Herr Schwanthaler's Clock.

[From the French.]

It was a clock of the Second Empire, such as are sold in the boulevard des Italiens; a clock of Algerian onyx, ornamented with campana designs, with its gilded key hanging like a watch-charm at the end of a pink ribbon. It was the most dainty, the most modern, the most useless timekeeper in all Paris. It had a charming little chime, but not a grain of common sense. It was full of whims and caprices, striking the hour at any minute and never knowing dinner-time from sunrise.

When the war broke out it was summering at Bougival,—expressly suited to that fragile summer palace; and on the arrival of the Bavarian forces it was one of the first things seized upon. It must be admitted these Germans were the most skillful of shippers, for the costly plaything, scarcely larger than a pigeon's egg, made the journey from Bougival to Munich, in the midst of Krupp cannon and caissons of grape-shot, without the least damage in the world, and appeared the next day in the show window of a curiosity shop, bright and smiling as ever, still retaining its two slender black hands and its little key on the pink ribbon.

It was a curiosity in Munich. Such clocks were unknown there, and everyone came to look at it as eagerly as at the Japanese collections in the museum. Before the bric-a-brac shop three ranks of great pipes smoked from morning to night, and the good people of Munich asked each other, with round eyes and many a "Mein Gott" of stupefaction, what could be the use of such a peculiar little instrument. The illustrated papers published its picture; its photographs were on sale in all the show windows; and in its honor the illustrious Doctor-professor Otto de Schwanthaler composed his Clock Paradoxes,—a philosophico-humorous study of six hundred pages, treating of the influence of clocks upon society, and logically demonstrating that a nation foolish enough to regulate the employment of its time by chronometers so out of order as this little clock from Bougival, like a ship putting out to sea with a false compass, must expect all calamities.

The Germans do nothing unless thoroughly. The illustrious doctor-professor wished, before writing his Paradoxes, to have the subject under his eyes, to study in detail and analyze minutely. He accordingly purchased the clock, which thus passed from a show window to the drawing-room of the illustrious Doctor-professor Otto de Schwanthaler, trustee of the Pinakothek and member of the Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts, at his private residence, No. 24 Ludwigstrasse.

The most prominent object in the Schwanthaler drawing-room, classic and dismal as a hall of convention, was a great clock of solid marble, with a bronze chime and complicated works. The principal dial was surrounded with smaller ones, showing the hours, the minutes, the seasons, the equinoxes, and everything else up to the phases of the moon, on a sky-blue ground in the middle of the pedestal. The noise of this powerful machine filled the house. At the foot of the stairs the heavy pendulum swung back and forth with a grave, accented movement that seemed to cut and measure life in equal morsels; with every tick-tack was a trepidation of the small hand, hastening around the seconds' dial with the toiling impatience of a spider that knows the price of time.

Whenever the hour sounded, dull and slow as a church bell, it gave a signal for something to happen in the Schwanthaler mansion. Either Herr Schwanthaler himself, loaded with papers, set out for the Pinakothek, or worthy Madame Schwanthaler returned from church with her daughters, three tall girls in braids, with the air of so many hop-poles, or perhaps lessons in dancing, or gymnastics, or either-playing began, or the embroidery frames and music stands were rolled into the centre of the room,—everything was methodically planned and regulated. To see