

I rose, and stood before him with my eyes on the floor.

He rose in his turn. He understood that the conference was over.

"Well! Well!" he said, with a kind of sad good-humour. "I suppose it is unreasonable of me to expect that a young woman like you should share of any opinion with an old lawyer like me. Let me only remind you that our conversation must remain strictly confidential, for the present—and then let us change the subject. Is there anything that I can do for you? Are you alone in Edinburgh?"

"No, I am travelling with an old friend of mine, who has known me from childhood."

"And do you stay here to-morrow?"

"I think so."

"Will you do me one favour? Will you think over what has passed between us, and will you come back to me in the morning?"

"Willingly, Mr. Playmore, if it is only to thank you again for your kindness."

On that understanding we parted. He sighed—the cheerful man sighed, as he opened the door for me. Women are contradictory creatures. That sigh affected me more than all his arguments. I felt myself blush for my own headstrong resistance to him, as I took my leave and turned away into the street.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GLENINCIL.

"Aha!" said Benjamin complacently, "So the lawyer thinks, as I do, that you will be highly imprudent if you go back to Mr. Dexter? A hard-headed sensible man the lawyer, no doubt. You will listen to Mr. Playmore, (won't you?) though you wouldn't listen to me?"

(I had of course respected Mr. Playmore's confidence in me, when Benjamin and I met on my return to the hotel. Not a word relating to the lawyer's horrible suspicion of Miserrimus Dexter had passed my lips.)

"You must forgive me, my old friend," I said, answering Benjamin. "I am afraid it has come to this—try as I may, I can listen to nobody who advises me. On our way here, I honestly meant to be guided by Mr. Playmore—we should never have taken this long journey, if I had not honestly meant it. I have tried, tried hard to be a teachable, reasonable woman. But there is something in me that won't be taught. I am afraid I shall go back to Dexter."

Even Benjamin lost all patience with me, this time.

"What is bred in the bone," he said, quoting the old proverb, "will never come out of the flesh. In years gone by, you were the most obstinate child that ever made a mess in a nursery. Oh, dear me, we might as well have stayed in London!"

"No," I replied, "now we have travelled to Edinburgh, we will see something (interesting to me at any rate), which we should never have seen if we had not left London. My husband's country house is within a few miles of us, here. To-morrow we will go to Gleninch."

"Where the poor lady was poisoned?" asked Benjamin, with a look of dismay. "You mean that place?"

"Yes, I want to see the room in which she died; I want to go all over the house."

Benjamin crossed his hands resignedly on his lap. "I try to understand the new generation," said the old man sadly. "But I can't manage it. The new generation beats me."

I sat down to write to Mr. Playmore, about the visit to Gleninch. The house in which the tragedy had occurred that had blighted my husband's life, was, to my mind, the most interesting house on the habitable globe. The prospect of visiting Gleninch had, indeed (to tell the truth), strongly influenced my resolution to consult the Edinburgh lawyer. I sent my note to Mr. Playmore by a messenger, and received the kindest reply in return. If I would wait until the afternoon, he would get the day's business done, and would take us to Gleninch in his own carriage.

Benjamin's obstinacy—in its own quiet way, and on certain occasions only—was quite a match for mine. He had privately determined, as one of the old generation, to have nothing to do with Gleninch. Not a word on the subject escaped him, until Mr. Playmore's carriage was at the hotel door. At that appropriate moment, Benjamin remembered an old friend of his in Edinburgh. "Will you please to excuse me, Valeria? My friend's name is Saunders—and he will take it unkindly of me, if I don't dine with him to-day."

Apart from the associations that I connected with it, there was nothing to interest a traveller at Gleninch.

The country round was pretty and well cultivated, and nothing more. The park was, to an English eye, wild and badly kept. The house had been built within the last seventy or eighty years. Outside, it was as bare of all ornaments as a factory, and as gloomily heavy in effect as a prison. Inside, the deadly dreariness, the close oppressive solitude, of a deserted dwelling wearied the eye and weighed on the mind, from the roof to the basement. The house had been shut up since the time of the trial. A lonely old couple, man and wife, had the keys, and the charge of it. The man shook his head in silent and sorrowful disapproval of our intrusion, when Mr. Playmore ordered him to open the doors and shutters, and let the light in on the dark deserted place. Fires were burning in the library and the picture gallery, to preserve the treasures which they contained from the damp. It was not easy, at first, to look at the cheerful blaze, without fancying that the inhabitants of the house must surely come in and warm themselves! Ascending to the upper floor, I saw the rooms made familiar to me by the Report of the trial. I entered the little study, with the old books on the shelves, and

the key still missing from the locked door of communication with the bedchamber. I looked into the room in which the unhappy mistress of Gleninch had suffered and died. The bed was left in its place; the sofa on which the nurse had snatched her intervals of repose was at its foot; the Indian cabinet, in which the crumpled paper with the grains of arsenic had been found, still held its little collection of curiosities. I moved on its pivot the invalid table on which she had taken her meals, and written her poems, poor soul. The place was dreary and dreadful; the heavy air felt as if it was still burdened with its horrid load of misery and distrust. I was glad to get out (after a passing glance at the room which Eustace had occupied, in those days) into the Guests' Corridor. There was the bedroom, at the door of which Miserrimus Dexter had waited and watched! There was the oaken floor along which he had hoped, in his horrible way, following the footsteps of the servant disguised in her mistress's clothes! Go where I might, the ghosts of the dead and the absent went with me, step by step. Go where I might, the lonely horror of the house had its still and awful voice for me:—"I keep the secret of the Poison! I hide the mystery of the death!"

