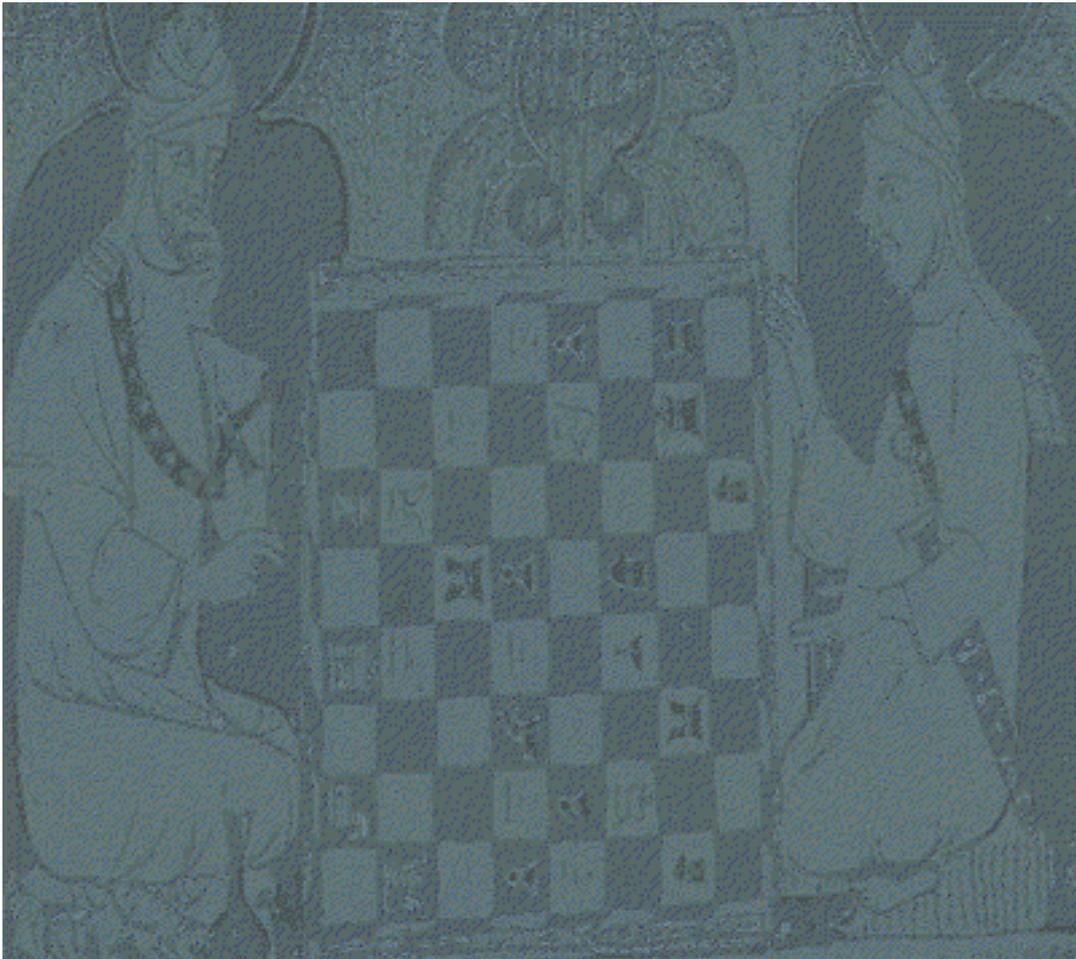


Chess History and Reminiscences

H. E. Bird



This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

Second Edition by Umut SAYMAN 2003

CONTENT

PREFACE	3
The Chess Openings: Considered Critically And Practically	7
<i>STEINITZ</i>	8
<i>STEINITZ'S REVIEW</i>	8
Variouly estimated from 3,000 to 1,000 B.C. CHATURANGA.	10
<i>CHESS HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES</i>	11
CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF CHESS	11
CHESS NOTES AND REFERENCES	13
<i>THEORIES AS TO THE INVENTION OF CHESS</i>	13
<i>TRADITIONS AS TO THE ORIGIN</i>	14
<i>THE THREE INDIAN TRADITIONS</i>	15
<i>PROGRESS OF CHESS</i>	16
THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF CHESS	19
<i>CHESS AND OPINIONS IN REGARD TO ITS ORIGIN</i>	22
AS TO THE SUPPOSED ORIGIN OF CHESS	23
<i>THE ANCIENT HINDU CHATURANGA</i>	24
<i>ON THE MOVES OF THE PIECES</i>	25
<i>PERSIA</i>	31
<i>THE TEN ADVANTAGES OF CHESS ACCORDING TO THE PERSIAN PHILOSOPHER, ARE THUS GIVEN IN TRANSLATION.</i>	32
<i>VIDA</i>	33
<i>THEORIES AS TO THE INVENTION OF CHESS</i>	39
<i>SALVIO, DOCTOR OF CIVIL LAWS</i>	40
<i>CHAUCER</i>	40
<i>SAUL AND BARBIERE</i>	41
<i>JOHN LYDGATE</i>	42
<i>HIEROGLYPHICS OF ANCIENT EGYPT</i>	45
<i>CANUTE</i>	46
<i>THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AND CHESS</i>	47
<i>THE NINETEENTH CENTURY</i>	47
CHESS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	50
<i>THE CHESS MASTERS OF THE DAY, IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED BY AN OLD ENGLISH PLAYER.</i>	51
NATIONAL CHESS.	54

<i>CHESS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. BELFAST, (THE MOST RECENT MEETING).</i>	55
<i>NORTH OF IRELAND (BELFAST) CHESS CONGRESS, MASTERS' COMPETITION.</i>	56
<i>BLINDFOLD CHESS</i>	65
<i>THE GAME OF CHESS</i>	67
<i>PHILIDOR,</i>	69
<i>THE CARLOVINGIAN DYNASTY</i>	70
THE HABITS AND IDIOSYNCRACIES OF CHESS PLAYERS	70
<i>STAKES AT CHESS</i>	71
<i>SLOW PLAY</i>	72
<i>DINNER AND CHESS</i>	73
<i>LOOKERS ON</i>	74
<i>EXCUSES</i>	74
<i>THE PIECES IN CHESS</i>	74
<i>CHESS PATRONS</i>	77
<i>STYLE AT CHESS</i>	78
<i>BUCKLE'S CHESS REFERENCES</i>	78
<i>IRELAND</i>	79
<i>THE GERMAN CHESS THEORISTS</i>	80
<i>ITALY</i>	80
<i>KRIEGSSPIEL</i>	80
<i>SCHACHSPIEL</i>	81
<i>Dr. A. VAN DER LINDE</i>	81
<i>NERDSPEIL</i>	82
<i>CHESS IN ITALY</i>	83

This text was produced by Stephen D. Leary

To

My Highly Esteemed
 Chess Opponent And Patron
 Of Nearly 40 Years
 W. J. EVELYN, Esq.,
 Of Wotton, Surrey

PREFACE

This little work is but a condensation and essence of a much larger one, containing the result of what can be discovered concerning the origin and history of chess, combined with some of my own reminiscences of 46 years past both of chess play and its exponents, dating back to the year 1846, the 18th of Simpson's, 9 years after the death of A. McDonnell, and 6 after that of L. de La Bourdonnais when chivalrous and first class chess had come into the highest estimation, and emulatory matches and tests of supremacy in chess skill were the order of the day.

English chess was then in the ascendant, three years before Howard Staunton had vanquished St. Amant of France, and was the recognized world's chess champion, while H. T. Buckle the renowned author of the History of Civilization was the foremost in skill among chess amateurs, Mr. W. Lewis and Mr. George Walker the well known and prolific writers on chess, were among the ten or twelve strongest players, but were seldom seen in the public circle, Mr. Slous and Mr. Perigal were other first rate amateurs of about equal strength. Mr. Daniels who attended Simpson's had just departed. Captain Evans and Captain Kennedy were familiar figures, and most popular alike

distinguished and esteemed for amiability and good nature, and were the best friends and encouragers of the younger aspirants.

At this time Simpson's was the principal public arena for first class chess practice and development: the St. George's Chess Club was domiciled in Cavendish Square at back of the Polytechnic. The London Chess Club (the oldest) met at the George and Vulture on Cornhill, when Morphy came in 1858, and Steinitz in 1862, these time honoured clubs were located at King St., St. James, and at Pursell's, Cornhill respectively.

Other clubs for the practice and cultivation of the game were about thirteen in number, representing not five percent of those now existing; the oldest seem to have been Manchester, Edinburgh, and Dublin, closely followed by Bristol, Liverpool, Wakefield, Leeds and Newcastle.

Annual County Meetings commenced with that held at Leeds in 1841. The earliest perfectly open Tournaments were two on a small scale at Simpson's in 1848 and 1849, and the first World's International in the Exhibition year 1851, at the St. George's Chess Club, Polytechnic Building, Cavendish Square. In each of these Tournaments the writer participated.

Three chess columns existed when I first visited Simpson's in 1846, viz., Bells Life managed by Mr. George Walker from 1834 to 1873. The Illustrated London News from 15th February 1845 to 1878, in charge of Howard Staunton, and the Pictorial Times which lasted from February 1845 to June 1848. The first column started had appeared in the Lancet 1823, but it continued not quite one year.

