. I would like to inform the mistaken progenitors of this culpable practice that the Zatrikion Club limits its indulgences to a mug of ale and a cross-cut hunk of cheese with wholesome rye-bread accompaniment, and in nowise is the club or any of its most privileged constituents justified in feeding this young hydra with pap from purses many of which are indeed scant enough now, nor does our constitution admit of any such *addenda* to the scriptural injunction therein established."

"Here! — here! — Good! Digby ; go

on !— Order !— order !— order !”

“ Gambling in the mildest type of indulgence has been odious and offensive to me from a very early age. I never knew until I became of age why my good father was so much averse to my learning the modest and venerable game, of chess. A little incident happened one day in the old country shed where I had taught my mates the to me forbidden game, that I shall never forget. I was playing with my rude implements— kings and castles made out of corn-cobs, queens and knights moulded of putty and plaster— ye fond elements ! what satires— playing with a young companion, allowing him to win all my spare change in order to hold his interest that I might win the change back again if possible, and it was generally quite possible. My father passed at the open window at the moment I was taking in the vulgar stakes, and our eyes met. I shall never forget that look ; gentlemen, I would give my right arm to eradicate from my memory the sad, sad face of my poor father as it stood outlined against the dark clouds of that autumn day ! It was the lesson of my

life. I had insulted my father and I knew it. It was not more than ten days later that I was called to his bedside. He was dying. He put his hand on my childish face as if to recognize me, for the films of death stood between us. I took the oath then and there, though I scarcely understood it, took it, and God be thanked, I have kept it manfully to this day. When I became of age I received an old, mill-dewed, ancient-looking letter addressed to me in the handwriting of my poor, dead father. It was like a message from heaven. It was written on the day of his death, to be opened on my twenty-first birth-day. It told me a true but remarkable tale of his youth when he had won honors over the boards, and not content with mere honors, had lost and won heavily in games for money. Of one man he had won some large sum of money, bankrupting his helpless antagonist and scattering his family in poverty and destitution. With this reckless and ill-begotten gold, my father purchased a diamond necklace which he presented to a very beautiful and worthy woman who bore on her finger his betrothal ring, and

on her heart his betrothal pledge. They loved each other most tenderly, devoutly. One night at a reception she flew to him in alarm, and begged him to unclasp the necklace as it bound her severely. He was unable to do so, and she fell fainting at his feet. She was carried to the open air, and the attempt was made to wrench the clasp apart ; it would not yield. An implement was procured at last, and the necklace broken ; it was too late : she was strangled. This sounds very like a fiction — like a dream. It is not ; it is the truth. The oath my father took and which descended to me, has never been broken, nor will it so long as I have the strength and reason of a man.

So I beg the honorable gentleman who so innocently indulged in this seemingly harmless innovation, to desist. I do not mean this to be a discourteous remonstrance ; it is merely a kindly expostulation, given with a good, warm heart, and I am sure it will be honored.

The painter who paints for stakes, the poet who poetizes for stakes, the preacher who exhorts for stakes — these will never more than daub, and prate, and

talk cant ; they never can nor will produce art, produce poetry, produce scripture, produce manhood !”

“Hear!—hear!.... Order!—Go on, Digby....”

“Now let me proceed to matters a little more conciliatory and — dare I say it—amatory, as well. Like all old bachelors who have passed the meridian of excessive reserve, I have some good love-stories to tell. But let me prelude my confessions by the happy little boast which I know will be generously construed, that before I was twenty I had with somewhat herculean skill cleaned the forty stables of everything in the way of our beloved Zatrikion, including some of the ablest greybeards of the state, including the famous L—— of Vienna, and the still more famous Mr. G—— who came from Liverpool to fight me. It was not until I met that professional from the Danish Court that I lost my laurels, and threw down the medals. He was about three sizes too large an antagonist for me, and I subsided with admirable grace much to the delight of those near and dear to me who began to look upon

this Persian mystery as the curse of my father's days that should descend a double curse upon mine. I was called from Heidelberg by the death of my mother, and settled back in this dear old Long Island village, the place of my birth, now made dear by the holy recollections of my father and mother, and, furthered by my love of quiet and reserve, resolved never to leave it again for any great length of time. The old homestead was now indeed a precious spot. I grew rapturous at my task, increased the library, heightened the artistic qualities of the fartherly old interior by wholesome emendation and addition, and so gradually shifted into the solitary and expensive career of a young bachelor who minds his own business and has his hands quite full. In fact, let me be candid and confidential enough to say that, or at least so I willingly persuaded myself, I had my hands quite over full. I was haunted with the delicious conviction that a pair of tender, shrinking, brave little hands in mine once in a while would relieve me of this burdensome plethora of blood at the heart and business at the brain, and so,

like all young bachelors who are righteously seized of the pretty vision, sharpened up my wits and imagination as to how that ideal world might be realized. But the task took abhorrent proportions as increased the assiduities of my heart. I began to repent and to recant, an experience or two tinging with an ugly quality the bright lights of my ecstatic dream. I think I used the term 'expensive career,' which I wish to respect in speaking of mine, because a man who really wants a wife and has not the courage to seek one, will ever be bribing himself off a little longer with gew-gaws and glittering trinkets, clubs, horses, yachts, Renaissance bric-a-brac, and strawberries and cucumbers in January, in the delusive hope to satisfying a longing which he is not half man enough to publish and pursue with honest and vigorous effort in the right direction. So, gentlemen,—I declare! you are Saint Patience himself—at last, like all young bachelors now suddenly grown an old bachelor, I came to the conclusion that a wife would be the worst acquisition possible; so I contented my vanquished self answering my good, gar-

rulous old house-keeper's inquiries at breakfast as to my predilections for luncheon, at luncheon what my choice might be for dinner, and at dinner what God is willing I should have for breakfast again. Now this is a thing that takes the angelic edge off a bachelor's Elyseum — to be obliged to ram a sort of butter-tester down a man's stomach, twist it around two or three times, and pull it out again, all to ascertain the anticipatory quality of its likes or dislikes for something it is n't going to get for five hours to come. It is very much of the absurdity that we would experience at a play, should the stage manager come down between the forth and fifth acts, approach you personally and say, 'Dear sir, I see you are immensely interested in this play, and in order to hold your patronage I desire to know your wishes : would you like to have the villain with the black mustache and the gold mine get her, drag her to his den and smother her, or are you satisfied to let her marry the parson?' You would be very likely to say, 'Do as you d—n please!' No ; I hold my stomach sacred, inviolable, non-committal. I

do n't intrude any questions upon it myself, and above all I do n't want any outsider to take any liberties that I myself would blush to inflict."

"Hear! — hear! Go on, Digby!"

"But, gentlemen . . . Mr. President, keep your promise to rap me down if I wax prosy or verbose . . . yes, gentlemen, there were two or three other reasons for hanging over the entrance of my castle of indolence and ease an Arab addage, which, could the ladies translate, they would take up arms against me as a libeler and a sacrilegious profaner of their sex; for like an honest, good-natured fellow, quite under-blest perhaps with personal charms and certainly unschooled in the gallant stratagems and affabilities that conquer woman, I fell into many traps.

The first was a widow. Let her be the first of the delinquents on the docket before this critical Inquisition, since she was first in that implacable spot which responds in valentine poetry to the heart of hearts. She was young — about a year my junior, I was assured from what I then honored as a reliable source — a

Washington belle a little cracked in the ring by over-palpitation of the pendulum that swung in a very empty bosom. She was polished, vivacious, captivating of manner, though scarcely original in her skillful coquetry, the keen edges of her gentle devices a trifle nicked from over-use. I had not poured much affection into the flattering breach before venturing my suit. I was accepted. I was surprised beyond measure at her unhesitating consent ; doubtless others in my position had also been. This was delicious. I began methought to live. I went to the city daily, and after the enthusiasm grew to a magnanimous proportion, I went weekly—staying the whole week. I taught her chess—ah, how delightful the task — taught her till she could whip me admirably if I blindfolded myself and played with my back to the boards. This is not impertinence, gentlemen: this is fact. I suddenly became convinced, however, that I was playing the love-game with her as blindly as I had been chess. She had a lawyer: most young widows have. I discovered that whenever he called, she begged me to play a game of

chess. I began to rebel against being blindfolded four hours a day with my back to my beloved and her lawyer, and remonstrated. The lawyer in the case was an old friend of the departed husband ; this is usually fatal. In the midst of my summering hopes on a luscious June morning, I received a pink-crested note whereupon in tears that were very fragrant was inscribed a regret that she had suffered my devotions so long, but that her lawyer had managed, or rather mismanaged, her affairs so admirably, that she concluded to marry him to save her properties. There is only one extenuating clause in this whole history wherein I thank God and the widow for mercy ; that was that she did n't offer to be a sister to me. This was more mercy than I could have prayed for ; and when the sweat of anger had dried, I wept tears of gratitude.

Then, gentleman — ah ! what a relief is it to unburden my full heart upon these once vital matters — then came a maid from the avenue, summering with one of our good neighbors by way of economy I suppose. She was an accomplished young

woman with a stout heart and talents that will not need renumeration here, since she had all that the dictionaries boast of. I flattered her with my whole heart's affection — at least such I supposed it until I discovered that that virtue is seated in the blissful range of the cerebellum, which, in the Digby family is quite flat and discouraging. She made me the usual angelic promises with the usual hesitancies ; simply time-killing till the winter season was all this for her, for me it was simply desperation with a devil's martyrizing accent on the *a*. In the month of September we parted beneath our ancestral elms, and they heard our flowering vows. I loaded her with tears and roses, and bade her adieu. A month later I went to the city to ascertain whether it was sickness, dissolution or an untamed father that prevented replies to my last fourteen billets-doux. She was not at home. I might have known that the ladies are never in in the morning. I called at noon ; not even then. Still I might have known that the ladies are never in at noon, not even to their lovers. I called towards evening. She was not in, and would not be ; so I

went back to my apartments, tore her hair out of my watch-case — (a curdling old bachelor's trick, these blond tresses in the watch-case), and performed the usual ablutionary functions proverbial with sacred and secular affair of this importance, and shook with scrupulous delicacy the dust of her mansion from my feet forever. That evening I went to the Metropolitan Opera with the specific desire of drowning my miseries and belittlements in the classic rhapsodies of the early gods, and during a most trying climax of the opera, was suddenly convinced that I saw a familiar figure in the box opposite. Ah, yes, gentlemen, it was even so. It was none other than my lost love — my pink-bodied, flower-engidled, diamond-braceleted symphony of beauty from the avenue. I forgot the simoon on the stage, forgot myself — aye, forgot the wrongs she had done me — forgot everything of heaven or earth but her. My head was in a fever, and my eyes stung with the strain of the opera-glass through which I caught each familiar feature and the smiles she bestowed — ah, heart-rending realization — upon rapturous Lothario with a vir-

ginal shirt-front and a caustic glance through an eye-glass, who posed distinguishedly at her side. Just before the final thunderbolt of his perspiring highness, the Herr Capelmeister, I stood in the corridor and waited. Anon she came, neck-deep in blushes and swans'-down, and I advanced with timidity that is born of the blood, yet with the temerity that is of the rebellious heart forced into prominence. She recognized me—alas! if I had only spared her the horrors of the moment that stood pictured upon that pretty face as the flush of betrayal mounted to her guilty temples—recognized me, and turned aside. ‘Why!’ said I, now at her side, frantically straining composure, ‘Miss M——, Lucile—hum!....’ She glared at me with most admirable scenic effect, and with a defiant and injured tremble in her curse, she replied :

“Sir, how dare you? I never saw you before in my life!”

I retired to lean up against the chandelier, collocate my stray wits and pinch myself into waking if this be a dream. I felt a cold drop or two rolling down my temples and in the heated midst my

quandaries, felt a rather belligerent tap on the shoulder. I turned about, and was confronted by that admirable counterfeit cockney whom I had seen in her box swinging love's fond incense before the sacred altar that was so lately mine. His teeth were set, and he bore a very filial resemblance to the British lion rampant on gules a little off-tint—a sight that doubtless would have amazed and crushed any but myself, now grown so conveniently fire-proof to surprises even of the most formidable presentation.

“Well?” said I.

“Well!” said he.

“What of it?” said I.

“Do you want anything of me?” said he.

“Yes,” said I. “I think I would like to play you a game of chess.”

“Directly, sir....follow me, sir, h'outside!”

I followed. It was a short game, played in the dark. I gave a policeman two dollars upon his promise to arrest anyone who proposed to interrupt us, and after the game, I gave him two more to take the spectacular cockney, ‘now total

gules ' of a more sanguine red, to his ancestral halls. Ah, who affirms then that the Arab proverb over the port of the Digby mansion, a libel on the exalted sex ?

