

CHESS, A POEM IN FOUR CANTOS.

CANTO I.

CAISSA, QUEEN OF THE DIVAN.

“Es ist für Ernst zu viel Spiel ;
Und für Spiel zu viel Ernst.”—LESSING.

She acts with equal force on grave and gay,
Makes play a labour, makes of labour play.

CHESS and the Muse I sing ! the Muse of Chess,
Not of the sacred nine, in classic dress ;
Nor her who smiles upon the pensive game,
Once sung by gentle bard of Indian fame,*
The fair Cäissa of the Thracian wild,
“Of air enchanting, and of aspect mild,”
Who long refused the love of Mars to bless,
Until he won her with the game of Chess.
The game called *Cassa*, from the Dryad’s name,
A gift from gods to men, it grew in fame ;
“And Albion’s sons, who most its praise confess,
“Approved the play, and called it *thoughtful Chess*.”
Near living streams, within the fragrant grot,
Where maidens play’d, and maidens viewed the sport ;
Where autumn’s bounty blushed ’mid flowers of spring,
And unseen hands would fruits and nectar bring ;
There did Cäissa gracefully preside,

* Sir William Jones. The three lines quoted are from his poem of *Cäissa*.

To rule the play, and youthful skill to guide.
 Such was the dawn of Chess in happier days,
 The golden time which poets love to praise ;
 Degenerate now the age ! Cäissa lives
 In Chess divans, and shilling lessons gives ;
 Consorts with men ambitious of no fame
 But what begins, includes, or ends the game.

I sing Cäissa of the Chess Divan ;
 Inspire my thoughts, O Muse ! my verses scan.
 Ye nymphs ! that o'er domestic cares preside,
 And chemic processes all-skilful guide,
 Lend aid, while still unseen below ye live,
 Content, if ye to all contentment give.
 Decoct the berry, and the leaf infuse,
 Roll up the weed sacred to smokers' use,
 Arrange the cups of whitest kaolin,
 With clinking spoons ; bring milk by warmth made thin,
 Serve up the crystal juice of luscious cane :
 Such be your cares, nor let your cares be vain.

Ye sprites of grosser mould ! that wait at night,
 Kindle the mimic suns that shed the light ;
 Prepare the board, the magic square of eight,
 Where pale or ebon king submits to fate ;
 For guests arrive and take their cushioned seats ;
 Friend faces friend, and stranger stranger meets ;
 And play goes on 'mid varied hopes and fears,
 When lo ! Cäissa, Queen of Chess, appears.

Sing Muse, Cäissa, of the Chess Divan,
 No blushing beauty that requires a fan :
 Yet all admit her beauty to be bright
 When Chess assists or even dulls the sight.
 Her graceful form, dark eyes, and olive skin,
 Beauty without, concealing fire within,
 Bespeak her ancestors' Italian clime,

Where Damiano ruled o'er Chess sublime,
 Where Il Puttino, Rüy Lopez played,
 And played for gold, and made of Chess a trade.
 Her dazzling robe, like humming-birds in flight,
 Down to her sandalled feet, in colours bright,
 Descends in ample folds. Symbolic taste
 Binds with a chequered zone her slender waist ;
 The clasp, a diamond heart, where rainbows live,
 The only heart Cäissa has to give.
 Her glossy raven hair falls loosely down
 Beneath the fleurys of a golden crown,
 Such as Cellini had designed and chased,
 Gracing her tresses, by her tresses graced ;
 Luxuriant ringlets fall on either side,
 They fall in beauty and some beauties hide.
 No other ornaments her locks enfold,
 For woman's hair 's more beautiful than gold.
 Gold and enamel serpents brace her arm,
 Show off its roundness and increase its charm ;
 The serpents' eyes are formed of precious stone,
 Only excelled in brightness by her own.
 Rings on her hands, flashing out mystic fires,
 Attract the eye ; the eye the hands admires.
 Her voice is like the sound of silver bell
 Vibrating soft and clear, and heard as well.
 The varying lines of her expressive face
 Reveal a soul where passions passion chase,
 Increase the force, but dim the woman's grace
 Of that expression ; changeful like the beam
 Which shines through foliage on a winding stream,
 Revealing now the conflict brief or long,
 The weak opposing, or opposed by strong ;
 Or wearing now the aspect of regret,
 As if some happy memory lingered yet.

Now all expression from that face is fled,
 As if the ruling passions were all dead;
 Calmer on calm, like landscape ere the storm
 Bursts on the hills. Another change in form :
 Her straight-lined eyebrows meet, and looking down,
 Her dark eyes pierce between a smile and frown,
 Her lips and hand compressed ; expression fit
 For one combining malice with much wit.

As the enchantress of romantic land
 Her marvels works by power of magic wand,
 Cäissa bears an ivory verge in hand,
 Garnished with ornaments of golden sheen,
 Surmounted by a white enamelled queen.
 And on the golden ornaments are traced
 The names of worthies who her realm have graced.
 Lo ! *Rüiy Lopez di Segur* in Spain,
 His name in full—Lopez is somewhat vain :
 The stripling *Leonardo* called "the Light,"
 And *Paolo Boi*, "Lustre" of the fight.
Salvio, Carrera, Greco, men of might :
 The Syrian *Stamma* and the *Modenese* :
 Then *Ponziani, Philidor* : to these
 Succeed some modern names reputed strong—
 Thou, Muse ! rememberest, but the list is long.

Ah, magic rod ! thy influence still lives,
 And she, who wieldeth thee, no mercy gives,
 But acts with equal force on grave and gay,
 Makes play a labour ; makes of labour, play ;
 Imparts a feverish ardour for the game ;
 All day you play : all days she makes the same :
 All the variety you find in life
 Bears some relation to this wooden strife :
 One hour a "close," an "open game" the next ;
 A "gambit" then, with dashing moves perplexed.

Within her sway she brings all sorts of men,
 Lawyers and Doctors; Bishops, now and then;
 The congregation and the men who preach;
 Various Professors and the youths they teach,
 Authors of learnèd or unlearnèd works,
 Jews, Artists, Actors, Infidels, and Turks:
 Of various minds and language, conduct, dress;
 But all distinguished by their love of Chess,

Such at Cäissa's court are always seen,
 In love or duty, waiting on their queen.
 But the just Muse exempts from censure those
 Who rule their passion for the wooden foes:
 When Duty lends a vacant hour, they play:
 When Duty claims their service, they obey.

Cäissa rules her devotees with skill,
 And moulds her conduct to their varied will.
 The leading feature of each courtier's mind,
 In her own manner you reflected find;
 Not with precision, like a looking-glass,
 Which paints the objects truly as they pass;
 Rather like streams o'er pebbly beds that move,
 Reflecting forms of objects seen above;
 Somewhat distorted though the image be,
 The object in the image still we see.
 Thus with a touch of Nature in her art
 She wins her way, and captivates the heart:
 For in the artificial world around,
 Some love of Nature in men's minds is found;
 If Nature's absent, an instinctive sense,
 That scarcely marks the truth from the pretence,
 Proclaims the void; and substitutes they find,
 To please, if not to satisfy the mind.
 So have I seen some Actress on the stage,
 In painted beauty, eyes and hearts engage;

The rose is borrowed from the crimson dish,
 And the skin's whiteness from the pearly fish;
 And as the foot-lights all the shades remove,
 Shadows she paints for fancied lights above.

Now mark Cäissa;—to the simple, mild :
 To boisterous wit all unrestrain'd and wild ;
 Modest to modesty she'll oft appear,
 Candid to truth, to falsehood insincere,
 Envious to envy, lending help to none,
 And rendering bitter e'en the cup that's won :
 Filling the loser's soul with petty spite,
 Teaching the winner sneering taunts to write ;
 Smiles on her lips and mockery in her eyes,
 She snares her prey to cajole and despise ;
 She'll give success, then snatch success away,
 Sink mirth to sadness, raise the sad to gay.
 Such is Cäissa, the Circean queen,
 Whose potent charms work in the mind unseen ;
 Who changes thoughtful men to pensive brutes,
 And active men to calculating mutes.
 But though an actress of perceptions fine,
 She sometimes oversteps the natural line,
 And seems to virtue to be over-nice,
 Parades her "morals," and denounces vice.

When some young Chessling wields his timid spear,
 Against a mighty man of valour there,
 Cäissa with some members of her court
 Presides, in careless mood, to see the sport ;
 Directs the converse that descends to chaff,
 Favours a titter, scarcely checks a laugh.
 Her arrowed wit and polished satire strike
 Foeman and friend impartially alike :
 Wounds to self-love she makes her captives feel,
 Wounds hard to bear and harder still to heal.

