

A PRINCESS OF BOHEMIA.

(By Annie E. T. Searing.)



THE THIRD EXCUSE FOR CROQUET.

through, if this can be done while the "non-playing side" are looking at another game.

The Turn.—A player when his turn comes round may request each ball once in succession without making a single point or in any way furthering the game, and he may do this again and again at every subsequent turn. In such a case the only remedy is to avoid asking him again. The style or play of such a person, however exasperating, cannot be strictly said to "give you a turn."

Commencement of the Game.—It is often difficult to tell from the demeanour of the players when a particular game of croquet began. If both parties look fairly bright and fresh it may be assumed that they have not been "at it" for more than six or seven hours. In tournaments every game should, if possible, be begun before breakfast. In case of games continued after dinner candles should not be balanced on the hoops, but inserted in the clips invented for that purpose.



WHILE THE NON-PLAYING SIDE ARE NOT LOOKING.

ABOUT TEAS.

The real reason for the different colour and flavour between green and black teas is that in the green tea of commerce the leaves are dried and cured as quickly as possible after they are picked and rolled, while the leaves that are intended for black are exposed to the action of the sun and air for at least 24 hours before being fired, being meanwhile raked and tossed about until they become soft, fleecy, and pliant; and again, after being fired, they are exposed to the oxidising influences of the atmosphere in a moist state for hours in short, in a sort of fermentation—previously to being fired a second time. These leaves are then dried over a slow fire. The method of curing also accounts for the effect that green tea has on some persons—caused, it is believed, by the greater quantity of volatile oil, which, from the rapid process of curing, remains in the leaves.

Miss Ethel (confidentially): "Do you know, Clara, that I had two offers of marriage last week?"

Miss Clara (with enthusiasm): "Oh, I am delighted, dear. Then the report is really true that your uncle left you his money?"

Van Rensselaer had sat through many an embassy dinner, eating messy dishes out of ribbons and frilled papers, and offering his polyglot remarks to many a foreign celebrity, but he glanced toward his left-hand neighbour with some apprehension as he finished his soup, making a hasty study of the Princess, with her blue-black hair and her swarthy side face. There was a display of shoulder and blazing green jewels in the corsage, an impression of large outline and a persuasive personality. Clearly she was not attractive, he decided, and then, as she finished what she had been saying to the man who took her out, and turned toward Van Rensselaer, he instantly reversed his judgment under the compulsion of her dark eyes. Whether or not she was handsome by ordinary standards he could not have told, but attractive, interesting certainly, and inexplicably odd. With her large red-lipped mouth and gleaming white teeth she might have been a quadroon, or she might have posed to good effect as a gypsy queen in private theatricals. She spoke to him in French.

"I suppose you are a senator, or a general, or perhaps a cabinet member? You American men are so ostentatiously plain in dress. You abstain so carefully from wearing your decorations on your evening coats that a poor foreigner may not know."

He laughed. She was audacious, even for a princess.

"I am sorry, your Highness, but I have neither office nor insignia to my name. Indeed, I have been puzzling you inglorious head not a little to know why I am placed so illustriously at your side!"

But he knew, and so did she, that it was because he spoke French like a Parisian and was the cleverest diner-out in Washington. It was not until the first entree that they again took a turn, and she passed with evident relief from the heavy German of the Austrian ambassador to her more accustomed tongue. They tasted and hazarded suggestions as to the composition of the dish before them.

"Permit me, Monsieur," she broke off suddenly, "allow me one more guess, more intimate—personal! I am a clairvoyant, it has been said, and I have taken a great liberty. I have been reading your thoughts—will you allow me to tell you?"

Van Rensselaer bowed, smiling his incredulity.

"You do me much honour, Madame!"

"Very well, you were looking down the table a moment ago when I addressed you, past the green and gold Bohemian glass. I do not know what you saw, but it was something very far away—over seas, I think." He flushed slightly and assented. "We spoke of the entree, your mind on other things. I said 'It is made of fish. I fancy, and you replied, 'Since it is a game of guess, I choose lobster.' What you were thinking was: 'It is the world-old mess of pottage—to be henceforth my daily bread!' Next ce pas, Monsieur, un bon hasard?"

