

hall, to see if the latter hold any of the denounced—any heads which are due to Madame la République—any job of work for neighbour Samson. "Friends depart," while the lingers around subdue their voices, and strain for a smile. Fouche himself shivers in his shoes, and his fingers shake as they move the pieces. One youth alone meets Robespierre's glance, and quails not. Napoleon, the young lieutenant, is there among the spectators, and like earrings of bronze are his impassible features. Buonaparte at one time played chess at the Regence daily; while waiting, like the sailor whistling for a wind, to get employment of the Directory. The sun of Montebello was yet to rise.

Napoleon was a great advocate for chess, which he practised constantly. He was even wont to say, that he frequently struck out new features relatively to a campaign, first suggested by the occurrence of certain positions of the pieces on the chess-board. He played chess all his life. In his youth, at college, in manhood, on shipboard, in camp, en bivouac. He solaced himself with chess in Egypt, in Russia, in Elba; and, lastly, on that darksome rock which yet contains his bones.

As might be anticipated, Napoleon, as a chess player, was not really of great force. His mind demanded a larger field for the expansion of its faculties. His chess was that of Marengo, of Austerlitz, of Jena, and of Eylau. Upon our mosaic of sixty-four squares I could have given him the rook; upon his own board he could afford odds to Julius Caesar. Buonaparte had no time to make chess a study. He played the openings badly, and was impatient if his adversary dwelt too long upon his move. Each minute of the clock was life to a mind so energetic. In the middle stage of the game, when the skirmish was really complicated of aspect, Napoleon frequently struck out a brilliant coup. Under defeat at chess, the great soldier was sore and irritable.

The great variety of character developed in the Cafe de la Regence is not the least interesting feature of the picture. The French are the worst losers in the world; in more ways than one. I have seen them, when checkmated, dash the men about the floor, with as many sore tonnerres as would sink a seventy-four. They are, moreover, not too exact in the settlement of certain small debts of honour, for which judgment is sometimes claimed in our chequer card. A very small stake is necessarily risked at the Regence; it being the custom that the loser on the balance pays the sixteen-sous tribute levied by the garcon for the use of the chess equipment for the sitting; no matter how long. A half-franc or franc is occasionally wagered on the game; in addition; and this slender slip of silver creates a system of petty Gouckism, which, like that of Newmarket, boasts many branches. While you go on game after game, dropping your coin kindly and readily Monsieur is funny and gentlemanly enough; but turn the talk on him, and the pestes and sacres break bounds audibly. I once played, days a youngster, in the Regence, several days consecutively, with a regular old soldier, at half-franc the game, and departed after each sitting, minus some two or three francs. Now it happened that upon one glorious occasion, rising to leave, I found myself to be, for the first time, on the credit side of the account. One half franc was the sum due to me; and I could not forbear smiling at the rueful look of my very respectable friend on casting up the score. Poor fellow! deeply, and slowly, and vainly, did he dive for the needful. The silver would not come; the pockets were free from encumbrance. Feeling pity for the man's position, I turned to quit the cafe, saying, "never mind," and all that. "Monsieur," cried the gentleman, gravely, "Je suis Français—je suis homme d'honneur—what do you mean in going thus without your money?—rendez-moi un demi-franc." Of course I complied, handing him the change I supposed him to require, and presenting my palm to grasp the larger piece of silver in return. "Now, sir," quoth monsieur, dropping the cash into his pocket with a low bow. "Now, sir, I owe you a franc, which I shall do myself the honour to pay the very first opportunity."

This last recollection walked into my mind through the circumstance of a man's crowning the room, a fair average sample of a class not unknown, either to the frequenters of the Regence or of waiting for a fare. When a flat draws

the London chess divan, as a tribe of Arabs to whom the "little shilling" is a thing of system. He claims an especial paragraph; and even the devil shall have his due. So stand back, ladies and gentlemen, and make room for the great Monsieur Pillefranc.

