

GRETCHEEN.

FROM THE GERMAN.

By Nell Gwynne, Author of "Acorn Leaves."

1.

In an old tumble-down castle on the banks of the Rhine, lived Count Vonstein, with his young and beautiful daughter, Gretchen. The Count, who was a philosopher as well as a beggarly old miser, spent his time between gazing at the stars through an old tin horn, and counting his money, which he kept in an old tea-pot without a spout, in one of the vaults of the castle. The Count half starved his household, and never ate anything himself but bread made of sawdust and fried mud-pouts, except when he went to his neighbour, the Baron Vonkalb, to dinner, when he would regale himself on half a sheep, and drink a gallon and a half of rye whiskey at a sitting. As to the Lady Gretchen, her life was lonely indeed. She had no person to speak to except an attendant, who was about a hundred and twenty years old, and, as a natural consequence, as blind as a bat and as deaf as a beetle.

When the weather was unpropitious, Gretchen would amuse herself by playing on an old rusty Jew's harp, and by embroidering an old yellow night-cap for the Count. And when it was fine, she would wander about through the dense forests that surrounded the castle searching for bobolinks' nests, and sometimes she would fish for mudpouts in the Rhine, always accompanied by her attendant, of course.

One day, as Gretchen and her attendant were climbing one of the steep paths that led up to the castle, they were surprised to see a mysterious-looking young gentleman, wrapped in a cloak and wearing a slouched hat, cross their path and disappear into the forest below, after flashing a lightning glance at Gretchen.

Gretchen went home and dreamt of the stranger, which was a highly improper thing for her to do, as her hand had already been promised in marriage by her father to the wealthy Baron Vonkalb, who was very old and very ugly. Baron Vonkalb had eloped with Count Vonstein's wife in the days of his youth, and killed two of his sons by running them through the body with a two-edged sword, which compliment the Count had returned by burning the Baron's favourite daughter to death by setting fire to her gauze sleeve one night when they were all drunk at a banquet in his own castle. But, bless your life, these trifles had been forgotten long ago. The Baron and the Count were as thick as thieves, and both eager to become more closely connected by a marriage between the Baron and the Lady Gretchen.

Gretchen hated the Baron, and made faces at him behind her papa's back, and before his own face whenever she got the opportunity, and as soon as she would turn her back, he would shake his fist at her and growl—

"Just wait, madam, until you are the Baroness Vonkalb!"

A few days after Gretchen had encountered the mysterious stranger, she was walking as usual in the forest with her attendant, when her foot slipped, and down she went over the edge of a precipice a hundred and fifty feet deep. She would have been instantly precipitated to the bottom had her hair not caught in some snags. Just as she was going over, her eyes encountered the lightning glance of the mysterious stranger, who was now mounted on a coal black horse, and she knew she was safe.

"Stand still, devil of the forest!" shouted the stranger, addressing his steed, who immediately stood like a statue, while his master took Gretchen by the Grecian coil and landed her at his feet with one sweep of his arm. The stranger, who was a scion of the noble, but impoverished, house of Ginguinblazaway, but whom we shall call Count G., for short, immediately fell at the feet of Gretchen and confessed his love, while his horse neighed and tossed his jetty mane on the wind, and the attendant coughed and affected to be looking for snail shells.

They were betrothed. The Count took a twenty-five cent greenback out of his pocket and tore it in two, giving one half to Gretchen and keeping the other half himself, as was the custom in those barbarous days.

"Adieu, adored of my soul; I shall meet you on this spot this day two weeks hence, at five o'clock in the evening," said Count G., as he sprang into the saddle and disappeared into the depths of the forest.

And now came the tug of war. When Gretchen got home she made the discovery that the Baron Vonkalb, knowing her father's grasping disposition, had offered to present him with a peck-measure full of five dollar gold pieces the hour he received her hand in marriage. The Count eagerly accepted the offer, and was already preparing for the auspicious event, by heating the tongue red hot, and threatening to pinch off Gretchen's shapely little nose if she did not consent to become the Baron's wife within a week. What was she to do! Even her passionate adorer, Count G., would not care to look upon her if she had no nose. The Baron had stipulated that the marriage ceremony was to take place at his castle, instead of at the Count's, and, accordingly a magnificent banquet had been prepared, to which all the swells from all the castles for miles on each side of the Rhine had been invited.

The bridal morning arrived, and the Baron started out, according to agreement, attended by

a couple of retainers, to meet the bride, who was to have been on the road, accompanied by her father. But, as the peck-measure of gold pieces had not yet arrived, the Count had not yet left his own door, where he stood supporting the half-fainting Gretchen, when the Baron arrived.

