

"Open it!" said Bertha. "I forbid you to do so, Mr. Dennison," Mrs. Willis exclaimed, furiously; "that chest is mine."

"It is false!" was Bertha's imperious reply. "It was Mr. Rainsforth's; I have long wondered what became of it. And here," she said, as Laurence lifted the lid,—"here is the will that gives Haffenden Grange to his nephew. Take it, Mr. Dennison—take it; and in your joy at its discovery, be merciful to the unhappy woman who has so guiltily withheld it!"

Mrs. Willis rushed from their presence. Tim Flaherty's statement was correct. She had been one of the witnesses to Mr. Rainsforth's will. The death of the other directly after his master, suggested to her the fraud she had perpetrated. Partly from affection for Bertha, and partly to enrich her son by wedding him to the latter, she had hid the will in the chamber of which Mr. Rainsforth had confided to her the secret.

Mrs. Willis and her son left Haffenden Grange within the hour of her detection; and Bertha found a temporary home with the rector and his wife, who had long been interested in the gentle girl, whom her wily *gouvernante's* machinations had rendered almost a prisoner.

THE SPECTRAL HAND.

A VERITABLE CHRISTMAS GHOST STORY.

BY NED P. MAH.

Not at all in the humour for work, I was lounging, meerschaum in mouth, among the crowd in the market place at A—, amid a confused medley of women, voluble, vociferous, with kerchiefs on their heads and sabots on their feet; men in blue blouses and blonde moustachios, horses in rope harness, waggons, wooden, screeching, and springless—amid the clacking of fowls, the neighing of steeds, the squealing of pigs, the gabble of buyers and sellers. The market women were, for the most part, luxuriating in the genial warmth arising from the *chaud pieds* beneath their feet, for the air was keen and frosty.

"O, Mr. Mah! O, Ned!" cried a voice at my side, "I am so glad to see you. I hadn't the least notion you were in A—."

I looked down and saw two black eyes lighted up with an eager fire and a delicate oval face flushing into genuine pleasure.

It was Harriott, the wife of my best friend. I stooped down and kissed her lightly on the forehead.

There was no harm in it. I had known her long before he did; we had been boy and girl together, we were accustomed to kiss each other when we met and parted, and we stuck to the custom even when she married. That was all.

"O, Ned!" she said, "if we had only known you were so near us, when we have so needed a friend! To think that you should have been in the same town and not have eaten our Christmas dinner together! But, come home with me now. You must not refuse me, though I am not altogether unselfish in the request. We are oppressed by a mysterious trouble, and you, with a

brain fresh from the contact of the outside world will be of invaluable assistance to us in its elucidation. Come!" and she placed her hand within my arm.

"But I am busy; spare me only a few hours. I have my letter to write to the *Trumpet*."

"You can write in our rooms. We will not disturb you. Only do not refuse us the succour of your presence in our sore need."

I yielded to the coaxing pressure of the little hand upon my arm, and moved with her in the direction she indicated.

"Do you believe in spirits?" she said, after a short silence. "Are you a spiritualist?"

"I laughed her to scorn. 'I used to laugh at it all once,' she said. 'But lately I have experienced phenomena attributable to no other cause. It is well you are come to us, for I sometimes have feared that if we can get no explanation of the persecutions to which we are subject we shall all go mad.'"

Further conversation was here cut short by our arrival at her domicile, which was one of a long series of one story buildings. The whole series had originally formed a carriage warehouse, or some such thing, but the proprietor having failed, the place had been cut up into compartments and let to bachelors or small families. Entering the door, which opened flush upon the street, we found ourselves in a small, but neatly furnished apartment, which had been formed by dividing off a portion of a large room by means of an unpainted wooden partition. A grooved rim of drab, so to speak, ran along the floor, up the walls and across the ceiling, in which were wedged a series of thin planks, the right side of each being grooved to admit the sharpened edge of its fellow. A door, also guiltless of paint, gave admittance through the right extremity of this partition to the inside room, which appeared to serve as the living room of the family, the front apartment being apparently intended as a sort of drawing-room.

It was in this apartment of honour that I, after a few words of greeting from her husband, who added to the peculiarities of expression observable in the faces of his wife and son a more decidedly scared look—was supplied with pen, ink, and paper, and entreated not to bother about their troubles until I had got through my own business. "It is enough," said Harriott, "that we only have you near us. I trust that you may not be disturbed by anything you may see or hear until your task is completed."

I was soon absorbed in my work. Mrs. S., busied with some fancy-work, occupying a sofa placed half within and half without the room, the rim which formed the partition passing beneath its centre, the door being a wide one, and when fully opened admitting a person sufficient space to pass despite this obstruction. The boy was seated on a stool near by, looking over some picture-book. S. himself, so far as I could judge, being stretched upon the hearth-rug in front of the fire.

Some half-hour might have passed thus in silence when I heard S. exclaim in an awestricken voice, "There it is again, Harrie."

"What, dear?" she asked. "The hand—up there by the cornice in the recess by the fireplace."