The Chess Player's Chronicle issued in 1841 (Staunton), was then the only regular magazine devoted to chess, but a fly leaf had been published weekly about the year 1840, in rather a curious form of which the following is found noted:

About the year 1840 the Garrick Chess Divan was opened by Mr. Huttman at No. 4 Little Russell St., Covent Garden. One of the attractions of this little saloon was the publication every week of a leaf containing a good chess problem, below it all the gossip of the chess world in small type. The leaf was at first sold for sixpence, including two of the finest Havannah Cigars, or a fine Havannah and a delicious cup of coffee, but was afterwards reduced to a penny without the cigars. The problem leaf succeeding well, a leaf containing games was next produced, and finally the two were merged in a publication of four pages entitled the Palamede.

The Gentleman's Magazine 1824, 1828, British Miscellany 1839, Bath and Cheltenham Gazette 1840, and Saturday Magazine 1840, 1845, had contained contributions in chess, but of regular columns there were only the three before mentioned, now there are about one hundred and fifty, mostly of larger dimensions.

Mr. George Walker's 1000 games published in 1844, gives no game of earlier date than 1780, viz., one of Philidor's of whose skill he gives 62 specimens, and there are 57 games by correspondence played between 1824 and 1844. The list of chess works of consideration up to Philidor's time, number about thirty, but there were several editions of Jacobus de Cessolus (1275 to 1290) including translations by J. Ferron and Jean De Vigny, from which last named Caxton's book of 1474 was derived.

Lucena, Vicenz, Damiano, and Jacob Mennell appeared before 1520, Ruy Lopez in 1561, Polerio, Gianuzio, Greco, Salvio, Carrera, Gustavus Selenus and the translation of Greco, followed in the interval from 1561 to 1656. I. Bertin 1735 and the six Italian works of the last century, were the principal which followed with Philidor's manifold editions, up to Sarratt the earliest of the nineteenth century writers.

Dr. A. Van der Linde, Berlin 1874, 1118 pages, 4098 names in Index, and 540 diagrams includes notice of Cotton's complete gamester 1664, and Seymour's complete gamester 1720, with editions of Hoyle's games from 1740 to 1871, in fact about one-fourth of Linde's book is devoted to the specification of books and magazines, mostly of the nineteenth century, even down to the A.B.C. of Chess, by a lady.

Poems have been written on chess, of which the most esteemed have been Aben Ezra 1175, (translated by Dr. Hyde) Conrad Von Ammenhusen and Lydgate's "Love Battle" in the fourteenth century Vida, Bishop of Alba 1525, Sir William Jones 1761, and Frithiofs Saga by Esaias Tegner 1825.

Of articles which have appeared during the last fifteen years, the Retrospects of Chess in the Times particularly that of the 25th June 1883, (the first on record) mark events of lasting interest in the practice of the game, which would well merit reproduction. Professor Ruskin's modest but instructive letters (28 in number 1884 to 1892), also contain much of value concerning chess nomenclature, annotation, ethics and policy combined with some estimable advice and suggestions for promoting greater harmony in the chess world.

The able article in Bailey's 1885, on chess competitions and the progress of the game, and that in the Fortnightly Review of December 1886, entitled "The Chess Masters of the Day," rank as the other most noteworthy productions of the last seven years' period in chess.

I regret that it is not in my power to produce the more extended work, for to bring that now submitted within assigned compass and cost, I have had to omit much that would be needful to render such a work complete, and to give but a Bird's eye view of chapters which would well merit undiminished space. Thus the complete scores and analyses of the matches, tournaments and great personal tests of skill and statistics of the game would be acceptable to a few, whilst the full accounts of individual players such as Philidor, Staunton, Anderssen, Morphy, Lowenthal, Steinitz, Zukertort, Blackburne and perhaps even Bird, (Bailey's and Ruskin's opinions) would be regarded and read with interest by many chess players.

Respecting the supposed first source of chess the traditional and conjectural theories which have grown up throughout so many ages, regarding the origin of chess, have not become abandoned even in our own days, and we generally hear of one or other of them at the conclusion of a great tournament. It has been no uncommon thing during the past few years to find Xerxes, Palamedes, and even Moses and certain Kings of Babylon credited with the invention of chess.

The conclusions arrived at by the most able and trustworthy authorities however, are, that chess originated in India, was utterly unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and was first introduced into Europe from Persia shortly after the sixth century of our era. In its earliest Asiatic form styled the Chaturanga, It was adapted for four persons, having four small armies of eight each. King, three pieces answering to our Rook, Bishop, and Knight, Elephant (Chariot or Ship,) and Horse, with four Pawns. The players decided what piece to move by the throw of an oblong die.

About 1,350 years ago the game under the name Chatrang, adapted for two persons with sixteen piece on each side, and the same square board of 64 squares, became regularly practiced, but when the dice became dispensed with is quite unknown.

It may not be possible to trace the game of chess with absolute certainty, back to its precise source amidst the dark periods of antiquity, but it is easy to shew that the claim of the Hindus as the inventors, is supported by better evidence both inferential and positive than that of any other people, and unless we are to assume the Sanskrit accounts of it to be unreliable or spurious, or the translations of Dr. Hyde, Sir William Jones and Professor Duncan Forbes to be disingenuous and untrustworthy concoctions (as Linde the German writer seems to insinuate) we are justified in dismissing from our minds all reasonable doubts as to the validity of the claims of the Hindu Chaturanga as the foundation of the Persian, Arabian, Medieval and Modern Chess, which it so essentially resembled in its main principles, in fact the ancient Hindu Chaturanga is the oldest game not only of chess but of anything ever shown to be at all like it, and we have the frank admissions of the Persians as well as the Chinese that they both received the game from India.

The Saracens put the origin of chess at 226, says the "Westminster Papers," (although the Indians claim we think with justice to have invented it about 108 B.C. Artaxerxes a Persian King is said to have been the inventor of a game which the Germans call Bret-spiel and chess was invented as a rival game.

The connecting links of chess evidence and confirmation when gathered together and placed in order form, combined so harmonious a chain, that the progress of chess from Persia to Arabia and into Spain has been considered as quite satisfactorily proved and established by authorities deemed trustworthy, both native and foreign, and are quite consistent with a fair summary up of the more recent views expressed by the German writers themselves, and with the reasonable conclusions to be deduced even from the very voluminous but not always best selected evidence of Van der Linde.

So much has a very lively interest in chess depended in modern times upon the enthusiasm of individuals, that the loss of a single prominent supporter or player, has always seemed to sensibly affect it. This was notably felt on the death of Sir Abram Janssens and Philidor towards the end of the last century, and of Count Bruhl, Mr. G. Atwood and General Conway in this. During the last 15 years the loss of Staunton, Buckle, Cap. Kennedy, Barnes, Cochrane and Boden, and yet more recently of such friends of British chess as F. H. Lewis, I. C. H. Taylor and Captain Mackenzie left a void, which in the absence of any fresh like popular players and supporters, goes far to account for the depression and degeneracy of first class chess in England.

Though the game is advancing more in estimation than ever, and each succeeding year furnishes conclusive evidence of its increasing progress, in twenty years more under present auspices, a British Chess Master will be a thing of the past, and the sceptre of McDonnell and of Staunton will have crumpled into dust, at the very time when in the natural course of things according to present indications, the practice of the game shall have reached the highest point in its development.

We miss our patrons and supporters of the past who were ever ready to encourage rising enterprise. None have arisen to supply their places. The distinguished and noble names we find in the programmes of our Congresses and Meetings, and in the 1884 British Chess Association are there as form only, and it seems surprising that so many well known and highly esteemed public men should allow their names to continue to be published year after year as Patrons, Presidents, or Vice-Presidents of concerns in which apparently they take not; or at least evince not, the slightest interest.

Of the score or so of English born Chess Masters on the British Chess Association lists of 1862, but five remain, two alone of whom are now residing in this country.

The British Chess Association of 1884, which constituted itself the power to watch over the interests of national chess, has long since ceased to have any real or useful existence, and why the name is still kept up is not easy to be explained.

It has practically lapsed since the year 1889, when last any efforts were made to collect in annual or promised subscriptions, or to carry out its originally avowed objects, and the keeping up in print annually, of the names of the President and Vice-President Lord Tennyson, Prof. Ruskin, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Sir Robert Peel seems highly objectionable.

The exponents of chess for the 19th century certainly merit more notice than my space admits of. After Philidor who died in 1795, and his immediate successors Verdoni and E. Sarratt, W. Lewis, G. Walker, John Cochrane, Deschappelles and de La Bourdonnais, have always been regarded as the most able and interesting, and consequently the most notable of those for the quarter of a century up to 1820, and the above with the genial A. McDonnell of Belfast, who came to the front in 1828, and excelled all his countrymen in Great Britain ever known before him, constitute the principal players who flourished up to 1834, when the series of splendid contests between La Bourdonnais and McDonnell cast all other previous and contemporary play into the shade.

The next period of seventeen years to 1851, had produced Harrwitz, Horwitz and Lowenthal from abroad, and Buckle, Cap. Kennedy, Bird and Boden at home, whilst the great International Chess Tournament of that year witnessed the triumph of the great Anderssen, and introduced us to Szen and Kiezeritzky, then followed a lull in first class chess amongst us from 1851 to 7, succeeded by a year of surpassing interest, for 1858 welcomed the invincible Paul Morphy of New Orleans, considered by some superior even to La Bourdonnais, Staunton and Anderssen the three greatest players who had preceded him.

