

Chess.

(Conducted by J. G. ASCHER, Montreal.)

THE UNINVITED VISITOR.

A CHESS STORY.

BY J. G. A.

To use the odd expression of "Boz," I had been on the "*rampage*" lately. A renowned player of Europe had been a month's visitor to our club. Chess in every form and phase had been the order of the day—and night also. Not only regular club-nights, but extra and unusual social chess gatherings had kept me from "nature's sweet restorer" until my hall clock showed a very large numerical of the "wee sma" hours. It was about twelve, midnight; I was seated alone, quietly ensconced in my study, before a half-dead grate fire, feeling rather fatigued, and congratulating myself on a, then, just made determination to seek immediate repose; my board and men lay on the table higgledy-piggledy, as I had been too lazy to put them even to rest after a look into a very nice three mover by my friend H——, when suddenly I heard a loud rap at the outer door. I started, naturally, for who could it be? Just at the moment an angry blast of winter howled round the house and seemed to burst open with a smash every door and window. Then the wind died away to a melancholy whining, most doleful, and again the loud knock was repeated—this time at the door of my own chamber. It seemed as if I should realize the weird story of Poe and his croaking raven, and that the bird of evil omen was going to strut in and perch himself somewhere in my sanctum, to taunt with its presence for the several "Lenores" I had, metaphorically speaking, lost of late in my encounters with our celebrated guest. But I hesitated no longer. "Come in, whoever you are," I unceremoniously called out. The door was flung back, and there at the threshold, making a forward, bowing movement, stood a most extraordinary-looking man. He was tall and gaunt,

with a meagre, haggard and jaundiced visage, well marked with lines of study and thought. I noticed that he had a pointed black beard and flashing dark eyes. He wore a doublet; and a sword hung clashing at his side. The pattern of his clothes was chess squares in every variety—black and white, green and drab and all embroidered in gold and colored silk with Chess Kings, Queens, Rooks, Bishops, Knights, &c., &c. His buttons were pawn-shaped, his collar and cuffs were brilliant with what seemed to be chess positions,—in fact his *tout ensemble* resembled a walking reality of living chess, whatever that may be.

Curiosity and wonder held me spell-bound; but I soon recovered my presence of mind, for I argued inwardly that if this was an embodiment of living chess, I need have no special mortal dread of my visitor—chess, even though an excited combat, being emblematical of good-will and harmony. In the most courteous language I could command under the very extraordinary circumstances of what seemed an intrusion, I bade the stranger enter and be seated. His stalwart form moved gracefully in a sort of knight-like fashion, one step forward and two steps slightly to the left until he advanced opposite, when he seated himself with a jerk as if he had been a pawn all the while and now had suddenly *Queened* himself. It flashed through my mind that my visitor might be an escaped lunatic who, finding the front door open, had thus found his way; however, I was determined not to show the slightest alarm or even anxiety.

"Might I have the honor," I said, as soon as he had *Queened* himself, "of knowing your name and your mission?"

"Oh, certainly," he rejoined in an off-hand