The Sieur Pillefranc dwells in a mansarde, for he is high of soul, and loves to soar above the crowd. He has neither employment nor sinecure, beyond an annuity of three hundred francs yearly; and depends for further means upon Providence and the chess-board. Poor as he really is, write him a billet without styling him proprietaire, and your chance of reply were slender. At the Cafe de la Regence, seven days in the week this player occupies one particular chair, the leather bottom of which he has worn to rags three several times during his five-and-thirty years' war. A good chess practitioner of what I term the cast-iron school, he plays with great rapidity; and so as he despatches his enemy, cares not how. He knocks down knights and bishops as though they were ninepins, rarely winning by checkmate; but preferring the certainty of picking off your men in detail, one at a time, until the board is a blank. In aiming at mate, he knows he might make a blunder, even with queen and rook against a pawn; and the wise will run no risk. M. Pillefranc is the most modest of bipeds. He speaks ever of himself as a mere block, stock, and stone. He owns to having acquired the rudiments of the game—plays daily pour se desennuyer merely—and protests he would not encounter La Bourdonnais at the rook for pins; the truth being that he is about what is termed, in club parlance, a knight-player. In 35 years, M. Pillefranc has never purposely played a single party with a better player—I say "purposely," because the greatest tactician may now and then catch a Tartar. M. Pillefranc plays upon a system; his system being to win. A stranger enters the cafe, and is invited smilingly by the Pillefranc to play a game—of course, for nothing. The new comer wins once, twice, thrice; and monsieur then quietly tries on the question of "Voulez-vous interesser la partie?"—the stake proposed never, I must own, exceeding vingt sous. But somehow it happens, although really I know not how, that, after the franc is wagered, the stranger wins less and less, and at last cannot win at all; but yet goes away comfortable, for if he lost the four last games (at a franc), did he not win the first three? (played gratis). An appointment is made for the next day; and the Frenchman, hating to win money, chivalrously proposes to render odds. "I think, I could give, perhaps, pawn and move," says he; and I, who have looked over his play some years, think he could give a castle! But even at the pawn, Pillefranc will not take every game. No; monsieur knows better than to kill the bird which lays the eggs, and stands so quietly to have its tail salted. Pillefranc wins at each sitting a small but certain majority. He speaks with profound respect of the stranger's skill; and the latter boasts in society that he plays daily with the great Monsieur Pillefranc, who can only give him pawn and move!

Should a chess-player of acknowledged force ask our adventurer to play, the Frenchman has the headache or is going away, or is waiting for somebody—from the kingdom of the moon! You are fain to take the excuse; but, as you glance from your "Galignani" to the stove by which sits monsieur, you may mark his cold, grey eye, watching the door—like a cat under a gooseberry-bush looking out for a fat sparrow. A greenhorn is not long wanting, and monsieur nails him down to the mahogany; taking care, as you are within hearing, to tender the invite in a low tone, that you may believe this was the gentleman he told you he expected. Should the preliminary game, with a fresh hand cause Pillefranc to believe he has hooked a trout too strong for his tackle, with that one battle does the war then and thereafter for ever cease and determine. Should the visitor, again, decline pre-emptorily to play for money, most assuredly will he never henceforth be honoured with the light of M. Pillefranc's countenance over the chess field.

The family of Pillefranc is large, but its members never play chess with each other. Wolf tears not wolf, thief robs not thief. You may spy at times a brace of the Pillefrancs sitting amicably side by side, engaged in conversation; each watching to do a little business on his own account, like Thames watermen near, the scramble to secure him is too ludicrous, either Greek popping the question in so smiling and indifferent a tone

of voice. The Pillefrancs never talk of their profession, but it is conventionally assumed that they are all honourable men—most perfect gentlemen. As the foulest thing has it its use, so may M. Pillefranc be made serviceable to the tyro who wants a block to chop at. Three hours' amusement are surely worth a crown; and thus you get a pennyworth for your penny, and take it with your eyes open. And with this, M. Pillefranc, I bid you God speed—an revoir. It is to be noted that none of the first-rate artists practise the dirty tricks of Pillefranc. They render large odds, and are quite satisfied to have the turn in their favour.

NOTES AND NEWS.

Auckland Chess Club.

The leading scores in the level tourney are Grierson, 6½ wins out of 7 games played; Miles 4—7; Miller 3½—7. Messrs Wingfield, Ewen, and Freeman have scored less than fifty per cent of their games; and Mr. Davies has only played four games out of which he won two.

New Zealand Association.

QUARTERLY COUNCIL MEETING.

The quarterly council meeting of the New Zealand Chess Association was held on the 18th inst. The following delegates were present:—B. B. Allen (Auckland C.C.), F. H. Kelling (Auckland W.M. Club and Timaru), H. L. James (Dishborne), W. E. Mason (Wellington and Oamaru), A. Gyles (Westport), R. J. Barnes (Otago C.C., Rangitikei and Wellington W.M. Club), A. G. Fell (Canterbury C.C. and Napier C.C.), and W. J. Harper (South Wellington C.C.) Mr. Allen was voted to the chair.

The action of the hon. sec. in ordering a further 100 copies of the Congress Book at a cost of £3, was unanimously approved. It is estimated that the loss on this publication will only be about £2 or £3.

It was decided to vote £1 10s. to the Blackburne testimonial. This, with the amounts received from clubs, makes the amount to be remitted to England £5 5s. This sum is in addition to the amounts which have been remitted direct by other clubs.

