



Henry Bird

CHESS
HISTORY
AND
REMINISCENCES

Henry Bird

Chess History and Reminiscences

**Development of the Game of Chess throughout
the Ages**

e-artnow, 2021

Contact: info@e-artnow.org

EAN: 4064066388911

Table of Contents

Preface

Chess History and Reminiscences: Concerning the Origin of Chess

Chess Notes and References

Chess History and Reminiscences: The Origin and Early History of Chess

As to the Supposed Origin of Chess

Theories as to the Invention of Chess

Chess of the Nineteenth Century

National Chess. Chess of the Nineteenth Century. Belfast, (The Most Recent Meeting).

Blindfold Chess

The Game of Chess

The Habits and Idiosyncracies of Chess Players (Myself)

Interdictions of Chess

PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

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,

Deschapelles 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 Havanna 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 recreatory 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, &c., 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.

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, &c.; 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.

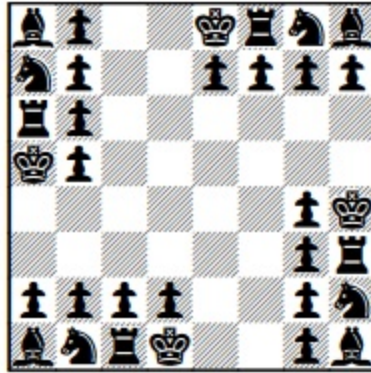
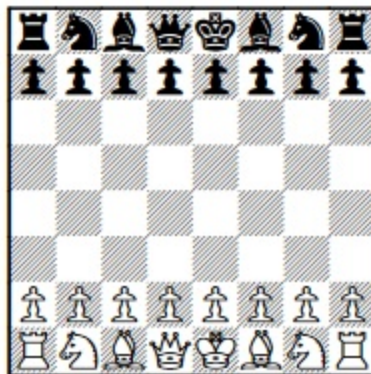


Diagram of a Chaturanga board with 4 armies. Yellow is in upper left. Black is in upper right. Green is in lower left. Red is in lower right.

The Medieval and Modern Chess.

White



Black

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.