Laborious task to gain the Queen's regard,
 And having gained it, poor is the reward ;
 The one requires long study from the book,
 And play with men who give you Knight or Rook :
 The theory by the practice rendered plain,
 Knowledge to give and steadiness to gain.
 Years of such toil may bring the lov'd reward,
 To play with skill, and well command the board :
 To beat the man who once looked down on you,
 And in your triumph offer " Pawn and two : "
 To give to common men the Rook or Knight,
 And criticise, with judgment, men of might ;
 To see your games in stately files of print,
 With praise bestowed in notes ; sometimes a hint
 That you, " a rising player," may one day
 Attain high rank in " scientific " play.
 And still you strive to reach that rank sublime,
 You grudge not shillings nor more precious time :
 Neglect your business, duties, friends, and dress,
 For one long, dull, unceasing round of Chess.
 Such the reward, and this the state of mind,
 Which in devoted players oft we find :—
 Kings, Queens, and Knights, Bishops, Pawns, and Rooks,
 Are living truths to them, mind's food, their books.
 Their brightest point of history is when
 Kings, with their fools, maintained chess gentlemen ;
 When tournaments were held on chequer'd plains,
 And royal smiles enhanced the victor's gains.
 That was the age of chivalry, alas !
 That times so glorious were allowed to pass.
 What is the use of science, if no light
 It throws on mate with Bishop and the Knight ?
 Why should Divinity its truths tell o'er,
 And the divinest game of games ignore ?

Why should the senate seek new laws to frame ?
 A perfect code of Chess laws would bring fame.
 Political economy's pretence
 No answer gives to Lopez' skilled defence.
 Why with mechanic art should men be full
 When the automaton—but that's a mull :
 And what avails steam's locomotive might
 Save to convene the Chess clubs to the fight ?
 Painting and Sculpture idle time away,
 E'en Flaxman's Chessmen are not meant for play.
 Arts old as Adam we'll allow a few :
 The baker still must bake, the brewer brew ;
 Let meaner minds to them attention give,
 Cäissa's friends by highest art must live.
 'Tis levee day, Cäissa holds her court,
 Reviews the clubs, and regulates the sport.
 Her throne is on a daïs, reached by eight
 Alternate steps of ebony and white ;
 On each step stands a pale and sable page :
 Of Pawns the symbol, which by tactics sage,
 Gaining the eighth, attain the rank of Queen :
 On either side white and black Knights are seen,
 Heralds, with silver trumpets, which are blown
 Before commands are issued from the throne.
 Besides these servants, thirty-two await,
 On either side two rows, affairs of state ;
 They stand accoutred ready for the fight,
 Each on his square, the black men and the white.
 The carpet forms a widely chequered field,
 Where men and boys the mimic conflict wield.
 A noiseless conflict ; when Cäissa's wand
 Is pointed, or her eye implies command,
 The destined Pawn or piece forsakes his square
 And mutely occupies another there ;

The captured men retire with noiseless tread,
 Pale with defeat, politically dead :
 Past service here; but there, whate'er their fate,
 "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Before the throne the deputies defile ;
 Report their progress and receive a smile,
 A word of caution or advice, a frown,
 As each club prospers, wanes, or topples down.
 To name the members of the clubs that came
 Were needless here, for they're all known to Fame.

A Chess Knight then a silver trumpet blew,
 Which rang, with mighty clang, the rafters through ;
 Filled with sonorous waves the spacious hall,
 Commanding silence to the herald's call :
 "Subjects ! the Queen commands, presentments make,
 Are any found to give offence or take ?
 Do troubles rise within the realms of play ?
 Say, are there traitors to our sovereign's sway ?"

A murmur rose amid the Chess Divan,
 And many spake against one absent man,*
 Long chief supporter of Cäissa's throne,
 Surpassed in play and authorship by none ;
 Who knows the worth of Chess, and of its fame,
 Knows how to use, and not abuse the game.

A many-headed, many-voiced complaint
 In accents loud or low, bold, timid, faint,
 Rose against him from some, who feel offence
 That his attack o'ermatches their defence,
 Or, that in printing them his praise he stints,
 And others lauds ; or, that he never prints ;
 Or, that his analytic lance is keen :
 Or, that at shilling play he's never seen ;
 Or for some points of manner, speech, or dress,

* Staunton.

Humour satiric, and exclusiveness :
 Or, mere dislike because they mix with those
 Who choose to be his self-elected foes.
 These varied causes raised that angry cry,
 Which some, infected, swelled they knew not why.

Cäissa smiling rose, a signal gave,
 And Discord soon, in the melodious wave
 Of herald's trumpet, which was blown with zest,
 In beats of sound and silence, sank to rest.
 Cäissa spake : " On no one do I call,
 That his voice blend complaining voices all :
 Or cite the man your angry tongues would strike :
 For who can conjugate the verb ' dislike,'
 When each one's meaning differs from the rest,
 And in each case is prejudice at best ?
 Small men who raise their measure to the great,
 Approve within their reach ; beyond it, hate :
 And like the homœopathic Bee, they bring
 Small drops of poison in their envious sting.
 But rail no more, the causes I'll relate
 Why you abuse the man you cannot mate :
 And as the ancient form of fable gives
 Speech to the beast, and everything that lives,
 Teaching, through Æsop, by the birds and flocks,
 My fable hear—THE LION AND THE FOX.

"The Lion* long among the beasts was king,
 All seemed t'obey, and some would tribute bring ;
 A few there were his title to the throne
 Would fain dispute, and substitute their own.
 The Gallic Cock,† invincible before,
 Who loudly crow'd o'er us, soon crow'd no more,‡
 When felt the lion's paw, and heard the roar.

* Staunton.

† La Bourdonnais.

‡ That is, after Staunton had defeated St. Amant.

A gallant Dog of German breed* next fought,
 Nor soon forgot the dressing which he caught.
 The wily Fox† next took up the dispute,
 With half a paw the Lion laid him mute.
 Thus many a year King Leo held his own,
 And though not undisputed, kept his throne.
 One year the king proclaimed a tournament,
 To test the strength of those on conflict bent :
 And that he might enact the worthy host,
 A special tax was levied for the cost ;
 The great ones grudged, or paid it not at all,
 And what the great ones did, did all the small.
 Badly supported, with half-empty till,
 Leo got worried, angry, and then ill.
 No wonder then that in an earnest fight,
 He should display not half his 'custom'd might.
 He did his best, e'en kings can do no more,
 But he was vanquished by a German Boar.‡
 Nor singular the unexpected fate,
 For strong from weaker foes received a mate.
 'Twas badly managed, tournament and feast ;
 Bones of contention angered many a beast ;
 And when 'twas over, and the guests dispers'd,
 At Leo's court the thing was oft rehearsed.
 The beasts, unmindful of their former knocks,
 Chose to rebel—chief rebel was the Fox.
 ' In former fights with Leo I was young,
 My wisdom-teeth uncut, my nerves unstrung ;
 But now I've strength to be the champion beast,
 No more will I of mighty foes be least—
 I dare him to the fight ! '—So Vulpes spake.
 The Lion rose, and gave his mane a shake,
 Then bade his Tiger—Hungary Tiger he—§

* Horwitz.

† Harwitz.

‡ Anderssen.

§ Löwenthal.

Punish the Fox for his temerity.
 The Fox his friends in warlike council met,
 And many a parley held ere terms were set.
 At length 'twas settled for a hundred pounds
 To him who won the first eleven rounds.
 Umpires agreed on, as the custom goes,
 They left off talking and then came to blows.
 The first two rounds told for the wily Fox,
 In the next five the Tiger gave the knocks.
 The eighth and ninth (one round consumed a day)
 The Tiger won, for Vulpes staid away.
 And in the tenth his time he did not keep,
 Was fined, then floored :—he wept, if foxes weep.
 But Fortune, e'en to foxes sometimes kind,
 Restored the courage to poor Vulpes' mind,
 When, in despair, the match he'd nigh resigned.
 Nine rounds he'd lost, victor in only two,
 But now each round he won, or skilful drew :*
 By luck and perseverance, more than might,
 He just escaped a loss, and won the fight.
 Then to the Fox's yelps friends joined their cries,
 Notes less of triumph than of dim surprise.
 And next, to fight the Lion, he pretends,
 And raises such a clatter with his friends,
 You'd think the hen-roost ceased to give him hens,
 The farm-yards geese, or geese to critics, pens ;
 And all the realm partook of the dispute—
 Party ran high ; nor beast nor bird was mute.
 The Fox's challenge was by all discussed ;
 But will the Lion fight ? He shall, he must.
 'Twas also asked if Vulpes were sincere ;
 If when the Lion roared, he'd disappear ?
 The noise the challenge made, more widely spread,

* See the position at the end of this Canto.

Set tongues and pens in motion, turned each head.
 Tumults arose, which law could not suppress,
 For bench, bar, jury wore a party dress ;
 And when a beast was caught in legal claws,
 The judge lost temper, justice lost her cause.