I came home hating the sight, and charging my lips never to utter the name of woman. I discharged the house-keeper with multitudinous tears, and got a Frenchman. The cook went next, and in her place a camp cook from the Bulgarian frontier ; he knew how to make Spartan black-broth, God bless him ! My female hound with a litter of fine pups went next. Everything feminine threw me into the rabies. I even put trousers on the queens of the chess-board, and named the female planets after the new board of aldermen. I began life anew, organized a modest little chess club that excluded the ladies with masonic scrupulosity, appointed my best friend president and myself his private secretary, so that I would be sure to have all the say. Some one nailed on my door a pompous announcement which regaled me as

DIGBY : CHESS PROFESSOR,

and doubtless the appellation will cling to me long after the card ceases to cling to the door. But never mind that. We used to have grand times in the chess club, always preluding the games with songs, and moistening the *Grand Finale* with something of a spread and the refreshing innuendoes of my grandfather's wine-cellar. But at last the venerable wine-cellar began to show signs of decay, its ribs anon protruding through the un-replenished hulk and saddening me. As the old carcass had thrived on stimulants long enough, I concluded to let it die; and die it did, but alas! so died with it the Digby Chess Club — or at least it became such a burdensome bore to many of the members after the lamentable funeral, that it fell into decline. I attempted to prop it up once or twice by clever devices. We met twice a week and played progressive games for silk hats, canary birds and silver-headed canes — all kindly put up for strife by the president's private secretary — but soon the whole membership, some of the constituents walking the streets of a Sunday afternoon regaled with Knox hats, silver-headed

canes and an ill-sorted patch in the seat of the trousers — became forgetful of the meeting hour, then of the meeting days, and it was not long before I was obliged, to keep from social mortification, to conjure up a happy improvisation called 'chess solitaire.'

But, gentleman, let me thank you for your indulgence, and retire. I have given you as much secret history as I dare give myself, and you should be satisfied. Let me put in a little *addendum*, however, in the shape of an announcement that I have discovered in the obscurities of New York life, a veritable giant in the way of chess. His name I believe to be Dubois. I am making every effort to hunt him out, and if his playing is one half as remarkable as his problems, I shall be able to bestow upon this estimable club the honor of having brought him to notice. Of this, however, I will speak at a later day. I thank you, Mr. President, for your kindness and the gentleman of the club...."

"Mr. Digby, has our thanks in return, and we shall be pleased to further any of his efforts to discover and bring to notice

any superior genius which bears upon the noble science...."

"Hear! — hear!"

III.

*Being a letter from Mr. Digby addressed
to the Editor of the New York
Courier.*

*Wherein Mr. Bigby
laments the decline
of the interest in
chess among the
Courier's readers.*

MY DEAR SIR: Your letter informing me that the chess-puzzles which have been a source of pleasure to me are necessarily crowded out of your estimable columns, is at hand. It is a matter of much regret on my part and doubtless so with that other enthusiast whose puzzles have alternated mine, — Mr. Dubois, whose work is of an excellent character. His problems are so unique and surprising that I am convinced that he is either some professional in disguise, or else he is a giant in obscurity. Now I write to ask you if it be contrary to the etiquette of the

Courier office to give the addresses of its contributors? In other words, may I not with propriety ask for whatever particulars you can furnish in regard to this Mr. Dubois? I trust, in view of the fact that Mr. Dubois and myself have been collaborators in the management of the chess columns, that you will at least grant the privilege of a partner to meet his complement. I remain, sir,

Yours, with respect,

SILAS JOHN DIGBY.

IV.

*Being a reply from the Courier office
despatched by return mail.*

*Which caused the
young gentleman
to pack his trunks
with all haste.*

DEAR SIR: Your letter asking for personal information concerning your collaborator in the chess columns— Mr. Dubois, is before me. Though it be quite contrary to the rules of this office, I feel that in view of our obligations to you, and especially in view of the fact that Mr. Dubois and yourself have been partners, as it were, for a year or two past in this chess column, I can accord you the information desired, feeling sure that the privilege will not be abused. Dubois is the real name, and not the non-de-plume, of the clever gentleman, and his address is 144 Pixley st., New York City.

With many thanks for your kindness and with the hope that when the Courier

is enlarged as it shortly will be, you and Mr. Dubois will renew your interesting problems, I remain sir,

Yours truly,

BING BINGHAMPTON.

Editor N. Y. Courier.

V.

*The drawing room of the Pickwick Club,
New York. Mr. Digby refreshes his
memory and gives a little chronicle
of his assiduous search for and
discovery of the master
chess-player.*

*To all of which a
painter, a poet, a
broker and a pro-
fessional lounge
give ear.*

"But you see, gentlemen, this thing rather palled on my demanding palate, and I went to the sea-shore....no, thank you, Mr. Stockton, I am going to dine shortly, and would rather not indulge. Oh, thank you; I will keep it then till after our coffee and Roquefort. I say, *our* coffee and Roquefort, for I shall

expect you to dine with me, Mr. Stockton. We have not met since the last handshake in the shadows of the Heidelberg tun, and it is no more than right that we should rejoice together this once at least But let me go on. Do you know that I have found one of the giants of the chessmen of the age to-day? Nay; not impossible; it is fact. Found him in the person of a middle-aged gentleman by the name of Dubois; a philosopher, a poet, a linguist, — a *savant*, in fact, in lores hidden and disclosed; but alas! he is —

“What — dead!”

“Dead? — you think no living man could stand up to such a flattering, intellectual measurement. Well, sir, I am to confess that he is on the thitherward track very fast. He is an invalid. I think he has not far to travel before he reaches the verge; but I propose to bring to light what there is left of him; for he is certainly worth keeping afloat on these tidal seas of circumstance which are boisterous enough for many of the hardier of us. Yes, I am going to keep him above the dark waters as long as I can, and I know my efforts will be rewarded.”

"You talk like a chess enthusiast, Mr. Digby."

"Do I ? thank you. That's my meat, food and drink. I adore it, and when I cease adoring it for a time, I reinstate myself much as a soul that is fallen from grace —"

"....What's that young chess fellow's name ? — Rigley ?"

"No, no ; it's Digby —"

"Yes, sir ; it's Digby. You need not speak so low, gentlemen. Although an ugly name, it's an honored one in the annals of my ancestors. The Digbys were all chess-players away back to the gods of the Valhalla whence we emanated, sir, you may be assured. Yes, sir ; Digby's my name, with a strong accent on the *Dig*. When the god Thor—the god of of thunder, you remember—was asked by his son how he might become a good chess-player, the sententious god rose in all his tempestuous splendor and replied, "Dig! by thunder." The young god who became famous throughout the fields of that Dutch Hyperides as a chess-player, having taken the advice of his father, and *dug*, was known ever after by that not

quite delicate, but certainly redeemable appellation. When the offshoots of this family came to America the 'thunder' was dropped as irrelevant, immaterial and incompetent, as they say in law, and simply the illustrious and homely synonym of pluck and perseverance — 'Digby' remains."

"Ah, Silas John, you have the largest imagination of any man I ever met. I have been confronted by many a young offshoot of the Mayflower amaranth and the Virginia oak ; but you are the first man that took upon him the huge presumption of hoisting himself upon the shoulders of the Valhalla gods !"

"Well, never mind that now, Stockton. Let me go on with the story of my discovery. You see it was during one of my mornings at Naragansett pier that there happened into my hands an obscure but since risen little sheet called the *New York Courier*. In the far-off corner of the fourth page there was a chess-puzzle. It was exceedingly clever, and I forthwith delivered up two days and a night in hostage to oblivion in its solution, and sent the correct answer to the

Courier, together with one of my own posers. My problem was commended and promised publication. In due time it appeared, not on the first page interlarding the court news and aldermanic squabbles, but away off in that far-away corner of the fourth page, transplanting the former one that I had solved. Shortly after I received a wittily written letter from the solver of my chess problem, which letter, undated and unlocated, was forwarded me by the editor of the *Courier*. Another puzzle appeared, evidently from the same source, for I solved it with nearly half the effort and by the same intricate methods in which I had now become thoroughly well schooled. I sent the answers, another problem, and a polite note for Mr. Charles Dubois in whom I was growing vastly interested, to the editor of the *Courier*. Thus for four months this chess-flirtation continued between Mr. Dubois and myself, until one day recently a letter from the editor of the *Courier* brought matters to an interesting climax. He regretted that advertising space, etc., crowded upon our clever but conservative little province,

but as it seemed that only Mr. Dubois and myself appreciated the problems, it would be better to cultivate the correspondence, etc. . . . Yours truly, etc. Compliments festooned with hopes that we might meet upon an actual plane of mutual admiration followed, and I hastened to the city from my quiet home in Hempstead."

"And you met your interesting antagonist?"

"Indeed I did. We were all the morning together over the boards, he trying to sound my metaphysics and I trying to sound his science of chess. It was a neat little cottage in rather an obscure quarter of the city, just such a place as one would expect to find some giant buried, where the great, broad, open sky is scarce thatch enough for so splendid a personality, and the bounds of the compass scarce wall enough for so transcendent a mind. At the door I asked my preliminaries of a bright little girl, who, when I begged an audience with the object of my curious veneration, blushed a trifle knowingly at my card, and bade me into a little nook of the homeliest good-cheer where I felt

the perceptible touch of something lovely—spiritually more beautiful to the genuine home-lover than all the awe inspired of the variest Rhine castles. ‘Ah, me!’ said I, as she disappeared with my greetings to her father, ‘if that is Mr. Dubois’ daughter, I am much afraid that chess will be a secondary consideration in my visits.”

“Ah, Digby, coddling your old weaknesses again. What will not a pure, innocent look out of a pair of laughing, blue eyes, make of all your chess-whims—your sciences and your arts?”

“I hardly dare answer what it will or has done with mine, Stockton, to tell the truth. But whose heart could not be won over by such simple, such exquisite refinement of feeling as displayed in that cozy little nook? Surely that was ‘home’ in something sweeter than an emblazoned name, and an empty title.

But soon my sweet little messenger reappeared. A blush or two—ah, that harmless bit of diplomacy gifted of woman!—a little hesitation, just enough to sweeten the first touch of interest, a little embarrassment that I might notice the

changes in her simple apparel made while delivering my card, and I was bidden through a narrow way till we halted before a huge, oak door. She turned about impulsively, and said,

‘Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, I forgot to tell you that my father is quite an invalid, and that he —’.

“But I really heard nothing more, for peering through the opening door, I beheld in the farthest corner of the room the bent form and grave feature of a man perhaps sixty, and yet with a youthfulness about the lower face that proclaimed him of middle-age, pale, emaciated, seated, or rather reclining, in a huge arm-chair at the window. As I approached, he fixed his large, unnaturally bright eyes upon me, his high, pale forehead shining with the lustre of marble as he reclined, and with a shrunken hand outstretched toward me, bade me welcome. I grasped the feverish hand heartily, wasted but a few moments over commonplaces, and forthwith ventured upon the spiriting and racy subject of my mission.

Not many moments did it take to apprise me of the truth that I was talking

to a man of the acutest wit — a mind like a fine gold thread drawn to a high tension, ready to vibrate to the minutest shades of tone in feeling and intellect — that he was a man of deep reason and perhaps high ideals, prostrate in an illness that had already incapacitated and impoverished him. “Now,” thought I, “the chances of being of some use in the world has come at last. This poor bundle of intellect and refinement — this prostrate handful of splendid possibilities shall be lifted up amid the activities of men if my right arm and the skill of science avails. Ah, no ; I have not lived in vain. I shall tear away this veil ; the man shall be free.”

“That was a very laudable resolve, Digby, and certainly inspired by the heroism and beauty of such a guardian goddess as attended you both, you ought not —”

“Tut — tut ! Stockton. Do n’t rush in where I have feared to tread ; do n’t take the genial edge off my happy little romance — for indeed it does seem too true to have my ideals of the master so fully realized — nor make sport of my weaknesses. Let me go on.”

"Yes, yes; I am unkind, Digby. I am interested in your old metaphysical chess-god, though I think I am a little more interested in the daughter. But go on, go on."

"Well, I found by linking fact with fact by a ligament of inference, that my friend Dubois was a scholar; that he pursues some task in metaphysics—death to the saint and sage -- spent fifteen years of his life on a book of exhaustive research, met with certain success, and in the straining after further laurels, overtaxed the body, consuming it in the intense fire of the mind. He was a recognized authority in the little philosophic province of which he was Polestar, but as this province was populated by a dozen or a score of brain-workers like himself, there was little reward pecuniarily for his patient labors. But his splendid discipline has given his mind the keen edge of a flash of fire from the stroke of a cimeter; and though as the world accounts him, he is poor, yet rich indeed is he within."

"But what of her?—what of her?"

"Not so hasty, Stockton. I soon found

that this dear little girl is, however, the one angelic indemnity of his bitter days. I say 'little girl' for indeed she seemed young as seated by her father's side smoothing his soft grey locks, the contrast of her healthful feature antagonized the spirit that seemed to pour out of those sad eyes, bearing the image of death into the heart of a beholder ; but perhaps she is twenty and her father twice her age, though the chasm of years between them seemed twice as wide.

First a burning pity in my heart for the good man's uncommiserated state — a feeling all sympathy all longing to do something godly and bettering for him, then ah ! then a flood of tenderest admiration and applause for the brave, sweet girl with hands clasped about her dear old father's neck, as if her simple, sweet ways could win him back to health, her prayer of love avail before heaven to restore that stricken soldier to the powers and proportions of a man ; for alas ! what vision was this before me ? — hardly a human feature not blotted and overlaid with misery on misery, hardly a thought untinctured by the opiate that

fight pain, — one monster set to fight a greater.