Glancing slyly at Mrs. S. I saw her turn several degrees paler than before, while she rose, as though governed by some kind of fascination, and approached the spot indicated. I heard her drag a chair along the carpet, and then mount upon it. "You are right," she said, in the tone of one whose suspicions are confirmed. "I cannot see it. I only know it is there by touching it."

"What nonsense is all this?" cried I, rising and breaking off my work in the middle of a sentence; "what morbid fancies are you indulging in? If you do not resist them you will die, a prey to your absurd hallucinations, because you give way to the terror they inspire. Have some sense; exercise your reason."

"Now for the test!" she cried. "If you can neither see nor feel this spectral hand that haunts us night and day, then I will disbelieve even my own senses, and will seek by medicines and removal to other scenes and by seeking fresh companionships to gain the health of mind which I have lost. If, on the contrary, it be sensible to your sight or touch, what then shall we believe?"

While speaking she descended from her chair, the intensest excitement visible in every nerve, and approached me slowly, one hand was held aloft, and by it she appeared to be dragging an invisible something which forcibly resisted.

"There," she said, placing her hand close to mine, "if you cannot see, can you not at least feel as I do?"

I grasped the air immediately on the other side of her little hand. No, it was not air I grasped. It was another hand, shaped like a human hand, but hard and cold as marble. Shuddering at the contact I shook it from me into the air. Then I saw it. A small, white, beautifully formed hand, cut off at the wrist, not broken off, but cut off, with a sharply-defined edge. As I flung it upward with my right hand it revolved several times in the air, and then I put out my left hand and caught it. I threw it seven or eight times thus from one hand to the other, and then, curious to see what the effect would be if I let it fall, I did not attempt to catch it. It did not fall. It vanished.

the contempt they deserve," and I turned back to my work.

"Well, you see there is something in it after all. Isn't it strange! Isn't it dreadful! Isn't it horrid! What can the explanation be?"

"We'll try some experiments presently, returned I; 'we'll see what that concern is made of. We'll break it, or blow it to pieces with a revolver, or something. Meantime, don't bother. I must finish this letter for the mail, and I plied my pen with desperate energy."

I was still writing when I was startled by a suppressed shriek from S. He called to his wife: "It is pressing its index finger on my brow, just between the eyes, here. It's heavy and cold—oh, freezing cold! Pull it off for Heaven's sake—pull it off!"

Harriott rushed to him and commenced (I suppose, for I went on obstinately writing) lugging at the wrist of the phantom. "That is better," said S. "Keep pulling! don't, don't let go your hold!" Then came a heavy fall. Harriott had fallen backward fainting with fright and exertion. A terrible shriek from her husband. I rushed into the room.

"It is all over," he said in a hoarse whisper. "It is leading my spirit from me, and it whispers it will return for Philip. If she is spared, Ned, take care of her. I bequeath her to you."

I knelt horror-struck at his side and placed my hand upon his heart, which had ceased to beat.

Then I rose slowly, oppressed with a nameless terror. Something icy cold touched my right hand. The cold, hard fingers insinuated themselves into my palm, then closed upon mine with a vice-like clasp. Resisting with all my force, I fell back upon the sofa. Coiling my left arm round the sofa head, I collected all my strength, but the hideous force raised me again and again to a sitting posture.

"Get up, you lazy beggar. It's a delightful clear frosty day, and Carey and the girls are waiting below with the tandem and no end of toboggans. Come, jump up! we'll have some fine fun!"

"Seedy, eh! Nightmare, was it? Well, I don't wonder. 'Didn't I tell you not to mix oysters and grog! Let this be a lesson to you. Drink Chablis, or sherry, if you will, or better still, drown the bivalves in good, honest, treble X stout. But, cocktails and saddlerocks! Never! Never! Never!"

Rubbing my eyes I discovered that Charley Goodfellow's cold hand was gripping mine and shaking me awake. Upon the bed were some sheets of paper covered with blots and illegible hieroglyphics which I had vainly endeavoured to convert into copy for the C. I. N. on the previous evening, and by their side reclined a small white hand of some ponderous substance, which your humble servant is in the habit of using as a paper weight. *Hinc ille lachrymæ.*

OUR CHESS COLUMN.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. S. Montreal.—Papers to hand. Many thanks. Correct solution, received of Problem No. 307.

Student, Montreal.—Correct solution received of Problem No. 303.

The activity manifested in chess circles on both sides of the Atlantic at the present time is very cheering, and we venture to predict that this activity will increase year by year, and that the game will ultimately become an every day amusement for all classes of society. Every enthusiastic chessplayer will do something towards bringing about such a wide spread appreciation of his favorite game, but we must chiefly look to chess clubs and chess societies as the means of producing the greatest success in this direction, and this leads us to ask what are we to expect at this fitting season of the year from the operations of the Canadian Chess Association? We asked a question of a similar nature some months ago, but we heard no response from those who were appointed to look after the interests of the Association, and we now repeat it. We have, in answer to kind enquiries, repeatedly said that we believe the Association is still in existence, but we have no means of stating where its vitality will next manifest itself. A President, Vice-President, Secretary and Managing Committee having been appointed, according to its constitution, we ought to know what they propose doing during the present season. We stated some months ago that we had been informed by a gentleman who was present at the last meeting of the Association at Ottawa that a resolution to the effect that a meeting should be held at the beginning of the year 1881 was passed by the members then present. Such being the case, the carrying out of this resolution most develop upon those now in office. The beginning of the year 1881 is very near now, but Canadian chessplayers, we believe, have heard nothing whatever of the next meeting of the Association.

