

The Bronze Bishop.

A bold move, Monsieur Dornit, but fatal. See how I call 'check' and in four moves monsieur is mated.

It was a curious, not to say an odd, set of chessmen with which Pierre and I did battle on these occasions.

For reply I pushed aside the chessboard, handed him my cigar-case, crossed my legs comfortably, and prepared to listen.

With a polite, 'Merci, bien,' the conchierge selected a cigar, lit it, and, after a few preliminary puffs, began his story.

'Forty years ago, monsieur, I fell in love with the sweetest girl that ever trod the soil of France. You smile, monsieur, but it is as I have said.

'Gabielle Joubert—for that was her name—was not handsome, as you English would say, but a pretty, winsome creature with an indescribable charm about her that captivated my heart the moment I first stepped into the sunshine of her presence.

'But, alas! even as one who, though he may bask in the sunshine, may never approach the orb of day itself, so I—miserable I—might bask afar off in the light of her sunny smile and yet never hope to lessen by one hair's breadth the gulf—the social gulf—that cruelly divided us.

'In short, monsieur, I was a junior clerk in a large and influential mercantile establishment at Orleans, of which Monsieur Joubert—Gabielle's father—was the chief.

'Picture then, if you can, my delicious delight when, a few months later, I discovered that my love glances, far from being lost upon the charming demoiselle, were being unmistakably reciprocated.

'After that I threw discretion to the winds, and, as you may imagine, lost little time in cultivating a closer acquaintance with my fascinating charmer.

'A dozen times did I set out resolved to face the ordeal, and a dozen times I slunk back again with 'to-morrow'—always 'to-morrow'—upon my lips.

'You smile, monsieur. Naturally you would consider that each visit to my master's house would have rendered him kinder disposed toward me, and therefore have made my task all the easier.

'At last there came a day. Ah, well I remember it, when, with thumping heart, I found myself striding dazedly across the lawn behind the mansion towards a table, at which, engrossed in a chess problem, sat M. Joubert.

'Never did culprit quake before a judge as did I that sweltering July afternoon, as with downcast eyes and in faltering accents I began the oration I had a hundred times previously rehearsed.

'What I said I scarcely know, for my head was speedily in a whirl; but long ere I had finished I read my verdict in the sternest visage before me.

'Still, I was not prepared for what followed. 'As soon as I had done M. Joubert motioned me stiffly to a chair. Then, after regarding me coldly for a few moments, he said, with a sneer: 'Of course you are prepared to do anything to prove your love for Mlle Gabielle?'

'Anything, monsieur,' I assented, eagerly. 'He laughed ironically. 'Eh bien! You shall prove it by your skill against me here'—he indicated the chessboard between us.

'If you lose—' He shrugged his shoulders significantly. 'You mock me, monsieur,' I cried, starting up distractedly at this cruel proposal.

'For, alas, I knew only too well that the result would be if I dared to accept that challenge. In all my encounters with M. Joubert I had never yet succeeded in vanquishing him, and I certainly could not hope to do so then.

'I will give you a minute to decide,' he said, pulling out his watch. 'A minute? Monstrous! Was it possible that he could be so cruel? I glanced at his face. Alas, not the faintest sign of his relenting was exhibited there.

'Then came the harrowing thought of losing Gabielle, and that rendered me well-nigh frantic. 'I appealed to him. I protested. I raved. But it was all in vain.

'At last, in despair, I sat down. 'Ah! So you decide to play for Gabielle?' he said. 'C'est bien. Ivory or bronze, Pierre?'

'Play for Gabielle! My whole soul revolted at the thought. And yet, what could I do? Ah, what, indeed? The ivory pieces were nearest me, and—well—as a pretext for prolonging the interview, I selected them. I knew I couldn't win. And so we commenced.

'It was on this board, monsieur, and with these identical pieces that we played. 'Ah! that game. Shall I ever forget it? For my part, my object was, as I have said, to protect the interview. Accordingly, my opening moves were made with caution and deliberation, for I knew that the slightest slip on my part at the outset would speedily end the game.

'My adversary, quickly perceiving this, plied me incessantly with alluring baits, but I would not accept them. Merely to break up my position he placed his knights, bishops, and castles indiscriminately at my disposal, but I refused them all, even when I might have taken them with impunity.

'Meanwhile, stronger and stronger grew my defence, until at length I had made it practically impregnable, and I felt prepared to resist him at all points.

'Hour after hour passed, but there was no material change in our respective positions. The sun had now become obscured by ominous-looking clouds which threatened before long to terminate our outdoor contest. Nevertheless we held on—the besieger, I the besieged. Mon Dieu! how he bombarded me! Time after time I thought it was all over. But my defence was sound, and his shots, terrible as they were, somehow never penetrated home.

'At length, whether my persistent defensive tactics rendered my opponent reckless I know not, but suddenly, in an apparently unguarded moment he left his queen unprotected. How my heart leapt! That was no ruse, I knew. The next moment my trembling hand had borne its off in triumph.

'The unexpected had happened, and now, thanks to my partner's oversight, there rose before me a prospect of victory hitherto undreamed-of. Ah, if I could only win! Dare I hazard a change of tactics? Why not? Why should I not win? I thrilled at the thought. Then the image of Gabielle came before me, and I hesitated no longer.

Oh! What an unconsciously long time he was. I glanced up at him covertly. As I did so a sinister smile passed across his face. Instantly my heart misgave me.