There was a pause. Her face saddened at my look of pity unsuppressed, and the tears came flooding to my eyes. I asked a question or two.

"Yes," he replied tenderly, "since her poor mother died, God only knows what comfort she has been to me —" and then the tearful child pressed her trembling fingers over his lips as if he were telling too much, and with face all crimson, touched her lips to his temples passionately, and then turned her face tremblingly aside. 'Good saints! how beautiful,' said I, 'how beautiful!'

But I called for the chess-boards soon after, making casual reference to his last problem, etc. He looked rather puzzled, but before he could give a command or or interdict mine, the little lady, glad to find something to rally us from the gloom of the moment, brought the boards and placed a little table between us. I drew up; the good man's eyes glistened at sight of the old worn out kings and queens, tumble-down castles and noseless knights, and his bright little daugh-

ter resting at his side with his left hand in her lap, bade us begin.

It was a quick game. To test his strength I let it by me and was soon helpless. Another game. I began to play my points with the strategic self-poise of a military warrior on the field, and the little lady, still holding her father's hand, began moving her lips inadvertently and knitting with revealing severity her pretty open forehead — ah, what would I have given at that moment to have silently smoothed those pretty wrinkles with confession-breathing lips, — but no matter.

That game was mine, and with a heavy reserve force behind it which I had no occasion to tax. The next game was entered upon as if it were a matter of life and death ; the little lady's eyes more intensely fixed upon the field of action each moment and her hands clenching her fathers wasted fingers, often trembling them suspiciously as if there was an understood code of telegraphy between them. And so it was that I began to watch the two more closely than the chessmen as I should. Although the gentleman was deeply interested, his little daughter sat

perfectly crimson with excitement, and this increased my wonder. Why should she enter into the spirit of the game with such profound and proficient enthusiasm? How took she such concerning part in our stratagems? I wondered. At last there came a climax: just a move would ruin me. I was afraid he would make it, and, to test my suspicions, I said calmly, 'Beg pardon, Miss Dubois, may I trouble you for a glass of cool water?'

She seemed perplexed for a moment and complied with a reluctant smile which was quite a triumph for me. She rose and left the room to do the little kindness. I urged the father to play. He did not stir — he preferred to wait. I urged him so earnestly that merely for the sake of drowning my suspicion I suppose, he made one move. He could not very well have made a worse one. I saw at a glance that it was the one thrust self-inflicted in his own side that gave the battle to me. Still I said nothing. The dear little lady returned. I took the glass from her white hands, thanked her tenderly, drank the water I did n't want, and watched her scan the boards as she

took her place at her father's side, and clasped his hands again.

'You have moved !' said she with upturned eyes, addressing her father.

'A good memory,' said I.

'Yes,' said her father assuring her, 'I moved the king's knight's pawn —'

The little enchantress started, dropt the hand she held so tenderly, and sank back in her seat in quite a pet. There was a little sigh of betrayal that caused me to titter in a manner quite undignified, and the father a picture of helpless interrogation, exclaimed,

'Well, what of it ?'

'Move!' she said sententiously, a wave of unmistakable irony passing over that warm face.

The father acted upon her advice and moved : it was unavailing and he recanted, taking the headlong knight back into safer quarters. He made another: this one was worse. He ventured a third with ever-growing caution : even more helpless proved it to him, and he sat back conquered yet not convinced.

'Your last move cut your own throat,' said his daughter with a forgiving look.

But the father, philosopher-like, could not see it ; and the little lady, not desirous of coaching him up to a recognition of his faults and shortcomings before strangers, reserved her discipline."

"Great Cæsar, Digby! And your mighty chess-giant you boast of having discovered, is not a man at all; but this—"

"Hush!—silence! not so loud. Yes, on my first visit to Mr. Dubois, I discovered two things—two very important things to me, and I am not so droll a hypocrite that I can conceal them, even if my bachelor compunctions cry 'wormwood!' First, that the clever little woman at her father's side, holding his hand, sanctioning his clever moves and dictating, in his hesitancy, is the 'Dubois' of chess-fame, and secondly,—lovilest of all conclusions, since I am now become brave enough to bare my secret to your forgiving eyes—secondly, I say, that I was really never so happy in my life as when seated opposite that gentle, fond little vision of delight with only a prosaic old chess-board separating all these leaping affinities,—a chess-board, which, like a bright river that flowed full many a fancy

before our eyes, separated a rapturist from the object of his rapture, in whose great, warm-blue eyes he gazed, gazed, — wondering what would be the end of all this.

But let me not confess too much. Let me not forget that I am as stolid a piece of cranky bachelorhood as the veriest bachelordom can boast. Let me not forget that it was but a few weeks ago that the name of woman threw me into an ironical convulsion only to be soothed by the timely administering of pepsine and solitude, the latter unbroken save by the advent of a new fad from London, or the writing of a devil's Dunciad against the name and fame of the ever-patient fair ones whom I truly, laboriously hated."

"Well, Well ; Digby, this all sounds like fiction — like a fit of insanity from you, you stolid old misogynist.... But come, let's to dinner — why Dig, old boy, your face is as flushed as a —"

"Hush ! — quiet ! say no more about it. It's only a little rush of blood to head, Stock."

"A rush of blood to the *heart*, you mean, Dig. Ah, you reprehensible old

rascal. I have you by the hilt, and I'll cut through the barrier of your celibate reputation with it, too. Hi! I say; how about that Arab proverb that hangs over the lintel of your door, libeling the fair name of woman—eh?"

"Sh—h-h! It's coming down in the spring...."

VI.

Being the transcription of a shorthand ledger written after a morning call upon the obscure chess-giant in Pixley street.

*And thus Silas John
pours forth his re-
sistless musings
with tranquillity and
courage.*

The work of ruin has progressed with an ungloved hand indeed, and the demolition of but a few wonder-dreaming hours reduced an aching heart to a condition of maturity that borders on the antique — as if I were to know no present, no future, — only the past. I called upon Mr. Dubois last evening and found myself so uncontrovertably, irredeemably sunken in the *deliciosa* of love, that life is becoming a piece of flaming, flaring pageantry, myself in the gleaming midst with all about me changing, dissolving, fading, only to give way to new splendors, to new emotions. I came home at ten, and retired at midnight. This morning the sun rose. I thought it had set forever when it went down after that triumphant day; so long was that sweet,

sleepless interval when alternately I reproached myself for my vision-building, and then knelt down, as it were, and kissed the fruit of those visions with a complacent and blessed indulgence. This morning I rallied forth—as the real novelist would insist upon his decorous hero's doing—even as if I had been snatched up to a new planet in the long interval, and now must go forth and seek life among a new people. I went abroad. The very heavens took a new complexion; the very commonplace sights took a new interest upon them all, it verily seemed, and I passed up and down the not yet populous streets before the huge windows glittering with their flattering wares, scanning everything behind the huge panes,—everything that seemed to tint with a new luxury this erotic phantasmagoria going on before my wide, wildered eyes. I looked upon the world as through the smoke of some precious incense swung up to heaven from the deeps of a beautiful soul. With contempt I passed the homely little tailor's window where I had so often tarried to study the caprice of dame Progress and the wanton

limitations of the whimsical trouser; I ignored with utterest waving of grace the windows festooned with heaven-eyed actresses and pectacular skylighted males in half, three-quarters and full face, like the phases of the moon; aye, and with what risen dignity of stature did I pass the window before which I had so often tarried, where guns, and tackle, and woodcock and glass-eyed dogs used to capture my interest and my substantials!—or even where the newest volumes glittered in pompous calf-skins to tempt the lover who takes pride in hailing his old friend in rich cardinal canonicals rather than the cloth of a commoner!—aye, ‘God wot, and so it was,’ now above,—one and apart from them all I stood, and warmly contemplated the moving world as revolving about a new hub, and that one blessed little being who, it seemed, had taken the very imperial reins of heaven and earth in her frail white hands, and drove the very stars into a new orbit. Then how shyly—ah, me! for an old bachelor of my consistent logic—how shyly did I brush up against those huge panes wherein were piled up mountain-

high all the delicate little novations that heightened the substance of my fancy-built Elyseum! And foolishly ardent was my wonder how that *petite* little figure would appear arrayed in this cultured little work of art — this pink-bodied, girlish-draped morning-gown, this soft, mazy lace clinging about the inviolate throat that never gave license to a vulgar voice, this glistening slipper to that shrinking foot, — this diamond bracelet shackling a white wrist, restraining her from heaven whither she might fly back again should the seal be but a moment unclasped — ah, what is the length and depth of an old bachelor's rhapsodies on coming from the selfish, brutal darkness to the hallowed, awakening light! And who wonders that I cried 'Fool — fool!' as I edged up to the gutter-side, back to these teasing, dream-forcing delectables, back to these star-embroidered fancies that borrowed their refulgence from the timid light of her eyes, — aye, crying 'Fool — fool!' forwards, backwards, up and down — anyway but the convincing way, till my outraged bachelor sense subsided again, vanquished by a sublime

vision, a gentler stratagem of fancy, — a sweet, dear little somewhat of heaven that had wound its delicate, beautiful soul around and round my poor, foolish old heart, till tears came to my hot lids in spite of me, rolled off and fell to the pavements where I crushed them in all their simple sincerities beneath my feet in a spasm of self-reproach, and then looked into my heart with wonder that I should dare so cruel a thing ! But I am calmer now ; this posting up of my hot foibles in counting-house frigidity — this putting into clean business English the combustible qualities of my humors, has the proper effect. My thoughts crystallize now into calm, cool, formative compatibility each with the other, my heart has become reconciled to my brain, my erratic imagination to my soberer reason. With a mood of that amplifying quality upon a man, it is not safe for him to walk the streets. I stood gazing into the heavens at one period of my abstraction, when a little street-sweeper approached me with outstretched hand. He wanted a penny : I gave him a dollar. He took it, dropped it in his amazement and de-

light, then turned his face up to mine with a look of commiserating pity that was nothing if not genuine. 'Poor fellow !' he muttered ; ' hopelessly insane ! ' I turned about. There was a flower-girl behind me, arranging her fresh morning wares in the most deliciously tempting array. I bought her out. She stuffed the big basket to overflowing, and I paid her. ' But you just paid me a moment ago, sir,' said she. I looked at her most helplessly. Then I became indignant at myself, but pretended to be so with her. ' Madam,' said I, sternly, ' do you think I am such a fool as to pay you twice for your flowers ? — never ! ' and so I left her with that conviction which after my fierce sally she dared not disclose, while I shied around the first corner I came to for fear she would run after me to convince me of what I was already too sure. I found a messenger-boy to take the flowers to the dear little cottage in Pixley street which had stood before me as a traveller's palm in a desert of thoughts where my cruel thirst was to be quenched. He was a good boy with a trustable sort of a face, one might say, and I coddled him

in rather a fatherly way, much to his content since I interlarded the successive coddlings with substantial current coin, and followed him an avenue or two that he make sure of the direction. He disappeared at last, and while standing with my gaze fixed questioningly in his vanishing direction, I came to the severe conclusion that those flowers were too valuable a parcel of treasure for so inexperienced a youth to carry through the streets alone, so I called a cab and overtook him. 'That package is very valuable,' said I. 'I'll take it myself.'

And take it I did, ye found Fates! wherefore this magnifying of trifles into kingdoms, this amplifying of little details into solemn, magnanimous scriptures?

But let me cease this retrospective, introspective confession of a confirmed amoret who would vindicate his position by appealing to himself in black and white, not to scourge the culpable delinquent with too fierce a vigor, nor take up the prostrate form which has suffered the exacting self-flagellation, and flatter it with soothest of kisses and plaudits.

Let me above all things be consistent in all things — even in love, where consistency and the throbbing heart seem at eternal variance. Let me take up arms to the restoring, not the crushing of my hosanna-like mood — restoring it to the proper bounds of intellectual approval. ‘All mankind loves a lover,’ and all mankind cherishes the little angelic blunders a lover may inflict upon himself and others, forgives his zealous shortcomings, applauds them even, not with malicious satisfaction in watching him writhing under the yoke of self-aggravated bondage, but granting that delicious, passionate enfranchisement from things of human interest and material demand from which a lover naturally prays deliverance while the trance of ecstasy is upon him.

So, with that tranquil, benignant forbearance — that tender clemency with which age judges youth and God judges both — let my mind judge my heart, my reason, my impulse. Would that my mind might once feel that bursting, godlikest ecstasy that only the heart knows! It would judge with more compassionate grace — more tolerant forbearance. And

still, would that my heart could love not less, yet reason more ; it would close the gap betwixt two widely opposing forces antipodal as zenith and nadir, yet walled up in the warm prison-house of a shut and windowless bosom. Query ; will the coming man be a poet, or a philosopher ? — a lover, or a stoic ? — a god, or a behemoth ?

VII.

A French Café in Gotham's 'Little Paris.'