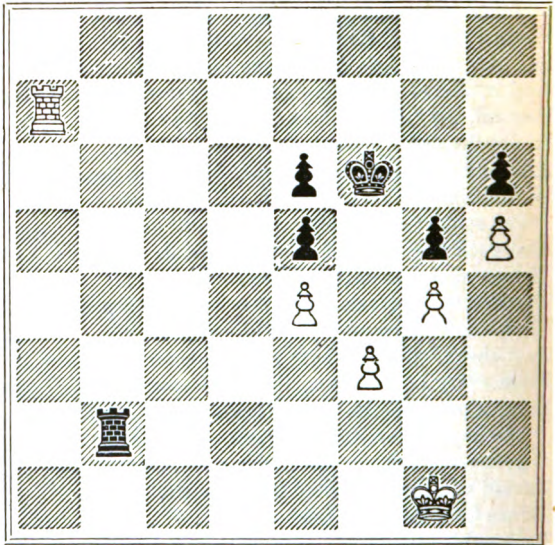
“ My friends, I trust you'll not be like these brutes,
 My interests suffer in your warm disputes.
 Leo has conquered Vulpes in set play,
 There is no need that they resume the fray.
 Let him alone, he's done enough for fame,
 And rendered noble service to our game.
 Pair off, my friends ; let anger melt away
 In depths and shallows of your earnest play :
 And one shall come and contest hold with me,
 While Simpson serves cigars, coffee, and tea.”

She spake : applauding voices swell around,
 And each the moral of the fable found.
 The wooden men rattle on wooden board ;
 The boards all dressed, no other sound is heard
 Than a low murmur, or a tinkling spoon,
 Or “ check ” to one whose King's exposed too soon.
 From every board the curling smoke ascends
 From pipes of peace, from friends opposing friends.

The happy man, Cäissa's choice, and fate's,
 Who mating her, or, whom she, cruel, mates,
 Envied and complimented by his peers,
 Before Cäissa's ample field appears :
 Each guides the living game with wand in hand ;
 The men and boys anticipate command,
 And move with purpose which they understand.
 I watched the game until the drowsy god,
 Sailing through clouds of smoke, caused me to nod.
 Waking, I found Cäissa's game was strong :
 She hastening not the play, considered long

The shortest way to win. Chess should be terse,
 And not spun out like middling poet's verse;
 And lest the simile excite a smile
 The Muse of Chess suspends her song awhile.

BLACK (Harrwitz).



WHITE (Löwenthal).

This is one of the skilful draws referred to above in the celebrated match between Löwenthal and Harrwitz in 1852. White had just played P. to K. R. 5, whereupon Black moved his R. to K. Kt. 7 ch.; the K. must capture it, thus forcing a stale-mate.

CANTO II.

THE PRACTICE OF THE GAME.

Mais ce grand jeu chez vous comment l'autoriser ?
 Le jeu fut de tout temps permis pour s'amuser ;
 On ne peut pas toujours travailler, prier, lire :
 Il vaut mieux s'occuper à jouer qu'à médire.

BOILEAU.

DELIGHTFUL GAME ! thou steal'st the hours away,
 Absorb'st the mind in intellectual play,
 Exciting grave men, and repressing gay,
 Feed'st love of contest, free from love of gain,
 Abiding solace, anodyne of pain ;
 Where skill meets skill, which intellect approves,
 Wily and slow, 'gainst bold ingenious moves,
 Crowning the toil with well-deserved success,
 How shall I sing thy praise, thy powers express,
 Thou peerless, perfect game, thou all-absorbing Chess !

Delightful Game ! great minds, for many an age,
 Have traced thy progress in the thoughtful page ;
 Their own increasing, they increase thy fame,
 In subtle problem and elaborate game :
 Swelling the store, we give to what they gave,
 And thou advancest like a coming wave,
 Bearing the old, and gathering up the new,
 The false rejecting, cherishing the true,
 Thy genial tide rolls on (be this thy praise),
 The skill of past, to present, future days.

C

or first-rate skill in any other game
 Must rest on vague tradition for its fame ;
 The ready hand, the quick, unerring eye,
 And the swift foot must slacken, dim, and die :
 These and the skill that's founded on blind chance
 Must untransmitted be, cannot advance :
 But skill at Chess, like the sun's parting ray,
 Transmits the setting to the rising day.

Delightful Game ! in thee grave men explore
 Bye-paths of history, antiquarian lore ;
 In truth and fiction, anecdote and verse,
 Men sing or say thy praise, thy charms rehearse.
 And thou hast had thy Muse in ages past ;
 Skill'd pens will write for thee while ages last :
 So rich the theme, such interest thou dost give,
 That e'en these verses for thy sake will live.

Delightful Game ! that steal'st the hours away,
 And wrapp'st the soul in intellectual play ;
 What pleasure when with cautious steps and slow,
 The attack you form, in view the distant blow,
 That in the dust shall lay the adverse King ;
 Now cat-like stealing, now you boldly spring :
 Perhaps outwitted in your wily aim,
 The subtle foe counter-attacks your game,
 Breaks through the web which skilfully you wove,
 Scatters your combination in a move,
 Wins Pawn or piece, and threatens speedy mate ;
 Long time you study to avoid your fate,
 You move,—he pauses,—moves,—you hold your breath,
 So near destruction, yet escaped from death.
 Though foiled, less cautiously his game proceeds,
 For his numeric strength your strength exceeds.
 More cautious now, your pieces you combine,
 Pawns lending aid to Pawns in oblique line,

You thus proceed to reconstruct your game,
 More clear the object, and more sure the aim.
 Or if his foil'd attack place in your hands
 The move, you then advance your conquering bands
 Into the adverse camp, or make a Queen ;
 Helpless he cannot shun the blow though seen,
 Into a problem you the end contrive,
 And terminate the game with "mate in five."

The game concluded, you indulge in chat,
 Discuss th' effect of this move, or of that ;
 Laugh o'er the shoals and quicksands which appeared,
 Some calmly seen, and others greatly feared ;
 And if the game unusual interest find,
 You note it down for private use designed.
 Caution must regulate this practice still,
 Or you may get enamoured of your skill,
 And seek to publish the best games you've had ;
 If you succeed you're lost,—you'll go Chess mad.

Two games like this played once or twice a week
 Is all the Chess that men of sense should seek :
 And men should play with mutual good-will,
 Bound by the ties of courtesy and skill.

"But how such scientific play attain ?"
 Study from books, and play with better men.
 But some object from books to learn their play :—
 "Without such toil first-rates have been," they say,
 "Witness Boncourt, Macdonnell, Bourdonnais !"
 But genius for the game these worthies had,
 By analytic play they progress made ;
 By constant practice they the openings knew,
 And played with men of great book-learning too.
 'Tis strange that men unwillingly receive
 In Chess that aid from books which books can give ;
 In most pursuits of intellectual skill

Books are the storehouse whence they draw at will.
 Why not in Chess? Let truth be told in verse,
 The mind is not a Fortunatus' purse,
 From which we're always taking something out
 And putting nothing in. No longer doubt
 That books, such books as Jaënsch, Staunton, write,
 Will raise your skill, give intellectual light.
 But you must read with method and digest,
 Or knowledge will be lumber at the best;
 Will dull the senses and obscure the brain,
 As ponds are muddled and increased by rain.
 The crucibles of Alchemists, 'tis told,
 Purged out the dross, transmuted lead to gold:
 Be such thy mind; in Chess and other things
 Retain the gold which careful study brings,
 Learn the true stamp and carefully select;
 The dross, or what you can't assimilate, reject.

Mammas would urge their sons at home to stay,
 And spend their evenings on their favourite play;
 But parlour Chess, Mamma, is like thy rule,
 That boys must swim before they seek the pool.
 For parlour Chess does not prepare a man
 To meet the "science" of the Chess Divan.
 The danger is, that if the Club you seek,
 Your play which you've thought strong, you'll find but
 weak;

And then you'll get no rest by day or night
 Until you've thrashed the Clubbist in the fight.
 You'll go again; swallow the bitter pill,
 Take odds of Rook, perhaps be beaten still:
 Or if too proud such desperate odds to take,
 Clubbist will show that he esteems you cheap,
 Will play a "rattling" game; his rattle springs
 Your own; impatience gives the pieces wings,

They fly, not move, upon the chequered plain,
And soon you've nothing more to lose or gain.