The oppression of the place became unendurable. I longed for the pure sky, and the free air. My companion noticed and understood me.

"Come!" he said. "We have had enough of the house. Let us look at the grounds."

In the grey quiet of the evening, we roamed about the lonely gardens, and threaded our way through the rank neglected shrubberies. Wandering here and wandering there, we drifted into the kitchen garden—with one little patch still sparsely cultivated by the old man and his wife, and all the rest a wilderness of weeds. Beyond the far end of the garden, divided from it by a low paling of wood, there stretched a patch of waste ground, sheltered on three sides by trees. In one lost corner of the ground, an object, common enough elsewhere, attracted my attention here. The object was a dust-heap. The great size of it, and the curious situation in which it was placed, roused a moment's languid curiosity in me. I stopped, and looked at the dust and ashes, at the broken crockery and the old iron. Here, there was a torn hat; and there, some fragments of rotten old boots; and, scattered round, a small attendant litter of torn paper and frowzy rags.

"What are you looking at?" asked Mr. Playmore.

"At nothing more remarkable than the dust-heap," I answered.

"In tidy England, I suppose you would have all that carted away, out of sight," said the lawyer. "We don't mind in Scotland, as long as the dust-heap is far enough away not to be smelt at the house. Besides, some of it, sifted, comes in usefully as manure for the garden. Here, the place is deserted, and the rubbish in consequence has not been disturbed. Everything at Gleninch, Mrs. Eustace (the big dust-heap included), is waiting for the new mistress to set it to rights. One of these days, you may be queen here—who knows?"

"I shall never see this place again," I said. "Never is a long day," returned my companion. "And time has its surprises in store for all of us."

We turned away, and walked back in silence to the park gate, at which the carriage was waiting.

On the return to Edinburgh, Mr. Playmore directed the conversation to topics entirely unconnected with my visit to Gleninch. He saw that my mind stood in need of relief; and he most goodnaturedly, and successfully, exerted himself to amuse me. It was not until we were close to the city that he touched on the subject of my return to London.

"Have you decided on the day when you leave Edinburgh?" he asked.

"We leave Edinburgh," I replied, "by the train of to-morrow morning."

"Do you still see no reason to alter the opinions which you expressed yesterday? Does your speedy departure mean that?"

"I am afraid it does, Mr. Playmore. When I am an older woman, I may be a wiser woman. In the meantime, I can only trust to your indulgence if I still blindly blunder on, in my own way."

He smiled pleasantly, and patted my hand—then changed on a sudden, and looked at me gravely and attentively, before he opened his lips again.

"This is my last opportunity of speaking to you before you go," he said. "May I speak freely?"

"As freely as you please, Mr. Playmore! Whatever you may say to me, will only add to my grateful sense of your kindness."

"I have very little to say, Mrs. Eustace—and that little begins with a word of caution. You told me yesterday that, when you paid your last visit to Miserrimus Dexter, you went to him alone. Don't do that again. Take somebody with you."

"Do you think I am in any danger, then?"

"Not in the ordinary sense of the word. I only think that a friend may be useful in keeping Dexter's audacity (he is one of the most impudent men living) within proper limits. Then, again, in case anything worth remembering and acting on should fall from him in his talk, a friend may be valuable as witness. In your place, I should have a witness with me who could take notes—but then I am a lawyer, and my business is to make a fuss about trifles. Let me only say—go with a companion, when you next visit Dexter; and be on your guard against yourself, when the talk turns on Mrs. Beaulieu."

"On my guard against myself? What do you mean?"

(To be continued.)

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

Solutions to Problems sent in by Correspondents will be duly acknowledged.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. B., Toronto.—Correct solutions of Problems No. 1 and No. 2 received. Many thanks for good wishes.

H. P. P., Whithy.—Correct solutions of Problems No. 1 and No. 2. Many thanks. Please send your problems. Will write to you in a day or two.

O. TREMPER, Montreal.—Correct solution of Problem No. 3 received.

We have received some information respecting the Tournament now in progress at Quebec. There are two classes of players. The first division contains ten players, each of whom has given a contribution towards purchasing a prize set of Chessmen, which will be awarded to the player scoring the greatest number of games. In order to determine this, the rule to be followed is the one carried out at the late Dominion Chess Congress, namely, that each player shall play a game with every other player, and that draws shall count half a game each. We are not informed as to the number of players in the second division. We have been kindly promised some of the games of this contest, when finished, for insertion in our Chess Column.