*Luncheon. Tables sparsely yet noisily
occupied by a cosmopolitan crowd of
painters, literators, and general
lovers of ease and a congenial-
ity of ethics, agnostics,
red wine and cig-
arettes.*

Wherein Mr. Digby
discovers his old
friend Stockton in
high dudgeon over
some trivial mis-
adventure.

"WAITER?—*Garçon!* Hi,
there!"

"*Oui, Monsieur; qu' est
que ce que ça, Monsieur?*"

"*Dites a madame qu' elle vienne!* — bring
me the Madam here instantly!"

"*Madam est là!* Vot will ze gentleman
like from her?"

"I want to know why in thunder I
can't get something new here! I come
here day after day, day after day, and it's
the same old story. Now what in thun-
der is that?"

"Zat ees *Pieds de Porcs grille, Mon-
sieur!*"

"Well, what in thunder is Pee-a-d-por-

gril, I 'd like to know?"

"Why, zat ees ze piges feets broiled, Monsieur."

"Why, that is the same stupid thing I had yesterday, you blundering ox, only to-day it's got a different name. That's French all over. The same bill o' fare week in and week out, but a change in the names every day. Now what's that?"

"Zat ees *Ragoût de mouton aux pommes, Monsieur!*"

"Well, what's ragoo-d-mutung or pum? — gimme the United States of it."

"Zat ees ze sheeps in ze potatoes! —"

"Well, bring some of that then — quick! Here — here's a quarter! hurry up, now! . . . beats the Dutch how —"

"Hello, Stock, old boy, you here!"

"Well, I guess so, Digby! Sit down. Here, hang your coat up there where we can keep an eye on it. No telling what these confounded Frenchmen will do with a man's wardrobe if they give a man lamb kidneys for a week under seven different names —"

"What's the matter with you, Stockton? You look put out."

"Put out?—do I, really? Well it's about time. I can't find anything on this bill of fare that I have n't had here fifty times —"

"Yes, Stock, old boy, you are just like hundreds of young American grumblers who go away from here leaving a brimstone and thunder sort of a smell behind them, and then come back again the next day as regularly as the clock punctuates the meal hours, and go through the same thing again."

"Well, I would n't come here at all if it were not for the company."

"To be sure you find a reason, and a good one. They all do. But the secret is, you like good wine, good *Camenbert*, good *Anisette*, good black coffee and a good cigarette, first ; second, you like the company of palates that are schooled in these delicacies as Bohemian-like as your own. You come in, swear at the waiter, give him a quarter, or if he gets it pretty hard, you give him half a dollar. Then you call for the Madam, and put her into a fit because she do n't have pork and beans, brown-bread, succotash and pie ; and yet you would cut the restaurant if she

did. Yes, you are a consistent Frenchman, I must say, Stock."

"Well, you are half right, old boy, I must say. Beats all what a hold these dingy, mussy little restaurants have upon us poor devils. Why, I have paid a cabby four dollars to trot me through a blinding snow-storm from Central Park down here to get a little fifty-cent dinner. Beats all what inconsistent mortals we are, Dig — eh? Well, well; I'm glad to see you anyway. Hi, there! Waiter Gimme some bur-r-r!"

"Qu' est que ce ça, Monsieur."

"Gimme some bur-r-r! Do n't you understand? Some bur-r-r for my pah-h-h... Oh, for heaven's sake, Digby, tell him I want some butter."

"Oh, ze gentilmon would like some buttah? Ah, cairtainly!"

"Hold on waiter! Bring me some glaz for my wine!"

"Some vot?"

"Why, glaz?...no, I do n't mean a glass; I mean la glaz-z-z!"

"Ah-h-h! *la glace* — ice you vunt — eh? Ah, *Oui*. Why ze gentilmon not zay zo?"

"That's a good hit, Stock, why do n't you talk English to him? His English is n't half so vile as your French. That's another American notion of yours; insisting that you must talk French in a French restaurant, and then kicking the waiter because he do n't understand it. That's pretty hard on the waiter, is n't it, now?"

"Well, it is, Dig, to tell the truth; but I'll give him half a dollar when he comes back."

"Yes, that's the way to mend it all. Give him half a dollar. After a while he will get so that when anybody comes in here and do n't swear at him and do n't pay him well for it, he won't be able to get a mouthful. Oh, you'r learning excellently. The trouble is that in learning all these virtues, you are unlearning his. That man will be cursing you through a pair of bars yet!"

"Oh, not so bad as that, I hope; but say: how about your famous chess-prodigy since last night? Called on him, or rather her, to-day?"

"I blush to confess it, Stock, old boy, I have."

"Well, well; things are progressing

admirably. Ah, well ; I may be an execrable Frenchman, Dig, my boy, an abominable Frenchman, but I am a good prognosticator of weather and lovers. God bless me ! the idea of you making a call in the morning upon your *cara santa*. Why, what possessed you to break down the walls of your vigorous, diplomatic notions of etiquette, man ? You old rogue, what care you for your squeamish urbanities of which you have of late so ministerially prattled ? — not a whit. A purist turned a lover — a mannerist made a wooer, God save us ! ”

“ Silence ! good fellow ; not so loud, nor hasty. I can stand your superficial invectives, but would rather not that the world at large drink in and misconstrue them. ”

“ Well, calmly now ; how did it happen ? Tell me the whole circumstance, Silas John, the whole affair. It is growing tremendously interesting, this superb chess-playing, eh ? ”

“ Well, Stockton, you ’r a generous fellow with all your impertinences. I *will* tell you the secret, and tell myself at the same time ; confess to you, my demanding in-

quisitor, and confess to myself at the same moment. I was wandering about the avenue this morning and bought some flowers. I sent a boy with them to Mr. Dubois—

“To whom?”

“To Mr. Dubois. The youth did 'nt get far before I made the wholesome discovery that I had entrusted too valuable a package to so small a lad ; so —”

“So you hailed the boy and took the job away from him, eh ? Well now —”

“That's exactly what I did. I took them myself. I was in a most frightful mood, let me candidly confess — frightfully — eh — delicious, I may say. Yes, sir, my good fellow, I took them to the cottage. She met me at the door. I expected that, you know, yet when we met face to face, for some astounding reason, I was speechless.”

“Ah, a sorry knight —”

“You need not look sceptic, Stockton, I really had n't the courage to greet her ; I simply held out my basket of flowers like a fool and grinned piteously. But anon, I rallied, told her the flowers were for her good father, that bright face so

rosy and radiant the while commanding my timorous mood. Ah, what womanly fortitude and thanksgiving good-cheer leaped from the hidden heart to the disclosing features, it seemed for my especial edification! I was beside myself for words — not to reveal, but to conceal the wonder-drama that lay quivering in my inmost soul. Whether man or fool hitherto, here beside her, in her presence, in the very light of her benignant personality, I had regained my long-lost self ; I was the king, not the coward ; the soldier not the slave ; a doer of deeds, not the mere dreamer of them, — and all was peace and heart's-ease.

The flowers spoke their own sweet language — the language that speaks long after the most eloquent word has faltered, long after the most aspiring speech has cried to heaven and so died — that language dear to all good woman the wide world over. So was it that I kept my lips severely sealed, save perforce a relieving smile or two in response to her look of gratitude ; it became me so much more ably and manfully to maintain silence before that which spake what lips could not.

She was so overjoyed at my little act of thoughtfulness that she nearly dropped the basket of bright, dew-bediamonded roses to the threshold. The big tears stood in her great brown eyes, and I felt incomparably foolish to think I had nothing to say. She turned her face aside as to hide these pretty tokens of a full heart's gratitude, and my stupid trance somewhat broken, I asked in a wildered sort of way after her father.

'Oh, thank you, ever so kindly,' she replied bravely, 'he is ever so much brighter this morning. I think your visit yesterday was a godsend to him. Come ; you must not go, Mr. Digby, please do n't. He will be so glad to see you if only for a moment.' Who could withstand so touching an entreaty? — who, certainly, whose lover's fancy heightened and applauded every word, gesture and intonation of the gentle entreator?"

"Not I, certainly, Mr. Digby, not I! Well, you went in, eh?"

"I went ; by all means, I went. I shook the elderly philosopher's hand as if we had known each other for years. I talked a jovial stream of jocundity I never

thought me capable, till I resembled a volcano ribbed with streams of molten lava — the over-brimming of a seething cup within. It was just that sort of hot wit which is best appreciated at a distance. But, ah, me ! When the exultant Miss Constance brought in that great basket of roses, the old man's eyes widened like a celestial transfiguration ; and with outstretched arms beckoning, he uttered a faint cry of delight, buried his kind, pallid old face in the delicious heap, and when he raised his eyes, they were all tears.

What did I do ? — why, simply looked foolish, as everyone does when a little ingenuous act of good-cheer is done another, for which that other regales the doer with a thousand-fold over-reward in the heartfelt of gratitude of the recipient. I stood staring, half ashamed that so slight and unworthy a remembrance should prompt such mountainous thankfulness as melted those hollow eyes and warmed that inspired countenance till it shone with somewhat celestial, I almost believe. I wonder if there is not a pass of life where the man and the eternal meet —

but never mind the metaphysics. I really believe I got a glimpse into heaven through that old man's face. 'Oh, my dear, good friend,' he burst forth tremulously. 'How can I ever thank you? — how can I ever prove my gratitude —'

'I'll tell you,' said I, with an inspired thought.

'How?' he pleaded.

'By playing me a game of chess,' said I.

"A happy thought, Digby, a happy thought."

"'But 'wait a wee bit,' as the Highlanders say,' said I, professing an ingenious amount of contemplation, 'my clock says eleven thirty. I fear we shall not have time, for I must go back to the club and order the carriage at two. You must take a turn with me in the park. 'Oh, father!' burst forth the exultant little lady with a clapping of hands that proved her still this side the genial flood-tide of girlhood. And ah, Stockton, that resonant little 'Oh, father!' was music to my ears. 'But my good friend,' said the venerable metaphysician with reproving warmth, 'do n't you know that I could not walk to the carriage?' 'Nothing like trying,

sir, as Apollo said when he slew the Nemean lion,' said I, muddling my classics somewhat yet pardonably, 'nothing like trying. Now,' said I, 'Mr. Dubois, I have a footman — Mr. Jim, with a surname Jam, and he's a mighty fellow indeed. He and I shall make a 'chair,' Mr. Dubois — see! just this way — with our clasped hands, just as the school-children do, and we can carry you to the carriage with most gratifying ease, sir. The horses are most gentle — they are my own; brought 'em down from the country Mr. Dubois.... You know I live in the country, that is, a good share of the year,' said I, 'and Jim is the most capable man at arms in all my household. Then in the carriage we'll bolster you up just this way — see! Ah, do n't I know? — well, I ought to,' said I, 'why I've got a St. Bernard dog — fine fellow; bought him at the St. Bernard hospice in Switzerland; huge fellow, he is, blooded to the teeth. He chased a cat; cat ran under the shed; dog followed as far as he could and stayed there till we raised the shed with a hydraulic jack, and let him out with no greater damage than a broken leg or

so. Well, as I was saying, Mr. Dubois,' said I, 'I used to take him driving with me when he was convalescent, and Jim Jam and I bolstered him up, you see, just as we will you —' Some one laughed : it was the dear little lady at my side who had so disconcerted me. I subsided ; no apologies for the unbecoming allusion. Apologies, you know, dear Stockton, generally increase the circulation of the bad currency they would repudiate."

"Yes, I have heard so —"

"No, you have n't. Do n't steal my honors with that reckless abandon. When I let fly an aphorism, do n't consign it to that pergatorial 'heard it before,' when you have n't."

"Talk about aphorisms : did you ever utter an original idea, Digby ? I rather wager not."

"You are half right and half wrong. 'There are no original ideas in our times,' said Aristarchus, and if not in that remote antedeluvian era, why now ? Here is a little poem of mine, written while crossing an east-river ferry-boat. An acquaintance showed me a picture of the globe supported by four pillars. Upon

each pillar was written a symbol : thus on the first 'Wisdom ;' on the second, 'Friendship ;' on the third, 'Prayer ;' on the fourth, 'Faith.' He thought it original, so I wrote him the following little stricture to the contrary :

THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE WORLD.

The Wisdom of the wise,
The Friendship of the true,
The Prayers of lifted eyes,
And the Faith to dare and do !

This seemeth quite original,
But, sir, 'tis far from true ;
I stole it from an Arab,
And he stole it from a Jew.

The Jew had robbed a wily Turk,
The Turk, a Japanee ;
And who shall say the coming man
Shall shrink to plunder me ?

Do n't you see, Stock ? Now let's put the genial *Envoi* as a distinguished sort of caudal accessory, thus,

ENVOI.