Van Rensselaer finished his wine and set down his glass. He was not smiling now, and the flush had died out of his cheek. He looked at her with a gravity very like displeasure.

"Your Highness is indeed clairvoyant. It was not a guess; it was the truth. Princesses always tell the truth, do they not?"

She made no reply, and the jewels in her piled-up hair burned not half so deeply as her eyes. He wished that people who were clairvoyant would not fall to his lot at dinner. It was distinctly uncomfortable, and not conducive to good digestion.

"Is it too much," said the Princess softly, "to ask what the birthright was?"

It was too much, decidedly, and yet before he knew he answered, "Music."

"Ah," murmured his questioner, "and now?"

"Now," said Van Rensselaer, smiling once more as he shrugged his shoulders, "now, I am Darby. But perhaps Darby and Joan are not indigenous to Russian Society."

Through the orchids a face was smiling greetings to him.

"How despairingly charming!" sighed the Russian as she laid down her lorgnette, "and that is Joan!"

There was an exasperation for Van Rensselaer in the finality of this woman's intuitions.

"Princess," he said when next they turned toward each other, "I am haunted by a resemblance, I think my

sub-conscious mind, if I have one, had gone wandering over time and space to verify it when you caught me napping. I had never seen but one woman who looked like you—it was years ago in my student days. She also was a princess—of Bohemia!"

"That was once my country," she replied.

Van Rensselaer laughed. "But not hers—or mine. There is another and greater Bohemia where such as you may not dwell. Yours is geographically located. The other is not; it is no man's land. As it happened that other princess belonged to both Bohemias."

"Who was she—and what?"

"Andou me, she had your eyes, but not your ancestry. She was a gypsy violinist in Prague. I have never since seen eyes like hers until to-night, and I shall never again hear a tone like that from her violin."

If he thought he had punished her he was mistaken. She drew in her breath with an odd little sigh and looked at him from under her lowered lids.

"I again read your thought, Monsieur, and I honour you for it. You are saying to yourself that her real rank was as far above mine as your Bohemia was a happier land to dwell in than—let us say, Russia!"

It was after dinner when the women were grouped in knots in the long drawing room that the Princess managed to learn what she wanted to know of her neighbour at the table.

"Van Rensselaer—oh yes!" said the hostess. "We call him Fortunatus, he's such a lucky dog. He's the last of an impoverished old American family—if there is such a thing as an old family in so young a country—and was quite out of suits with fortune when he met his wife. I believe he was knocking about Europe consorting with all sorts of shabby musical people, studying to be a pianist. She fell so desperately in love with him that her father was obliged to allow the marriage. She had always had her whims gratified, and she threatened to kill herself if denied this one. There was some delay about it and then the wedding took place, with the compact—so I have been told—that he was to give up his profession. I fancy that was no great hardship," she laughed, "as the price was three millions down and the hand of the richest heiress in America. It is not a difficult matter to be rich, Princess!"

"I think it is sometimes very difficult," was the surprising answer.

It was at the bidding of a scented note with a coronet on it that Van Rensselaer found himself a few days later entering the apartments of the Russian.

"It's a thundering annoying sort of thing having your mind read, and I hope she won't be up to it again," he grumbled.

She was clad in flowing red garments, ornamented with gold filagree, and a finely wrought gold girdle hung down from the clasp to the hem. Van Rensselaer felt the costume to be so barbaric as to be out of good form—too theatrical, and yet her manner was simple enough.

"We were speaking that night," she began as if they had just left off, "of music, Hungarian music, or were we only thinking of it? I was hoping you would play for me to-day."

"I never play, never touch a piano any more," and he felt a thrill of annoyance as if some one had pushed against him roughly.

The Princess arose and crossed the room, taking up a violin that lay on the open piano. "Then you will listen to me?" she said.

It was Schubert, and she played with such mastery of the instrument, such sympathy and love of the work, that Van Rensselaer was moved out of his reserve. He laid aside his hat and gloves, and sat down by the piano. Once more he threaded through exquisite harmonies and filled the scheme with the piano accompaniment he knew so well. For more than an hour they played with no words save "Do you remember this?" or "Another composer has solved that problem thus—you know it," leading and following by turns through those paths where only musicians may walk in happy ignorance.