In the year 1862 England's second great gathering took place and Anderssen was again victorious. In the four years after Morphy's short but brilliant campaign, a wonderful array of distinguished players had come forward, comprising Mackenzie, Paulsen, Steinitz, Burn and Blackburne, The Rev. G. A. MacDonnell, C. De Vere, Barnes, Wormald, Brien and Campbell. In another ten years two more of the most illustrious chess players appeared in the persons of Zukertort and Gunsberg, and we read of matches between Steinitz, Zukertort and Blackburne, for a modest ten pound note (see growth of stakes in chess).

In 1867 at Paris, 1870 at Baden, 1873 at Vienna, and 1878 again at Paris, four more International Chess Tournaments of nearly equal interest to the 1851 and 1862 of London took place, and they were won respectively by Kolisch, Anderssen, (third time) Steinitz and Zukertort, Berlin 1881, a very fine victory for Blackburne, 1882 Vienna, honours divided by Steinitz and Winawer, and 1883 the Criterion, London, a second remarkable victory for Zukertort represent the other most noteworthy tournaments.

Of all sorts International and National, there have been 34 meetings with 46 County local gatherings, as well as 20 of the University matches between Oxford and Cambridge, of which the two first and greatest were held at Perrott's, Milk St., in 1873 and 1874.

Continuing with the chess giants of more modern date, Mason's great powers became developed in 1876, and Tchigorin of St. Petersburg, a splendid player came to the front in 1881. Equal to him in force, perhaps, if not in style, and yet more remarkable in their records of success are the present champions Dr. Tarrasch of Nuremberg and E. Lasker of Berlin. The Havana people, who, for five or six years past have spent more money on great personal chess encounters than all the rest of the world combined, have put forth Walbrodt of Leipzig. In the above mentioned four players, chess interest for a time will mostly centre, with Steinitz, yet unvanquished, and, as many consider, able to beat them all, the future must be of unique interest, and the year 1893 may decide which of five favourite foreign players will be entitled to rank as the world's champion of chess, so far as can be decided by matches played on existing conditions.

Chess with clocks and the tedious slow time limit of fifteen moves an hour (say a working day for a single game) must not be confounded with genuine, useful and enjoyable chess without distracting time encumbrances as formerly played. Played at the pace and on the conditions which the exigencies of daily, yea hourly, life and labour admit of experience shews that there are yet English exponents that can render a good account of any of the foreign players.

First class chess enthusiasm and support for the past year has been limited to Newcastle-on-Tyne and Belfast. The unbounded and impartial liberality of these very important cities has met with gratifying reward in the increased appreciation of their efforts and the enhanced number of club members and interest in the general circle. These highly successful meetings, however, have caused no impetus in metropolitan management, and has seemed to divert the attention of chess editors and the responsible powers entirely from the fact that the London 1892 First Class International Chess Tournament promised has been altogether neglected, if not forgotten. We are thus in grave default with the German and Dutch Chess Associations, who have so faithfully and punctually fulfilled every engagement.

The forthcoming monster chess competition at Birmingham, from which first class players are excluded can scarcely be deemed a fitting substitute for our owing International engagement with any true lover of chess and its friendly reciprocity, and least of all in the eyes of our foreign chess brethren and entertainers.

NOTE. This monster Chess Contest between the North and the South of England, represented by 106 competitors on each side, which terminated in a victory for the South by 53 1/2 to 52 1/2, took place at Birmingham on Saturday, the 28th January last, and has occasioned considerable interest among the votaries of the game and reports pronounce it a great success.

As affording indications of general chess progress, since the game became a recognized item of public recreational intelligence, and the time of the pioneer International Chess Tournament of all nations, London 1851, the event may be deemed of some import and significance, as evidence of the vastly increased popularity of the game, but the play seems not to have been productive of many very high specimens of the art of chess, and has not been conspicuous for enterprise or originality, and if these exhibitions are to take the place of the kind of International Tournaments hitherto held, much improvement must be manifested, before they can be deemed worthy substitutes, even from a national point of view only.

Books on the openings in chess have continued fairly popular, but it is singular how very little novelty or originality has been imparted into them. Since Staunton and Wormald's works, and the German hand-books, the Modern Chess Instructor of Mr. Steinitz, 1889, was looked forward to with the greatest interest, and the second of the several volumes of which it was to consist, promised for September, 1890, is still awaited with anxious expectation. In regard to the practice of the game, the lack of national chess spirit, or organization, and the extraordinary denominating influence of the foreign element, is the remarkable and conspicuous characteristic, and the modest seat assigned to British Masters in the Retrospects of 1889 and 1890 (Times), will it is feared have to be placed yet further back.

The Chess Openings: Considered Critically And Practically

By H. E. BIRD.

"This is the work of one of the most distinguished of English players. Since the death of Mr. Staunton nobody can more fairly claim to represent the national school of players than Mr. H. E. BIRD, who took part in the first International Tournament of 1851, and also played at Vienna in 1873, at Philadelphia, and recently at Paris. Perhaps his most brilliant performances have been in single matches, in two of which he made an equal score with Falkbeer, while, in 1867, when contending against Steinitz (fresh from his victory over Anderssen), he won six games against his opponent's seven, while seven others were drawn. Six years later Mr. BIRD once more proved his right to be considered second to none among English players, by defeating Mr. Wisker, the holder of the British Association Challenge Cup, after a protracted struggle. So far, therefore, as practical proficiency constitutes a claim to respect as a teacher of chess-theory, the author of 'The Chess Openings' is in no need of an excuse for coming forward as an instructor. Mr. BIRD by no means confines himself to mere reproduction. He has the merit of having identified his name with several original variations, and of having revived several older defences, such as the Cunningham Gambit, with no small degree of success. The book has been evidently the result of painstaking and accurate analysis, and it may be confidently recommended to the more advanced players who have graduated in the beaten tracks of the 'Handbuch,' and are willing to follow in the steps of an able and original guide. In addition to the usual Appendix of problems, Mr. BIRD supplies a very useful and attractive feature in a series of end game positions from the most celebrated modern match-games. Owing to clear type and large diagrams, the volume will prove an agreeable companion when a board is out of reach."--Athenaeum, September 7th, 1880.



Chess Masterpieces: Comprising--A Collection of 156 Choice Games of the past quarter of a century, with notes, including the finest Games in the Exhibition of 1851, and in the Vienna Tournament of 1873, with excellent specimens of the styles of Anderssen, Blackburne, Der Laza, Hanstein, Kolisch, Lowenthal, Morphy, Staunton, Steinitz, and the principal English Players. Supplemented by Games of La Bourdonnais, McDonnell and Cochrane, contested prior to 1849, Compiled by H. E. BIRD. Cloth, black lettered, 3/6; or, handsomely bound, gilt and gilt edges 4/-.

The entire series will be found full of interest and points of excellence, and can scarcely fail to afford amusement and pleasure, as well as to impart instruction, to all who may avail themselves of the opportunity of examining them, they will be of especial service to amateurs who aspire to preeminence in chess.



Times, Biographical Notices, Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic, Pictorial World, American and Continental, Newcastle Chronicle, and Hereford Times.

Professor Ruskin (from 28 letters in all, since 1884). "Your games always delight me, as they seem in my humble judgment specimens of chess skill remarkable for originality and vivacity."--12th June, 1884.

"Indeed I feel that you have done more for chess at home and abroad than any other living player."--16th April, 1885.

"Your Catalogue is quite admirably drawn up, and if ever I can recover some peace of life and mind I hope to be of some use in furthering the sale of the book and recommending its views."--7th June, 1887.

H.R.H. PRINCE LEOPOLD, EARL DARTREY, SIR C. RUSSELL, LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL, Etc., Etc., (also great Musicians, Amateur Chess Players, letters and support.)



STEINITZ

As a player, analyst, critic and author. Considerations of his book on the openings. Notes on his general play, and conduct of the game, are dealt with in review of *Modern Chess Instructor*.

Steinitz claims with justice to be very conscientious in the performance of his work at all times, and he had no need to excuse himself for the following criticism, which occupied him (he told me) months in its preparation. It seems to me that an author has reason to be obliged to any who may point out his real errors and shortcomings. Steinitz, however, was betrayed into a degree of unfairness and prejudice in dealing with Staunton and Wormald's books, and Morphy's play, bordering almost on imbecility. That the great artist himself is not infallible appears from my review of his *Modern Chess Instructor*.

STEINITZ'S REVIEW

The Field, December, 1879.

CHESS OPENINGS, 1879.

The Chess Opening, Considered Critically and Practically. By H. E. Bird. London: Dean Son, 160, Fleet Street.

The public record of chess matches and great tournaments places the name of the author of this work above that of any living English competitor for chess honours, excepting Mr. Blackburne. It is therefore all the more disappointing to find that Mr. Bird's book has not done justice to his great reputation as a player. The author's chief defect as an analyst arises probably from one of his distinguishing qualities as a practitioner over the board. Few chess masters could excel Mr. Bird in rapid survey of position and in the formation and execution of surprising maneuvers, which, though not always sound--and sometimes, as he admits, even eccentric--tend to raise confusing complications, difficult for the adversary to disentangle at a quick rate. These qualities make Mr. Bird one of the most dangerous opponents in "skittle play," or in matches regulated by a fast time limit; but they prove almost antagonistic to the acquirement of excellency as an author on the game. For the first-class analyst is not merely expected to record results, but to judge the causes of success or failure from the strictly scientific point of view, and he has often to supplement with patient research the shortcomings of great masters in actual play. In such cases every move of a

main variation becomes a problem which has to be studied for a great length of time; and the best authors have watched the progress of different openings in matches and tournaments for years, and pronounced their judgment only after the most careful comparisons, Mr. Bird is, however, too much of an advocate to be a good judge, and he evinces great partiality for ingenious traps and seductive combinations, which form an attractive feature of his own style in actual play, but which mostly occur only in light skirmishes. Moreover he often treats his duties as an analyst in a cavalier fashion. In his quotations from other authors he embodies variations which stand already severely condemned by first-class chess critics in various chess periodicals; and his original researches contain a considerable portion of "skittle" analysis, which does not bear cursory examination.