'Again my eyes swept the board to reassure myself of my position. 'Mille Diabli! what had I done? Oh, fool that I had been!

'In my seemingly irresistible attack I now discovered for the first time a flaw—a flaw which, if detected by my formidable rival, would place me entirely at his mercy. To a thousand casual observers it would have been indistinguishable. But to him—Ah! would he see it? Had he already seen it? Why had he smiled? Why didn't he move? Why—Ah! misery!—even as the questions traversed my heated brain his hand was already upon the bishop with which he was to deal the fatal stroke.

'An involuntary groan escaped my lips. It was his turn now, and for several moments, that seemed ages, he toyed meditatively with the bishop piece twisting it round and round with his fingers. 'Mon Dieu! the agony I endured. Once I essayed to rise, but some fascinating influence riveted me to my chair.

'At last he looked up and smiled grimly. 'You may bid Gabielle adieu,' he said. 'Those were the last words he uttered! Scarcely had that sentence passed his lips when—merci! heaven!—I—'—even as he was in the act of moving to the fatal square, there came a blinding flash of lightning! For an instant it played upon the mitre of the bronze bishop, and then the hand which held it twisted convulsively, the bishop was whirled through the air like a stone from a catapult, and M. Joubert fell forward upon the table, scattering the chessmen in all directions. He was dead! . . .

'The conchierge paused, and for a while we were both silent. 'That is the story of the missing bishop,' he said at length.

'And Gabielle?' I inquired. 'Ab, monsieur, it was a terrible shock to the poor girl, but she survived it. Twelve months later I persuaded her to marry me, and all though many heavy misfortunes have since befallen us, we have never ceased to be happy in each other's love.

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BORN.

- Piton, to the wife of John McVicar, a daughter. Fredericton, Mar. 18, to the wife of A. Boyd, a son. Albert, Mar. 20, to the wife of John Dunsy, a son. Piton, Mar. 19, to the wife of Jno. T. Gooden, a son. River Hibbert, Mar. 15, to the wife of J. R. Gay, a son. 'Shiloe, Mar. 15, to the wife of Harry Watson, a son. Sydney, Mar. 21, to the wife of Charles McIsaac, a son. Digby, Mar. 17, to Mr. and Mrs. T. (Farnsworth) a daughter. Torbrook, Mar. 14, to the wife of Arthur Goucher, a son. Joggin's Mar. 15, to the wife of James Kennedy, a daughter. Truro, Mar. 17, to the wife of J. W. Lepper, a daughter. Campbellton, Mar. 20, to wife of J. C. Miller, a daughter. Campbellton, Mar. 4, to the wife of W. J. Russell, a daughter. Torbrook, Mar. 15, to the wife of Arthur Wheelock, a daughter. Middleton, Mar. 22, to the wife of Charles Harris, a daughter. East Torbrook, Mar. 19, to the wife of Martin Uhlman, a son. Burlington, Mar. 17, to Mr. and Mrs. Tupper Sanford, a son. Halifax, Mar. 23, to Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Lander, a daughter. Joggin's Mines, Mar. 15, to the wife of Arthur Miller, a son. River Hibbert, Mar. 7, to the wife of James Hennessy, a son. Moncton, Mar. 20, to the wife of Samuel H. Steeves, a son. Beaver River, Mar. 20, to the wife of Newton Gaudin, a son. Janna's Plains, Mar. 14, to the wife of Chas. D. Phillips, a son. Lower Grand, Mar. 13, to Mr. and Mrs. Leander Burdige, a son. North Brookfield Mines, Mar. 13, to the wife of E. F. Morse, a son. North East Mainville, Mar. 7, to the wife of John J. Crowdy, a daughter.

MARRIED.

- Oxford, Mar. 15, by Rev. C. Munro, Gustaf F. Isale to David W. Dunn. Halifax, Mar. 17, by Rev. W. J. Arms'ons, John Smith to Jennie Furell. Truro, Mar. 11, by Rev. A. L. Gergie, Richmond Peters to Lucy Gaudin. Yarmouth, Mar. 8, by Rev. N. B. Duns, Byron Bowser to Ophelia Roberts. Windsor, Mar. 8, by Rev. A. A. Shaw, John A. Spencer to Hallie M. Dickie. Kentville, Feb. 1, by Rev. B. N. Noble, Chas. G. Gaudin to Gertrude Peterson. Napan, Mar. 18, by Rev. D. Henderson, Ernest F. Secumias to Isabel A. Wilson. Waterville, Feb. 28, by Rev. E. O. Bead, Wilfred E. Gullman to Gertrude Peterson. Rockland, Mar. 21, by Rev. A. H. Hayward, Frank E. Lewis to Ella V. Bishopson. Roop's Point, Mar. 22, by Rev. E. A. Bartley, Mr. Geo. Winchester to Mrs. Susie Dittmas. Lower Bayville, Mar. 21, by Rev. A. W. Young, E. D. Harry Wiley to Miss M. Orchard. Bridgetown, Mar. 18, by Rev. F. M. Mason, Ingram B. Bohner to Mrs. Minnie Dagoty.

DIED.

- Farrboro, Howard Homes 16. Shelton, Mar. 20, John Churchill. Halifax, Mar. 21, Peter Frazee 61. Milton, Mar. 19, Catherine Burritt 92. East Boston, Mar. 12, David Francis. St. John, Mar. 23, Ethel E. Williams.

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