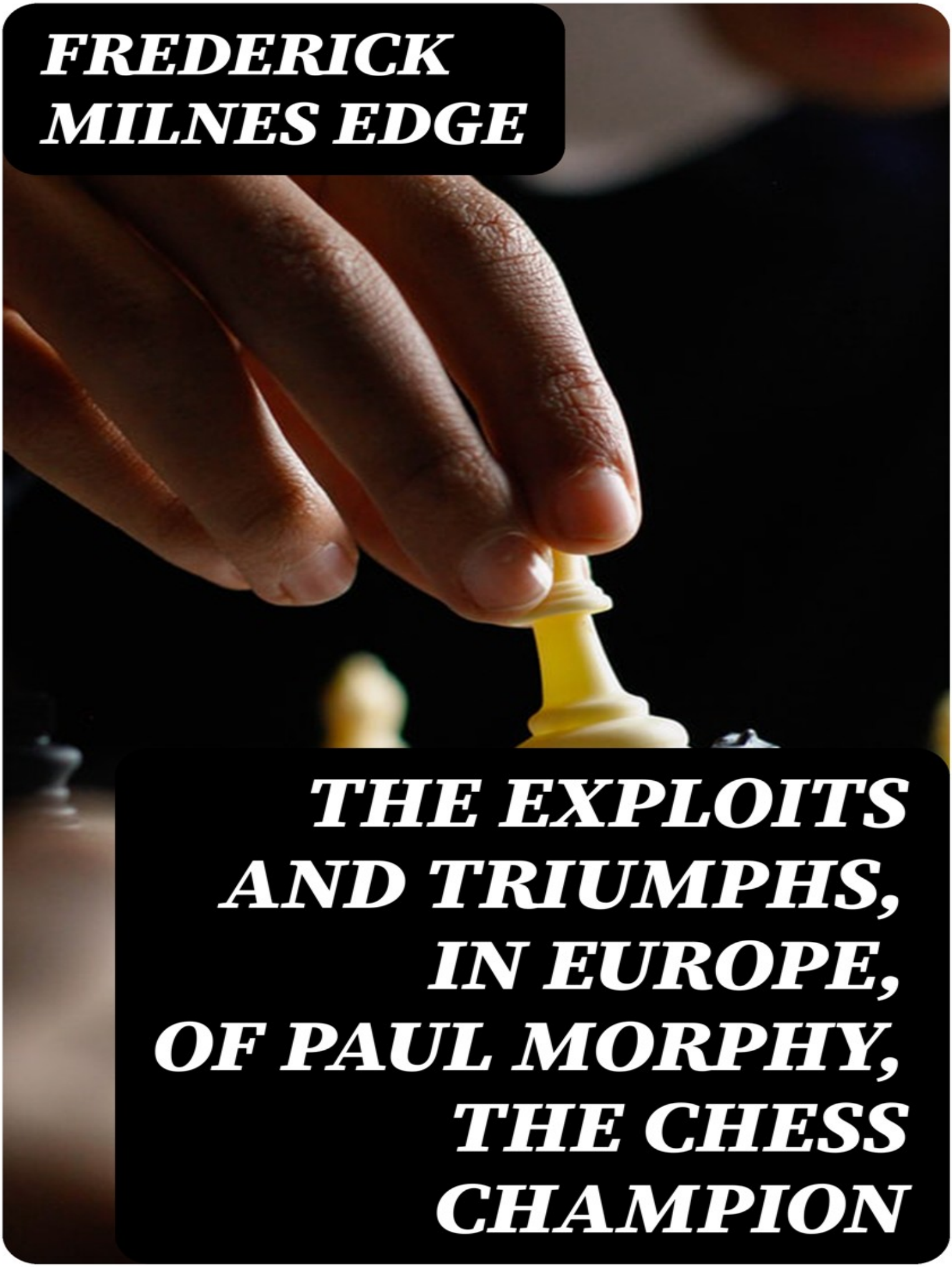

FREDERICK MILNES EDGE

THE EXPLOITS AND TRIUMPHS, IN EUROPE, OF PAUL MORPHY, THE CHESS CHAMPION

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PREFACE.