I knew a man who thought he played Chess well ;
Provincial play could not the charm dispel :
But once, when he to town on business went,
Some time he found for Chess : on victory bent,
He spent an evening at the Chess Divan,
And held a contest with a shilling man ;
Who thus addressed him, in his pleasant way,
" Sir, for a shilling, I propose to play ;
More if you like ;" but more he did not choose,
He said, " A shilling is enough to lose."
" Or win," replied the other with a leer.
Our friend resolved from gambits free to steer,
And when the *King's Pawn* two led off the play,
He straight replied in the *Sicilian* way.
But whether playing close or open game,
He was relieved of shillings all the same ;
Since inexperienced skill made weak defence,
Against this master in the art of fence ;
Who won three games in jaunty facile way,
Which made our friend suspect his gift for play.
He played some games at odds ; but *Pawn and move*,
And *Pawn and two* were much his strength above.
Surprised at these results, he went next night,
When he was beaten at the odds of Knight.
The truth then slowly dawned upon his mind,
That he for first-rate play was not designed.
Home he returned, more modest than before,
And with a smile told his adventure o'er ;
Content with the small rural fame he'd earned,
Better than fame of clubs for which he'd burned.

Ponto is old, and garrulous, and gray :
Has lost all passions, save his love for play ;

Business or politics his morns consume,
 And after lunch he seeks Cäissa's room,
 Where he is welcomed with a cosy seat
 (Sheltered from winter's cold or summer's heat)
 By smiling foes whose skill it is to know
 How to beat Ponto by a Pawn or so :
 For Ponto scorns the smallest odds to take ;
 Thinks even games 'gainst finished play to make
 The shillings that he lost the day before
 He wins not back to-day, but loses more ;
 And always loses, save a game or two,
 Sly discount given for each payment due.
 Thus self-deceived, content he goes away,
 Leaving his foes to seek for other prey.
 And prey they find, and conquer as before,
 The same dull games repeating o'er and o'er,
 Just like the waters of Trafalgar's fount,
 Pumped back, in liquid line again to mount.

Should you the common argument advance
 That you must pay to learn to fence or dance ;
 Or emulate your master's violin,
 Why not at Chess, pay and thus learn to win ?
 This answer take :—If they are lessons ; well :—
 A man may surely his instructions sell.
 The skill you lack, you seek where skill is found ;
 An easy search : Chess teachers now abound.
 But when this skill 'gainst ignorance is played,
 The shilling games sink to a gambling trade.
 Should the "Professor" openly proclaim,
 That, if he win or lose, he's paid the same :
 Level with masters of the dance or fence,
 Or music-master, he gives no offence.

"But if he's paid, whether he win or lose,
 To play his best he may not always choose !"

Vain fear ! he'll play for reputation's sake :
 Give mute instruction, if you're skilled to take.
 He'll play, to set your vanity at rest,
 Better than you, and still not play his best.
 He'll not offend if he addresses you,
 "I can't give higher odds than Pawn and two."
 And if he lose some games, you will not say,
 'Twas his neglect, but your superior play.

Now, sportive Muse ! in truthful verse display,
 The varied features of men's minds at play :
 How timid men become elate and loud ;
 The cautious, rash ; the humble-minded, proud.
 Depressed with loss, elated with success ;
 Exalting one, the other to depress,
 Chess, like a mental see-saw, up and down,
 Makes dull the loser, noisy him who's won.
 The calm and generous man is rare to fame,
 Who'll praise the mate by which he lost his game.

Chess, like a skilful leech, has power to feel
 The mental pulse, and mental ills reveal ;
 To sound the shallow depths of bland self-love,
 Detect the malady it can't remove ;
 The Chess physician will unerring speak
 The diagnosis : "Human nature's weak."

Some men who lose at Chess a game or two,
 Excuse themselves ; they are not "in the cue :"
 "Their head aches,"—"close the room," or "weather hot,"
 Or "out of play"—affirming what is not ;
 Lies to self-love, poor easy dupe is she !
 The "Well, I never played so bad," should be
 Whipped for his grammar and duplicity.
 Let him but win, excuses disappear,
 He talks to you with patronising air,
 Condoles your losses, shows you could not win,

So strong his combination, eye so keen.

One must be fond of Chess indeed, to sit
And hear the comments that are meant for wit :
Such as facetious players often make,
When Pawn or piece you lose or try to take :
Such as, " I saw your object, sir, and played
To court the move which in your mind you'd made."
Or, " Well, I never"—" That I knew you'd do."—
Just beat the wretch ; he'll be as mute as you.

Some men there are who whistle o'er their game ;
Winning or losing, sibillate the same.
Some whistle only when the game runs smooth,
As if to dulness they the mind would soothe.
Some whistle when they win, some when they lose :
This habit irritates ; it should amuse ;
But when they seek to play again—refuse.

Some players sing in captivating strain,
And sing the louder when they hope to gain ;
As if the men required a martial band
To march them forward at the mind's command.
Most of these talking, whistling, singing men,
When they begin to lose, whate'er their sin,
Are silent as they should be when they win.

As authors, very young or very vain,
Or both, their meaning better to explain,
Employ strong words, *italics*, and SMALL CAPS,
Some players plant their men with desperate raps,
Seeking with emphasis to put you down.
Ah ! harmless impotence ! not worth a frown ;
Play with accustomed quiet, win a piece—
The noise Presumption makes will quickly cease.

As one who treads the hot and dusty road,
'Tween hedge-rows tall, fainting beneath the load
Of July sun, sighs for his journey's end,

Or path o'er breezy down, his way to wend;
 So when you're matched 'gainst play that's dull and slow,
 Weary you wait to give the winning blow;
 While he o'er obvious moves drawls his slow pace,
 Fidgets his fingers o'er a Pawn or piece;
 Withdraws them, rests his finger on a square,
 As if a latent mate existed there.

You dare not break the charm—resign the game—
 Or to the world his triumph he'll proclaim.
 At length he makes his move; impatient, you
 Play the first thing that seems to meet your view:
 Again he drawls ten minutes, fidgets, grieves;
 His Queen *en prise*, his Queen *en prise* he leaves;
 And still he'll not resign or make a draw,
 He'll count the fifty moves allowed by law.
 But won, or lost, or drawn, for ever mark
 That man, and shun him as you would a shark.

Fine players and gentlemen eschew these sins,
 Courteous when winning, and to him who wins.
 At least fine players are so—could be—should,
 (Excepted cases must be understood.)
 In gentle Löwenthal we never can
 More highly prize the artist than the man;
 And many more there are the Muse could name.
 Who grace by courtesy their well-earned fame.
 With such men play; take odds, and try to win,
 The Clubs produce them free from gambling sin;
 Or if the 'customed shilling be the stake,
 'Tis to improve the play, not for the shilling's sake.

Problem composers in Chess rooms are found;
 Idle as poets, and not half so sound.
 They seldom play, and poets seldom work,
 An honest contest o'er the board they shirk;
 And spend their time in torturing the men,

With mates in fifty upwards, down to ten.
 Theirs, strange positions which true Chess ignores,
 Or strange conditions which true Chess depletes.
 But some there are who blend with natural grace
 A work in which the well-trained mind we trace;
 No piece or Pawn superfluous, out of place.
 The mates in five descending down to two,
 Ingenious, subtle, unexpected, new.
 Respect their skill; their names 'twere long to sing:
 But one we give as type—ingenious Kling.

Again receive this caution from the Muse:
 Use Chess with moderation—ne'er abuse
 This game; though prince of games it be,
 'Twill be a game to all eternity.
 Play Chess for ever—Chess is all you're taught:
 It will not train the mind to useful thought.
 And e'en "the morals" to which Chess lays claim,
 Franklin possessed before he knew the game.
Caution which weighs with prudence—weighs again,—
 Is never taught by wooden board and men;
 And *forethought*, *perseverance*, and *self-rule*,
 Are things not furnished in Cäissa's school.
 Caution in Chess, but not in other things,
 Much practice at the board not seldom brings;
 And forethought, perseverance, and self-rule,
 Chess, for her own sake, gives to wise and fool.
 The cautious player oft incautious lives,
 Withholds what's due; without a claim he gives.
 Some who with forethought move upon the field,
 In life move rashly, and to impulse yield;
 Men who in uphill games still persevere,
 In life may wayward be and insincere.
 Men who in play are calm and self-possessed,
 At work with nervous fancies be distressed.

Bacon regarded Chess as "over-wise;"
 And Walter Scott too costly deemed the prize
 That needs for first-rate skill long years of toil;
 Far different seed he'd sow in mental soil;
 In the same time, with less of mental strain,
 He'd grasp a science, or a language gain;
 Open fresh stores of wisdom, genius, wit,
 And read new thoughts in mother-tongue not writ.

"Such critics," you may say, "are not quite sound;
 "They underrate the skill they never found."
 Then let great Philidor the point decide;
 His judgment you will surely not deride.
 You know his legacy—I do not state
 His legacy to Chess, that smothered mate;
 But to his children at the close of life
 Addressed in touching language to his wife:
 An outlaw he, in poverty and pain;
 She striving hard their children's bread to gain:
 "God bless thee, dearest! in our dark distress,
 "Let not our boys devote their lives to Chess."