We have no room for lengthened demonstrations, and must confine ourselves to a few instances of the latter description, all occurring in the compiler's new additions. On page 6, he overlooks the winning of a clear piece which White can effect by Q to R4, followed by P to QR3 if the B be defended. On page 22 Black can win a piece on the 16th move by P to KB4, followed by P to KKt3, and there is no chance of any counter-attack by P to KKt4, for Black may afterwards interpose the B at K4, and get the K into the corner. On page 105 a piece can be won by Black on the 10th move by B to Q5, for the Kt has no retreat, a mate being threatened at KB3. The ending of a game between Messrs. Bird and MacDonnell affords a still more remarkable illustration. There is abundant proof that the author must have examined the position at least more than once, for, by a singular error, the identical ending appears twice in the book--on pages 183 and 197,--each time with a large diagram. On each occasion a win is demonstrated for White in nine moves, while at least a piece can be gained at once by Q to K7, followed accordingly by P to Q6 dis. ch., or B to KKt5. Mr. Bird would be annoyed to make such oversights over the board; and there is no excuse for such shallow examples being recommended to the student without the least comment on their weak points.

As regards the general arrangement, we have to remark that the variations sometimes seem to have been examined loosely and separately, irrespective of their relation to each other, or to the main propositions of the author in reference to the form of opening he deals with; and the brevity or length of space assigned to different forms of play have apparently been decided in a whimsical and arbitrary manner. For instance, on page 29, in the Philidor's defence, 7. Kt to KB3, is described to afford the most satisfactory and secure opening for Black. On the next page the move is repeated under the separate heading, Example II, and it looks odd enough that one single move should have received such prominence, the only addition being, "Won by Harrwitz in 40 moves," as if it were to be forced by Black in that number, while at the time the positions show little difference. But, stranger still, four pages later on (page 34) the identical variation reappears, taken from the same game between Morphy and Harrwitz (though this is not stated), with three more moves on each side added to it, but this time the remark is made, that "White has a good position." To take another example. On page 78 there is a repetition of 10 moves on each side, merely for the purpose of indicating a different 11th move for White. It is scarcely necessary to point out that in each case the stronger move should have been inserted in the main variation, while the weaker one could have been disposed of in a foot-note of one line.

While on this subject we cannot refrain from mentioning the frequent references to "Chess Masterpieces," a work previously published by the author, which contained a collection of fine games partly reproduced from Howard Taylor's "Chess Brilliants," and other publications, with additions mostly from Mr. Bird's own practice. We must confess that some of the so-called variations extracted from the "Masterpieces," appear to be nothing more than advertisements. Notably, on page 157, four "examples" are given, which do not go beyond the 4th move, and leave no mark on the positions, and then we are gravely informed, in a manner already described, that White or Black won in so-and-so many moves.

We notice with great pleasure the handsome and courteous manner in which almost all the prominent chess masters of the day are mentioned in the book, and the sense of fairness evinced by Mr. Bird in the selection of variations and examples from his own practice, irrespective of his victory or defeat. But his chess historical references are unreliable, and he often wrongly ascribes the adoption of certain variations to different players in a manner which could have been easily rectified by taking a little more trouble. This is not unimportant, for the reputed strength of a player is evidence of the strength of an opening he favours in matches and tournaments. We can only adduce a few instances which are more within the writer's personal knowledge.

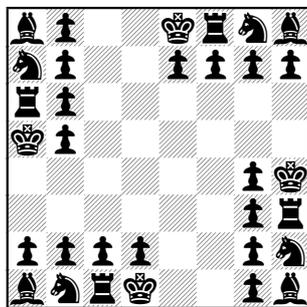
The statement about 5. Q to K2, in the Buy Lopez, on page 16, is much confused. The move was adopted by Mr. Blackburne in the final tie match of the Vienna tournament, but it never occurred in the first game of the Steinitz-Blackburne match, as Mr. Bird can convince himself from his own book, where the latter game is published in full on page 171. Steinitz is also erroneously credited with strongly favouring the attack in the Scotch Gambit, for we do not remember a single game on record in which he ever adopted that form of opening as first player. On the other hand, a variation in the Evans Gambit is ascribed to Zukertort, which actually occurred first in a game between Steinitz and Blackburne, played in the London Grand Tournament of 1872. This error seems to have been quoted from Staunton and Wormald's "Chess Theory and Practice."

A few more words about the problems at the end of the book and we have done with the details. There are about a dozen compositions mostly by high-class American authors, and some of them of very good quality; but, unfortunately, Mr. Bird has omitted to indicate their solutions. We must suppose this to be due to an oversight, as he gives the key moves of the four problems by English composers. The omission is deplorable, for many students would wish to appreciate the author's idea, and the merits of the construction, if they fail to solve the problem. To quote an instance from our own experience; we could not find any solution to the problem on page 224, which composition, we conclude, is either of the highest order or suffers from the gravest of all faults, that of being impossible. In either case we should have liked to examine the solution.

Our judgment of the book, on the whole, is that it cannot be ranked in the first class with the works of Heydebrand, Zukertort, Staunton, Lowenthal, Neuman and Suhle, Lange, but it will satisfy the demands of the great number of lovers of the game who do not aspire above the second rank. Mr. Bird's ability and ingenuity is beyond doubt, and there is ample evidence of his qualifications in the book before us, but he has not yet acquired that element of genius which has been defined as the capacity for taking pains. Mr. Bird could produce a much better book than this, and we hope he will.

Variously estimated from 3,000 to 1,000 B.C. CHATURANGA.

The Primeval Hindu Chess.

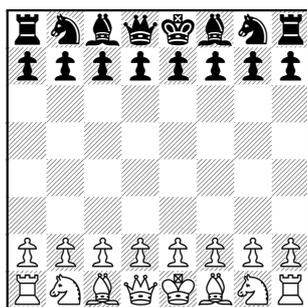


[Diagram of a Chaturanga board with 4 armies. Yellow is in upper left. Black is in upper right. Green is in lower left. Red is in lower right.]



The Medieval and Modern Chess.

Black



White

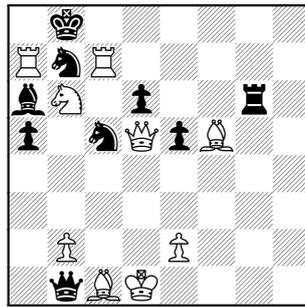
[Diagram of a standard chessboard, white pieces at the top, black pieces at the bottom.]
Derived from the Persian Chatrang, 537-540 A.D.



833-842.

Problem I. by the Caliph MU'TASIM BILLAH.

Black



White

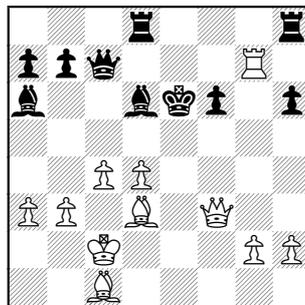
White to move, and give checkmate at the ninth move.



About 1380.

Problem II. by 'ALI SHATRANJ.

Black



White

White to play and mate in eight moves.

CHESS HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES

CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF CHESS

A not unfair criterion is afforded of the long prevailing and continued misconception as to the origin of chess, by the lack of knowledge regarding early records as to its history exhibited in the literature of last century, and the press and magazine articles of this even to the present year. We refer not to lines of poets such as Pope, Dryden and others, with whom the ancient order of fiction is permissible, or to writers of previous periods, from Aben Ezra to Ruy Lopez, Chaucer and Lydgate, or Caxton and Barbieri, but to presumably studied and special articles, such as those given in Dictionaries of Arts and Sciences and in Encyclopaedias. The great work of 1727 dedicated to the King-- which claimed to embody a reasonable and fair account--and even the best knowledge on all subjects referred to in it; contains an article on chess of some dimensions, which may well be taken as an example of the average ignorance of the knowledge of information existing at the time. The Chinese, it says, claim to date back their acquaintance with chess to a very remote period; so with the best testimonies of that country, which acknowledge its receipt from India in the sixth century the writer seems to have been quite unacquainted. Nothing occurs in the article as to the transit of chess from India into Persia, next to Arabia and Greece, and by the Saracens into Spain; neither does a line appear as to Egyptian probabilities, or the nature of the game inscribed on edifices in that country. Though abounding in traditional names of Trojan heroes, and others equally mythical as regards chess, the more genuine ones of Chosroes of Persia, Harun, Mamun and Mutasem of Bagdad, Walid of Cordova, the Carolingian Charlemagne of France, Canute the Dane, William of Normandy the English kings are entirely absent, nor is there a word concerning Roman games or the edict which refers to them in which Chess and Draughts (both mentioned) were specially protected and exempted from the interdiction against other games; which has escaped all writers, and would certainly, if known about, have been deemed of some significance. The Persian and Arabian