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I am much indebted, in the following pages, to the kind assistance of that able writer and veteran chess-player, Mr. George Walker, who has furnished me with most of the very interesting and valuable information contained in the fourth chapter of this work. I am likewise under obligations to Herr Löwenthal for many anecdotes relating to chess celebrities of the past, and other information; and also to Mr. George Medley, Honorary Secretary of the London Chess Club, and Mr. Ries, of the Divan.

The cuts with which this work is embellished have been engraved by the well-known Brothers Dalziel. The portrait of Paul Morphy, copied from a photograph taken shortly after his arrival in London last year, is an excellent likeness.

The portraits of Messrs. Staunton, Boden, Anderssen, and Löwenthal, are copies of photographs, for which they sat at the Manchester Meeting, in 1857. The originals of Messrs. Saint Amant and Harrwitz are admirably executed lithographs of those gentlemen, taken about four years ago, and that of Mr. Mongredieu is copied from a photograph kindly lent for the purpose.

I am under great obligations to Mr. Lewis, who came to London expressly to sit for his likeness; and I feel assured that my readers will value this "very form and feature" of an amateur who was famous before Labourdonnais was known outside the Régence; and whose works are found in every chess-player's library.

I had considerable difficulty in obtaining the portrait of Mr. George Walker. Photographs, lithographs, etc., of that most popular of all chess writers, did not exist, and many friends prophesied that his likeness would not be in my book. But I importuned him so that he relented, and confided to my care an oil painting, for which he sat five years ago, and which was the only portrait of him in existence.

My readers can judge of the resemblance of the other cuts by the portrait of Paul Morphy. I only wish my story was as good.

PAUL MORPHY.

CHAPTER I.

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MORPHY'S FIRST GAMES.

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Paul Morphy's father, Judge Morphy, of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, beguiled his leisure hours with the fascinations of Chess, and, finding a precocious aptitude for the game in his son, he taught him the moves and the value of the various pieces. In the language of somebody,—

> "To teach the young Paul chess,
> His leisure he'd employ;
> Until, at last, the old man
> Was beaten by the boy."

I have here spoilt a very pretty story. The report in chess circles is, that the young Paul learned the moves from seeing his father play with his uncle, Mr. Ernest Morphy, long ranking amongst the first players in the Union, and one of the brightest living ornaments of American chess. One evening—so runs the tale—this gentleman awaited the arrival of the Judge, when Master Paul impudently offered to be his antagonist. What was the uncle's astonishment at finding the stripling a match for his deepest combinations, and what the father's surprise on discovering a very Philidor in his son of ten years! Deschapelles became a first-rate player in three days, at the age of something like thirty. Nobody ever believed the statement, not even Deschapelles

himself, although his biographer declares he had told the lie so often that he at last forgot the facts of the case. But the story about Morphy beats the Deschapelles story in the proportion of thirty to ten. I sorrowfully confess that my hero's unromantic regard for truth makes him characterize the above statement as a humbug and an impossibility.

Paul's genius for Chess was, very properly, not permitted to interfere with his educational pursuits. At college (in South Carolina) until eighteen years of age, he had but little time for indulgence in his favorite game, nor did he find any one capable of contending with him. When the vacations allowed of his playing against such adepts as his father and uncle, or such well-known paladins as Mr. Ernest Rousseau, of New Orleans, and Judge Meek, of Alabama, he soon showed himself superior to all antagonists. In the autumn of 1849, Herr Löwenthal, the celebrated Hungarian player, visited the Crescent City, and out of three games against the young Paul, then but twelve years old, he lost two and drew one. It is but reasonable to suppose that the desire of atoning for this defeat had something to do with Herr Löwenthal's challenging his youthful victor, on his arrival last year in Europe.