In the French national tournament, which has just commenced, there are only seven competitors for the works of art offered by M. Gravy, President of the French Republic. The prominent names are Messrs. Clero, De Riviere and Rosenthal.

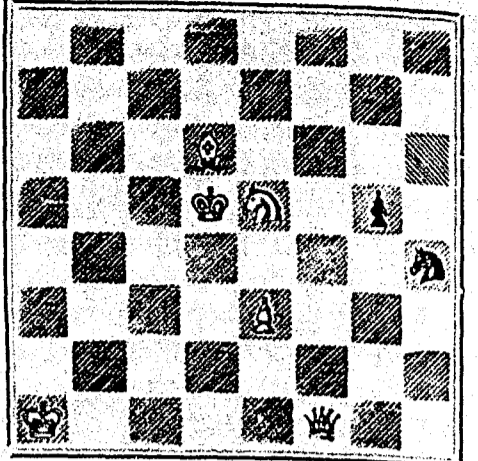
Capt. G. H. Mackenzie, the champion, as was announced in *The American*, arrived in Baltimore last Friday evening, on a visit to the Baltimore Chess Association. A large and enthusiastic assemblage of chess-players were at the Association's rooms to meet him, and the evening was passed very pleasantly, although no play was indulged in. It has not yet been definitely arranged as to the programme of play to take place next week, but some of the games between the champion and Mr. Alex. G. Sellman will certainly be contested on Monday and Tuesday evenings.—*Baltimore Advertiser*.

The following is the score of Capt. Mackenzie's play with his opponents at Philadelphia:

Mackenzie..... 2 Martinez..... 2 Drawn..... 0
Mackenzie..... 1 Davidson..... 1 Drawn..... 1
Mackenzie..... 0 Reichenheim..... 0 Drawn..... 1
Mackenzie..... 1 Elson..... 0 Drawn..... 1

—Turf, Field and Farm.

PROBLEM No. 308.
By the Rev. F. Bennett.
BLACK.



WHITE.

White to play and mate in two moves.

GAME 430TH.

Played at Philadelphia on Friday, the 13th inst. between Capt. Mackenzie and Mr. Martinez.

White.—(Mr. Martinez.) Black.—(Capt. Mackenzie.)
1. P to K4 1. P to K4
2. K Kt to B3 2. Q Kt to B3
3. B to K5 3. Kt to B3
4. Kt to B3 4. B to Kt5
5. Kt to Q5 5. B to B4
6. P to Q3 6. P to K R3
7. P to B3 7. P to R3
8. B to R4 8. P to Q Kt1
9. B to Kt3 9. P to Q3
10. Castles 10. Kt to K2
11. P to Q4 11. P takes P
12. Kt takes Q Kt 12. Q takes Kt
13. P takes P 13. B to Kt3
14. P to K5 14. P takes P
15. Kt takes P

Mr. Martinez has now acquired what La Bourdonnais would call "une petite position," and he handles it like a great master.

16. Kt to Kt6 15. B to K3
B takes B wins the exchange, but the line of play adopted is more stylish and is such a combination as Morphy would have made.

17. P takes B 16. B takes B
18. R to K5 17. P takes Kt
19. Q to B3 18. Kt to K5
20. B to B4 19. R to K B4
21. R takes Kt 20. Kt to Q2
22. R to K3 21. Q to B3

The finishing touch of a gem. It must have been a novel acclamation to the Captain to be an involuntary contributor to such a production.

23. Q to Kt4 (ch) and wins. 22. R to R2

SOLUTIONS.

Solution of Problem No. 303.

White. Black
1. B to K B5 1. Auy
2. Mates acc.

Solution of Problem for Young Players No. 304.

WHITE. BLACK.
1. P to Q B4 1. P to Q Kt4
2. B to R4 (ch by dia) 2. K moves
3. B to B3 mates

PROBLEM FOR YOUNG PLAYERS, No. 305.

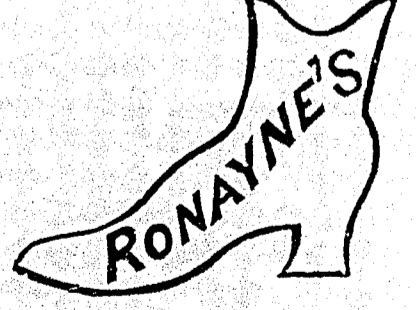
White. Black.
K at Q R4
R at Q Kt3 K at Q R4
B at Q Kt7 R at Q2
B at K B3 B at K R6
Kt at Q5 B at Q5
Pawn at Q R7 Pawn at K4
White to play and mate in two moves.

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