periods from the time of Chosroes, to Harun, covers the Golden Age of Arabian literature, which is more prolific in chess incident than any other; yet even this and Firdausi's celebrated Persian Shahnama, and Anna Comnena's historical work escapes notice. We may perhaps, not implicitly trust or credit, all we read of in some of the Eastern manuscripts biographical sketches; but there is much of reasonable narrative we need not discredit nor reject. We may feel disposed to accept, with some reservation, the account of the 6,000 male and 6,000 female slaves, and 60,000 horses of Al Mutasem, (the eighth of Abbasside). The prodigious bridal expenditure, comprising gifts of Estates, houses, jewels, horses, described in the history of Al Mamun (the seventh of Abbasside, and the most glorious of his race), may seem fabulous to us; the extraordinary memories of certain scholars narrated in biographies, who could recite thousands of verses and whole books by heart may appear worthy of confirmation; the composition of two thousand manuscripts by one writer, and the possession of forty thousand volumes by another, may somewhat tax our credulity. We may feel a little surprised to hear that Chosroes' chess men were worth an amount equivalent to one million of our money in the present day; we may doubt, or disagree with the opinions attributed to Hippocrates, or to Galen; that cures were effected, or even assisted of such complaints as diarrhea and erysipelas by the means of chess; or, that, as the Persian suggests it has been found a remedy of beneficial in many ailments from the heart ache to the tooth ache. We may doubt whether the two Lydian brothers, Lydo and Tyrrhene, in the story of Herodotus really diminished the pangs of hunger much by it; but, amidst all our incredulity, we can believe, and do believe, that Chosroes and chess, Harun and chess, Charlemagne and chess, Al Mamun and chess, Canute and chess, are as well authenticated and worthy of credit, as other more important incidents found in history, notwithstanding that encyclopaedists and writers down from the days of the Eastern manuscripts, the Persian Shahnama and Anna Comnenas history to the days of Pope and Philidor, and of the initiation of Sanskrit knowledge among the learned, never mention their names in connection with chess as exponents of which the Ravan, king of Lanka of the Hindoo law books, the famous prince Yudhishthira and the sage Vyasa of the Sanskrit, and Nala of the poems, and in more modern accounts, Indian King Porus, Alexander the Great and Aristotle, are far more reasonable names inferentially, if not sufficiently attested, than those cherished by traditionists such as Palamedes, Xerxes, Moses, Hermes, or any of the Kings of Babylon or their philosophers.

NOTE. The ever growing popularity of chess is forcibly and abundantly proved in a variety of ways. One conclusive proof of it is afforded by the enormous and ever increasing sale of Chess Equipages, Boards, Men and Figures, Diagrams, Scoring Books, Sheets, a somewhat matter of fact, it is true, but at the same time practical, reliable, and satisfactory species of evidence. Its progress is further attested by the extreme favour in which Chess Tournaments both International and National, are held, at home and abroad, which attract a degree of attention and awaken an interest little dreamt of during any past period of the history of the game; and it is further illustrated by the continued formation of Chess Clubs in every sphere, the ever widening interest in the home circle, and by many other facts which indicate with absolute certainty its highly enhanced appreciation among the thoughtful and intelligent of all classes of the community.

The humble and working classes have, in recent years, began to avail themselves very considerably of the enjoyment of the game, and this is a powerful and laudable ground for gratification, because chess, besides being innocent, intellectual and mentally highly invigorating, though soothing also, is essentially inexpensive and does not tend to the sort of excitement too often occasioned by some other games where the temptation, too often indulged, of spending money principally when losing, in hopes of obtaining supposed stimulating consolation and nerve, is so frequently manifested, that it appears at times to be so irresistible an accompaniment of the game as to become almost a condition and part of the play.

Chess in fact, affords the greatest maximum of enjoyment, with the smallest minimum of expense; it is at the same time the most pleasingly absorbing, yet the most scientific of games; it is also looked upon as the most ancient, and with, perhaps, the exception of Draughts probably is. The reason why it has been for so many ages, and still is called the "Royal Game" is, because it came to Europe from Persia, and took its name from Schach or Shah, which, in that language signifies King, and Matt dead from the Arabic language making combined "Schach Matt" the King is dead, which is the derivation of our "Checkmate."

The degree of intellectual skill which chess admits of, has been considered and pronounced so high, that Leibnitz declared it to be far less a game than a science. Euler, Franklin, Buckle and others have expressed similar views; and the Egyptians, the Persians, and the Arabians according to many writers, including Mr. Warton and the Rev. Mr. Lambe, have also so regarded it.

Chess is so ancient that, by that distinction alone, it seems taken beyond the category of games altogether; and it has been said that it probably would have perished long ago, if it had not been destined to live for ever. It affords so much genuine intrinsic interest that it can be played without pecuniary stake; and has been so played more than all other games put together, and continues to be so during the present time on occasions, by the very finest players. It exists, flourishes, and gains ground continually and prodigiously, although the average annual support in amount for first class chivalrous chess competitions, tournaments and matches in all Great Britain does not equal that put on in

former years as the stake of a good prize fight; whilst the receipts of a great football match at Bradford and other important cities, which can be named, exceeds the combined incomes of all the few remaining British chess masters derived from chess instruction and skill in play.

Chess is, moreover, surrounded by a host of associations, and is suggestive of a pleasant mass of memories, anecdotes, manners, and incidents, such as no other game, and hardly any science may presume to boast; and though never yet honoured throughout its long life by any continuous history, or consecutive and connected record, its traditions from time immemorial have been of the most illustrious, royal, and noble character.

More apt at figures, than at diction, I have no claim to powers of writing or learning, which can afford me any hopes of doing full justice to so important a task as a worthy work on the history of chess would be; my labours and experience, however, may have enabled me to gather together materials for a more solid and substantial chess structure, than at present exists and I am not without confidence that competent and skilful workers will be found to construct an edifice more worthy of our day, which present, and pending, grand developments will still further consolidate in interest and glory; a building in fact cemented by the noblest and most worthy, praiseworthy, and commendable associations with which the aspiring and deserving artisan and mechanic of the present and future, may be as closely identified as the greatest rulers, deepest thinkers, and most accomplished and profound scholars, and distinguished men of science of the past; affording also a substantial boon, which may be conferred by philanthropists on their less fortunate brethren in society, as it is calculated to induce temperate as well as peaceful and thoughtful habits. A bond of social union also to all who appreciate and care to avail themselves of the relief and advantages which chess is so well known to afford, over other less innocent, less intellectual and more expensive and objectionable movements.



The following notice of chess shortly after the death of Dr. Zukertort, add materially to an increasing appreciation of chess among the working classes, and help the good work on.

"THE WEEKLY DISPATCH," June 24th, 1888.

By the sudden death of Dr. Zukertort, last Wednesday morning, the royal game of chess loses one of its most interesting and brilliant exponents. This distinguished master was only forty-six, and he has been cut off right in the middle of an interesting tournament at the British Chess Club, in which he stood the best chance of winning the first prize. Amongst his last conversations was his arranging to play Blackburne on Saturday, the 23rd, and Bird on Monday, the 25th. The extreme painfulness of Zukertort's death to his friends cannot be estimated by the general public. Famous cricketers and famous actors are applauded by those they entertain or amuse. The chess master receives no applause; over the board, however, he enters into conversation with amateurs, and is rewarded by friendships that far outweigh the wildest ephemeral outbursts of approval. The friendships so formed by Zukertort have now been snapped, and his removal has caused, in the words of the old player Bird, "a severe blank." Bird himself is an interesting character. He is by far the oldest chess master, does the chess correspondence for the Times, and is as well known by his chess books as by his play. The game between him and Zukertort in the tournament now in progress was looked forward to with intense interest, for he and Zukertort were the leading scorers, and the fight for the first prize would have centred in this contest. A good feature in Bird's character is his disposition to make acquaintances with working men. He has taught many of them his "charming game," and has frequently been told afterwards that it has been the means of saving them a few shillings every week. This is easily understood, for a man that plays chess is not likely to play "penny nap" nor to drink much four-ale. Such at any rate, is Mr. Bird's theory; and he is just now endeavouring to promote a scheme for the popularising of chess amongst the industrial classes.

CHESS NOTES AND REFERENCES

THEORIES AS TO THE INVENTION OF CHESS

The honour of the invention of chess has been claimed, we are told, by seven countries, China, India, Egypt, Greece, Assyria, Persia and Arabia.

Capt. Kennedy, in one of his chess sketches observes, and Mr. Staunton, in his Chess Player's Chronicle repeats the statement, thus: "That this is as many countries as aforesaid there were cities in Greece, each of which, it is said, having peacefully allowed Homer to starve during his life-time, started up after he died in a fierce contention for the glory of having given him birth.

My old friends, Capt. Kennedy and Mr. Staunton, no doubt, used the words "starved" figuratively, for neglected by his country, for myself, I really do not know whether Homer really was neglected by his country or not.



TRADITIONS AS TO THE ORIGIN

The traditions of chess are numerous and conflicting, Zakaria Yahya a writer of the tenth century in "The Delight of the Intelligent in Description of Chess" referring to stories extant and fables respecting its invention to that time remarks, "It is said to have been played by Aristotle, by Yafet Ibn Nuh (Japhet son of Noah) by Sam ben Nuh (Shem) by Solomon for the loss of his son, and even by Adam when he grieved for Abel.

Aben Ezra, the famous Rabbi, interpreter, and expounder of scripture, and who is said to have excelled in every branch of knowledge, attributed the invention of chess to Moses. His celebrated poem on chess, written about 1130 A.D., has been translated into nearly all languages of the civilized globe, into English by Dr. Thomas Hyde, Oxford, 1694.

The unknown Persian, author of the imperfect M.S. presented by Major Price the eminent Orientalist, to the Asiatic Society, and upon which N. Bland, Esq., mainly bases his admirable treatise on Persian Chess, 1850, says--"Hermes, a Grecian sage, invented chess, and that it was abridged and sent to Persia in the sixth century of our era."