This proves that all new thoughts are old,
That all old thoughts are new ;
Plunder the dead ! O classic thief —
(*That I may plunder you !*)

"Very good, Digby, — excellent. But let's not waste too much time in this by-play. What of your proposition to take

your philosopher and more interesting daughter for a drive ? ”

“ Well, I assured him that he would be most comfortably provided for, and that Miss Constance should accompany us to dictate the proper ministering to his comforts. Then we went in for a game of chess. But I don't believe it was a very scientific game that we played, and certainly not a particularly exciting one. All parties concerned seemed severely preoccupied. The old gentleman wondering how in the world he would be able to go from his chair to the carriage and back with no bones dislocated nor ribs tied in a hard knot ; she, possibly wondering in what she would look the sweetest, although if I had dared I would have assured her that nothing ordinarily becoming to one of such refined grace could render her presence anything but rare and precious ; while I still questioned with compulsory diligence what this delightful spasm which gnawed away so pleasantly at my conscious heart, making havoc of every sane stratagem of chess-tactics and strangling every influence not prompted of its sublime and bursting

quality, might yet lead my blind and estranged nature to. But—ho! Waiter, a little more sugar for my coffee, please, and the *Chartreuse*. I declare, Stockton, you are the most patient of mortals. Why, what a splendid lover you would make, being such a patient and indulgent listener to the confessions of an already confirmed one. I declare, you are a prodigy."

"Yes, I half think I am in that direction, Digby.... Yes, bring me some *Camenbert* and pears.... I think seriously of setting myself up in that novel profession."

"Of what, may I ask?"

"Why, a sort of amatorial confessor, do n't you see?—where young lovers can apply, and for a dollar and a half an hour, can unload their burdened bosoms of all their surplus rapture. Why, you've got professional dinner-wits who can be called upon at a moment's notice to make the fourteenth at the table that has the misfortune to have only thirteen guests; you have professors who can black your eyes with two ounce gloves, and other professors to paint them out skilfully. Bureaus where a lover can get advice,

and why not a bureau where lovers can give it. Why, certainly. There's a man around the corner who writes love letters and erotic poetry, and makes a heap of money ; why not establish a bureau where lovers can come, read their lays, and have them wholesomely applauded at sixty cents per plaud — eh ?”

“Yes, Stock, a capital idea. Just such a profession as would fit you, too. Your last remark, however, reminds me of the sententious Barkley — the novelist and wit who sits at that table yonder, watching the skilful curls of his smoke with such distinguished nonchalance. I asked him this morning how his last novel was being received. He replied sententiously, though scarcely with elegance, that throughout the country it was being very liberally discussed — with a strong accent on the *cuss*.”

“Rather good ; I agree with him, having indulged a humor of a like order to my severest satisfaction.... But, I say, Dig, have some coffee? Waiter—*Garçon!* — hi ! Bring us du coffee-nor, a couple of Virginias and a blow pipe !....”

VIII.

*Central Park. Mr. Digby with his
genial chess discoveries taking
an airing.*

*Wherein Silas John
makes an observa-
tion or two perti-
nent rather to love
than to chess.*

"Hi, Jim! — I say; drive on to that little clump of trees out of the general bustle, and let us take a little halt under the green."

"All right, sir!"

"Good fellow, Jim is. Been with us thirty years. Remembers me when I made my *début* upon this ranting all-world stage, Jim does. Yes, Mr. Dubois, I knew it would be an easy thing to prop you up comfortably in this easy carriage. Are n't you quite comfortable? — are n't you enjoying yourself, Mr. Dubois?"

"Ah, my good young man, I cannot tell you with what delight I hail the simplest familiar in nature, — with what joy I contemplate the slightest token. It seems like a sweet dream after my long, long months of frightful apprehensions

and watchings for the last. It seems as if I had become rejuvenated in a single hour by these glad sights and the advent of so generous and God-sent a friend —"

"Oh do n't mention that, I pray, Mr. Dubois, do n't mind about me.... That's right, Jim, this is an excellent spot.... Ah, Mr. Dubois, just look at these overhanging branches! June is the month of months!.... And, Mr. Jam, now for that bottle of veteran port so 'bearded like a pard.' That, Mr. Dubois, is one of the ancient, God-spared, antediluvian spectres of my grandfather's wine-cellar, sir, that is. Ah, you rascal, Jim, you did n't know that I hid that under your seat — eh? — did you? Not a bit of it, or — ah! tut — tut! Careful now. Do n't you know how to handle old port yet? You must n't stand it on its legs; it's too old for that. Let it lie down. Ah, Mr. Dubois, doubtless you know the interminable task it is to dig an ancient, worm-eaten cork out of an old bottle, and will be patient."

"Well, I used to know considerably about a good glass of port in my palmier days, but alas! that's long, long ago,

God bless me !— ages ago when I was a young man and did n't need it. Now I am an old man and do need it, and so, as fates have it in their edict, I must go without."

"You sha' n't go without as long as I know you, Mr. Dubois, be assured."

"God bless you, sir, God bless you!"

"Ah, look at that, Professor, eh ? talk of your 'blushful Hippocrene !' "

"Well, well ; these skinny, tottering old fingers of mine must not offend. 'T is death to spill,— death to the toast."

"Just a drop, Miss Dubois ?"

"O, thank you, no !"

"No ? oh, do n't say that. Why, we are going to touch glasses to your father's health."

"Well, I can't resist that, Mr. Digby. You are ever so kind. Just a drop now, — a wee — wee —"

"With a cautionary accent on the wee, Miss Dubois."

"There ! you have given me a whole glass—"

"God help us, sir ; who ever thought that I would yet be drinking port under the trees of the park ? Ah, I can scarce-

ly—excuse me, Mr. Digby, if I am a little childish—If I can't repress every tear of gratitude that—"

"You will drink many another, Mr. Dubois, be assured. And now, I beg to interpose a toast to the ladies, and—Why, Miss Dubois! what is there in this delicious nectar that should make you sputter and sneeze—"

"Chu-u-u! hem!...yes, it's lovely; but really—though it is truly delectable, I—eh—rather guess papa had better help me out with the rest."

"My child I have always been a kind and indulgent parent: I will not deny your simplest wish; I *will* help you out of this embarrassing task. Besides, the wine is too precious to throw away, and too full of lightning for anything but a non-conducting constitution with a lightning rod attachment—eh? Mr. Digby."

"Just so—just so, Professor. But let me fill it up—"

"There—there!—no—no—"

"Now you don't really mean to interdict me when I fill your glass with something so rosy and radiant, do you?"

"Ah, um!...excellent! delicious!

How invigorating ! Mr. Digby. And right here under the green trees too, my daughter ! God bless us ! what a feast.'

"Well, Jim, I guess you can go on now. Drive up on the Riverside—"

"All right, sir !"

"Now, I am going to give you the little history of the Zatrikion Club, Mr. Dubois."

"Certainly — certainly ! I would be delighted."

"Well the Zatrikion Club was founded in the year of 1883, by . . ."

IX.

*Being a cutting from the 'Hempstead Bugle,'
bearing date June 2.*

*Wherein Mr. Digby's
tender affairs are
discussed with brutal
levity.*

DIGBY. — Our esteemed fellow-townsmen and brilliant bachelor wedded to the noble science of chess, and Past Worthy Patri-

arch of the Zatrikion Club, Mr. Silas John Digby, is at present in New York in search of a marvellous chess-player whose problems have been the astonishment and delight of that learned *coterie* as the puzzles appeared from time to time in the *New York Courier*. Information has not been received at the headquarters of the chess-club, but as Mr. Digby has ordered his carriages, footmen, dogs and a goodly leakage of the old gentleman's wine-cellar to the city, it looks as if his search would be a protracted one. There have been rumors afloat that he has been seen several times in Central Park in company with a long-haired, scholarly-looking old gentleman and a remarkably pretty young girl. There are the severest conjectures regarding the mysterious affair, and many heavy wagers among his loyal friends as to whether his giant chess-player which he promises to introduce to the Club, is the elderly gentleman or the young lady — the heaviest odds however are favoring the latter conviction. The '*Bugle*' may always be relied upon as authoritative in these matters, as well as for information

regarding the pork market, town-lots and scandal, our corps of reporters being versatile and efficient.

X.

*Being a private letter to the President of
the Zatrikion Club, dated New
York, June 7.*

*In which Mr. Digby
righteously protests* DEAR Whigley: I was sent a copy of that scurrilous sheet known as the 'Hempstead Bugle,' in which my love-affairs, of which I confessed to you at length some days ago, are frightfully sausaged up with pork, town-lots and scandal. Cannot something be done to crush this nasty sheet out of existence? Now, say, Whig, old boy, do me a favor. Take a pot of paint and a step-ladder, and about sun-down, while still light enough to see to do the work and still dark enough not to be detected at it, go to the Digby

mansion and paint out that Arab proverb over the lintel of the front door, and substitute this instead :

“ *Sono piu vecchio e piu sapiente.*”

By doing this you will merit my life-long gratitude. This motto denotes such a spiritual change that to return to my dear old home and pass under that Arab stricture again would be unendurable. This is no whim, dear Mort ; it's fact. Don't deny me because you think it capricious....Now say ; another thing. Find Susan, the cook, and bring her back to the Digby mansion ; buy back Pinkey and her pups at any price ; give my Frenchman fifty dollars and a ticket home, and otherwise remove the anti-feminal stigma that has rested upon the house so long. God bless you for this....

Ever yours,

Silas John Digby.

XI.

*Being another clipping from the odious
"Bugle" bearing date
June 11.*

*In which insolence
is heaped upon in-
sult.*

DIGBY. — Our estimable townsman, Mr. Silas John Digby, still remains in New York where the superb climate continues to rejuvenate him. Nothing further has been reported regarding his precious find, and indeed whether his giant turns out to be a Titan or an Amazon, cannot be with surety divined. Mysterious alterations seem to be going on in the Digby mansion, however, under the directorship of Mr. Morton G. Whigley, the genial president of the Zatrikion club and Mr. Digby's right hand coadjutor in all affairs celestial and secular. This dignified gentleman was caught in the undignified act of painting out the strictural Arab adage which for so long has made Mr. Digby famous as a woman-hater, and a new French or Hottentot proverb painted in high vermillion in its stead. It reads :

"Sono piu vecchio e piu sapiente."

Although our able corps of Gallic, Hibernian, Classic, Hodoic and Hebrew translators have spent a sleepless night over the paradoxical line, up to the time of going to press, it is unsolved. It is safe to note, however, that Mr. Digby has undergone a 'change of soul' since his delicious Argonactic Expedition for the chess-giant, and that undoubtedly he is older and wiser.

XII.

Telegram.

Which catches Mr. Whigley in his unnamables at dead of night.

For heavens sake Mort entrap that scurrilous editor of the Bugle into my house unchain Margery and let her avenge me.

SILAS JOHN.

XIII.

Telegram.

*Which catches Mr. Digby at the Pickwick
Club-dinner.*

*Cant do it Margery in jail your French
cook in hospital compound fracture of jaw I
couldnt help it I did the best I could you better
come home*

MORTON G.

XIV.

*Being an extract from Mr. Digby's ledger
of events bearing date, June 18.*

*Wherein an episode
is recorded with Mr.
Digby's warmth of
style at fever heat.*

I am not without a well-
founded suspicion that I
have an undeveloped mine of sentimental
ore in the murky recesses of my nature,

which may require some very cautious and circumspective mining to bring forth, and mint into available currency of the gods. It is so easy to achieve sentimentalism, so difficult to achieve sentiment. One may shrink from the insinuating touches of sentimentalism while it is yet time ; they are from without — they are extrinsic. Sentiment, however, proceeds from within outward ; it can but ennoble, it can but achieve magnanimity. This is all to the proving that the spell under which I now write—somewhat like the Patmos oracle is this precious interpolation of divinity in the complexities of my days — is one of sentiment : true, honest, trustworthy, repudiating the vulgar, renouncing the trivial, anathemizing the unrespecting, the unbelieving.

I think I have neglected to record my musings and reinless Pegasean flights for about ten days—since the morning of our first drive along the dazzling Hudson which like Hunt's 'bright thought threading a dream,' so rejuvenated the elderly philosopher's internal antiquities. Ah, many an obsolete function of that splendid physical ruin was called into action,

and many a dusty, cob-webby pretorium of wit and wisdom in that drooping brain gave forth treasure upon treasure till my heart was made glad, and his precious little daughter's days changed into incarnate, living poems of sunshine and gladness. That was a memorable day indeed. Jim Jam and I with the most airy of tenderness carried the good old man with his great broad head supported on a spindling frame, from the carriage to his huge chair again which spread out its broad arm invitingly as if it had missed the venerable patient whom it had embraced so tenderly these long, long months. Before he could express his gratitude which Miss Constance in her flurry quite forgot to prompt him, he was asleep. I summed up the day's progress in my search for the elective counterpart in the science of chess, by writing a generous note to Mr. Dubois enclosing the rest of that case of rare port — or rather, I enclosed the letter in the case ; the epistolary gratulation was so inflated of good-cheer and vivifying hilarity, I quite forgot which was the larger — and so despatching the courtesy forthwith,

went to the Club for somewhat of repose.