"And now," said the Princess, at last, "do you remember?" She stood straight and tall in her barbaric reds, the gold ornaments gleaming in the late slanting light, and Van Rensselaer had no need to wait for the strains that were coming. He was back again in student days and through the cigar-smoke of the music-hall in Prague, he could see the Gitana more slim and girlish, but, with the same strange eyes and the blue-black hair, while above the clink of the beer glasses and the soft shuffling of the waiters'

feet, he could hear the wifery of her gypsy music—that half-remembered strain that had teased him so often through the intervening years. Back and forth flashed the bow while her figure swayed to the mad notions, and then came the sad cadence with the heartbreak in it that often characterises the Hungarian music. Here she broke off and laid the violin on the piano, then she came and put her hand on Van Rensselaer's shoulder.

"You know me now. I also was a Bohemian and I also sold my birthright for a mess of pottage! Ah, comrade, it is a grand country, that Bohemia—but we were not worthy of it, and there is no going back! But it is still left to us to be true—true to a compact, and one dishonour is enough!"

The Princess held out her hand in farewell and dismissal, and Van Rensselaer kissed it reverently. He felt unsteady on his feet as if he had been drinking.

"Good-bye," she said, brokenly. "I shall not see you again, for I am going away to-morrow,—back to my Darby in Russia. I shall think of you sometimes, when I dream of Bohemia, and I shall pray that you be not too unhappy in your exile. Be good to your Joan!"

MYSTERIOUSLY WARNED.

Some of us know instances of that subtle sixth sense which is apt to efface women more than men, and which is so mysterious in character that its existence is often denied. A lady sat sewing in her sitting-room, while in another chamber the nurse was putting the baby to sleep. As the nurse came out, she said to her mistress:—

"I think, madam, that the little dear will sleep for full three hours."

The nurse went downstairs and the mother sewed on. Suddenly a desire seized her to go and take the sleeping child from its crib.

"What nonsense!" she said to herself. "Baby is sound asleep. Nurse just put her down. I shall not go." Instantly, however, a still stronger power urged the mother to go to her baby; and after a moment she rose, half vexed with herself.

The baby was asleep in her bed, safely tucked in with soft white and pink blankets. One small hand was thrown above the brown head. The hand was half open, the fingers slightly curved, and the palm as rosy as the depths of a lovely shell.

"My baby!" whispered the mother, adoring the little sleeper as mothers will. "My own dear little baby!"

She bent over suddenly, a third time, impelled by that imperious force which was controlling her, and, for no apparent reason, took the sleeping baby in her arms and went swiftly into the other room.

She had scarcely crossed the threshold when a startling sound caused her to look back. Through a stifling cloud of thick grey dust she saw that the ceiling had fallen, lying heaviest of all upon that spot where, but for her mystic warning, her precious child would even then be lying.

MARRIED IN A SHEET.

It is an old idea that a husband whose wife at her marriage was clothed only in a sheet, or in the most elementary linen garment, was not in any way liable for the debts previously contracted by her, says the "Lore and Legends of the English Church." Ancient parish registers and local traditions give ample illustration of this quaint idea. At Chiltern All Saint's, "Whitby" is the following entry:—"John Bridmore and Ann Selwood were married October 17, 1714; the aforesaid Ann Selwood was married in her smock, without any clothes or headgear on." Similar cases occurred at Gorton Green in 1738, and at Otley in 1808. Avis' "Birmingham Gazette" for 1797 vouches for an extraordinary story, according to which a bride disrobed in the vestry, and appeared at the altar without even the amount of clothing worn by the ladies in the above cases.

The latest example of which the present writer knows comes from Lincolnshire. The register of Gedney has this commonplace entry:—"December 2, 1842, David Wilkinson, full age, bachelor, labourer, of Gedney," to "Susan Faran, full age, widow, of Gedney." Local tradition supplements this brief account by relating that the bride was dressed in a sheet stitched about her, with holes cut for the passage of her bare arms.