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THE SOLVING OF SUI-MAT.

A Tale Suggested by George Meredith's "Shaving of Shagpat."

IN the first year of the Caliphate of Abu-Bekar, there dwelt in the land of Yemama one Rigi, the Lover of the Beautiful, a noble youth, tall and stately as the palm trees in Elkura. And lo! he was a player of the Chess, master of gambits and the subtleties of sacrifices. Had he not beaten Ramhoemuz and Chalibar? And their fame is known beyond the Tigris; yea, even in Shiraz. But Rigi remembered the words of the poet, where he saith:—

"He who truly would be lord
Must go afar, and learn abroad."

So he undertook a journey beyond the Desert of Nafud, verily planning to study with the masters in Bagdad. For is it not written:—

"The greatest of all in Arabia are
Who frequent the tables at Simsoon's Bazaar."

And on the thirteenth day of his journey it happened that he had been without water for four days, and he was exceeding thirsty, and the sands danced before his eyes, and the fantastic colours of the sunset caused him strange imaginings: illusions of lakes, mountains with running brooks; and a fountain fairer than the fountain of Quizz danced on before him, ever just beyond his reach. Wah! his tongue was as dry as nutmeg and his eyes started from their sockets with his thirst. When the sun had set he beheld in the very path of the sun a stately building with domes, minarets and fair courts, and this he knew to be no illusion, for doth not the poet say:

"Though much is false, yet in the end
We come on truth as on a friend."

So Rigi, Lover of the Beautiful, stumbled on to the very door of the dwelling, and over the door was written: "The Palace of Rukanpur ben Sindri, Who Lieth Enchanted by the Wiles of the Genie Sui-mat," and below, upon a panel of the great door, were encarven the words of the poet Abu Dhabe, where he saith:—

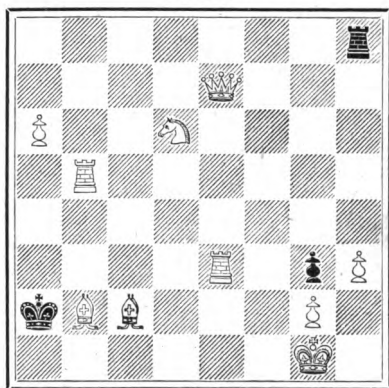
"Ye who enter through this gate,
Failing Rukanpur to liberate,
Must bend your head to meet your fate."

But hesitation was not in Rigi, and he smote upon the door, which yielded upon its brazen hinges and admitted him, nothing loth, into the vast corridors, with chambers and courts opening from them—truly a miracle of the builder's art. Yet all was still and enchanted, and the attendants slept at their posts with the sleep of enchantment—dwarfs and servants and slaves. Then Rigi followed through the mazes of the corridors, until they brought him to the innermost hall of the palace, vast in extent, with a hundred doors.

But Rigi had no eyes for the splendours of the hall, neither for the lights, nor the rare tapestries of Minab, nor for the velvet rugs of Jask, for upon a couch in the centre of the hall lay the Princess Rukanpur ben Sindri, a full-moon of loveliness, enchanted and enchained. And Rigi, Lover of the Beautiful, knew that he had found the fairest jewel of the whole world, and his heart burned with love and yearning to set the Princess free. As she lay, a rough chain coiled about her wrists and around her ankles, and was locked to a mighty pillar with a lock of iron. Wah! such a lock would hold all the prisoners of Kashan and would safeguard all the jewels in the treasure palace of Joob. Now the eyes of Rigi marvelled, for upon the lock was inlaid a Chess-board, with squares of ivory and bronze, and displayed thereon the disposition of men shown here below :—*

No. XXI.

BLACK.



WHITE.

White to play and Sui-Mat in ten.

