

A GAME OF CHECKERS.

How Young "Grover" Cleveland Defeated the Village Boaster.

There comes a pleasant story to my ears of President Cleveland, says "Halston" in the New York Times. It goes to show that in his younger days, before ambitious thoughts began to surge through his brain, he could not have been the sententious, phlegmatic person over whom Washington correspondents are worrying themselves to death with bits of description just now. On one occasion, at least, he saw the humorous side of a little episode and enjoyed a quiet laugh. Young Mr. Cleveland—'Grover' was his title in the days I write of—happened to be spending a few days at the home of a relative in a respectable hamlet, one of those places whose placid excitements alternated among the railroad station, the meeting house, and the village store, where the mail was pigeon-holed and everything from rum and calico to flat head nails and ginger cakes was doled out. The young man's visit was during the winter, when the place was desolate and dreary enough. When he got his bearings, tired of tramping around in the snow and ice, he sometimes dropped in to 'Uncle Silas's', the village store. One gray-skied afternoon he came upon the regulation circle of gossips. The familiar old Franklin was blazing out it's heat over in the corner and the solons were busy ruminating and varying the monotony of their thoughts with frequent 'chaws.' One of the characters of the place was sandy-haired, small-eyed, pucker-faced Ike Sanders, a prodigious boaster and a self-constituted authority from the text of the parson's last sermon to the shingling of the dilapidated school house. This local Sir Oracle was a confirmed checker player. Easy and shiftless, the long winter hours were passed by him up at Uncle Silas's, where from a favorite corner he watched or victims. On the afternoon that Grover entered, the excitement in the corner seemed to be running over. Even Uncle Silas had quitted his seat behind the counter, and with his spectacles perched up among his thin locks, his hands clasped on his backbone, he stood eagerly watching the checker board. A milder-faced, middle-aged little man was nervously bent over Ike's slow and impressive moves of the checkers. The game was close, and Sanders' opponent, no other than the village schoolmaster, had held a slight advantage; suddenly Ike surrendered one of his men to the foe, who promptly seized the opportunity. Another man was yielded, and then the trap became apparent, and the devoted dominion rushed to his ruin.

'Ha ha! no no! Why you can't play checkers any more than you can scrape the sky,' was Isaac's taunt as he grasped his victory.

'If ye'd set down and study the board for a couple o' year ye might win a game once in a while, but sho' yer all poor fool folks at checkers ruin' here anyhow.'

The poor schoolmaster, his thin cheeks pinkish with mortification, shrank back with a faint excuse for his defeat. Ike carelessly rearranged the draughts, boastfully placed the board over on the firkin, and looked up with a challenge in his eye. 'Say, Uncle Silas,' he called out, 'have ye got anybody else thinkin' they can play checkers here? No? Well I guess yer haint; so's nobody wants to play about with me, ye might as well put the board away.' Uncle Silas rubbed his wrinkled hand across his forehead, admitted that Isaac was a master at the game, and was making preparations to place the well fingered checkers behind him on the desk, when the young stranger, pitying the defeated schoolmaster, having watched the game with some interest, and inclined to attribute its loss more to nervousness than lack of skill, found voice.

'I say, Mr. Sanders, would you mind trying a game with me?'

'With you? Sho', young fellow, you don't want to play against Ike Sanders!'

'Well, I would be willing to try.'

'Oh, come, you can't play nothin' against me; I'm tired of beatin' this village, anyhow. Now, take the advice of a friend and don't waste your time, young man.'

'I might give you some trouble, though.'

'Humph! you're sassy enough about it, and to take down your conceit a peck or two I'll let you have a game.'

Once more the firkin was moved into place, and the knot of spectators peered over the shoulders of the contestants, and old Silas again resumed his wonted attitude. As the game advanced there was no sound in the room save the clatter of the wooden blocks as they changed from square to square. The young player's black men wedged themselves boldly in among the 'whites.' Isaac began to pucker up his thin lips. Soon his fingers opened and shut nervously as his fist lay against his hip and his left foot tapped impatiently on the pine boards. His moves became hasty and his manner irritable. Lookers-on took in the situation; glances of relief were interchanged, some bolder ones nudging their neighbors, and soon half-suppressed snickerings were heard. Ike 'didn't know what folks meant by disturbin' the game.' When a few more moves effectually placed him in coven-try and his remnants were completely hedged in he began really to understand; his under lip dropped, and he had only voice to murmur: 'Waal, the first game's yours, and that's all ye kin reckon on.' The second game started. The result was as before. Ike's enemies crowded forward to see him 'put down by that there young Grover

Cleveland.

Another and another victory was wrested from the crestfallen Ike. When the fifth contest failed to change the tide, Sanders, unable to control himself longer, dashed board and checkers to the floor and pushed his way out through the door, followed by jeers and laughter from former victims now become tormentors. The little schoolmaster's piping croak was not the weakest instrument in the orchestra. Young Mr. Cleveland received enthusiastic congratulations, his eyes flashing triumphantly and a smile lurking in the creases of his chubby face. It is related that he only laughed quietly the next day when he heard the dictum of Mr. Sanders, which has made a good many folks in these later days rank plagiarists:

'Some folks do have dog-gasted luck!'

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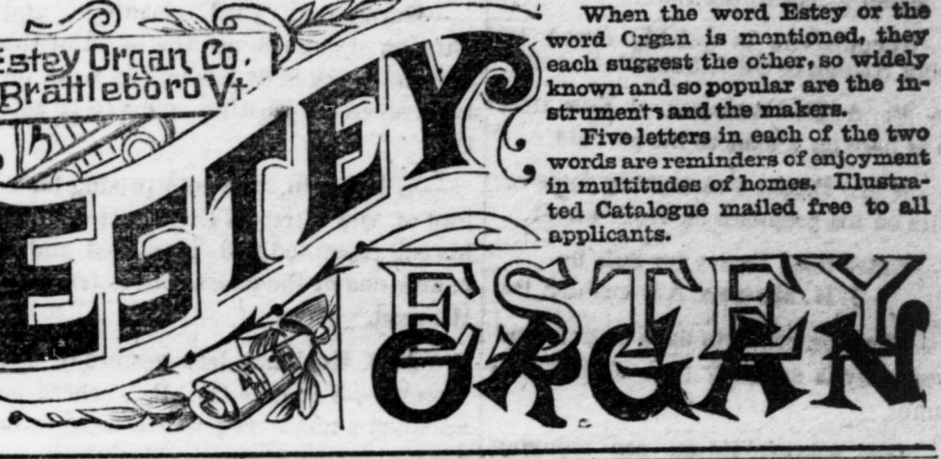
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