The revision of rules relating to the annual championship tournament was then taken—the various delegates reporting the instructions received from their respective clubs. The decision of the clubs is as follows:—

1. Reduction in the rate of play from 18 to 15 moves per hour (as from the commencement of the game) was carried by 40 votes to 7. The competitors, therefore, no longer have the option of overstepping the time limit in the first hour and making up the shortage of moves in the second hour.

2. Both proposals for excluding from the championship tournament competitors whose playing strength is not up to standard were lost. The present not too satisfactory position, therefore, continues.

3. It was decided, by 38 votes to 9, to retain the existing rule for drawing the rounds of play, whereby brothers and members of the same club have to meet in the opening rounds.

4. The proposal to institute a junior championship for New Zealand was rejected by 27 votes to 20.

5. The proposal to reduce the maximum number of rounds to be played per week from nine to eight was carried by 35 votes to 12.

6. The proposal that official records shall be open to newspaper representatives, under such restrictions as the council may direct, was carried by 39 votes to 5.

7. It was decided, by 37 votes to 10, that in every case of a tie at the congress the prize or prizes affected thereby shall be equally divided, with the proviso that in the case of a tie for the first place there shall be a play-off merely to decide the championship.

8. Of the alternative schemes for a more equitable division of the prize fund Mr. James' proposal was carried. Briefly put, the prize-winners will be those who score over half their games, and the prize-fund will be divided amongst them in proportion to the points scored over and above one-half of their games.

"A FAST PUNCHER."

"Do I remember my bout with Alphabetical Douglas?" said Snowy Baker to a reporter in Sydney last week. "I should think I do. It was absolutely the fastest contest I ever took part in. Why, it was just one wild apart from the first gun to the last."

J. W. H. T. Douglas, the well-known English amateur boxer and all-round athlete, who is known as "Alphabetical" Douglas, will accompany the M.C.C. team that is to visit Australia next season.

"How did you find his two-handed punch affect you?" asked the reporter.

"It didn't trouble me seriously," replied Baker. "We had a whirlwind go, and at the end of it there was not a mark on either of us. The contest went the full four rounds, and I found Douglas an extraordinarily fast customer. He is a two-handed fighter, but is better at in-fighting than standing off and using his punch with his full weight behind it. He had evidently learned his in-fighting from the Americans, for he uses both hands freely to the body and jaw when he gets in close.

"Douglas is a fine stamp of an athlete, and if you were to see him in the street, you would pick him out at once as an athlete. He is a clean-cut style of a man, a little taller than I am, but not quite so thickly set. He has a strong face and a strong personality. In England he is regarded as a good all-round athlete, and as a boxer he is a first-class man, taken either on the amateur or professional standard. He has the American crouch, a fact due to his having done a deal of fighting with the Americans when they visited London.

"When Douglas stepped into the ring on the occasion of our meeting I thought I had never seen a more perfectly conditioned man. He looked the pink of perfection, and he was all that, too.

"A peculiarity about him which struck me in an unpleasant manner was the way in which he guarded himself from a sudden attack while shaking hands at the commencement of the contest. As he walked into the centre of the ring to shake hands he held his left hand up to guard his face, at the same time standing off as far as he could when putting out his right hand to me. This attitude struck me as all the more extraordinary owing to the fact that it was an amateur contest. He gained the decision on points, and although there was a great difference of opinion amongst the audience as to which of us had won or whether it was a draw, I felt satisfied that Douglas did win on points. I had had three fights previously that afternoon, and in each instance had the bad luck to be drawn against a Britisher, and a tough proposition."

"Would you like to meet Douglas when he comes out here?"

"I would dearly love to have a spar with him," replied Snowy, smiling. "He is considered to be an all-round athlete, in the prime of life and condition, and I think I am also able to fill the bill. If such a bout could be arranged, it might be made a feature of an evening's entertainment, the proceeds of which could be devoted to charity."

Solution of Position No. 109.

The bishop is on the wrong colour to be effective in stopping mate. The Rook consequently can drive him to a square where he can be attacked, and mate threatened at the same time, e.g.:

- 1. R—Kt3 ..... B—Kt
- 2. R—Kt4 ..... B—B4
- 3. R—Kt4 ..... B—K7 (a)
- 4. R—B2 ..... B—B3
- 5. R—Qf2 ..... B—Q2
- 6. R—Qk2 and wins.
- (a) If 3. .... B—K7; 4. R—B2, B—B5; 5. R—Qb2, B—R3 (b); 6. R—B6, B—Kt2; 7. R—Kt 6 and wins.
- (b) If 5. .... B—Kt4; 6. R—B8 ch, B—K1; 7. R—Q8, and wins.

By Horwitz and Kling.

TO THE ELECTORS OF WAITEMATA.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I have the honour to announce that I shall be a candidate for your suffrage in the Liberal interest at the forthcoming Election of Members of the House of Representatives. Yours respectfully, W. J. NAPIER.