The Bishops and the Rooks and the Kings carved curiously from single blood-red rubies and ominous black opals. Wullahy! the solving of such a problem had Rigi never before essayed. He tried in vain to move the pieces, but they were fixed firmly upon their squares, immovable, and Rigi realized that the combination of the lock was past his human strength. Then he thought of the wisdom of Tebuk-el-Akhdar, who liveth in Room, and all men visit him who would gain wisdom and knowledge. Verily, the greatest caravan that crosses laboriously the stony desert of Hamad is but a fly upon the multitude who seek for advice from the All-Knowing One. So Rigi left the palace and hastened to reach him in Room, a journey of three-and-twenty days. But he no longer felt his thirst or his hunger, and hardly stopped as he passed through the date groves and the vineyards along his road; and when he came to the cave where

*Diagram No. XXI. Problem by D. J. DENSMORE, *New York Clipper*, before 1900. Per *Lasker's Chess Magazine*.

dwelleth Tebuk-el-Akhdar, in the mountain fastness of Room, lo ! the concourse of men who had preceded him on a similar errand stretched in line through the valleys of Sapha to the flowering meadows of Gujranwala, and Rigi took his place in the line as one who waiteth at the gates to the Bazaar before they open. And gradually the line thinned and men returned to their homes, some with cheer and satisfaction, and some with doubt upon their brows, and some with the perplexity of those who do not understand. And when the turn of Rigi came, he laid his case before the wisdom of Tebuk-el-Akhdar, and the old man stroked the grey waterfall of his beard and smiled as on a little child, and said :—

“ My son, you fail where fail many players of the Chess ; for you look upon what should be a sport with all the seriousness of study. Learn now to play thy game with merriment ; yea, cause the Chessmen on the Lock of Sui-mat to laugh and you will loosen them upon their squares, so that they move readily through the continuations of solution, and free the Princess from her toils. Remember the caption : ‘ White to Play,’ not ‘ White to Work.’ Go now and fare thee well ; but woe to thy fate if thou failest at the third attempt ! ”

So the load of care was lightened on the brows of Rigi and he returned to the Palace of the Enchantment of Sleep with a lighter step ; and when he had come again into the great hall of Sui-mat he addressed the Chessmen frolicsomenely, endeavouring to bring laughter to their cheeks. But cheeks of stone laugh slowly, and though Rigi bethought him of all the jests heard in bygone days—conundrums to amuse children, chestnuts that fall from the dining table, with frivolous songs and verses—nevertheless, he was rewarded only by sometimes a smile on the severe faces of the Kings, or a quiet wink from the Knights and Bishops. Only the Pawns laughed heartily ; simple folk and easy to provoke to fun, they stood on tiptoe to miss no word of his, or moved a square nearer to hear the better. At length Rigi's effort ceased, and he bethought himself of seeking outside help, and repaired forthwith, a four-days' journey, to the City of Basra, frequenting there the book sellers, buying old, forgotten books of jests, verses printed on strips of palm leaves, and scrolls containing collections of palindromes and puns and anagrams, the wit of serious men and the foolishness of fools. And after a week Rigi returned through the desert even to the Palace of the Sleeping Princess, and his tongue was loosened and he recited to the Chessmen a gay, unending flow of nonsense, and little by little laughter followed the smiles upon the faces of the men, and they shook themselves with laughter, swaying upon their stands, enjoying his pranks. The Kings laid their crowns upon the ground to laugh more freely, and the Bishops rocked back and forth with their chins upturned, and the Pawns were wild with glee and lay and rolled upon the board. Only the Black Rook kept his countenance unmoved, and looked upon Rigi with the blank and curious air of stony sobriety.

Now Rigi was waxing tired, and his strength failed, his jaw ceased to move and he was conscious that greater strength than his was needed.

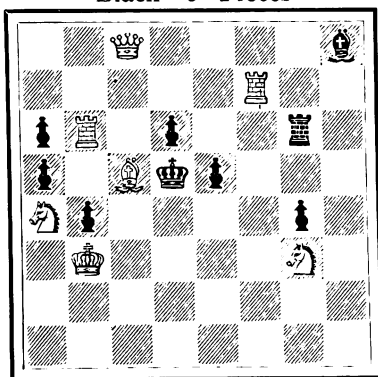
So he journeyed once more—a twelve-days' journey—to Bagdad, the greatest city in the world, and mingled with the fun makers in the bazaars and sought out the company of clowns and court jesters, buffoons, professional wagsters and those who write for the comic supplements. With all these he was a boon companion, and they loved him and withheld not the secrets of their art. Wah! their laughter resounded across the Tigris and the hyena of the desert echoed their laughter in Hileh.