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THE FIRST AMERICAN CHESS CONGRESS.

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A circular was issued by the New York Chess Club, in the month of April, 1857, "for the purpose of ascertaining the feasibility and propriety of a general assemblage of the chess players resident in America." This "met with a hearty and zealous response from the amateurs and clubs of the United States. So favorable was the feeling everywhere manifested, that it was deemed advisable to proceed with the undertaking, and to complete at once the preliminary arrangements."[A] In consideration of the movement having been initiated by the New York Chess Club, it was conceded that the meeting should take place in that city.

Some of the founders of the New York Chess Club still live to do honor to the game. I believe that Mr. James Thompson and Colonel Mead suckled the bantling in times of yore, sometimes forming the entire of the Club without assistance. In that day of small things, I believe, too, they defeated the Norfolk (Va.) Club, proving themselves just two too many for their opponents. Then they travelled about from house to house, as their members increased, with the arrival of Mr. Charles H. Stanley, Mr. Frederick Perrin, and others. About 1855 or 1856, the Club made the acquisition of two enterprising young players, Mr. Theodore Lichtenhein and Mr. Daniel W. Fiske; and to the latter gentleman is due

the credit of first suggesting this Chess Congress, which made known to fame the genius of Paul Morphy.

In the summer of 1857, being then engaged on the New York Herald, I used occasionally to tumble into the basement of an edifice opposite the newspaper office, where a jolly, fat German, with a never-to-be-remembered name, regaled his visitors upon sausages and "lager." Here the members of the Chess Club were wont to congregate; for the landlord had provided chessmen and boards as an inducement to visitors.

One afternoon being engaged in a game with a brother reporter, a gentleman, whom I subsequently learned was Mr. Theodore Lichtenhein, stepped up to us, and put into our hands the prospectus of the approaching Chess Congress, stating his opinion that an event of so much importance merited newspaper publicity. So began my acquaintance with American chess amateurs. Although possessing but little skill as a player, I had a strong liking for the game, and determined that every thing in my power should be done to render the meeting successful.

My visits to the saloon, and eventually to the Club, became frequent, and the Committee of Management, finding that I both could and would work, did me the honor of appointing me one of the secretaries.

The Congress was advertised to open on the 6th of October, but players began to arrive some weeks previously. First of all came Judge Meek, of Alabama, a truly imposing specimen of a man. Soon after him followed Mr. Louis Paulsen, from Dubuque, Iowa, whose astonishing blindfold feats out West were the theme of general talk, and almost

total disbelief, amongst Eastern players. From Judge Meek we first heard of Paul Morphy's wondrous strength. He told the New York Club that if the youthful Louisianian entered the tournament, he would infallibly wrest the palm of victory from all competition.

We were much afraid, nevertheless, that Mr. Morphy would be unable to quit his legal studies for the purpose of attending the Congress, but when Mr. Fiske announced the receipt of a telegraphic despatch, which stated that he was *en route*, everybody hailed the news with satisfaction. Mr. Paulsen now came to the support of Judge Meek, and declared that Paul Morphy would carry off the first prize in the tournament; giving, as the grounds of his opinion, some two or three published games of the young Louisianian, which he considered worthy to rank with the finest master-pieces of chess strategy. Benignant fate brought the young hero safely to New York, some two days before the assembling of the Congress.

Who that was present that evening does not remember Paul Morphy's first appearance at the New York Chess Club? The secretary, Mr. Frederick Perrin, valorously offered to be his first antagonist, and presented about the same resistance as a musquito to an avalanche. Then who should enter the room but the warrior Stanley, tomahawk in one hand and the scalps of Schulten and Rousseau in the other. Loud cries were made for "Stanley! Stanley!" and Mr. Perrin resigned his seat to the new comer, in deference to so general a request. Thus commenced a contest, or rather a succession of contests, in which Mr. Stanley was indeed

astonished. "Mate" followed upon "mate," until he arose from his chair in bewildered defeat.