The famous Shahnama, by Firdausi, called the Homer of Persia, and other Eastern manuscripts as well as the M.S. of the Asiatic Society, give less ancient traditions of the adaption of chess relating to the time of Alexander the Great and Indian Kings, Fur, Poris, and Kaid; in one of these the reward of a grain of corn doubled sixty-four times was stipulated for by the philosopher, and the seeming insignificance of the demand astonished and displeased the King, who wished to make a substantial recognition worthy of his own greatness and power, and it occasioned sneers and ridicule on the part of the King's treasurer and accountant at Sassa's supposed lack of wisdom and judgment. However, astonishment and chagrin succeeded before they were half way through their computation, for when the total was arrived at, it was found to exceed all the wealth of the world, and the King knew not which to admire most, the ingenuity of the game itself, or that of the minister's demand.

The earliest European work on chess is supposed to be that of Jacobus de Cessolus, a monk of Picardy, which appeared (it is said) in 1290 (scheilt swischen 1250-1275 Linde 1-10). His favourite names are Evil Merodach, King of Babylon and a philosopher named Xerxes, Massman, 1830, gives Ammelin, Amilin, Amilon and Selenus, Ibl, Xerxes whose Greek name was Philometer to whom 597 B.C. has been assigned.

Palamedes and Diomedes of Trojan celebrity, the Lydians of Herodotus, the Thoth of Plato, the Hermes of the Asiatic Society's philosopher; in fact nearly every one of the Gods who has in turn served as the Great Mythological Divinity has been credited with the discovery of chess.

NOTE. There are few parts of learning so involved in obscurity, as the history of Pagan idolatry. It may, perhaps, be some satisfaction to us to think that the ancients themselves knew even less of the matter than we do; but if so, it furnishes a strong argument for the necessity of being very cautious in drawing our conclusions. We believe it may safely be said, that there is not one among all the fabled deities of antiquity, whom (if the writers of antiquity may be trusted) it is not possible to identify with every other--Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Pan, Hercules, Priapus, Bacchus, Bel, Moloch, Chemosh, Taut, Thoth, Osiris, Buddha, Vishnou, Siva, all and each of these may be shown to be one and the same person. And whether we suppose this person to have been the Sun, or to have been Adam, or Seth, or Enoch, or Noah, or Shem, or Ham, or Japhet, the conclusion will be still the same, each of them, it may be shewn was worshipped as the Sun, and all of them, wherever their worship was established, were severally considered as the Great Mythological Divinity.

So far, It would not appear that there is any room for much difference of opinion, at least, not if ancient authorities may be depended on.



Dr. Salvic states on the strength of one of his authorities, and Alexandre apparently quite seriously has repeated the statement that the text in Samuel of Abner and Joab's twelve chosen champions "Let the young men now arise and play before us" may be applicable to chess, but the context of the chapter is opposed to any such conclusion. All the foregoing fabulous accounts may be at least declared "not proven" if not utterly unworthy even of the verdict

pronounced in those two words. There are three more modern traditions or accounts, the first of which is referred to Alexander the Great's time 336 to 322 B.C., and the two others to about the time of Chosroes--900 years later. Forbes devotes thirteen pages to them and they are given with less detail by the Rev. R. Lambe in 1764 and N. Bland in 1850.



THE THREE INDIAN TRADITIONS

In this, the first Indian tradition referred to the time of Alexander the Great, it is related in the Shahnama that a very powerful King of India named Kaid, satiated with war, and having no enemies without, or rebellious subjects within his kingdom, thus addressed his minister Sassa.

"Day and night my mind is harassed with the thoughts of war and strife; when in the hours of the night sleep overpowers me, I dream of nothing but battlefields and conquests, and in the morning, when I awake, I still think over my imaginary combats and victories. Now you are well aware that I have no longer one single enemy or rebel in my whole dominions with whom to contend. It is utterly repugnant to justice and common sense, to go to war without any cause. If I were to do so God would be displeased with me, and a severe retribution for my evil deeds would soon overtake me, even in this world, for is it not said that a kingdom governed by falsehood and oppression is void of stability, and it will soon pass away. Tell me, then, O Sassa, for great is thy wisdom, what am I to do in order to regain my peace of mind, and obtain relief from my present state of weariness and disgust?"

Sassa hereupon bethought himself of a rare game, the invention of an ancient Grecian sage, by name Hermes, which had recently been introduced into India by Alexander and his soldiers, who used to play it at times of leisure. Sassa procured and modified the game and board from 56 pieces and 112 squares to 32 pieces and 64 squares, and explained it to the king, who practised it with both satisfaction and delight, Sassa's stipulation of a reward of a grain of corn doubled again and again 64 times, which was at first deemed ridiculous, was found to amount to 18,446,744,073,709,551,615 rating the barley corn at two shillings the bushel, the value required from the Indian king by the philosopher was 3,385,966,239,667 pounds and 12s an unexpected and amazing sum.

The second version is of another highly ambitious and successful king of Hind, name Fur, who died and left a young son, inexperienced in war and in danger of losing his possessions. The wise men consulted together, and Sassa, the son of Dahir, brought the chess board and men to the Prince, saying, "Here you have an exact image of war, which is conducted on principles similar to those which regulate this wonderful game. The same caution in attack and coolness in defence which you have to exercise here, you will have to put in practice in the battlefield. The Prince with eagerness availed himself of Sassa's instructions until he made himself fully acquainted with the principles of the game. He then assembled his army and went forth in full confidence to encounter his enemies, whom he defeated at all points. He then returned home in triumph, and ever after he cherished his love for the game of chess to a knowledge of which he considered himself indebted for the preservation of his honour, his kingdom and his life."

The third account relates--"After Belugi, reigned Giumhur who had this royal seat in the City of Sandali, in the province of Cachemir. When he died, his brother, called May, was chosen King, who had two sons, Ghav and Talachand. Upon the death of May, their mother Paritchera, that is, endued with angelic beauty, reigned. These two young Princes being grown to maturity, desire to know from their mother who of them was to be her successor. The mother concealing her mind, gave them both hopes separately. In the meantime, the brothers quarrel, and raise armies, and the mother endeavored to reconcile them by her good advice, but in vain, for soon after they broke out into open war. After various battles, it fell out that Talachand was slain. Upon this, the mother goes to her surviving son, and complains to him of these things.

"Then the wise men of the kingdom set about to compose the game Shatranji, representing the battle of Ghav and Talachand.

"The sorrowful mother contemplates this game, and by daily playing it, brings into her mind the battle and death of her son Talachand. She could not forbear to torment herself with the remembrance of his death, and every day for a long time, to give herself up to the meditation thereof."--SHAHNAMA.



>From the early ages of the Christian era back to the times of Homer, Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, and Aristotle, traditions, concerning the origin of this wonderful game have come down to us of a very various and conflicting character; the Arabian and Persian historians from the commentators on the Koran interdict against lots and images

to the days of the Persian Shahnama of Firdausi and the Asiatic Society's famous manuscript, have spoken of the origin and history of chess, Aben Ezra, the famous Rabbi, contemporary of Maimonides, Jacobus de Cessolus the Monk of Picardy, Ruy Lopez the Spanish priest, Damiano the Portuguese Apothecary, Gustavus Selenus (the Duke of Luneburg), Dr. Salvic, Carrera, and the writers of the Italian school, have all contributed to the remarkably delusive and often mythical theories propounded in regard to it. In our own Country we have them from Chaucer, Lydgate, Caxton, Barbieri and the Encyclopaediasts, and Pope writing just before knowledge of the Sanskrit became imparted among the learned, and ere the classical Sir William Jones had began to enlighten us, thought probably he had set the matter at rest by declaring that the invention of chess, (which we had and could enjoy without caring to know from whence it came) and which was an imperishable monument of the wisdom of its unknown founder, involved a problem which never would be solved.



PROGRESS OF CHESS

It has been a subject of regret with writers that complete games of chess cannot be found for the earlier ages, and it has been suggested that a few well annotated games of the great Eastern players of one thousand years ago, and of the rival champions of Spain, Italy and Sicily in the Sixteenth century would be of more interest than all the problems and positions handed down to us in existence and, it certainly would be pleasing and instructive to be able to compare the styles Ali Suli, Adali, Lajlaj, Abbas and Razi, the great players of the Golden Age of Arabian Literature, and that of Ali Shatranji of Timur's Court and Ruy Lopez, Leonardo and Paolo Boi with those of Philidor and the leaders of the Nineteenth century.

The first half of the Nineteenth century witnessed the commencement of Press notice, and the growth of a literature for chess, and was distinguished by the number of works devoted to the play of the game, not half a score of books could be traced in England before Philidor's, besides which Caxton, 1474, dedicated to the Duke of Clarence, Rowbotham, 1561, to the Earl of Leicester, and Saul and Barbieri, 1617 and 1640, to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, which constitute the most noted works recorded, conveyed but little knowledge concerning the game, and were scarcely more than translations of foreign works from that of Jacobus de Cessolus, 1290, and others, and were rather moralities and philosophical treatises than works of practical utility from a scientific point of view.

