

A GAME OF CHESS

By Gelett Burgess

I PUSHED my king's pawn forward two squares. Maysie did the same with hers.

"Chess is very much like flirtation," I ventured.

"Yes?" said Maysie. "Why?"

"Both games are divided into three parts, the opening, the mid-game and the ending. And you estimate your opponent's skill by his first moves."

"Do move, then," said Maysie. "I am impatient to know whether it is worth my while to play with you!"

I moved K. Kt. to K. B. 3. It is a sound and conservative opening, and experts never take any chances until an opportunity presents itself. Maysie replied with her queen's knight, and I saw that she was able to protect herself.

"I wish you'd explain about the opening of a flirtation," she said.

"Oh, you reconnoitre, watch your victim, test her strength and weakness, study her, in short, and prepare to attack at her weakest spot."

"Indeed!" said Maysie. "It sounds easy. Perhaps you make mistakes sometimes?"

"Very often," I replied. "For instance, I counted on your taking my queen's pawn."

"I see. You consider pawns as compliments. But, no, I don't care for 'swaps.' I want a whole compliment or nothing." And with that she menaced my king's pawn with her king's knight.

I supported the royal pawn with king's bishop at Q. 2. "I see you're not a bit afraid of me," I remarked.

"Not at all. You're a bit slow. don't you think? I am used to a more reckless game."

"I'll make it hot enough after a while," I said. "I'm massing my attack. What are we playing for, anyway?"

"For fun, of course."

"You aren't serious, then? I believe you *are* afraid of me!"

"What do you want?" she asked.

"A kiss from you if I win."

"And if I win?"

"Anything you say," I replied, for I had completed my salient and its supporting parallel and was almost ready to castle.

Maysie looked at my men carefully, but what did she know of pawn bases and open bishop units? She was playing the opening she had learned by rote, while I was working scientifically. Her queen was badly placed, and she had *fianchettoed* her bishop on the king's side.

"All right," she said. "I take you. If I win, you must be nice to Stella Towles to-morrow night."

"What good will that do you?" I asked.

"It will show me whether you're worth while. Remember, I don't know you very well yet, and I can judge a person better when I look on from the outside."

"I'm learning about you," I replied. "In a few more moves I'll be ready to take advantage of your inexperience."

Maysie made a little mouth and showed her impatience. She attacked my queen's pawn with her knight and for a minute there was a rapid exchange of pieces. At the end my grand right oblique was almost wholly destroyed. But I knew she had weakened herself more than she had me. She castled,

and I led off with my knight, attacking her king's flank.

"This inaugurates the mid-game," I announced. "You have actually made me hurry!"

"I'm glad of that," she said; "if I am to be beaten I'd rather be carried by storm than by siege."

"The mid-game," I went on, as I rapidly doubled my rooks and drew closer to her extremely ill-advised left wing, "consists in concentrating one's fire upon what is called the objective plane: Your heart, or your lips, according as we are serious or frivolous."

"I thought we had decided that we weren't quite in earnest," she pouted.

"Your lips, then. At present, I have my eyes and my ears on them."

"I don't care much for your way of expressing it," said Maysie. "Of course, that's not to be taken literally, though."

"Not at all," I replied. "The mid-game is also concerned with obtaining what is called adverse material, by experts of the science of minor and major tactics."

Maysie looked rather dolefully at her lost knights and rook. "I have suffered, rather," she complained.

"You have lost your patience, a good part of your temper and, I think, in four moves, the game!" I replied.

"Thank heavens I haven't lost my heart," she remarked.

"What about the kiss?" I asked, as I announced check.

"I suppose I can only be thankful that what is my loss is your gain," she said.

"You mean nobody's else but mine?" I asked, anxiously.

"I didn't say that," she said. "What's the use? The ending has begun, hasn't it?"

"The ending has begun," I assented. "You had better submit as gracefully as possible."

"Perhaps you have forgotten my queen's rook's pawn," she suggested, as that small man reached the eighth square. "Doesn't that somewhat alter things?"

"Oh, no," I replied, as I took the new-made queen with my bishop, "it merely prolongs the inevitable end. It's no use for you to dabble in logistics—the proper name for your maneuver—I assure you. Your king is badly placed."

"What is the end to be?" she asked, as if innocently.

"We made the bargain before we started," I said.

"A kiss? Is that the end of a flirtation always?"

"No," I answered.

"What is?" she asked.

"Are you in earnest, now? Do you want to take this game of chess seriously?"

"Yes," she said, for she saw it was no use opposing me.

"And you ask me what the end is to be?"

"Yes," she said, softer than before.

"Mate!" I answered, as I moved my queen to K. Kt. 7.

Of course, there was nothing for her to do but to accept, and I assure you she did it as gracefully as possible.