But there are other things that give delight
 As keen as that of playing Chess at night.
 Go ask the boy who reads thy charming page,
 Graphic De Foe! dost thou his mind engage?
 And is his joy at Friday's rescued fate,
 Less keen than planning or evading mate!
 Go ask the man of science when he's found
 New facts, or old into a new law bound—
 The Orator, when men of wisdom cheer—
 The Actor, when applause rings in his ear—
 The Artist, when his sense of beauty gives
 Life to each touch, and all it touches lives,
 And breathes the inspiration of the hour,
 True test of Art and of the Artist's power—

The Author, when at length the struggling thought,
 All clear and pure, is into language wrought;
 Or (when the Muse's smile he can engage)
 Melts into verse, and flows along the page?

What charms has Chess for you from toil set free,
 When gazing on the broad, blue, sun-lit sea,
 When on the rippled sands you careless roam
 And watch the waves break at your feet in foam?
 Superior joy! released for one poor week
 From mental toil refreshment there to seek;
 On shingly beach beneath a towering rock,
 Sublimely ruined by the ocean's shock,
 To sit in dreamy, half-mesmeric trance,
 Watch the melodious waves as they advance,
 Breaking in white foam on the sounding shore;
 From reverie wake, and cherished thoughts con o'er:
 To think of her whose love is always new,
 Ah! in that moment wrapped in thoughts of you,
 Or fondly muse on friends long-tried and few.

No more! my summer holidays are past,
 Too quickly fleeting, and too bright to last;
 No more my mind in numbers finds repose;
 The printer's boy knocks at my door for prose;
 But for which prose, the wolf would seek the door,
 And summer rambles I should know no more.

CANTO III.

THE DIVAN AFTER MIDNIGHT.



THE lights extinguish'd, closed is the Divan,
 And weary Simpson and his wearier man
 Seek home and smiling supper, which awaits
 The men whose homes are graced with smiling mates.
 The husbands did not smile ; they'd tarried long,
 Whilst a strong player, match'd 'gainst one as strong,
 Could scarcely mould his men to mating power,
 Ere Mary's clock had chimed the midnight hour.

The guests are gone to regions near or wide,
 As pleasure, choice, necessity may guide :
 Some call it early, and they dive from sight,
 And rise where "Sons of Harmony" delight
 Dull heads with dreary comic songs, or where
 Mock Judge and Jury worn-out jokes repair.
 Some in the fast Casino pleasure seek,
 Where gaslight beauties show the painted cheek,
 And in the mad gallop shine and outshine,
 And quaff the fiery mixture misnamed wine.

But he who calls it late, at home would be,
 In dread of her who's chary of latch-key ;
 His timid knock a tardy answer meets,
 Last night's excuse to-night with smirks repeats,
 Then seeks the attic floor with gentlest tread,
 Soon on the pillow rests his weary head,
 And dreams of brilliant moves he never makes,

Or that he gives the odds he always takes.
 Sleep on, poor fool ! and rise with morning's light
 To feeble toil all day, and feeble Chess at night.

At length all sleep. The players, rich and poor,
 Torture their brains with strategy no more.
 In the Divan now night and silence reign ;
 In wooden caskets slumber wooden men,
 Save one poor set, the first to meet in fight,
 The last to close the business of the night,
 Left by the players with mate upon the field.
 Queens frown no more, no more their weapons wield,
 Nor scowls the leaguer'd monarch on the Knight,
 Who dealt the blow that closed the lengthen'd fight.
 The few tenacious Pawns, whose tactics fine
 Had nearly won for them the royal line,
 Their subtle strategy awhile resign,
 While on the marble cold the captives stand
 Disconsolate, and eye the chequer'd land.

In the deep silence of the awful hours
 The disembodied spirits wield their powers,
 And wander through the darkness where they list,
 And fill the air with intellectual mist,
 Which spreads its influence on all who sleep,
 On those who wake to smile, or wake to weep ;
 Gives Poverty a palace, wealth at will,
 Shows Wealth the Union Workhouse on the hill ;
 Visits the shed where hungry wretch reclines,
 And makes him dream of costly meats and wines ;
 Whispers in Beauty's ear of conquests made,
 Or, dreadful thought ! that every charm must fade ;
 Gives the poor poet what he covets—fame,
 The sick man health, the man obscure a name ;
 Suggests the horrid thought, the base desire,
 The joy or sorrow, hatred, envy, ire ;

Or jumbles men and things, and place and time,
Verse without sense, and words that only rhyme.

But gentler spirits wander in the night,
And fill the aching heart with soft delight,
Assure the trusting sufferer of peace,
Of rest when storms of life with life shall cease,
Breathe helping words to them, the tempted sore,
Give self-denial strength, bid hoping souls hope more.

Some from the spirit-land repeat on earth
What they, while living, most accounted worth.
The miser gloats upon his secret store,
And counts the shadowy gold, and sighs for more.
The wretch who cozen'd, stole, or lied for pelf,
Steals his own wealth, lies, and defrauds himself.
Nor need we seek, in tortuous ways of crime,
How men prepare eternity from time;
The intellectual soul, the wise, the good,
Taste in the shadowy world of wisdom's food,
Ambrosial food to make them ever wise,
And from the earth uplift them to the skies.

If spirits walk the earth for ill or good,
And every shape assume, and every mood,
Why not inform the ivory and the wood?
'Twere hard to tell, where no reporter waits,
What talk is held, what shadowy debates
When lesser sprites inspire the Queens and Kings,
And minor men of Chess.—Of these the Poet sings.

The men, we said, were standing on the board.
From sable lips a tiny voice is heard;
The Black King yawned, and calling to the White,
Began the talk which we proceed to write.

(*Black King.*) My friend, our final struggle—such is
fate—

Ends like Othello, with a smothered mate.

(*White King.*) Your sable Majesty is pleased to jest,
Forgetful that, this night, we get no rest.
We've stood upon the board twelve hours and more,
And here must pass another twenty-four.

(*B. K.*) Well, never mind; the man has left his case
Of mild Havannahs. (*W. K.*) Where? (*B. K.*) Before
your face.

(*W. K.*) Your *knob*, you mean. As sure as I am born,
I'll have a smoke. Fetch me a light, King's Pawn.

(*B. K.*) Knob or no knob, 'twere more correct to say
Not *born* but *turn'd*. I have you, any way.

(*W. K.*) And why not *born*? Our family has stood
Well in the land, under the name of *Wood*.

(*B. K.*) A growing, rising family are we,
And ancient is our gene-something tree.

(*W. K.*) Ancient indeed, you've truly hit the mark:
A quiet race, in spite of all our bark.

(*B. K.*) And most polite are all our race, I vow;
We give our parent stock full many a bough.

(*W. K.*) When summer, which we love, departs and
grieves,
How busy autumn is in taking leaves !

(*B. K.*) The woodman, like a porter in the town,
Axes about our trunks, and knocks us down.

(*W. K.*) Well, leave off chaffing; take a mild cigar,
And hear my Knight sing to the light guitar.

[*The White King's Knight sings.*]

The man who fondly spends his time
In studying from the book,
And only copes with first-rate skill
At odds of Knight or Rook,
Is like the fruit which on the wall,
Ere winter has begun,
Is only ripe upon the side
That's turn'd towards the sun.

Who gets his practice from the board,
 His theory from the book,
 By this corrects his play,—by that,
 Doth rise 'bove Knight or Rook ;
 Is like the fruit that flowers in spring,
 Forms when bright days begin,
 Ripens beneath the summer sun,
 And ripe, is gather'd in.

(*B. K.*) Well sung, my dainty Knight ! You well
 express
 One of the minor morals of our Chess.
 My Bishop moralises similar things,
 Only more copious is the verse he sings.
 Wilt please your Grace to give us something new,—
 Some lines from your last Epic—only—very few ?

[*The Black King's Bishop reads:—*]

“ The sailor guides his ship from shore to shore,
 And scarcely knows what depths he passes o'er ;
 So, many men, in playing from the book,
 Beneath the surface know not how to look.
 What unknown depths on either side you find,
 They skim them o'er ; to strategy they're blind ;
 Your variations, A B C, that cost
 You hours of toil, on them completely lost,
 They deem your learned notes to be a bore,
 Great as the A B C they learn'd of yore.”

A pause rhetoric ere he spouted more,—
 That pause, alas ! was fill'd up by a snore ;
 Another snore the first re-echoes back ;
 The White snores fill the intervals of Black.
 The Poet starts ; with an offended look
 Closes his recitation and his book ;

D

When, lo, another voice ! The Bishop pale
 Forbids the fount of Poesy to fail ;
 Aping his rival's manner, gesture, tone,
 'Twas thus he spake, and faced the sleepy throne.