The following day, the assembled delegates and amateurs from the various clubs, organized the Congress by the election of a president, in the person of Judge Meek, with Mr. Fiske as secretary, four assistant secretaries, marshals, treasurer, etc. All these matters of detail, as well as the games played, the laws passed, etc., etc., will eventually appear in the long looked for "Book of the Congress," forthcoming with the completion of the "British Museum Catalogue."

In the absence of the "Book of the Congress," I must give a slight sketch of its proceedings, in order to trace the career of Paul Morphy *ab initio*. After taking possession of the magnificent hall which the New York Committee of Management had chosen for the meeting, the sixteen contestants in the Grand Tournament, proceeded to pair themselves off by lot. Never was fate more propitious than on this occasion in coupling the antagonists. It is obvious, that however apparently equal in strength two opponents may be, one will prove stronger than the other. This is an axiom requiring no proof. Out of sixteen, one is better than the rest, and one out of the remaining fifteen is stronger than the fourteen others. The latter player may be drawn in the first round of the tournay with the former, and though he stand incomparably the superior of all but one, he loses every chance of a prize by being put immediately *hors du combat*.

Amongst the sixteen players who entered the lists, two were unmistakably the strongest, namely, Messrs. Morphy

and Paulsen; and much fear was manifested lest they might be drawn together, in the first round. Such, however, was not the case. Mr. Paulsen was coupled with Mr. Dennis Julien, the well-known problem maker, and a gentleman whose hospitality to chess players scarcely requires praise from me. Mr. Julien had allowed his name to be entered in the Grand Tournament in the absence of the representative of Connecticut, Mr. S. R. Calthrop, but the latter player arriving shortly after, Mr. Julien was but too happy to resign in his favor. Mr. Morphy's antagonist was Mr. James Thompson, of New York, a gentleman who finished his chess education at the Café de la Régence, and the London Chess Divan, noted for the brilliancy and daring of his attack, and his pertinacity in playing the Evans' Gambit wherever he has a chance. If Mr. Thompson had not been pitted against such a terrible opponent, in the first round, he would have tested the powers of some of the other players.

Mr. Morphy's second opponent was Judge Meek. As they took their seats opposite each other, one thought of David and Goliath; not that the Judge gasconaded in any wise after the fashion of the tall Philistine, for modesty adorns all his actions; but there was as much difference in cubic contents between the two antagonists, as between the son of Jesse and the bully of Gath, and in both cases the little one came out biggest. Judge Meek sat down with an evident conviction of the result, and although he assured his youthful opponent, that if he continued mating him without ever allowing him the least chance, he would put him in his pocket, he consoled himself with the reflection that Paul Morphy would serve everybody else as he served him.

Hitherto our hero had won every game. In the third round he encountered the strongest player of the New York Club, Mr. Theodore Lichtenhein, a gentleman who had formerly been President of the Circle des Echecs at Königsburg in Prussia, and an admirable exponent of the Berlin school of play. Mr. Lichtenhein eventually carried off the third prize in the tournament, and although he did not win any game from Mr. Morphy, he succeeded in effecting "a draw," which, against such a terrible enemy, is almost worthy of being esteemed a victory.

Mr. Paulsen had also been successful in the first and second rounds without losing or drawing a single game, and, as if to keep even with his great rival, he, too, had made "a draw" in the third section of the tournament—with Dr. Raphael, of Kentucky. Now was to be decided the championship of the New World, and notwithstanding that the majority anticipated the result, yet many of the spectators thought that the Western knight might prove a hard nut for Morphy to crack. Mr. Paulsen's game is steady and analytical to a nicety. Modelling his operations on profound acquaintance with Philidor, he makes as much out of his Pawns as most others of their Pieces. In reply to Mons. de Rivière, I once heard Morphy say, "Mr. Paulsen never makes an oversight; I sometimes do."