During the second half, the advance in the appreciation and practice of chess has been yet more astonishing as compared with the single club in St. James' Street, and the meeting place for chess players in St. Martin's Lane, which existed in Philidor's time, and the thirty clubs or so which had arisen by 1851, we have now at least five hundred, and as against the earliest chess columns in the *Lancet*, *Bell's Life*, and the *Illustrated London News*, we can specify near one hundred. It is among the middle and humbler classes that the spread of a taste for chess has been most apparent, with the fashionable or higher classes, so far as any manifestation of public interest or support is to be taken as a criterion, its appreciation has died out, and for twenty noble names among its patrons in Philidor's time, we cannot reckon one in ours. Another singular feature is the grave diminution in the recognized number of able exponents, commonly called Masters, which in the British list are reduced to less than a third of the well-known names of 1862. The support of chess, trifling as it is, comes from about a score of Her Majesty's subjects, and the total in a year does not now equal a sum very usual in a glove fight, or a Championship Billiard match, and the sums provided in a generation by our present machinery would not equal the value of one Al Mamun's musk balls or the rewards to Ruy Lopez for a single match.

The time allowed for consideration of the moves in chess, and the management of the clocks used to regulate such is a most important element in estimating the relative strength of chess players. So important, in fact, that pure chess, and chess with clocks is found by experience to be a very different thing with certain players. Bird finds the clocks more trouble than the chess, and as everybody knows is heavily handicapped by them, hence his force and success in ordinary play is far greater than in tournaments. Take the time limit alone for two players of equal reputation, who may not be disturbed or distracted by the clocks, a difference in the time limit of ten or even five moves an hour would in some cases turn the scale between them. Passing over the faster Bird; and other English players who prefer the slower rate take a very notable example, Steinitz and Zukertort. After the Criterion Great Tournament of 1883 opinions differed much as to which of these was the stronger player, but after the match at 15 moves an hour, in the United States, won by Steinitz with a score of 10 to 4, the palm has been generally awarded to Steinitz, and without any qualification whatever the term of champion of the chess world has been universally accorded to him and still continues to be so, notwithstanding the superior claims of Dr. Tarrasch based upon victory in three successive International Chess Tournaments, Breslan 1889, Manchester 1890, and Dresden in 1892, in the two first named not losing a single game, and in the last, one only, feats never accomplished by Steinitz.

Zukertort was undoubtedly a far more ready, and we have long thought a finer player than Steinitz, but skill was so nicely balanced between them that a very slight variation or acceleration in rate would have been in Zukertort's favour. At 25 moves an hour or at any faster rate it would have been odds on Zukertort, at 15 moves an hour or less it would have been safer to back Steinitz. Staunton, Kolisch, and Paulsen seem to have been the slowest of the players, 10 moves an hour would suit them better than 15, a 10 or 12 hour game with them was not uncommon. Bird is the fastest, and his best games have averaged 40 moves an hour or two or three hours for a game, a reasonable rate for recreational chess.

In the last century one-and-a-half or two hours was considered a fair duration for a good game, 30 moves an hour would give three hours for a game of 45 moves or four for a game of 60 moves, and such could be finished at the usual sitting without adjournment.

The period dating from the France and England Championship Match between St. Amant and Staunton in 1843, to the Vienna Tournament of 1873, was singularly prolific in very great chess players. In addition to Anderssen 1851, and Morphy 1858, there appeared in the metropolis in 1862 Louis Paulsen, William Steinitz, and J. H. Blackburne, three players who, as well as Captain Mackenzie competed in the British Chess Association's Tournaments of that year, and were destined with Zukertort and Gunsberg of ten years later growth, to rank as conspicuously successful among even the score or so of the pre-eminently distinguished players of the highest class the world has ever produced, the Rev. G. A. McDonnell and Barnes were of five and Boden of 12 years earlier reputation, all were competing in the 1862 contest, Buckle died in this year, and his opponent Bird had retired from chess, other pursuits entirely absorbing his time mostly abroad. He had been the hardest fighter and most active of the English combatants of 15 years before, and it was his fate about four years later, once more to become not the least prominent and interesting of the leading chess players.

Chess as now played with the Queen of present powers, imported into the game dates back about four centuries, to near the time when the works of the Spanish writers, Vicenz and Lucena, appeared in 1495, and shortly before that of Damiano the Portuguese in 1512. In 1561 Ruy Lopez, the Spanish priest of Cafra, a name familiar to the present generation, from one of the openings most approved in modern practice being named after him, wrote the best work of a scientific character which had appeared in Europe to that time, and he was considered in Spain the very best player in the world, until the memorable contests between him and Leonardo da Cutri, and Paolo Boi of Syracuse left the question of supremacy doubtful. These famous struggles are reverted to not without interest in our days, when the not very profitable task of attempting to institute comparisons between past and present great players is indulged in, for in the absence of a single published complete and annotated game until the 19th century, there is little advantage in conjecturing whether Al Suli was equal to Philidor, Razi or Greco to A. McDonnell of Belfast, Ali Shatranji to La Bourdonnais, Paolo Boi to Anderssen, Ruy Lopez to Staunton, or Leonardo to Morphy, though these conjectural comparisons in varied forms are not uncommon in modern chess talk.

The records of incidents, and the anecdotes appertaining to chess or chess players in the middle ages, are so scattered, scant, and meagre, that no writer has attempted to put them into shape, or make a consecutive or connected narrative of them. Even Professor Duncan Forbes the most elaborate of all the European writers on the history of chess, dismisses the period from 750 to 1500 A.D., in a very few words not vouchsafing to it in his volume of 400 pages a chapter of a single page, though his book able as it is, contains much description of games of the past in different countries, the interest in which seems not considerable in present days. The Hon. Daines Barrington writing in 1787, says, (and others have followed him to a like effect), "Our ancestors certainly played much at chess before the general introduction of cards, as no fewer than twenty-six English families have emblazoned chess boards and chess rooks on their arms, and it therefore must have been considered as a valuable accomplishment."

The opinions so commonly entertained and expressed, however, so far at least as they can be taken to apply to the period before Queen Elizabeth's reign, rest upon but slender data, and it is highly probable that even in that monarch's reign the practice of chess was confined to a very limited circle for we read of no fine player, great games, or matches, or public competitions of any kind, in our climes until Philidor's time; his career in England though intermittent extended close upon fifty years and from his time may be dated the budding forth of the popularity of chess, which began to come to full bloom about 1828, (33 years after his death) and produced its fruits in the France and England championship contests of 1834 and 1843, and the inception of International Tournaments in 1851 which first established Germany's great reputation and furnished a chess champion of the world from among them.

Though the contests between the rival champions of Spain and Italy, were promoted as tests of skill, at the courts of Philip and Sebastian, and rewarded with a liberality unheard of, since the days of Chosroes and Al Mamun, and took place during the contemporary reign of Queen Elizabeth, when chess had become decidedly fashionable in England, we find no record of the games, or that any interest or enthusiasm appears to have been evoked by them in any

country except those where they took place. They seem to have led to no emulation in other parts of Europe, and we read of no chess competitions of any kind in France, Germany, or England. It was not till a century later that the debut and successes of the brilliant Greco the Calabrian, in Paris, began to cause a little more chess ambition in France and gave the ascendancy in the game to that country which it still held in Legalle and Philidor's time in 1750, and continued to maintain until the matches of 1834, between Alex. McDonnell of Belfast and the famous Louis de La Bourdonnais of Paris, followed in 1843 by Staunton's victory over M. S. Amant, first advanced British claims to a first class position in chess, and left our countryman Staunton the admitted world's champion in chess, until the title was wrested from him by Professor Anderssen of Breslau, in the International tournament held in London during the Exhibition year 1851.

The career of England's champion, Staunton, for about ten years successful as it was, is considered generally to have been even surpassed by that of Anderssen which lasted till his death in 1879 near thirty years. Their chess performances like those of Philidor from 1746 to 1795, and of Paul Morphy from 1855 to 1858, would well merit full record in a longer work.

NOTE. A translation of Greco was published in London in 1656, with a likeness of Charles the First in it.



Space precludes the admission of the sketches and comparisons of the chess careers of Philidor, Staunton, Anderssen, and Morphy, and confines us to the brief account of Philidor's extraordinary support and influence on the future of chess and such references as occur in the sketches of Simpson's.

Continuously from the date of Philidor's death in 1795, to the ascendancy of Deschappelles in 1820, France maintained the lead in chess which she had held for one hundred and fifty years, producing in the interval the famous de La Bourdonnais, who for genius, invention and force has never been excelled, and may be ranked with Anderssen, whose supremacy for Germany first became manifested in 1851, and the unparalleled Paul Morphy, of New Orleans, who in 1857 and 1858, electrified the whole chess world by his signal successes in New York, London and Paris.

Taking strength, style, and rapidity of conception combined, these are probably the three greatest players which the world has produced since Al Suli in the Tenth century who was considered a marvel among the best of the Eastern players, and Paolo Boi, Leonardo and Ruy Lopez in the Sixteenth century.

Even in the pools at Paris in 1820, when Deschappelles essayed to give the pawn and move to La Bourdonnais and Cochrane, and in a boastful manner challenged the whole world on the same terms the superiority of La Bourdonnais was already manifested, and for succeeding years became unquestionable.