[*The White Bishop recites :—*]

“O wondrous Alphabet ! thy magic spell
 Expresses thoughts of wise, of fools as well ;
 Dulness no special alphabet can keep,
 For wise men use it, shallow men and deep ;
 Nor will our royal Game less royal sound,
 If shallow men play skittles on the ground,
 Where first-rate Chess sedately sits in state,
 And spends long hours accomplishing a mate.”

His crozier the dark prelate shook, and said
 (His swarthy visage brightening into red),
 “The Bishops that attend the Kings at Chess,
 On colours move as different as their dress,
 Nor have the power to meet in angry mood ;
 Why should your Grace, then, be so very rude ?”

(*White K. B.*) Should I dull epics write as well
 as you,

I should not play the Bishop but the *Fou*,*
 Exchange my mitre for the cap and bells,
 For *Chess*, a *Poem's* not the thing that sells.

(*Black K. B.*) Your Grace self-judges well, I not
 dispute,

For when to speak asks wit, and when be mute :
 You'd scarcely then on Gallic chessboard rule,
 As skill is wanted to enact the fool.

* France being a Roman Catholic country, the Bishop is not allowed to appear on the chess-board. His place is taken by the *Fool*. For this reason, and on account of other differences in the form of the pieces, Mc Donnell and Staunton, in their matches with French players, stipulated that English chessmen should be used.

Rose the pale Bishop, with his cheeks a-flame,
Swift to reply.—A royal message came ;
The Queen's Knight's Pawn, waving his hand for peace,
Issued the Queen's command that broils should cease.

The rival Queens had been engaged in chat,
Discuss'd the last new bonnet, riding-hat,
The dress that most became dark dames or fair,
While Queen's Pawns dress'd each one his mistress'
hair.

The four Knights now profound obeisance made,
And harmonised a gentle serenade :
That o'er, the Queens awhile their talk prolong,
When from her Knight the White Queen asks a song.

[*The White Queen's Knight sings:—*]

GIUOCO PIANO.

O Lady of the golden hair ?
O how contend at Chess with thee ?
When beauty sits divinely fair,
Herself and not the moves I see.

My dazzled sight converts the men
Into a misty multitude,
Zealous to give, as best they can,
Honour to thee and servitude.

And like a page my King's Pawn dress'd,
Advances to the central line,
And sets around thy King's Pawn's vest
The ring, an humble offering mine.

King's Knight springs forth and doth salute,
With bow profound, thy own Queen's Knight,
Proclaims thee fair, which none dispute,
Yet will maintain it he in fight.

The royal Bishops, square by square,
Discourse—we blush to hear what's said :
“My Lord ! the maid with golden hair,
And that dark youth anon must wed.”

Queen's Bishop's Pawn advanced one pace,
 And listen'd to the grave debate ;
 Queen's Pawn gazed in the lady's face,
 And said, " Beware ! at hand's a mate."

The Castled King serenely smiles,
 As if from doubt he set thee free ;
 " Fear not, sweet lady ! thou wilt find
 His castle a defence for thee."

That castle home where we shall be,
 In love secure from force or guile ;
 Smiling if Fortune kindly be,
 And if unkindly still to smile.

Lady ! on thee depends my fate ;
 Propitious be, then, this the hour ;
 Grateful if thou wilt quickly mate,
 Or give to me the mating power.

Thus sang the White Queen's Knight ; his mistress fair,
 Smiling approval, with a gracious air
 Drew from her tiny hand the fitting glove,
 The ring within it to reward his love,
 And threw them to the Knight, who quickly took
 The gracious gift, kiss'd it with grateful look,
 Threaded the ring with glove, and kneeling down,
 Secured the trophy to his helmet's crown.
 Well done, brave Knight ! and may you wear it long,
 The gift bestow'd on bravery and song !

The Black Queen's Knight would now her beauty chant,
 Her well-turn'd neck and raven tresses vaunt,
 Her *mignon* hands and all-excelling feet,
 And shape where dusky Cupids hovering meet,
 And eyes that languid melt, or flash with fire,
 As varying moods alternately inspire,
 Of love the gentle, or of kindling ire.
 He sings her prowess eke on chequer'd field,
 How skilfully doth she her forces wield ;

And, save the knights, her subjects' powers combining,
How far transcendent she, the warriors all outshining.

The White Queen's Knight, impatient to proclaim
What deeds of war have earn'd his mistress' fame,
Can scarce hear out the sable warrior's song,
When he her praises sings with tuneful voice and strong.

As the *Rois fainéants*, fighting little, keep
Secure at home, eat, drink, ride, talk, and sleep,
While all the labour of the brain or hand
Is done by grateful subjects in the land,
So do our Kings at Chess eat, drink, and smoke,
They sleep and wake, talk and enjoy their joke.
In groups the other Pawns and pieces stand,
On marble table or on chequer'd land
Discuss Chess-players, critics, books and all :
When small men talk, their talk must still be small ;
Then bear the Poet patience, readers all !

" 'Tis very true," remark'd the Black King's Rook,
" What said the Bishops touching play from book ;
Though one in earnest spake, and one in jest,
Each one the truth in his own way express'd."

The White Queen's Rook replied, " I quite agree ;
The man who took last week the odds of me,
And lost his games and shillings by the score,
Has play'd all Walker's '*Thousand Games*,' and more,
And when at home is class'd among the strong—
Who're wrong themselves, must be to others wrong."

(*Black Q. R.*) A local reputation fades away
Beneath the fervour of superior play.

Who takes the odds of Rook at the Divan
May walk his village a superior man,
Regarded as a Philidor by all,
Since small men, judged by smaller, are not small.

(*W. Q. B.*) Such men have value, for they form the state

Of the great Masters in the art of mate.

(*B. Q. B.*) Yes, these, when first-rates battle it,
never fail

To form the vertebræ of each man's tail.

(*W. K. Kt.*) But useful are those planet satellites ;
For while the great one moves, the smaller writes.

(*B. K. Kt.*) If more McDonnells in Chess fields
prevail,

May ne'er, to squire them, Greenwood Walkers fail.*

(*W. K. R.*) Such men the part of useful Boswells play
To our Chess Johnsons, in their own small way.

(*B. K. R.*) Lavish are these of laurel crowns and bays,
Extolling him whom they select for praise.

(*W. K. B.*) Not praise indeed, but flattery sheer they
give :

The last is breath ; the first hath strength to live.

A nice distinction, which our Poet here

Has made, in epic verse, distinct and clear.

My Lord, excuse me—I was lately rude ;

Weary with fight, and in a wayward mood.

To prove with what sincerity I plead,

I ask your Lordship something else to read.

[*The Black King's Bishop smiles and reads :—*

“ More easy 'tis to flatter than to praise,
For Flattery walks in common places' ways,
Where each in turn frequents the beaten tracks,
And credit gets for what he has or lacks.
Weak Flattery scarcely can discriminate
'Twixt him who checks and him who checks with mate.
But praise will nicely weigh the mental store,

* Greenwood Walker followed McDonnell like his shadow, and took down many of his games as they were being played. He published them without notes, and thus rescued a large number of games which otherwise would have been lost.

And make a true return—nor less, nor more :
 'Twixt strong and stronger nicely draw the line,
 Distinctions make of finest, finer, fine ;
 Predict who'll rank above all odds from all,
 And who to whom gives odds, or great or small ;
 Mark the distinctive features of your game,
 Wherein from mine it differs, where the same ;
 How one is strong in this or that attack,
 Another master of defence or slack ;
 A third in openings learned or in ends,
 A fourth book-knowledge with invention blends.
 Rare are such critics, since they need combine
 How much the powers of finest, finer, fine ;
 And though not always victors in the fight,
 Their true perceptions make them judge aright
 What constitutes of mighty men the might."

(*W. K. B.*) My Lord, to change the subject, can you
 guess

The table-rapist's plan of playing Chess ?

(*B. K. B.*) No doubt the mighty spirits that preside
 O'er silent Chess, and deign skill'd play to guide,
 Or meet in spirit-land in grave debate,
 Discuss the art and mystery of mate,
 Are now by mortals heard and understood
 By many a skilful rapping on the wood.

(*W. K. B.*) Yes ! modern table-rappists who contrive
 To make the dead hold converse with the live,
 Now, by a skilful knuckling of the board,
 Make Stamma's, Ponziani's shades be heard :
 Make them rap out fine games they play'd of yore,
 And games of spirit-land ; a goodly store
 Of problems, ends, positions, which may fill
 Each month a new *Chess Rappists' Chronicle* ;

Get up a match 'twixt Staunton and the ghost
Of Greco, or of the man he values most.