It is only justice to Mr. Paulsen to state, that he never for one moment imagined that he would beat Mr. Morphy. So exalted was his appreciation of the latter's wondrous powers of combination, that he has been frequently heard to declare—"If Anderssen and Staunton were here, they would stand no chance with Paul Morphy; and he would beat

Philidor and Labourdonnais too, if they were alive." And when, after the termination of the Congress, Mr. Morphy offered Pawn and Move to all and every player in America, Mr. Paulsen declared that he could easily give those odds to him. But this invariable confession of inferiority did not at all interfere with his doing the utmost to become victor, although supremacy was only to be decided by one player scoring five games. If I recollect rightly, it was in the third game that Mr. Morphy committed an error, which spoiled one of the finest combinations ever seen on a chess-board. This combination consisted of some eighteen or twenty moves, and its starting point was one of those daring sacrifices which European players dignify with the title "à la Morphy." Certain of the inevitable result, (*humanum est erraret* almost loses its signification when applied to his combinations,) our hero played rapidly, and misplaced a move. The result was, loss of attack and a piece, and apparently of the game; the most ardent admirer of Paul Morphy believed it was impossible for him to avoid defeat. But though angry with himself for his carelessness, he was not disheartened, but set to work with courage, and effected "a draw." The latter part of this game is a masterpiece of perseverance and strategy. The result of the tournament is well known. Mr. Morphy won five games, drew one, and lost one in the concluding section—only one battle lost during the entire campaign. The annals of chess do not furnish a similar victory.

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[A] Prospectus of "The National Chess Congress."

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MORPHY PREPARES TO START FOR EUROPE.

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Arriving in Europe three months before Mr. Morphy, I was in some sort,—not from any consent or knowledge on his part, his *avant courier*; and the fact of my having been one of the Secretaries at the New York Chess Congress, joined to my acquaintance with him, afforded me the opportunity of conversing frequently with prominent English players in reference to this new meteor in the chess firmament.

Shortly after my arrival in London, I called upon the Secretary of the St. George's Chess Club, Thomas Hampton, Esq., and introduced myself to him. Chess is a bond of brotherhood amongst all lovers of the noble game, as perfect as free masonry. It is a leveller of rank—title, wealth, nationality, politics, religion—all are forgotten across the board. Every chess player recognizes this, and none more so than Mr. Hampton, who gave me the warmest of welcomes. He told me that every Saturday there was a full attendance of members, and kindly invited me to visit the club on that day, promising to introduce me to Mr. Staunton. I was but too happy to accept this invitation, being desirous of learning how far the prowess of Paul Morphy was appreciated by one so eminent in the chess world.

My acquaintance with the young American was a passport of general interest to all present on the following

Saturday. In addition to Mr. Staunton, I met there Herr Falkbeer, Messrs. Barnes, Bird, "Alter," and other luminaries, and many were the questions asked in reference to Mr. Morphy. But I am bound to say that the feeling with which he was regarded in the United States was not participated in by English players. I was told by one gentleman—"Mr. Morphy's games are very pretty, but they will not bear the test of analysis." Another said—and his opinion was universally endorsed—"It is quite possible that Mr. Morphy may arrive at the highest rank, nay, even that he may become a second Labourdonnais, but he cannot have the strength his admiring countrymen wish to believe. Chess requires many long years of attentive study, and frequent play with the best players, and neither of these your friend has had. Depend upon it he will find European amateurs very different opponents from those he has hitherto encountered." This rather nettled me, but it was reasonable and just. Any one possessing the slightest acquaintance with the game knows that it partakes more of hard, laborious application to arrive at first-rate skill, than of mere pastime. Very few of Morphy's games had been seen in Europe, and his opponents were not, certainly, of a class to rank with the Stauntons, Löwenthals, and Anderssens of the Old World. Was it reasonable to suppose that a youth, just out of his teens, who had devoted but little time to chess, and who was about to meet first-rate players for the first time, should possess the experience and lore of men double his age? At the present time, now that he has unmistakably proved himself the superior of all living players, I feel utterly at a loss to solve the problem of his skill. At college, until