"You are late, Count," said the Baron, as he essayed to lift the lovely Gretchen up on to the saddle before him.

"No, you don't!" said the Count; "where is the peck-measure?"

"Oh! the peck-measure, of course, I had quite forgotten it," returned the Baron in a careless tone; "but, here it is," he continued, as an express waggon drove up to the door. As the driver was depositing an apparently very heavy peck-measure on the doorstep, the Baron again essayed to lift the fair Gretchen into the saddle, but the Count again said: "No, you don't; I have not yet seen the contents of the measure."

"Why, Count, how particular you are this morning," said the Baron, as he jerked off the top of the measure, disclosing its much coveted contents, which fairly glittered in the sun, the gold pieces being just fresh from the mint. The Count was about to make a dive at the treasure, when the Baron said:

"Come, Count, lend me a hand in making Gretchen comfortable in the saddle: the priest and my guests are waiting for me; you have delayed me half-an-hour already."

The Count did as he was desired, and the next moment the Baron and his party were galloping towards Vonkalb Castle.

The Count turned to his beloved treasure, and dipped his hand in among the gold pieces, when his hair stood on end, his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth; the measure was filled with sand and pebbles, with only a layer of gold pieces on the top.

He sprang on his saddle and rode madly after the treacherous Baron, calling out, "Halt, treacherous villain!"

But the Baron only winked at his followers, and rode all the faster. As they neared the castle gate, the Count called out:

"My daughter, wed not the rascally Baron Vonkalb; he hath most shamefully deceived thy father!"

Gretchen's spirits rose. She might yet wed her beloved Count G., and she forthwith began to scream and scratch the Baron's face. The Baron, foreseeing a scene, and the consequent frustration of all his hopes, immediately despatched one of his followers to inform the guests that the wedding was to be postponed for a week on account of the sudden illness of the bride. The guests dispersed, and the Baron conducted the unhappy Gretchen to a little cell in the tower of the castle, where he left her to cool her heels at her leisure, with the comforting assurance that if she did not consent to become his wife within one week, he would leave her to drag out the rest of her existence in the lowest dungeon of the castle.

In the meantime, the hour that Count G. had appointed to meet Gretchen in the forest had arrived, but what was his surprise, on coming to the place of rendezvous, to behold the ancient attendant, alone, awaiting him. She informed him of all that had occurred, when he caught her by the back of the neck and shook her till she howled again, and he stamped and raged and tore his hair and then sprang on his horse and disappeared.

II.

The shades of the evening were beginning to fall over Vonkalb Castle, and Gretchen was seated in her cell at her usual repast of fish bones and cold water, when she was disturbed by seeing a dove fluttering against the bars of the window.

"Alas! said bird, you have come to the wrong shop if it is anything to eat you want," said Gretchen.

Yet it kept on fluttering and fluttering till prompted by some instinct she thrust out her hand and caught it by the wing—her heart gave a great bound—there was a note tied underneath its wing with a piece of piping cord. She severed the cord with her knife and devoured the contents of the note (in a figurative sense of course) which ran thus:

"My beloved Gretchen, consent to become the wife of the Baron Vonkalb to-morrow morning, and leave the rest to your beloved G."

"Ha, ha, ha! I knew fish bones and cold water would fetch her!" laughed the Baron, when he received the news from her keeper the next morning that Gretchen had consented to their union. Even as he spoke a travelling priest entered the hall.

"Welcome! thrice welcome! holy father, I have a little business for you to transact after you have eaten this leg of mutton, and this ham and these five loaves of bread and drank this keg of beer," said the Baron as the servant placed these articles on the table.

"I had better strike while the iron is hot, or she will be getting into some of her tantrums," thought the Baron as he despatched a messenger to Gretchen's cell with the order that she was to appear in the hall as soon as possible.

Gretchen appeared pale and trembling, when the Baron gave the priest to understand that he wished to be united in the holy bonds of matrimony to this fair creature, and he wished him to commence the ceremony without delay, as he had now eaten his breakfast.

"All right, my son," said the priest, "it will not take this child long to confess," and taking Gretchen by the hand he led her into a

little chapel off the hall, while the Baron went in search of one of his retainers to be present at the ceremony.

As soon as the priest closed the chapel door he threw off his cowl and disclosed the handsome face of Count G.