But what are clubs to me?—ye almsgiving Fates!—clubs, banquets, symposia, and all the general *feu-de-joie* of modern social sun-basking?—aye, nothing. I have become a creature of a new sensation, the fulfilment of a new prophecy, the forerunner of a new gospel which for its very limit of sway is made precious indeed. I find myself staring vaguely here and there, contemplating fires and calamities with an abstract disregard becoming a disorganizationist, cutting my best friends on the street, answering questions addressed to others, and standing dumb and impenetrable to those addressed to me. Ah, what a perilous situation for a sane mind! What a unscientific, inartistic, utterly incapacitating condition of cultivated eroticism is this that forces me into places where my bachelor sense rebels most blushing to behold myself, barring my entrance into other delights where my bachelor nature was so wont to find so wholesome a resilience in innocent buffonery, paying for what I did not buy, and buying what I did not pay for till roused out of this submissive

chaos of *deliciosi*, and roused into a keen sense of finance by a policeman hungry for my picture in the shop-lifters' gallery. God save me ! to what will not my dearly beloved chess — this one disorganizing factor of my existence, so lately adored, — yet imperil us all ?

I have thought, and with some pertinent seriousness which could but insure me wholesome results, of writing a sort of modern "*Gesta Romanorum*" on the subject of chess. I think that if the stories I could chronicle from my own fund of experiences could be amplified and given the liberal polish they demand, they might be set up in the handy shelf of *l'incroyable* and the bizarre which in our day is the only literature. Yes, I even think I could divide honors with those shady old monks of the court of Pisa, and make my "*Gesta*" as sprightly and morally taking as those of old. And in my present submissive, undictatorial mood it would be so easy to drop personality and become impersonal, even as I have become accustomed to think, act and have my being in these aromatic vapors as a disembodied soul rather than a walking incarnation of

the science of chess. Strange is it indeed, and strange would it appear on paper, the confession of such a chess-madman as I, one who by these simple, stolid knights, pawns and castles, has become inverted spiritually, and converted physically into an abandoned heap of mincing abstraction, a sort of incongruous anomaly, a moping, intangible nonentity, interpreting existence but in the confounding dream-philosophies of the orientals who love but would their God and their king believe otherwise ; who hate but would the world remain blind to the truth, and so proclaim them loveless, hateless, passionless Buddhists, and that only. But let me not dilate too warmly in the promise. There is but one kind of promise that ever fulfils, and that is the promise to do the second half of a certain task. The first half must be accomplished before the promise, else there are no shoulders upon which to rest the promise upon.

I think that daily for ten days, I have called upon the object of my chess aspirations and her dear father, often in the morning, but more frequently in the after-

noon, crowning the day's brain-work (yes, and heart-work too, if it gives love any pleasure to hear the confession) over the chess-board with a turn in the park. She, my kind old friend's lovable little daughter, daily grows more dexterous in prompting her father to the right move, and each day more adroitly does she divine my schemes, and often anticipate them, encompassing my little handful with such clever intrigue that I conquer, if at all, only by such straining of effort as brings the sweat to the laboring-man's brow. So, with the glowing enthusiasm of a knight of early lore, I bear away the only trophies : the applauding smiles and the gentlest looks of the noble little woman whose warm, innocent ways have never once betrayed the knowledge of the sublime fact which her father and I have long been apprised of, namely — must I confess so much ? — that she is slowly winding her whole generous being about my poor heart deeper and deeper with every intrigue of the block-headed chess-men, and I am vanquished at every pass. So daily with ye lover's stratagem, we entrap and make feudal prisoners of

each other's stray and adventurous pawns and scouting bishops on a midnight escapade, capturing castles on the sodden hearth, or intercepting the warrior knight lost in the woods by his wild jumps in some subtle, far-off corner of the board. Every day with every exercise of vital ingenuity, I tender such little remembrances as I dare to her whose face and features have now become an essential quality in the perspective of my hopeful future, and the true vanishing point of all my perception of things, to which all else seems by nature supreme in function to tend, return and find focus. Each day, too, methinks, the good old philosopher draws me to his side with a firmer confidence, and, in most worthy reciprocation, a more abiding confidence for the scholarly old man of deep, dear thoughts and solemn words, has sprung up in my heart as the days tally often against me the record of the little wooden-headed chessmen, which army of well-thumbed soldiery, I begin to reverence too, as the salvation of my precipitate future. Thus this little season of the heart, tending each day to a surer pur-

pose, I am convinced is the very happiest of my hitherto never really unhappy life. Ah, and the philosopher, too. Think you not that under these new influences fostered into vitality by a goodly inspiration of daily fresh air under the trees of the park and the bone-building qualities of old port, he revives not? Why, in this week or two he is standing erect, the stature of a Titan on those spindling legs which he had almost laid on the shelf like an old done-up beaver which had served his time. Yes, and with the body walking erect, the mind walks erect also; and in the precious intervals between more precious progress in another direction, the grand old man discourses his fine-line reason right and left as in the glory of his early energies—in the assurance of his early ambitions. Every day developes a new scheme which would demand a year to see fulfilled; yet what could be more vitalizing to a wearied, overburdened brain than to steep itself in such luscious phantasms? And so we let him scheme on. We sound each other's logic with clock-work constancy, when not close-mouthed over the chess-

board, and, though we generally disagree, I think that the arguing for the mere argument's sake, welds us firmer than a mutual concurrence of ideas; and, for the sake of gathering gospel fire from his enthusiasm, I maintain negatives when he affirms positives, alternating when the occasion demands, and so keep up the steel and flint fireworks till the little heaven bound up in that tiny cottage, is all aglow with the lightnings of a benignant Jove in a clear and tranquil sky.

But she,—ah, what shall I say of her to be truly revealed of my heart?—I had better say nothing. Nothing said is the best lover's language; and if you take my hand, so, look into my blazing eyes, so, culture yourself in the precious art of mind-reading and heart-interpreting and look into my up-lifted countenance, even so, O unseen deity that presidest at my side and to whom I thus unbosom! I would medicine myself with my own logic and say nothing; and yet, in saying that, say all.

Even at her father's side she sits listening, following our arguments with marveling eyes, and who wonders that under

these heaven-breathing influences I often become translated, transmuted, trans—anything you wish so long as truly transparent to her and you! Who wonders that I often become inspired,—that I often talk of things so far beyond and above me, that this little preaching, dictatorial world lies in the deep dregs of nothingness far beneath me, while I, up, up into the middle zenith, rise to the surface of that enchanted, overflowing cup, and sit sparkling at the brim? What then shall I say of her in whom love created to my eyes this first substantial heaven?—whose very essential being becomes a symbol of something so spiritually beautiful and fragile withal, that the light touch of an angel would tarnish and shatter it, and the breath of a mortal corrupt? What shall I say of her who became the embodiment of some celestial melody, tuning all human-kind in generous unison, startling me at every pass with ever fresher glimpses into a world where divinity itself is the environment of every purpose of aspiring kind? What shall I say of her?—well, nothing more at present....

XV.

The Philosophical Alcove of the Astor Library. Silas John discovers his old friend Stockton buried deep in the metaphysical mysteries of nosology, paleontology, bum-pology and ennui; from which prostrate monotony he is forthwith rescued.

Wherein Silas John renders himself more and more that transparent, interpretable mystic in the lores of love and logic.

“Why, bless my soul! if that is n’t old Stock tied up in a most incontestable knot making eyes at that heap of pre-Socratic quidnuncs!...Hi! Stock, my boy, wake out of that ugly trance! Ghost of Plato! I would n’t suffer the scourge of that fierce brown-study upon my reputation — why, man! Is this the trouble your solving the problems of intellectual liberty gives you? Why, I would n’t twist my parabolic features into that rhomboidal contortion to serve the human family the noblest purpose imaginable. No, sir; I thought chess

with all its amatorial accessories these days, elongated my features quite out of my looking-glass recollection ; but, ye shades of ancestry ! your own mother-in-law wouldn't know you with that face —"

"Well, Digby, when you get through, just ring the bell. I have been living in a tub all the morning —"

"What ! Russian bath-tub ?"

"No ; in a tub along with Diogenes. We've got as far as Smyrna. We're going on to Ephesus and strike over into the interior of Asia Minor by four o'clock. If you have use for me, just ring me down out of these bombastic inflations —"

"Young man, consider yourself rung. Close that book ! Why, look at that blazing face ! Is tubbing it with Diogenes such terribly exciting work as that ? Thank God, I never got that far in my philosophic abandonment. Come ; shut your old cynics up and shelve them. They're out of place in this bright, glowing, God-blessed twentieth century. You're away behind the times. What cares the cherry optimist who lives on Fifth avenue in Gotham for the black-girdled pessimist who lived in a Tub in Stilpo

two thousand years ago? Let 'em alone, I say. Give the gods their due. It is not the poverties and prodigalities of a thousand years ago that the modern philosopher should endeavor to equalize and balance; its the horrors of to-day that must be crushed, the scriptures of to-day that must be published abroad; the love, good-fellowship and republican freedom of government that must be emulated, preached, painted, poetized into modern, living, breathing homily for the betterment of to-day."

"You are quite right, my boy, quite right. But I propose to study the mistakes and amenities of the past. By considering them diligently, I become more capable to rectify and augment those of the present. But here; this is leading off into a discussion. I do n't just feel in the mood for a polemical war at present. I get enough wrangling with these inconsistent old mutual vilifiers and unmutual inconsistencies; let these genial interregnum intervals be filled from a cup of sweeter enchantment. I say; Dig, old boy, since I met you last Saturday at the Club, you have cut me dead on the street

four or five times. Now, that don't dovetail with your present genial mood, I must confess."

"Well, Stockton, I will be candid. I have n't been able to account for half the discrepancies in my every day affairs of late, and would n't account for them if I could. Do n't you know, it kills love to pry too curiously into the psychology of that delicious virtue which is a sort of godlike trust-fund from heaven. What a fool would he be who, in order to find out some secret of sistole and disastole, would cut a hole in his side and pry his ribs apart with a burglar's jimmy just to get a peep at the arcanum. No ; I do n't propose to spoil my future by any such exhaustive research as that. Love is good enough for me without knowing where I caught it or what its antidote is. I'm going to hang on to it as long as God wills."

"That's logic pure and undefiled, Dig, I must applaud you. But say ; you've been treating me most shabbily of late. Do you know you've promised me these three weeks to take me around to Pixley street to meet your venerated chess-giant

and giantess. Now, why have you been so shy about keeping your word ?”

“Glad you spoke, dear fellow, glad you reminded me. Of course you shall meet them. You shall meet them to-night.”

“Where ? — in Pixley street ?”

“No ; at the Metropolitan Opera, Box J, second tier.”

“Ah, getting on excellently are n’t you. Why, when you came to town a month or two ago, the old gentleman was n’t able to sit up ; now he regales himself with one of those brocaded-silk pigeon-holes at the Metropolitan. You must have found for him the pill of immortal rejuvenation — ”

“Not quite. My pills are all liquid. I give him daily doses of fresh air, good company, a hearty hand-shake, and chess ; equal parts, well mixed, and washed down with a goodly quantity of old port from my ancestor’s famous catacombs in Hempstead. Now, who would n’t revive under all that, I would like to ask ?”

“Not a Lazarus, certainly.”

“I do n’t feel particularly elated to-day, Stockton, and I am glad to find you. A very serious conspiracy is about to be developed under my supervision, and I

want a little advice about it. I might as well begin and tell you the whole story."

"Yes, do ; I am delighted to find something to lighten my *ennui*."

"Yes ? Well, Stock, although I do n't just like the idea of my love-affairs being compounded up for an antidote to *ennui*, I will overlook the inadvertence, and make plain to you. We took an earlier drive than usual to-day, and returned to the little cottage in Pixley street to linger over a touch of the 'blushful Hippocrene,' and all that, and as usual to talk Socrates while we thought Ovid."

"Ah, I see ; logic in the head, love at the heart —"

"Do n't interrupt me with your impertinence. My wit do n't need your explanations ; so let me proceed. I had invited the professor and Miss Constance to the German Opera some days ago, and after our drive to-day, I sat there in their company, libretto in hand, giving them a sort of preliminary lecture on the subtle splendors of Tristan and Isolde which they were both in a high fever to enjoy. Well, the cursory lecture done, I called for the chess-boards. Miss Constance

kindly set that inexhaustible dish of game between us, and then left us to ourselves a time. Well, Stock, I must confess that my thoughts were as far removed from chess as Tristan is from the Hindu Pantheon. It was indeed with much nervousness and a general overtoppling of kings, queens and their stately castles that I adjusted the swarthy artilleries in the ranks for war. Suddenly an inspiration, — one of such stupendous proportions that I quite wavered beneath its weight and sank back in the chair, covering my face with my hot hands to think it out. A vision? — yes a score of them, — fair rhapsodies of heaven and earth, of which philosophy and art in all their delicious subtilities, have dreamt not. “What is this?” I murmured, with inconstant feverishness. Then a pause, a determination, and a bold resolve. “Whatever it be, it must out!”

I opened my eyes; the philosopher’s keen glances were upon me. How noble he looked, Stockton! how solemn and reverend in his years, yet inspiring with the most joyous optimism of a boyish heart — two worlds meeting in one prime of

manhood and intellect, only lacking the natural instruments of freedom to rule a world. That sickly vision had long sunk-en away, and health had taken up dominion. Those eyes lost their burden of unnatural fire, and those kindly glances bespoke only the remembrance of things beautiful in his youth and early prime,—only prompting in the heart of the beholder a clear, bright charity—a faith and a liberal courage.”