(*W. K.*) Our champion then would play with spirit, such
As fails in modern games, or shines not much.

(*B. K.*) Or they might set two spirits down to play—
A spirit black against a spirit grey.

Such *chiaroscuro* would much power express—
Shade against shade would throw some light on Chess ;
Show up new openings, many a new defence,
Rare lessons give at some few raps expense.

(*W. K.*) In time, if rapping prosper, each man might
Keep for himself his own familiar sprite
To guide his play, or guard it from mishap ;
Cheap service, though repaid with many a rap.

(*B. K.*) But might there not be danger that the sprite,
Once raised, would rap—disturb the house all night ?
There are such noisy spirits : Mistress Crowe,
In her *Night Side of Nature*, tells us so.

(*W. K.*) The chess-board tells the same ; there's many
a man
At play makes noise that drowns the whole Divan.

[*The Black King's Bishop reads:—*]

“To play with noisy players is a task ;
The less that's in them, like a long-neck'd flask
In pouring out, the greater is the noise.
When to the play-ground school turns out the boys,
They strive 'mid fun and laughter, shout and din,
Who box the best, or who in wrestling win ;
So with our Chess, half men half boys who play,
Proud of their moves, more proud of what they say.”

[*A cock crows.*]

(*W. K.*) My friends ! 'tis time that we conclude our talk.
The Savoy cock has crow'd, and mortals walk ;

But ere our nightly festival we close,
 Custom requires that we some toasts propose.
 Queens, Rooks, and minor pieces, Pawns, all fill
 Your shadowy glasses with what drink ye will ;
 There's no one here will such a toast refuse
 " As Staunton and the *Illustrated News*."

'Twas drank with plaudits ; rang the glasses all,
 When toast the second thus did Black King call :
 " To Brien and the *Chronicle* success ;
 May none but gentlemen e'er edit Chessa."

(W. K.) " An *Era* in chess literature appears ;
 May Löwenthal produce it many years."*

(B. K.) To Kling and Horwitz may their *Ends* so grow,
 That we no ending to them ever know."

(W. K.) " Here's health to Mott ;† and though he
 lose his rooks,
 May *Cassells* never fail him, or good looks."

These toasts were drunk with loud acclaim by all.
 One cheer—one more—unanimous the call,
 Save from pale Bishop, who, with 'custom'd sneer,
 Whisper'd (twas rather loud) in King's Knight's ear :—
 " A man may play extremely well at Chess,
 And yet a humbug be, you must confess."

The cold grey morning breaking on the room,
 Scarcely relieves the foggy air of gloom.
 The smother'd mate upon the board still stands ;
 Absent the mind that plans, attacks, commands ;
 Vanish'd the sprites ; dull things of wood succeed,
 Foot-deep in ashes of the fragrant-weed.
 Cold silence reigns within ; the noise without,
 The rattle, roll, shrill cry, or rounded shout,

* Löwenthal edited the chess column in the *Era*.

† Mott was editor of the Chess Column in *Cassell's Magazine*.

Proceed confused from Covent Garden's mart,
 Where Ceres' gifts from densely-laden cart
 Are poured: Pomona's packed in baskets round;
 Flora's in bundles, pots, or corbels found.
 Like Plenty's horn, the market overflows,
 And Plenty o'er the town by various channels goes.
 The carts which crowd Long Acre to the Strand
 Depart; departs the early breakfast-stand.
 The muffin-boy no longer shakes his bell,
 And baked potatoes are no more to sell.
 No more the charms of ale, gin, purl persuade,
 And London wakes from cabbages to trade.
 By various ways grave men to business haste,
 Time's forelock twisted round their finger fast;
 Due east proceed cab, omnibus, and van,
 And Simpson comes to open the Divan.

CANTO IV.

THE VICTIM OF CHESS.

—♦—
 "Why, all delights are vain ; and that most vain
 Which, with pain purchas'd, doth inherit pain."
 SHAKSPERE.

IN a small town unknown to factories' fame,
 Which scarce as rural centre had a name,
 George and Eliza rose to youth's degree,
 He surgeon's son, and rector's daughter she.
 His handsome form, her beauty, pass unsung,
 'There's always beauty in th' ingenuous young.
 His was a warm, impetuous nature, caught
 By pleasing study, or more pleasing sport.
 In boyish games, in mental conflict brief,
 George won the day, became the short-liv'd chief ;
 But if the struggle lasted over-long,
 The weak enduring would surpass the strong.
 Selfish at times, who among men is not ?
 If smiling tempter came, the youth was caught.
 Such love as man to woman often brings,
 Tender, sincere, but mix'd with other things,
 Which please the fancy, mingle men in strife,
 And serve th' ambitious rivalries of life,—
 Such love did George unto Eliza bear:
 Her love, like woman's, an absorbing care,
 Which took from other objects all their charm ;
 Deprived all objects of their power to harm,

To excite to pleasure, or to raise alarm,
 Unless they touched her love: what pleasure sent,
 Which to her age or sex might bring content,
 Below the level of her love she brought;
 Unless it bore on that, she held it nought.
 Her prayer for blessing, that he might be bless'd;
 For peace, that he might find both peace and rest;
 For health, prosperity, and length of days,
 That he might prosper—long enjoy men's praise.
 Oh, selfish man! what will not woman do?
 Lose life, health, ease, all but her love, for you.

Arrived at man's estate, George bent his will,
 To learn his father's art, acquire his skill;
 He studied medicine's art, with method sure,
 More varied than the ills it seeks to cure.
 He now, completing his apprentice years,
 Leaves home with father's hopes and mother's fears,
 And one, be sure there was, who gave him tears.

Mid London's smoke and din how changed the scene!
 And soon how changed the youth from what he'd been!
 With modest blush, he marked how students chaff,
 Laugh at the lecture, at the lecturer laugh;
 The dress and mien of gentlemen neglect,
 The sins of inexperience detect,
 Shock with their grossness e'en when they dissect.
 Solemn employment! that should lessons give;
 Sounding of depths to fathom how we live;
 And finding only in the absent breath
 That dull, dark, cold, decaying thing called Death.
 But grossness ruled o'er many a student's will:
 Grossness, though glozed by wit, is grossness still,
 Giving the mind a deadly taint, to last
 Years after what inspired the wit had passed.

George, to his credit, sought his company

'Mong men whose converse was from grossness free.
 Alas ! he did not seek those earnest men
 Who hear the lecture while they use the pen ;
 Who walk the wards by day with watchful eye,
 Noting the course of skilful remedy ;
 Or of disease, with fatal steps and sure,
 Or else, with thankfulness, th' advancing cure :
 Men who devote large portion of the night
 To seek, in study, for a clearer light
 From science to illuminate their art,
 And aid by knowledge, not by rule impart.
 Such is their life, and not unmindful they
 To pray for strength and 'gainst temptation pray.

Among the students was gay Herbert Blane,
 A youth of parts, intelligent and vain.
 Charming companion for a night or two ;—
 Yourself not deep,—he'd stand a session through.
 His knowledge covered such extent of ground,
 'Twas not in reason it should be profound.
 Books of good authors choicely he'd select,
 And rare editions carefully collect ;
 Only their precious truths he'd quite neglect,
 Because, of books, he gathered all he knew
 From harsh critique, or the unjust review,
 So it were slashing, cared not if untrue.
 Dabbling in science, he'd collections make
 Of things reputed scarce, for scarceness sake.
 He knew the shallows of all sorts of things,
 Why actors quarrel, why the critic stings,
 Why artists or musicians disagree,
 Discords in colour or in harmony ;
 Of authors' quarrels he could tell you too,
 More than the men themselves believed or knew.
 To hear him talk of them you'd sigh and say

Your hero-worship was a faith in clay.
 He'd pass opinions on a print or book,
 Shake his conceited head ; sagacious look ;
 Show skill by finding fault ; be mute or blind
 To merit which true men in merit find :
 Would praise when fashion made his judgment sure,
 But sometimes he would praise the dull obscure ;
 Predict, superior man ! fruit from the weed,
 And crops from ground that never knew a seed.
 But most the gossip of the Chess Divan
 Gave pleasure to this parti-coloured man.
 The games in *Chronicle* or *Chess Review*,
 He knew them all ; the players also knew.
 When two first-rates played out their long-drawn match,
 High privilege was his to hold the watch,
 And sit for hours to count the weary chime,
 And flap the slower player up to time.*

Of dissipated mind was Herbert Blane ;
 By worldly rule, his habits free from stain :
 Neglect of duty was indeed his sin,
 But gross pursuits could not his fancy win.
 His ready wit, and converse gay and free,
 Attracted George : ardent, admiring, he
 Pleased Herbert Blane, who loved to be admired,
 And soon what pleased his tastes, the tastes of George
 inspired :

Pictures and books, the play, the opera, dress ;
 But what attracted most were the Divan and Chess.
 Herbert played off some games in dashing style,
 And mated with a supercilious smile :
 A conquest George not easily could brook,

* When Harrwitz and Löwenthal played their match, a time limit was under discussion in the Chess world. In some of the games, Löwenthal, acting under Staunton's advice, took a-quarter of an hour for every move. This led to the appointment of a timekeeper.