"My Gretchen, we have no time to lose," he said, throwing open the chapel window and lifting Gretchen out, and then springing out after her. The "devil of the forest" stood pawing the earth a few yards off. A few moments and his master was on his back with Gretchen before him, while he galloped for his life towards Vonstein Castle.

Count Vonstein was delighted to see his daughter safe out of the clutches of the now detested Baron, and he immediately consented to her union with Count G., which took place in a few days. And dying shortly afterwards the old Count left the newly-married couple the tea-pot full of gold pieces, which of course enabled them to live in great affluence all their lives.

As to the Baron Vonkalb he was so furious at the trick that had been played him that he stormed till he was black in the face, and threatened to collect all his followers and raze Vonstein Castle to the ground. But as the Count G. was renowned all over the country for his prowess in arms, and the "devil of the forest" was said to be his satanic majesty in horse shape, he changed his mind.

VARIETIES.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES.—The various wedding anniversaries, as celebrated of late years, are as follows: That at the expiration of the first year is called the cotton wedding; two years, paper; three years, leather or straw; five years, wooden; seven years, woollen; ten years, tin; twelve years, silk and fine linen; fifteen years, crystal; twenty years, china; twenty-five years, silver; thirty years, pearl; forty years, ruby; fifty years, golden; seventy-five years, diamond. These celebrations are usually originated and managed by the friends of the couple interested, for obvious reasons, and the presents must be of the material which conforms to the name of the anniversary. With the exception of the silver and gold weddings, and occasionally the wooden and tin, these anniversaries are seldom celebrated.

THE LAUREATE.—Here is still another "pen-picture" of Laureate Tennyson walking in a London park: "He looked tall, somewhat stout, round-shouldered, and he walked with a stick, as though the gout were hanging about his legs or feet. He had a long beard which almost buried his face, and wore a pair of large, round, Chinese-looking spectacles. He had on a very broad-brimmed, weather-worn felt hat, dark trousers, gaiters, several undercoats or jackets, covered over all by a thin, shabby-looking red tweed dust coat, buttoned very tightly, as though it were much too small for him. Dangling outside, from what should have been a clean white shirt front, was a pair of large gold-rimmed nose spectacles. He was one of the oddest-looking creatures I have ever seen out of a Morning meeting."

PHOTOGRAPHY IN BANKING.—The London *Times* reports that the Bank of France has for some time past employed a photographic detective to examine suspicious documents, and more recently has placed an invisible studio in a gallery behind the cashiers. Hidden behind some heavy curtain the camera stands ready for work, and at a signal from any of the cashiers the photographer secures the likeness of any suspected customer. It is also reported that in the principal banking establishments in Paris several frauds have lately been detected by the camera, which, under some circumstances, exercises a sharper vision than the human eye. Where an erasure has been made, for instance, the camera detects it at once, let the spot be ever so smoothly rubbed over, while a word or figure that to the eye has been perfectly scratched out, is clearly reproduced in a photograph of the document.

SHORT DRESSES IN ENGLAND.—English ladies are just beginning to adopt the fashion that has been in vogue in Paris for some time, of wearing short skirts for ball-room toilettes. Now that quadrille, and in fact all square dances, are voted "slow" and tabooed, nothing is thought of but the waltz, for which the long-trained dresses are found extremely inconvenient, both to the wearer and her partners, especially the latter, who occasionally find themselves more inextricably attached to a lady than is at all consistent with the *trois temps*. To avoid these difficulties, many ladies have a cord from the end of the train, and a loop through which the gentleman's arm goes, and by which he holds up this troublesome appendage, but this, at best, is a clumsy expedient, and not elegant, to say the least, while a short costume, just showing a pretty foot beneath, is both becoming and infinitely more convenient. Can the hesitation of our fair friends about adopting this fashion be caused by the non-existence of the pretty foot?

TURNER.—It is told of Turner the painter that he did not consider his labours over when he had sent in his pictures to the exhibitions; he would wait till the hangers had done their work, and then, on the vanishing day, would, by a few magical touches, so alter the tone of his work that all the neighbouring canvases looked like foils carefully arranged to set off this one particular picture in the whole room. "He has

been here and fired off a gun," said Constable on one occasion, when he found that the introduction at the last moment of a piece of scarlet about the size of a shilling into a gray sea-piece of Turner's had completely killed the colour of his own picture, which represented a pageant of boats at the opening of Waterloo Bridge. On the opposite wall there hung in that same exhibition a picture of "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the Fiery Furnace." Cooper, who was present, said to Constable, "A coal has bounced across the room from Jones's picture and set fire to Turner's sea."