And the time came when Rigi was perfect in funmaking, and he returned a third time across the Desert of Nafud to the Palace where Rukanpur-ben-Sindri lay enchanted. And when he looked upon her face, lovely in sleep as the lotus, a new strength came to him and he bubbled with fun like the fountains of Shihr, first daintily teasing the simpler anecdotes and gradually increasing to hysteric extravaganzas, piling up his jokes as one heapeth straw upon the camel, until the load creaketh of its own weight, and the laughter he engendered was contagious and each Chessman upon the board was convulsed. Wullahy! the Kings put their heads upon the shoulders of their Bishops and the twain swayed together, and as a dam bursteth and the waters flow more and more powerfully, bearing everything down, so the waves of laughter swept over the board and broke upon the grim Black Rook, and he, who was the mainstay of the lock, swayed beneath the impact and was lost, for a smile like sunlight broke upon his dark face, and laughter, like wind that shakes the laden branches in autumn, loosening the pomegranate and the apple and the much-flavoured nectarines; and the laughter of the Black Rook increased in volume, the pent-up cachinnation of years resounding from the depths of his lungs, peal after peal. Verily the laughter of thunder is loud, and the laughter of earthquakes is louder, but the laughter of the Black Rook was mightiest of all, and the Chess-board groaned therewith; and as Rigi watched he saw that the pieces moved with their laughter, moving upon the board, yea, all in proper turn; he beheld the solution working out, the manifold combinations, and the beauty of the variations, even to mate being given. And the heart of the Chess player was bewildered in him, seeing how, in the Chess of Sui-mat, even the loser winneth.

At the last, when the problem was fully solved, the lock fell from the chains on the pillar and from the fair limbs of the Princess, and as the Chess-board struck the ground and was shattered into a hundred pieces, the charm of Sui-mat also was broken; and then awakened all the sleepers, even the hundred doors of the hall were opened, adding to the joy of the moment the glad setting free of the suitors and solvers who had failed to master the problem of Sui-mat. From the most distant parts of the Palace their joy resounded, overflowing the courts and gardens, but the eyes of Rigi saw only the smile of re-awakening life on the lips of the beautiful Rukanpur ben Sindri, and he knelt beside her couch, offering his hand to help her arise—

PROBLEM NO. 195.

By Adolf Kraemer, Budingen, Ger.
Black—9 Pieces



White—7 Pieces
White Mates in Two

THE SOLVING OF SUI-MAT.

A Tale Suggested by George Meredith's "Shaving of Shagpat."

By Alain C. White.

(Problem by D. J. Densmore.)

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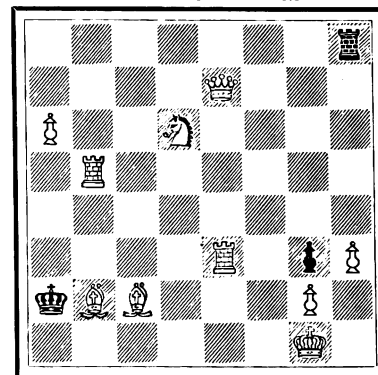
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But Rigi had no eyes for the splendors of the hall, neither for the lights, nor the rare tapestries of Minab, nor for the velvet rugs of Jask, for upon a couch in the centre of the hall lay the Princess Rukanpur ben Sindri, a full moon of loveliness, enchanted and enchained. And Rigi, Lover of the beautiful, knew that he had found the fairest jewel of the whole world, and his heart burned with love and yearning to set the Princess free. As she lay, a rough chain coiled about her wrists and around her ankles, and was locked to a mighty pillar with a lock of iron. Wah! such a lock would hold all the prisoners of Kashan, and would safeguard all the jewels in the treasure palace

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PROBLEM NO. 196.

Black—3 Pieces



White—10 Pieces
Ten Move Sui-Mat.

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(Continued page 128)

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The Problem is the only magazine of its kind in the world. It deals exclusively with problems. If you are interested in these you cannot afford to do without it.