So he began to study from the book ;
 Mastered the openings in a month or two,
 And the best games of classic players knew ;
 Marshall'd his Pawns with Philidorian skill,
 And Herbert fell before his sterner will.
 In the Divan each night his seat he took,
 Soon passed the rubicon of *Knight* and *Rook* ;
 With first-rate men engaged at *Pawn* and *two*,
 Who printed games he lost, or which they drew ;
 And e'en of games he won, ingenuous men ! a few.
 Herbert, disgusted at his friend's success,
 Reviewed his stud of hobbies—turned out Chess.

Vacation came, and homeward George returned :
 What thoughts were his ! what memories in him burned !
 Who smiled or blushed a welcome, need we tell ?
 Joy lit those eyes which loved him more than well.
 George shared the blushes, joy he did not share,
 Such love for him ! reproach he'd rather bear.
 The father asked what lectures he had heard ?
 What cases seen ? what treatment was preferred ?
 At each grave question George could something tell,
 Could give an answer, but not answer well.
 The father shook his head, and urged the son
 To study better than he had begun.
 The mother made him tell her of his fare,
 His rooms, his dress, and what the stranger's care.
 Eliza scanned him with true love's keen eye,
 Marked the pale, pensive face, the latent sigh ;
 She thought he seemed less tender than before ;
 Alas ! he loved not less—he loved Chess more.
 Old friends revisited, old walks explored,
 Something of peace to George's mind restored :
 Though sad at times, the cause he'd not reveal ;
 Enough, if sad, she too would sadness feel.

She strove to cheer, to gratify each whim,
 Would play at Chess—do anything for him.
 Ah ! foolish maiden, little didst thou know
 That thou wert dallying with a mutual foe,
 That soon would lay your mutual fortunes low.

George gave the Knight and quickly won the game,
 Gave Rook, then Queen—unworthy, Chess, thy name !
 For she would gossip o'er her thoughtless play,
 Smile o'er the past, or sigh ; hope for the future day.
 As if stern Chess, like music in a room,
 Should keep dull talk from lapsing into gloom.
 In silence he'd combine some dexterous mate ;
 The skill she saw not, nor bewailed her fate.
 Like Indian wife, to her the law was plain,
 That man must beat and woman not complain.
 George who had learned by Chess to measure all,
 Gauged poor Eliza's mind, and found it small.

Returned to town, George purposed to abstain
 From higher Chess, and time for study gain.
 This he accomplished for a week or two ;
 But Chess does not resign her victims so.
 The want of practice made his play less strong,
 And a first-rate assured him he was wrong
 Thus to lose ground ; so he played late and soon ;
 At midnight playing ; playing oft at noon.
 Unheard was many a lecture, books unread,
 Cases unseen, time for improvement fled.
 Plucked at " the Hall," he scarcely mourned his fate,
 Cäissa smiled, he'd now become first-rate.

Three years had passed since George first quitted home ;
 Changes and troubles o'er the scene had come.
 His father died and left his mother poor,
 And soon, the troubles she could not endure
 Kindly released her, and she went to rest

'Neath the fresh turf which on her husband pressed ;
 And he who ministered the rites of death,
 And read the prayers of piety and faith
 O'er this sad pair, himself was called away
 To that bright land to which he'd shown the way,
 Crown of our suffering here, reward for which we pray.

Eliza and her mother sought a home
 Close to the town where they were loved and known :
 Opened a school, and little children taught,
 If not to think—material for thought.

But George, meanwhile, had met with his success
 In the Divan ; “ Professor,” now, of Chess ;
 To play with him and win were skilful play,
 Enough the honour, do not make him pay ;
 And if he win, the 'customed shilling give,
 For George is poor—hard work for him to live.
 In Chess the paying pupils are but few ;
 Who quickly lose a pound, are slow in losing two.
 I've seen him sit a weary hour and more,
 The News in hand, but still observe the door ;
 And should a Chess-like face but enter in,
 High are his hopes, he may a shilling win.
 He greets the stranger with a smiling bow :—
 “ Is he disposed for Chess, a game or two ? ”
 Perhaps to-day he is not in the vein,
 Or plays with one who does not shillings gain.
 Once more George sits to watch the swinging door ;
 Another comes ; more prosperous than before,
 George gives the *Pawn and two* ; the play begins,
 And lasts some hours ; perchance the stranger wins
 One game, and loses one, and one is drawn :
 Ah ! Labour's labour lost, not Love's ; forlorn
 Poor George looks out for one less skilled in play
 That he may have wherewith to dine next day.

E

Wretched employment ! toil's perpetual round
 Is hard to those, by use, to labour bound :
 But harder still, when recreation wears
 Like labour's load, and play is full of cares.
 The contrast mark ! with knitted brow one sits ;
 Around are men of pleasure, sportive wits,
 Who know not, or if knowing, do not feel
 How hard the play on which depends a meal :
 How sad the heart, how weary is the brain,
 Which plays 'gainst dulness ; sometimes plays in vain.
 For when large odds are given the attack may fail ;
 And dull and slow, 'gainst skilled and quick, prevail.
 On such occasions lookers-on may smile,
 And with a joke their emptiness beguile,
 While the poor shilling player toils in vain
 And with a nervous hand sets up his men again.

As sunshine makes the desert scene more lone,
 All void of beauty and reflecting none ;
 So sadness gains no solace from the glad,
 When Joy stands smiling by, Sadness is doubly sad.

Three years Eliza passed, and never knew
 If George were dead, or if alive, were true.
 He long had ceased to write ; there came no news :
 Love framed excuse, friendship could not excuse.
 Poor gentle, suffering creature ! long resigned,
 Troubles to bear, not love's neglect to find ;
 In maiden widowhood her beauty dies ;
 Heard by herself alone were all her sighs :
 Even to her mother she did not complain,
 When thought arose, it would in thought remain :
 Heroic patience ! thou wilt not rebel,
 But bear and suffer all, and nothing tell.

At length a letter came in George's hand,
 Not, as of old, boldly and quickly penned,

But writ as when the feeble hand of pain
 Complains to have to write, and writes but to complain.
 "Forgive, Eliza, my neglect of thee,
 Oh ! soothe my pain, relieve my misery !"
 She and her mother went, without delay,
 Sought the poor lodging where the sick man lay ;
 A wretched room next the roof's narrow slope,
 Abode of poverty divorced from hope.
 A scanty bed, a table, and a chair,
 A fireless grate, and scantier still the fare ;
 Some shelves, unoccupied by books, for they
 Were pawned or sold, the weekly rent to pay.
 Such the abode where the affianced bride,
 After long absence, reached her lover's side.
 His hollow cough, sunk cheek, and lustrous eye,
 Made questions needless what the malady.
 George welcomed both his friends with gratitude ;
 They saw his need, procured him warmth and food :
 They smoothed his pillow, and assuaged his pain,
 And the old smile played on his lips again.
 He said he'd taken cold, should soon be well ;
 Of the tasked brain, late hours, scant food, he did not
 tell,
 Nor of gas-heated air, cigar's perfume,
 Breathed for long hours within Cäissa's room ;
 Nor how, returning home one night, the storm
 With death-like fingers grasped his ill-clad form.
 Poor George was nursed as mother nurses son,
 Or wife the husband by affection won.
 A few weeks merged the winter into spring,
 And the two friends their patient homeward bring.
 The well-known scenes some peace and comfort
 brought,
 But with the peaceful stirred the troubled thought.

Tree buds were bursting into tender green,
 Wild flowers were gazing on the sky serene,
 The active building birds were on the wing,
 And Hope, to wintered minds, smiled like the coming
 spring.

More hollow grew the sufferer's hollow cheek,
 More thin the bony hand, the voice more weak ;
 And when he talked, and talk he often did,
 Remorse and Hope dictated what he said.
 He mourned the time neglected, but would still
 In earnest work, his father's hopes fulfil ;
 And when in practice he had settled down,
 Eliza should be partner of his home.
 And then he'd take her hand, gaze in her face
 With deep and earnest gaze, the hand embrace,
 Ask why she wept when he was getting well ?
 Ah ! sad to hear Death's voice of living prospects tell.
 Ere autumn came he died. They made his grave
 Beneath the trees which o'er his parents wave.
 And thus the prodigal who'd ceased to roam,
 Returned repentant to his desolate home :
 Too late ! he found his parents gone to heaven,
 Let 's hope he followed them, and was forgiven.