“You see perfection in those whom you admire, do n't you, Digby?”

“I loved him,—why should I not see all that was perfection in one whom I swore upon my selfish, pardonable faith from the very first, should be my friend—my guardian, yes,—my father? All was plain to me and would have been to anyone better versed in the analysis of human impulse than I, looking too from a point of sight beyond my horizon, and realizing from a criterion without and extraneous to my exalted Eden; but I was so selfish in my happiness that, like all lovers, I would my secret be almost hidden from the object of its fervency, and dwell in a spiritual Elysium one and apart from

the reluctant and unbelieving world.

‘Why do you look at me so earnestly!’ said the venerable theosophist with searching but kindly glances.

‘Did you ever gamble, sir?’ said I with parching lips and throbbing thoughts.

‘Gamble?’ said he most amazedly.

‘Gamble!’ said I with gospel affirmation.

‘Why, sir, what do you mean?’ he interrogated more with eyes than with lips, and evidently puzzled and bewildered more by my stranger looks than strange words.

‘My good friend,’ said I, at last forcing a certain bravery into the stranded hulk of the moment, ‘let me unbosom to you. Some years ago my poor father died. He gambled at chess; he confessed this to me on his very death-bed, and there, sir, even there, I took an oath that I would never gamble at any game, and of all, the game we both so truly loved. I have kept my word till this day, but now —’

‘And you would break it now!’ said he with a look of kindly sympathy and admonishment.

‘Yes,’ said I with a determined frown.
‘I can support this terrible oath no longer ;
I am going to gamble!’

‘Indeed ! — where ? — with whom ?’

‘Here, — with you !’

‘With me ?’

‘With you !’

‘Impossible ! — why, look you ! What have I to stake if I choose to indulge you in your mad caprice — not even —’

‘Ah, sir, you have everything,’ said I.
‘You have all — all ; a treasure beyond price — a jewel surpassing all the world in my poor eyes !’

‘What a madman you are !’ said he, as if retreating from my unsolved glance and crimson face as they were things inexplicable. ‘But, be calm. Tell me, where have I this adorable treasure ?’

‘In your daughter, sir,’ said I, with meekness, yet with somewhat of a gallant’s temerity, not yet daring to look up and meet that mellow but piercing eye, ‘and, sir, believe me truly : I love her !’

The old philosopher dropt back as if I had struck him. A moment’s perplexing pause, and then he contemplated me quietly as if relieved to find that I was sane, and,

perhaps, a little more than sane ; yet he probably thought it would not demand the inspiration of a genius to detect—perhaps too, with assimilating fervency, the adorable points in the gentle make-up of his idolized daughter, and I, over-reluctant sophist that I was, determined not to let him become too thoroughly apprised of that which even so poor a sophist as I might have read upon the lips and ways of another.

I paused ; it seemed to me that all was done, when in reality, the conquest was just heartily begun. I lifted my eyes in one warrantable moment and braved the worst. He was soberly contemplating me with such a look as I had never before seen upon a human face—half love, perhaps—certainly half reproach, and still something beneath and beyond all,—something unintelligible.

Was I then proven the interloper ?— I who was about to prove the benefactor ? Had I really come to rob him instead of adding to his simple treasure-store ?— was I really to tear from his side that which had become a part of him— in fact, all of him worth the record upon

the living tablets of a brave, still aspiring manhood? And still, what were those thoughts of his?"

"That's a difficult though delightfully interesting question, Digby."

"Perhaps those glances were unintelligible even to so wise and introspective a mind as his; perhaps after all that unfathomable factor of his strange look was but love in a truer, deeper guise. That was not for me to divine.

'Perhaps you think you have an interest there already!' said he finally, with the air of a stoical pyrrhonist, still half persuaded.

'Decidedly!' said I with confident affirmation, 'and like the knights of old, sir, we must fight it out.'

'And if you win —'

'If I win? I shall bear her in triumph to my home; and,' I continued, looking him entreatingly yet commandingly in the eyes, 'and you too!'

He laughed hysterically for such a dignified old man, and I echoed it somewhat as by sympathetic nervousness.

'But,' he demanded, with that skeleton finger uppoised, which was an act of

kindly admonishment, 'suppose, sir, that you do n't win?'

'If I do n't win? — well . . . well, to tell the truth, I never thought of that,' said I, retreating with my vanquished thunder.

'And you would that I stake what is already mine?' said he still insisting.

'She is half mine, sir,' said I with premature positiveness, 'half mine already. Come, sir, no more words. Come ; to the game!'

'But halt! one moment . . . ah, she is here,' said he, greeting fondly with lifted eyes the advancing form ; and then construing all to the best motive, he subsided and watched us both with a secret satisfaction perhaps, or a secret disquietude, — for me, I cared little which.

The gentle Miss Constance, all innocence and self-possession, glanced at us both as if in question whether there stood a quarrel between the old gentleman and myself, and studied the wherefore of our agitated countenances with painful diligence.

'Here, daughter,' said the old gentleman with gentle beckoning, and with a levity that was not all levity, 'come, a

game — a very important game.'

The dear little woman glanced at our flushed faces, said nothing— only took her good father's cold hand and sat down by his side.

'Daughter, if I ever played well, I must do so now," said he, which, thus interpreted, meant : if *you* ever played well, etc. And she understood it so well that the solemn query in her mind was only increased.

He looked up, regarding me with exact composure. He saw my hand tremble, my face drawn up into a contortion of seriousness beyond the ordinary weight of interest in a chess game, and construed from my looks the truth that my mind was everywhere at once.

There was consequently a merry twinkle in his eye, occasioned by no slight conviction. He saw more than I did : he saw and realized that a man in such a fever of devotion and anxiety was no chess-player, and that the stake was large enough to topple this serene warrior complacency and make a sorry craven of me at the crisis. Had I seen this, I would have postponed the bombardment

of that fair citadel, and tried to bribe my way into the back window.

But, we played.

I dared not lift my eyes. The only glimpse I enjoyed of the outside world was the studied hand of the old gentleman cautiously on the aggressive, then on the defensive, then neither, then both, transporting whole kingdoms with their ecclesiastics and castles from one end of the board to the other at the dictation of a calm little providence who held his hand and gave him the readiest anchorage. Oh, if I could only have taken hold of her other hand! Once, just as I was beginning to crush down this infectious nervousness which was yet to be my ruin, she bent so low—did she do this purposely, or by accident?—so low and interestedly did she bend forward to the chess-board, that I felt her breath on my hot forehead! That breath was the extinguisher of every lamp of reason, setting fire to the old altar-flame, and all was in such a whirl again. I thought my heart's beat must be audible in the next room. They had chosen white—typical of wedding veils and the triumph

which I wanted myself. That choice left me the black, — death, defeat : perdition. Who could play a love game in a black and odious cowl, let me demand ?”

“Not the most rapturous St. Simon in the talons of such a star-trailing young eaglet, I venture, Digby.”

“Oh, if I could only have told her by a secret code of lover’s unworded language that she was ruining her prospects for life, — that she was playing against the very Fates who would defend her, unproping her very heaven — and, alas! mine too ! But at any rate, here is the record of the game. I remembered it — indeed being so severely schooled in every vital move, how could I readily forget it.’

“You have a remarkable memory, Dig, if you recalled this ugly-looking scrawl.”

“Not at all. You present a piece of music to a good musician, he will hum it over and give you an opinion of it instantly. You hand me the record of a game, I can play it over on the boards in my mind much as the musician on his imaginary piano. See ! here it begins: usual Pawn to King’s 4th, Knight to K B’s 3d,

to my Knight to Q. B's 3rd, see! Now follows the tussle :

3. K B to Q B's 4th.
3. K B to Q B's 4th.
4. P to Q Kt's 4th.
4. B took Kt P.
5. P to Q B's 3rd.
5. B to Q B's 4th.
6. Castles.
6. Kt to K B's 3rd.
7. P to Q's 4th.
7. P took P.
8. P took P.
8. B to Q Kt's 3rd.
9. Q B to R's 3rd.
9. P to Q's 3rd.
10. P to K's 5th.
10. Kt to K's 5th.
11. R to K's sq.
11. P to Q's 4th.
12. K B to Q Kt's 5th.
12. Q B to K Kt's 5th.
13. Q R to Q B's sq.
13. Q to Q's 2nd.
14. Q to Q R's 4th.
14. B took Kt.
15. R took Q Kt.
15. Castles (Q R).

16. P to K's 6th.

16. P took P.

17. R took B.

“ Ah, Stockton, you think these are most prosy, apathetic-looking scrawls, do n't you? You have not a prophet's eye — no, not even a lover's. You do n't read the tragedy that lies written in the harrowing steganography of a leaping heart — eh? Who could chronicle the plighted moments bridging these intervals, with anything of their proper horror to me and their proper exultation to the old philosopher opposite? Look at the last move! Why, man, that means the fall of Jericho — the plunder of Rome — the sacking of Nineveh. Nor indeed then is the story half told. It is needless to say, too, that with this last stroke of utterest subjugation, the good old man fairly burst forth in one spectacular explosion of triumph and tribute. White had won; the bridal white I had so coveted, was someone's else: that black Afric cowl of solitude and perpetual celibacy alone was mine. I put it on manfully, submissively; but it did not fit nor become me. I dropt back into my seat dismayed; and,

as if to pique me in my hardship, the old man bent over and gathered his bewildered daughter to his heart, fairly screaming with delight. I did not scream. The game was lost, — the precious stake was not mine. Think of it! I had done two desperate deeds quite my ruin, either of which would have suckled remorse enough in a weaker lover, to hurl him into that famous bramble-bush head foremost. I had broken my oath, I had lost the chaplet. Who wonders at my turning away disheartened?"

"But what of her? — how did she take this all?"

"She? — ah, she could not understand it at all. What wonder-wording question — what reality of giant import was involved in the simple game? That exasperatingly cool telegraphy of hers had ruined me.

'But what may all this mean?' she implored of either of us. 'How strangely jubilant over a simple game of chess.' This last was, as may be supposed, addressed to her father and not to me.

'Well,' said he with sobering exactness, 'to tell the truth, my dear, I believe in

the pre-existence of the astral soul, and he does not. I told him that we might settle the controversy by a game, — so we did."

It was rather a weakling put-off, and served wide indeed of its purpose.

'But I don't see as that settles it!' said she, with a sceptical glance that stung me to repentance.

'No? — well enough for the present, perhaps,' said he indulgently.

But she was not to be so compromised. Neither was I, for that matter. Consequently, both in an equal frame of dissatisfaction, I resolved to form a secret conspiracy. I did a great deal of hard thinking in the next few moments, but roused myself sufficiently to escape detection at the will of the genial old man who began, unsolicited quite, to pity me. Then starting to my feet, I shook hands as recklessly all around as men do when desperation drives them to expediences impossible to the guessing of the gods, and, with a promise to return at seven thirty, I departed, and soon stood in the clear thankful air, driving my conspiracies into mettlesome readiness for action."

"But what is this conspiracy against the old gentleman? You have n't elucidated matters very thoroughly as yet. You only mystify me with your threats; you do not enlighten me."

"Very well, Stock, I will enlighten you at the opera to-night. I have use for you there. You must render me what assistance you can. Everything in readiness, the thunderbolt will fall. Be on hand now — ye saints ! why, there goes the ominous three bells. Time for the library to close. Come; go down the avenue with me to the Pickwick. I am going to sup lightly there to-night. I want my head clear, and 'to fire the brain, starve the body,' as the ancients say."

"You're, a mystery, Digby, verily."

XVI.

*In the corridor of the Metropolitan. Mr.
Digby on the lookout for his friend
Stockton whom he proposes to
intercede and coach up
in his expedient ere
he pass the thresh-
old of Box J.*

*Mr. Digby relates
his initiatory tri-
umphs and proceeds
to undertones and
whispers.*

"Ho ! Stockton. A word
with you."

"Well, well Digby ; I
thought you would be in your box by
this time—"

"Coffin ?—"

"No ; Box J, where you invited me.
If the box had been your coffin, I should
not have consented so willingly."

"It's going to be my coffin or my
throne to-night ; one or the other, that is
sure, Stock, my boy ; and you must help
me too."

"Where are your precious charges.
Are they not here yet ?"

"Certainly. They are comfortably

pigeon-holed up there....Here, come here ; Stock. You can get a glimpse of her. Here ; see ! sixth box from the end. That *petite* little figure half hidden in the damask curtains, my boy, —”

“Hush ! not so enthusiastic right here. Let’s step back into the corridor....Now go on ; tell me why you waited for me here.”

“Simply to tell you that between the third and fourth act I want you to take the old gentleman for a promenade in the corridor. He will say he is scarcely strong enough and all that, but take no excuses ; simply help him out of the box and keep him out till the curtain rises again.”

“Well, that’s a rather a subsidiary part I am to take in this important drama, seems to me. Then I must take your good shepherd out into the wilderness while you conspire with the lambs, eh ? Well, I like that notion. This amorous conspiracy has developed most adequately in the plastic perspective of your imagination, I must say, Dig. But I forgive you. Go on ; what else ?”