eighteen years old, what time could he find there, except out of school hours, for the required practice, and what antagonists worthy of him? From eighteen to twenty, he was engaged in reading for the bar. During that period he was as frequent a visitor at the chess club as circumstances would permit, but certainly not sufficiently so to increase his strength. Who were his antagonists? His father had almost entirely abandoned chess; Mr. Ernest Morphy had settled in "the West," and Mr. Rousseau, absorbed in the sterner duties of life, held the same relation to the game as Mr. Lewis in England. To one and all of his opponents, except these gentlemen, he could give the rook; and playing at odds is somewhat different from contending with even players. He met strong players for the first time at New York. Paulsen, Lichtenhein, Thompson, Montgomery, Marache were all northern players, and new to him, and vastly superior to the antagonists he had previously encountered. There is but one way to account for his annihilation of all precedent. His skill is intuitive, and I doubt much whether his prodigious memory has been of assistance to him. In answer to a gentleman in Paris as to whether he had not studied many works on chess, I heard him state that no author had been of much value to him, and that he was astonished at finding various positions and solutions given as novel—certain moves producing certain results, etc., *for that he had made the same deductions himself, as necessary consequences*. In like manner, Newton demonstrated, in his own mind, the problems of Euclid, the enunciations only being given; and I can think of no more

suitable epithet for Morphy than to call him "the Newton of Chess."

But *revenons à nos moutons*. Morphy's achievements at the Congress in New York induced many to believe that America now possessed a champion capable of contending with the proficients of Europe, and it was proposed that he should be backed by the American Chess Association against any player who would take up the challenge. I am sorry to say that the action of certain prominent men prevented the gauntlet being thrown down. These gentlemen said, "He beats us because he is better versed in the openings, but such players as Löwenthal and Harrwitz will be too strong for him. He wants experience, and were we to make this national challenge, we should appear ridiculous when our champion is defeated, which he certainly would be." The proposal, however, got noised abroad, and the following paragraph appeared, in consequence, in the Illustrated London News:

"CHALLENGE TO EUROPEAN CHESS PLAYERS."[B]

> "The American Chess Association, it is reported, are about to challenge any player in Europe to contest a match with the young victor in the late passage at arms, for from $2,000 to $5,000 a side, the place of meeting being New York. If the battle-ground were to be London or Paris, there can be little doubt, we apprehend, that a European champion would be found; but the best players in Europe are not chess professionals, but have other and more serious avocations, the interests of

which forbid such an expenditure of time as is required for a voyage to the United States and back again."

I would say, by way of parenthesis, that such a being as a professional chess player does not exist in the United States. Paulsen is a tobacco broker, with tendencies to speculating in "corner lots." (Western men know what that means.) Lichtenhein deals in dry-goods, dry wines and Italian opera; Thompson is the proprietor of a magnificent restaurant; Colonel Mead devotes himself to democratic cabals at the New York Hotel; Fiske is an admixture of the Chess Monthly, the Astor Library and Scandinavian literature; Perrin and Marache are bothered daily with banks, "bears" and "bulls." Chess professionals, indeed! they do not grow in the United States.

Mr. Morphy returned to his native city without any further action having been taken, but the New Orleans Chess Club determined that the challenge should be made, and they addressed the following letter to Mr. Staunton, at the commencement of last year:

NEW ORLEANS, *February 4, 1858*.

HOWARD STAUNTON, ESQ.,

Sir,—On behalf of the New Orleans Chess Club, and in compliance with the instructions of that body, we, the undersigned committee, have the honor to invite you to visit our city, and there meet Mr. Paul Morphy in a chess match. In transmitting this invitation, permit us to observe, that we are prompted no less by the desire to become personally acquainted with one whom we have so long admired, than by the very natural anxiety to