

The Family Circle

THE TWO LITTLE BOYS.

The good little boy and the bad little boy
Both live in the house with me;
But it is quite strange—I can look and look,
Yet only one boy I see—
Just one little boy with sparkling eyes
And the funniest pudgy nose,
All brimful of life from the top of his head
To the tips of his ten stubby toes.

And yet there are two of him, I am sure,
For one is a bad little boy,
And I am sorry he lives here
To bother the good little boy.
Yes, pester and bother the good little boy
Till he sometimes drives him away;
And the bad little boy is alone with me
For the rest of the long, long day.

And I ask him to go for the good little boy,
And bring him again to me;
But I take him up and hold him close
While I talk to him lovingly.
And while I am talking he sometimes laughs,
But oftener far he cries—
And I see that the good little boy is back
As I look into the bad boy's eyes.

NAPOLÉON AND THE CURE.

During Napoleon's sojourn in the town of Rambouillet, France, there were many days when no hunting, no concerts, no plays relieved the monotony of the work in which he was engaged with his Ministers. To compensate for this dearth of amusement, the evenings were spent in playing cards, chess, checkers, etc. Nine tables were arranged in the great square salon of the palace, one in the centre being reserved for the Emperor himself, should he feel disposed to take part in a game.

One evening he happened to approach a table on which had been placed a set of chessmen.

'Come, Duroc,' said he to his grand marshal, 'are you anything of a chess player?'

'No, sire.'

'Well, see whether you can find among these gentlemen one who is, and request him to give me a game.'

Turning to a general officer with whom he had been talking a few moments before, Napoleon resumed the interrupted conversation. Duroc in the meanwhile inquired on all sides for a chess player, but among those present not one had the least idea of the difficult game.

On reporting his want of success, the Emperor asked whether the Mayor of Rambouillet was present.

'Yes, sire,' answered Duroc. 'I saw him a moment ago.'

'Ask him to come here.'

Duroc went off, and soon returned with the mayor. 'Mayor,' said Napoleon, 'have you not in your town some one who plays the game of chess?'

'Sire, the pastor of our parish understands the game, but I cannot answer for his skill.'

'Never mind! He will do. Is he a good sort—companionable and patient?'

'Sire, he is a very worthy man, venerated and loved by all the townsfolk, especially the poor.'

'I must make his acquaintance,' said Napoleon, and, in obedience to his order, the grand marshal left the salon.

A quarter of an hour later there entered a hale, white-haired old man whose frank, open countenance was as venerable as it was prepossessing. He was the cure of Rambouillet. On being presented to the Emperor, he bowed respectfully and turned a little compliment quite in keeping with his age and profession.

'Monsieur le cure,' replied Napoleon, 'I hear that you are a good chess player, and I would like to try my skill against yours. Come, sit down here, and play like a brave champion. Don't spare me if I make mistakes.'

'Well, well, sire! I once played the game passably well, but now I am out of practice. When one neglects an art, one soon grows incapable.'

'Yes, but chess is not an art; it is a real science. Come, come! All rusty as you think yourself, I am sure that you will recall a move or two. Let us begin.'

The cure seated himself opposite the Emperor. Napoleon put his hand in his waistcoat pocket, drew out some twenty-franc pieces, and placed one of them on the table, saying:

'We must make the game interesting, but not ruinous. We will play only a twenty-franc game. My dear cure, your money is the patrimony of your poor, and I would not have you risk the least portion of it at play. You and Duroc here shall be partners and your shares of stock will be quite equal—you giving your skill and he his money.'

'But, sire,' replied the pastor, 'the grand marshal has perhaps a less favorable opinion of my skill than you have. He who has the honor of being your companion in arms must know better than any one else that your opponents never triumph.'

This compliment, arising so naturally from the subject and pronounced with perfect candor, flattered Napoleon far more than the most extravagant eulogies of his courtiers, and he smilingly replied:

'Monsieur le cure, both Duroc and I are your parishioners at present. You should not try to spoil either of us.'

The game began. It was indeed a strange spectacle, the powerful Emperor engaged in a playful contest with a modest old priest. The great conqueror then in the zenith of a glory that seemed destined never to fade—he who with a word could set half a million of men marching from one extremity of Europe to the other—was soon deeply meditating the movements of a few knights across a chess-board.

Napoleon was completely routed by the cure, who won five successive games. At the end of the fifth game, Napoleon laughingly arose and said to his adversary, in his most amiable manner:

'My dear cure, you have given me a capital lesson, and I will profit by it. I have learned more about chess to-night than during the past twenty years that I have played the game. You have beaten me unmercifully.'

'Your Majesty is invincible on every other field,' answered the pastor: 'the least you can expect is to be beaten at chess. Moreover, sire, you owe your defeat to the rapidity of your play. That style is successful sometimes, but it is not always fortunate when one has an adversary who is slow, patient, and experienced.'

Without intending it, the good priest had given Napoleon another lesson in strategy.

The great personages who had surrounded the Emperor's table during the game made no comments on the results. The cure took the five gold pieces, and, approaching Duroc, said in a half-whisper:

'Of this sum your share is fifty francs; the rest is for charity.'

'Keep them, I beg you, and distribute them for my intention among your poor.'

'It shall be as you wish,' said the cure.

In the meantime Napoleon had been explaining the causes of his defeat to the bystanders. Turning again to the priest, he remarked:

'Monsieur le cure, you have given me a charming evening, and I thank you for it. But I hope to get even with you the next time we play.' Then, changing his tone, he went on: 'How old are you?'

'Seventy-two, sire. For forty-five years I have prayed for France in the exercise of my ministry.'

'Well, continue, my dear cure, to pray for France and for me.'

They did not meet again. The pastor of Rambouillet died in 1813, and the Empire was then near its downfall.—*Ave Maria.*