SPRING FASHION HINTS.—Old age is generally much worn everywhere.

Evie's walking-suit in Eden was even much lighter than those worn at Gilmore's garden.

Uneasy lie the heads wearing crowns in Europe—especially in Germany and Russia.

Purses should be worn full on the body.

Suits of China material are rather hardware for this changeable climate.

Pies, this spring, are cut quartering and diamond-pointed.

The principal style in gentlemen's spring hats is to pay for them in advance.

Hand-cuffs are much worn by tourists to Sing Sing.

Impecunious acquaintances and poor relatives may be cut very short.

Slippers are less common since the ice has melted from the pavement.

Furs are often used to hide unhealthy skins.

Mahogany and rosewood suits appropriate for people who persist in dying may be had at the undertakers.

Clocks are becoming to stockings, but more useful in steeples.

The fashionable colour for boiled lobster this season is red.

Large rents are now common in expensive suites of rooms.

Everybody's trousers are wearing out.

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. S. Montreal.—Letter and Problem received. Many thanks.

Student, Montreal.—Correct solution received of Problem No. 121.

R. F. M. Sherbrooke, P.Q.—Correct solution received of Problem for Young Players, No. 217; also correct solution of Problem No. 216.

J. H. H. Montreal.—Correct solution received of Problem No. 251.

H. & J. McG., Cote des Neiges.—Correct solution received of Problem for Young Players No. 217.

C. A. K., Ottawa.—Correct solution received of Problems Nos. 220 and 221.

In an excellent article entitled "The Chessplayers of London," written by Mons. A. Delannoy for the Chess Column of the *Harford (Conn) Times*, we were glad to find the following remarks on Mr. Bird who visited us some time ago. It will be perceived by a perusal of the remarks of Mons. Delannoy, who recently paid a visit to England, that he could not fail to observe in Mr. Bird those pleasing characteristics of play, and also of manner, which delighted so much the amateurs of Montreal during his sojourn among them.

"We now come to three celebrities between whom I can scarcely make a choice for two reasons: first, because from my opportunities for observing them, I have not yet been able to make up my mind; and secondly, because, in assigning the preference to any one of them, I might be accused of ignorance and partiality. From their sketches let the reader judge: they are Messrs. Bird, McDonnell and Hofer. We may begin by noting that all three are witty and vivacious; that they draw around them quite a crowd of observers, and form one of the principal attractions of the 'Divan.'"

Mr. Bird has fire, boldness, a real love of the game, disdains to follow beaten paths and is always striking out something strange. Novelty is what he wants, if it is to be found in this world. His attempts are not unfrequently crowned with success, and these are received with well-earned applause; but I must say, sometimes, the result is disappointment.

Mr. Bird deserves credit for his readiness in placing himself at the disposal of every amateur, strong or otherwise, and for the collection of the hundred games played between the greatest masters, which he has enriched with very instructive and exact analyses and commentaries which form a book really valuable."

An exhibition of living chess was lately given at Cincinnati. The details of the proceedings, in a local journal, are too long for our Column, but the following extract will give some idea of an entertainment, which seems to be much in vogue in some parts of the United States at the present time:

"Shortly after 8 o'clock the curtain rose on the opening feature. The Allegorical Tableau of Chess, illustrating the antiquity of the game. The goddess of chess, Calissa, occupied a pedestal in the centre at the back of the stage, with a Grecian statesman and Roman general at the right and left. A Persian king playing chess with his old prime minister, attended by two black slaves, formed a seated group in front of the goddess. Other seated groups at chess near at hand were two Turks and a British general and a lady in full evening dress. An Arab studying a chess problem was stretched on the ground in front. On the right of the stage the two kings were exchanging defiance, surrounded by their knights, bishops and rooks. On the left the pawns clustered around the two queens, to whom the kneeling archbishops proffered baskets of flowers."

"At the first tableau the curtain rose on the pieces and pawns arranged diagonally across the board in double rank. The board was of muslin, thirty feet square, painted in black and white squares, and inclined toward the audience by an elevation of two feet at the rear of the stage. The gorgeous grand marshal came forward, gave the signal, and the opposing forces counter-marched to their places on the board, at right angles to the audience, with the king's rooks nearest to the footlights."

We insert in our Column this week two games played by the late Herr Andersen in the year 1851. They are both masterpieces, but the first is considered by all competent to give an opinion to be the most brilliant game on record. The whole of the moves in this game should be stamped upon the memory of the chess student.