SOLUTIONS.

Solution to Problem No. 1.

WHITE. BLACK.
1. Q to Q 5. (ch) 1. P takes Q
2. R to Q's. 2 mate

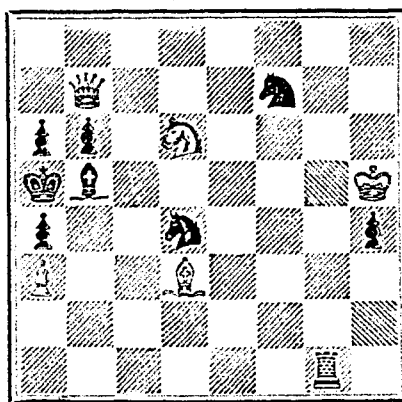
Solution to Problem No. 2.

WHITE. BLACK.
1. R to K 5 1. P takes R
2. Kt to Q R 5 2. Any move
3. Kt mates at Q B 6, or at Q Kt 3

PROBLEM No. 4.

By Calvi.

BLACK.



WHITE.

White to play and mate in two moves.

PROBLEMS FOR YOUNG PLAYERS.—No. 2.

WHITE. BLACK.
K at K R's 2nd K at K Kt 5th
Q at K B 7th Q at Q Kt 3rd
B at Q B 6th R at K Kt 5th
Kt at Q B 3rd B at K 6th
Pawns at K Kt 3rd Kt at K B 4th
and Q R 4th Pawns at K Kt 3rd
and Q R 2nd

White to play and mate in five moves.

GAME 5TH.

A dash recently played between two players of the Montreal Chess Club.

WHITE. (Mr. B.) BLACK. (Mr. H.)
1. P to K 4th 1. P to K 4th
2. B to Q B 4th 2. Kt to K B 3rd
3. P to Q 3rd 3. B to Q B 4th
4. P to K R 3rd 4. Castles.
5. Kt to K B 3rd 5. P to Q 3rd
6. Castles 6. P to K R 3rd
7. Kt to Q R 3rd 7. P to Q B 3rd
8. P to Q R 3rd 8. P to Q Kt 4th
9. K B to K B 2nd 9. Q B to K 3rd
10. Q B to K 3rd 10. B to Q Kt 3rd
11. Q Kt to K 2nd 11. Q to Q 2nd
12. K to K R 2nd 12. Kt to K R 2nd
13. Q Kt to K Kt 3rd 13. K B to Q sq
14. P to Q 4th 14. Q B takes B
15. R takes B 15. Q to K 3rd
16. Q R to Q R sq. 16. Q Kt to Q 2nd
17. P to Q B 3rd 17. Q Kt to Q Kt 3rd
18. P takes P 18. P takes P
19. Kt to K B 5th 19. Q Kt to Q B 5th
20. Q to K 2nd 20. B to Q Kt 3rd
21. Q R to Q sq. 21. Q R to Q sq
22. K Kt to K R 4th (ch) 22. Q Kt to Q 3rd
23. B takes K R's P (ch) 23. Kt takes Q Kt
24. Kt takes Kt 24. R takes R
25. R takes R 25. R to Q sq
26. B takes K Kt P 26. P to K B 3rd
27. B to K R 6th 27. R to Q 2nd
28. Q to K Kt 4th (ch) 28. K to R sq
29. R takes R 29. Q takes R
30. B to K Kt 7th (ch) 30. K to Kt's sq
31. Kt to K R 6th check mate (ch)

(a) White takes good care to strengthen his position.
(b) Well played.
(c) Neatly finished off.

GAME 6TH.

Between Popert and Cochrane.
King's Knight's Opening.

WHITE. COCHRANE. BLACK. POPERT.
1. P to K 4th 1. P to K 4th
2. K Kt to B 3rd 2. Q to Q B 3rd
3. K B to Q B 4th 3. K B to Q B 4th
4. P to Q B 3rd 4. Q to K 2nd
5. Castles 5. P to Q 3rd
6. P to Q 4th 6. K B to Q Kt 3rd
7. Q to K 3rd 7. K Kt to K B 3rd
8. Q Kt to Q 2nd 8. Q B to K Kt 5th
9. P to Q 5th 9. Q Kt to Q
10. B takes B 10. Q R P takes B
11. Q to Q B 2nd 11. K Kt to K R 4th
12. P to K R 3rd 12. Q B to Q 2nd
13. K to K R 2nd 13. Castles.
14. Kt to K Kt 14. P to K B 4th
15. Q to Q 15. Q to K B 2nd
16. K P takes K B P 16. Q takes P
17. P to K Kt 4th 17. Q takes K B P (ch)
18. R takes Q 18. R takes R (ch)
19. K to R 19. Kt checkmate.

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