“Nothing ; in doing that, you do all.”

“Where did you go when we parted at the Square after dinner?”

“Directly to Pixley street. I found the old gentleman and Miss Constance in welcome readiness. I deposited a goodly armful of roses in my dear lady's lap — or rather, I may say, some one's else dear lady's lap, Stock, — she smiled and gave me another one of those suppressed looks of gratefulness which heretofore have made such a fool of me on these tender occasions, unless, I may say, unless love itself has not capped the supremest superlative in that direction. Then I shook the old gentleman's hand, exchanged twinkles—for I twinkled now under the pressure of my newly compounded strategy, though I must say, Stock, my boy, his was the merrier, more confident twinkle of the two—”

“Well, then you came here direct?”

“Yes, the old gentleman took my arm, and I led him dutifully to the carriage where we found our classic Jim Jam in readiness. I felt like asking the old philosopher with solemn deference what he would do for that arm when I was gone ; but assured by somewhat of youth-

ful confidence that that arm was n't going, I refrained, and so spared him the apoc-
alyptical tear which might or might not
have been my reward. Yes, Stock, all
goes merry as the popped dreams of the
troubadour. With the opening strains of
Tristan — you know how inexpressibly
full of melody and warmth they are —
the good old man fairly swayed back
and forth like a dervish to the spell of
those fervid cadences, and the tears stood
in the pale wrinkles like great jewels, in
my eyes outsparkling all the bedia-
monded pomps of the parading world
about us. Scarcely a word has passed
his lips. He seems oblivious to human
condition, utterly. He has become ethe-
realized — beyond all human presences.
With this, I need not say I was more than
pleased, since it gave me ample oppor-
tunity to prelude my conspiracy with
Miss Constance without his keen cogni-
zance. At the end of the first act I
thought I would come out and intercept
you."

"I am glad you did.... Hello! I say ;
the second act is over. May we not go
up now ?"

"With pleasure. . . How are you, Fipps ? Glad to see you out again ! . . ."

"Where has that fellow been — in Sing Sing ?"

"No ; in debt, mostly. That 's Fipps ; do n't you know Fipps ? No ; I congratulated him on being out of the Turkish Baths where I met him yesterday. His creditors chased him up till he thought the best way to elude them was to take a Turkish bath. He took one and was about twenty four hours taking it, one of his creditors having climbed over the partition, clothed his nudity in Fipps' broadcloth, and left the estimable gentleman to grow thin in that ungodly hot oven. He was half parboiled when I saw him . . . But here we are ; remember now. After the next act you take the old gentleman for a walk, eh ? . . ."

XVII.

*Box J, Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Dubois
and Mr. Stockton at ease on the right,
Miss Constance and Silas John
half concealed behind the tap-
estries on the left.*

Wherein Mr. Stockton proves an able coadjutor in the amatorial conspiracy, and sustains the dignity of the Grand Finale.

"YES, Mr. Dubois, it gives me unbounded pleasure, I can assure you, to greet the friend who has been so amiable a helper to my friend and school-mate, Mr. Digby. He has told me much about you — in fact, he has made me acquainted with some of your history and your remarkable chess exploits, since I am so much an enthusiast in that direction."

"Well, Mr. Stockton, I must confess that whatever your pleasure may be, it is quite incomparable to mine upon greeting so good a friend of one who has been the very saving of me, I may say, who has been the very light of my dark, uncertain steps these many months. I was

already on the highroad to that dark Unknown many, many leagues I may say indeed, sir, when rescued and snatched back to life and health by our mutual friend, God bless him ! And it gives me a double delight, I assure you, to meet you over so entrancing a feast as is progressing before us. Are you not a musician, Mr. Stockton ?”

“In worship — not in theory ; at heart — not intellect. I have a most acute ear to all inflictions, and a most sympathetic ear to all harmonies. Music is my heaven — not my Elyseum ; my passion — not my palæstra. I do n't want to be put to school by a piece of music ; I want it to speak to me a language of the intuitions — a language beyond words, beyond synthesis, beyond trifling. Music is my angel ; not my goddess—if that may be construed rightly, Mr. Dubois.”

“I think I do understand you, Mr. Stockton, and quite agree with you too. A man that strides the earth on these starry stilts of abstraction, familiar with all notional and abstruse principles whereof the philosophers fume so majestically, can find in music just that one desidera-

tum that completes the circumference of his intellectual circle. We don't think enough, Mr. Stockton, considering spiritually, yet we think too much, considering organically. Our books must think for us, our sermons think for us, our dramas think for us, our arts think for us. These should not think for us; they should force and inspire our own thought. Music of this kind is like an exquisite poem of every line of which we are given the first and last words and the proper punctuation. We are bidden to fill in the delicious blank ourselves; and to the fertile imagination this is delightful. A man will find a hundred times the excitement in discovering a new thought in himself than in another. This is the proper theory. Such music forces images and symbols upon us; the tangible is of our own creation in its spirit."

"Ah, they have begun again. Let me look at the libretto. Third act. Delightful strain that was! Heavens! think of the mind that could conceive such a celestial combination of chords. By the way. What do you think of Schopenhauer's theory of affinities in *harmonia*? "

"I do n't know, I 'm sure."

"Rather hair-lined in its *finesse*, I say. Friend Digby tells me you are a staunch Kantian, Mr. Dubois; now I would like to know a thing or two about phenomena and noumena, if you please. Have you any decided opinions on the Amphiboly of Reflection?"

"I have."

"Thanks · I am delighted. Kant's synthesis of Right and Wrong I do n't quite concur with."

"No?"

"No; the ancient moralists seemed to know more about it. Under the cardinal virtue of Justice, they included Benevolence. Now what is your opinion of Kant's inductions with regard to right and wrong?"

"Well, I do n't know exactly what you are talking about, Mr. Stockton, but my opinion of right and wrong is, that it would be very wrong indeed for us to break in upon this divine spell of music with any vulgar polemics that can better be dispensed with in our laboratories."

.... "No, Dig, its no use; he wo n't stir. He is simply oblivionized in that

devout rhapsody. I can't rouse him."

"Let him alone. You don't expect a poet to descend out of his celestial abstraction and give you a barn-yard lyric whenever you call upon him, do you? Let him alone. When the act is over, take him out and pump him dry of his wit, if you must; but as long as he is here, his heaven of dreams should be sacred to you.... Yes, Miss Dubois, — Constance — thank you! You were ever so good to allow me to call you Miss Constance. It's an adorable name.... See! your poor father seems to be embalmed in some speechless wonder-trance. Yes; Stock's a good fellow, but a trifle inquisitorial at times. You will like him immensely when you know him better. Ah, the scene is drawing to a close, Miss Constance. Delightful! what an outburst of melody. Enthusiasm?—did you ever see such enthusiasm in your life Miss Dubois?"

"It is all, all most wonderful to me. I do n't know what to say. I never looked upon nor heard such loveliness before. It is all beyond my conception — beyond all my dreams. This was so good of you —

so — so very good of you, Mr. Digby —”

“Hush! you will wake your father. See him sway back and forth to those fervent melodies as if his soul were on fire. Now comes the final thunderbolt, and the act is done. God! what music is this.... Now, now! Stock, wake up, you sorry sluggard, go to your task!.... Professor! Mr. Stockton will take you down into the *salon* and show you some works of art down there, if you would like the change.”

“Oh, Mr. Stockton is very kind. Nothing would please me better. Just take my hand, Mr. Digby, please, till I get firmly pinioned on these fragile stilts.... Ah, thank you kindly, sir. Now, Mr Stockton, your arm. Thank you, sir; you are very kind. Pardon my interrupting your observation a few moments ago. What were you saying about my German philosopher? Ah, yes; I remember. Well, my theory in regard to....”

“Yes, his ‘theory in regard to,’ thank heaven! he and Stock can fight out their exegetical binomials in the corridors. Ah, Miss Constance, your dear father has been almost in the ‘happy valley’ to-night,

has he not? What a wonderful old Atlantis-builder he is! How music does overwhelm him!"

"You are so good, Mr. Digby. You have filled his dark cup with sunshine again by your generous thoughtfulness. I think that I was never so happy,—no, never as I have been in these last few weeks since father's old-time geniality and good cheer have come back to him. I do n't know ; there at one time I gave up hope. I never expected to see the light return to those dear eyes, and the sunshine thaw away the frosts of death that gathered about that noble face ; but it has come at last ; and for all this — for all this, Mr. Digby, we are to thank —"

"Do n't say that, Miss Dubois — Constance — my good friend, do n't speak of me. One look into your dear father's face repays — but never mind your father now, Miss Constance—beg pardon, I mean that I have another matter on hand which that may make room for in the cramped space of these few moments. I mean, Miss—Constance, I mean, I have have a conspiracy on my hands ; a very serious conspiracy in which I demand

your whole, undivided assistance — ”

“ A what ? ”

“ A — well, a sort of new found medicine for your good father, Miss Constance. It's a veritable wonder-worker. Its curative qualities simply overleap anything in the market. Do I talk like a patent-medicine canvasser ? — Well I do n't want to be taken for one. But will you give it to him if I prescribe it ? ”

“ Certainly, Mr. Digby, certainly, if you — ”

“ . . . God save me ! Those great, brown eyes will tear the heart out of my courage yet . . . Did your father tell you that we were gambling to-day, Miss — ch, Constance ? ”

“ Gambling ? ”

“ Gambling ! — aye, verily. You need not start so ; it is not so horrible a crime — unless, of course, you lose ; well, I lost.”

“ How strangely you talk, Mr. Digby. I have . . . really, I have scarcely understood a word you have been saying.”

“ Oh, do n't say that, please do n't. That's unkind of you, Miss Constance, so unkind . . . Great God ! how shall I

go on? I wish Stock and the old gentleman would come to the rescue....No, do n't say you do n't understand me, Miss Constance, I beg of you. You *must* understand me, by this time. You must know that I — that I think all the blessed world of — yes, that I love —”

“Who? Papa!”

“Yes; yes, your papa. God only knows how much. And now....that's a poser, ye saints!....Yes, Miss Constance, I *do* love him; and I am going to take him to my country home, Miss Constance, and — and he is going to live there too. See....oh, please do n't look so surprised and disappointed. I did n't mean to....God bless me, no.”

“Why, Mr. Digby —”

“Oh, do n't be frightened, I beg of you. Draw the tapestry a little further. I thought your father had told you all about this, my dear Miss Constance, I certainly did; and he certainly would have, had he known anything about it....Heaven shield me!.... Yes; you see it's this way, Miss Dubois, it's this way. I have a dear old country home near the sea, Constance — Miss Dubois, do n't you see? Beautiful gardens,

and deep, solitary woods, with flowers, and birds, and huge elms, and ten dogs, and a hot-house and a monkey. Do I amuse you? Ah, that's a blessed relief, thank God! When the tears came to your eyes a moment ago, I thought I had frightened you; but no matter. Yes, I have them all, together with a huge library, Miss Constance, the best of servants, a cellar full of that old port, and God knows what not. Now I do n't want to be selfish all my days; I do n't want to be a small-hearted, belittled old bach — old crabby, don't you see? so I am going to make him share this all with me. You see, do n't you? — God! no; I am afraid she does n't see."

"How strangely you talk, Mr. Digby."

"Do n't say that, please. Yes, your good father is going to my old country home to enjoy all this with — with you — you and me!"

"With what?"

"With you and me, or me and you, just as you like. Do n't you see? — that is just what we were gambling about: whether it was to be with you and me, or with me and — nonsense! why do I with-

hold from you the truth any longer? This is all prattling child's-play to the great, godlike truth, Miss Constance,—that I love you, and with all my poor heart; and all these things whereof I have told you, are yours — are yours if you will only take the poor, unworthy creature that I am, thrown in. Now that do n't frighten you, does it, Miss Constance. Say that you are n't frightened — that you are n't surprised."

"Well, Mr. Digby, I — I do n't hardly know, to tell the truth, whether I am alive enough — enough by this time to be — to be frightened or not!"

"Why, look into my eyes; am I not calm? Am I not — you sweet, innocent, brave little woman; who could help loving you? Now, let me learn more of you. Let me be your companion — your friend of friends — your everything on earth, and learn more and more of your dear self, even as I have studied you and your gentle ways day after day for these long, sweet months; and may you confirm all that I have so devoutly learned, for you have proven beyond all the world beautiful at heart, and proven too that I

am yours forever — forever ! ”

“ . . . Unless the doctrine of the absolute consubstantiality of God and nature, Mr. Stockton, is proven in the premises, and the — why, my daughter ! you — you frighten me. What has happened ? Why, your face is crimson — your eyes all tears — your — ”

“ Father ! ”

“ Bless my soul ! Digby ; is this your doing ? ”

“ I do n't know, Professor. God save us ! I only know it's done ; I do n't know who did it. ”

“ Sit down — sit down ! the curtain's up ; the music has begin, — sit down, Digby, you madman ! sit down — ”

“ Stock ! — shake ! . . . ”

THE END.