There are yet remaining old chess enthusiasts who recall with pleasure the satisfaction of the British chess circle at the zeal and prowess of Alexander McDonnell, of Belfast, on his appearance in London in 1828, and his continued pluck, perseverance and improvement, and gallant stand against the most formidable of French or living chess players, and which first began to establish English chess claims to equality with France and the very learned German school which had sprung up of which Dr. Bledow, Heydebrand Der Lasa, Hanstein and Bilguer soon became like Anderssen so especially distinguished. Staunton, a household word in chess, first came decisively to the front in 1840, the year in which La Bourdonnais died. McDonnell had already departed in 1837. They lie close together in the northwest corner of Kensal Green Cemetery. Staunton became the recognised English Champion, and by defeating St. Amant, the French representative, and all other players he encountered, further enhanced British chess reputation by upholding his title against all comers, until his wane and defeat by Anderssen, of Breslau, in the First International Tournament of 1851, a result quite unexpected at home and abroad, but subsequent events confirmed what the character of Staunton's play in this competition seemed to indicate that he had passed his best, for two English amateurs, very young, but rising into fame, not then considered by any means equal in force to Staunton, yet fully held their own in 1852 against Anderssen, the first great German conqueror in games which Germany has ever held in very high estimation.

In British chess circles, H. T. Buckle, writer and historian was now the most patient and scientific of the players. S. S. Boden, the most learned and profound, H. E. Bird the most rapid, ready and enthusiastic. The last-named, a favourite opponent of the English leaders, also encountered one by one the phalanx of great Foreign players assembled, such as Anderssen himself, Szen, Lowenthal, Kieseritzky, Harrwitz and Horwitz, and sustained our chess reputation, particularly in those dashing contests of short duration, which exigencies of time and other pursuits alone rendered practicable. The years 1853 to 1857 were not notable for first-class chess contests. Boden and Bird had both retired. The appearance of the invincible Paul Morphy from America in 1858, caused a revival of chess; he came to play a great match with Staunton, but no individual contest ever took place between them. Barnes a very

strong amateur chess player encountered Morphy but lost by a large majority. Boden next came forth from his retirement and played some excellent games with him. Bird, long out of chess happening to return from a long absence abroad, also met him, but neither English player proved equal to Morphy, and it was regretted that the more experienced Staunton would not, and that Buckle could not test conclusions with him, Lowenthal and Paulsen had both been defeated by Morphy in America, and the young American proved decisively successful in matches against Lowenthal and Anderssen in London [Paris], and Harrwitz in Paris.

NOTE. Schallop, Dufresne and Alexis at the Berlin Chess Club pointed out the great appreciation by Anderssen for these games when Bird was in Berlin some years ago.

CHESS HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES

THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF CHESS

When it first entered my thoughts to say a few words about chess and its principal exponents during the Nineteenth century, and particularly of the forty years during which I have been in the circle, any idea of inquiring or examining into, and much less of attempting to reconcile the many conflicting theories so well known to exist in regard to the early history and progress of the game, had never once occurred to me. Like many others, I was slightly acquainted with Professor Forbes' important work of 1860, in which the age of chess was fixed at about 5,000 years, and India assigned as its birthplace; and I was more or less familiar with the theories advanced as to its supposed first introduction into Europe and also into our own country. That the assumed great starting point of chess on a board of sixty-four squares (as at present used), with thirty-two figures, and played by two persons, was Persia, and that the time was during the reign of Chosroes Cosrues, or Khosrus (as it is variously written), about A.D. 540, was to the limited few who took any particular interest in the matter, considered, if not altogether absolutely free from doubt, certainly one of the best attested facts in early chess history; whilst the opinions of Sir William Jones (1763), the Rev. R. Lambe (1764), Hon. Daines Barrington (1787), F. Douce, Esq. (1793), and Sir Frederick Madden (1832), to the effect that chess first found its way into England from France after the first Crusade, at about A.D. 1100, were, I know--although unfounded and erroneous--generally accepted as embodying the most probable theory.

The circumstance which first induced me to take some additional interest in this question of chess origin, was the perusal of the lines attributed to Pope (quoted by Forbes at the foot of Chapter XII of his book), and the vague and uncertain, and I now think unreasonable date fixed for our own probable first knowledge of the game, though concurred in with tolerable unanimity by so many ancient writers among those regarded as the chief authorities on the subject.

This, however, is not all, for in regard to the European origin of the game of chess, as to which there is such a consensus of agreement; it may be that all the authors are yet still more at fault; for with one accord they all assume that chess reached Europe from Persia not earlier than the sixth century, the Arabs and Saracens getting it about A.D. 600, Spain and the Aquitaine Dominions being commonly pointed to as the countries which first received it from the Arabs or Saracens in Europe after the Persian period above named. There is no indication in any of the works of a notion of the knowledge and practice of chess in Europe at an earlier date, so it appears not unreasonable to conclude that the following extract, which applies to a period seven hundred years before the Persian epoch, must have entirely escaped the notice of all the writers. The article occurs in the "Biographical Dictionary of the Society for Diffusing Useful Knowledge" (Longman Co., Vol. I, Part II, pp. 842, 512), under the head of "Ahenobarbus." The following is an extract of the Biography, which is given in full in the Appendix:

"Ahenobarbus triumphed at Rome for his victory over Averni, and, according to Cicero, over the Allobroges also, in B.C. 120. In their Consulship (B.C. 115), Ahenobarbus and his colleague, L. Coecilius Metellus Dalmatius, prohibited all scenic exhibitions at Rome, except that of the Latin flute players, and all games of chance, except Chess or Draughts,

*(Signed) W. B. D.
(Presumably William Bodham Donne.)*

The contributions of W. B. D. are not frequent in the Biography as those of Duncan Forbes, Aloys Sprenger, Pascual de Gayangos, and William Plater are, and he does not apparently write, like them, as an authority upon Eastern questions, and I might have overlooked this reference to chess had I not read through the whole of the volumes.

It will be observed that both Chess and Draughts are referred to in the notice, which is important, for had chess alone been mentioned, it is probable that exception would be taken that the game was but a species of the latter; it is doubtful, also, whether Ludus Latrunculorum, a game of the Romans, might not also have been suggested.

I cannot find any writer who has referred to chess in Rome or elsewhere at this period, and it is not improbable that the extract given may cause some little astonishment to those well-known writers who have assumed that the Romans knew nothing of chess till some centuries later. The generally accepted theory is that chess reached Persia from India in the sixth century of our era during Chosroes' reign, as stated by Lambe, 1764; Bland, 1850; and others; and this is almost universally concurred in. The practice of chess in Rome, as indicated by the foregoing edict seven hundred years before, may, however, tend somewhat to disturb all existing theories as to its first European origin, and it will be of interest to know what the learned in such matters will think in regard to it, while it may tend to closer investigation by more learned and able men, who have already devoted attention to the subject, and have greater facilities for extracting reliable information.

Spain is stated by all authorities to be the first country in Europe where chess was known, 600 to 700 A.D. being the period assigned. The Franks and Aquitaines had it very soon afterwards, certainly in Charles Martell's reign, and evidence that the game was held in high esteem during the reigns of his successors, Pepin and Charlemagne, may now be regarded as perfectly satisfactory.

As the views of Pope before referred to represent something like those of many others, and they may not be altogether devoid of interest in the present day, I append them, with Forbes' sweeping animadversions thereon. The lines which have been published as original (or without acknowledgment) by more than one chess writer in modern magazines, are as follows:

"When and where chess was invented is a problem which we believe never will be solved. The origin of the game recedes every day further back into the regions of the past and unknown. Individuals deep in antiquarian lore have very praiseworthy puzzled themselves and their readers in vain, in their endeavours to ascertain to their satisfaction how this wonderful pastime sprang into existence.

"Whether it was the product of some peaceful age, when science and philosophy reigned supreme, or whether it was nurtured amid the tented field of the warrior, are questions which it is equally futile and unnecessary now to ask. Sufficient for us that the game exists, and that it has been sung of by Homer, that it has been the delight of kings, scholars, and philosophers in almost every age; that it is now on the flood tide of success, and is going on its way gathering fresh votaries at every step, and that it seems destined to go down to succeeding ages as an imperishable monument of the genius and skill of its unknown founder."

Forbes introduces this article by observing: "Pope has much to answer for as the originator of a vast deal of rhetorical rubbish upon us in chess lectures and chess articles in periodicals. Here (he says), for example, is a fair stereotype specimen of this sort," and he concludes: "We recommend the above eloquent moreceaux, taken from a chess periodical now defunct, to the attention of chessmen at chess reunions, chess lectures, and those who are ambitious to do a spicy article for a chess periodical."

This appears somewhat severe on Pope, even if it be reasonable and consistent, which may be doubted; for Forbes himself, writing to the "Chess Player's Chronicle," in 1853, about 120 years after Pope, and seven years before the appearance of his own "History of Chess," thus expressed himself:

"In the present day it is impossible to trace the game of chess with moral certainty back to its source amidst the dark shades of antiquity, but I am quite ready to prove that the claim of the Hindoos as the inventors, is far more satisfactory than that of any other people."

Pope needs no defenders. There are writers of more recent date, who have inflicted what Forbes would probably call more rhetorical rubbish upon chess readers. Here is one other example, which appeared in 1865:

"Though the precise birth and parentage of chess are absolutely unknown, yet a light marks the track of this royal personage adown the ages, by which we may clearly enough discern one significant note of his progress, that he has always kept the very best of company. We find him ever in the bosom of civilization, the companion of the wise and thoughtful, the beloved of the studious and mild. Barbarous men had to be humanized and elevated before he would come to them. While the East remained the better part of the world he confined himself to the East; when the West was to be regenerated he attended with the other agents of beneficial destiny, and helped the good work on. He seems to have entered Europe on two opposite sides. Along with philosophy and letters Spain and Portugal received him, with other good gifts, from their benefactors the Saracens; and he is seen in the eighth century at Constantinople, quietly biding his time for a further advance. >From that time to the present, chess has been the delight of kings and kaisers, of the reflecting, the witty, and the good."



The Indian and American views will be found in the sequel.