

CHECKERS IN A BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Favorite Home Game of
Grandmother and the Chil-
dren Has a Rich
Literature.



CHECKERS and backgammon are commonly associated in the mind, because you play the first on the outside of the folding board, and the other on the inside. Both are good games, requiring skill; nobody has ever denied that. But perhaps on account of their joint popularity in sedate households, of their usefulness in keeping the children amused on rainy days, and the well-remembered fondness of one's grandmother for both, they have not seemed, in these later years, diversions to be reckoned with, like chess and the card games. One has known dimly that checkers, or draughts, as the English players prefer to call it, is a very old game, somehow associated with the pyramids and Persia. Most of us have known, too, at least one remarkable person who could play checkers well, and make your own men, and kings and queens, if you managed while playing with him to get any monarchs in your service, disappear from the parti-colored board with disheartening rapidity. Folks who still play checkers, however, generally play badly, with their minds on other things, and the long, fashionable folding board, made to stand on end and resemble two respectable, tall books in the family bookcase, generally comes to one's mind when the game is mentioned.

Mr. Call's neatly printed bibliography* opens your eyes to the lasting importance of checkers. It is a game to be revered. Opinions differ somewhat as to whether it is a very old game, those tales of the old Orient to the contrary notwithstanding. Clearly this is a point on which it is better to have assured facts than opinions. The Encyclopaedia Britannica cites the statement of one Strutt, author of "Sports and Pastimes," that it is a "modern invention," while Mr. Call, compiler of the first English bibliography of the game, says it is ancient, in fact, the oldest of surviving games. There was a treatise on draughts published in Paris, by Pierre Mallet, as early as 1608, and Mr. Call says that Mallet's was the true game of checkers. His book, of course, has no place in this bibliography of works in English, but the English writers have made free use of it. The Romans had a game called latrunculi, played, like checkers, by two persons, but with a board of sixteen squares instead of sixty-four. The Greeks and Egyptians certainly had similar games, so that draughts, if a "modern invention," can clearly trace its ancestry to the remote ages.

Mr. Call's bibliography comprises all the books, pamphlets, and magazines treating of checkers which have been published in England and America. He tells us that the game has been called "the ancient game," to distinguish it from Spanish, Italian, Polish, German, and Turkish draughts, each a distinct game, with more or less of a literature of its own. A game played in Spain before America was discovered, however, was so like modern checkers that collectors of books on checkers eagerly seek the treatises on the Spanish game by Canalejas (1650) and Garces, (1681.) Besides Pierre Mallet, Quercetain and others wrote early French books on the game.

It is interesting to know that there are ten collections of books on checkers in England and the United States which Mr. Call considers "first-class." There are perhaps fifty of the second grade. Collectors of checker literature, it will be seen, form an exclusive set among the raging bibliophiles. Mr. Call says that the checker library of Henry Hutzler of Cincinnati is complete, except for the omission of B. Pearce's work, the first American book on the subject. This is a paper-covered pamphlet of twenty-four pages, published at Albany in 1815. It contains

games and problems selected from the first English book on the subject, (W. Payne's, London, 1756,) and a copy of it nowadays is presumably a priceless treasure. Of course, you may be able to get Payne's book, if you have good luck and about \$15, but you want Pearce's if you have the collector's spirit. The thing that is hardest to get is most highly prized in more pursuits than rare book collecting.

Andrew Anderson's "The Game of Draughts Simplified" (Glasgow, 1852) and his "Guide to the Game of Draughts" (London, 1848) were long considered the standard English works on the subject. The second is by far the best, but its quoted price is only \$8, while you must pay \$25 or more for the first, and have hard work to get it at that. Anderson was a famous draught player, and his were the accepted English rules of the game. Mr. Call's bibliography contains 227 titles. He has five books of his own in the list, so it will be seen that he is an authority on the game, as well as on its literature. There is an excellent index.

TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF THE MILLIONAIRE IN FICTION

WHETHER is able to put up with its fantastical absurdities will find enjoyment in Gerald Villiers-Stuart's story, "The Soul of Croesus," (Cuppers & Leon Company, publishers.) It is a story about Standish Vandracken, a young American who inherited \$200,000,000 from his father. The father had been a money-maker, pure and simple; he found out too late that his life had been a mistake, and that it would have been a much more successful life if he had spent more and made less. For years he dined it into his son's ears that when he should come into his inheritance he must make his money fly.

We see the young man for the first time in a London club, where he is undertaking to obey the parental injunction. He asks his friend, Lord Ancester, to take a drink, and when his Lordship announces that he will take a whisky and soda, the young man resentfully cries out:

"Whisky and soda! You're a nice sort of a chap to celebrate the possession of \$200,000,000 with!"

For himself the young man orders the most expensive wine in the club—not for the sake of splurge, but to get rid of some of his money. For the same reason he gives the waiter a tip of about £300.

While he is on the road to Lord Ancester's rooms, one of those "elderly French and Belgian ladies" who throng Piccadilly in the night time stops in front of our millionaire and says something in a tired voice. Vandracken is turning away from her when "some pathos in the defeated gesture she makes strikes that note of impulsive sentiment which vibrates so easily in the American character."

"You're a bit of a linguist, Ancester," says Vandracken, pulling out a roll of notes. "Ask her how much she'll take to retire from business."

Ten thousand francs is the amount the woman named, and Vandracken hands her about twice that amount, remarking as he passed along, "Thank goodness I've nearly spent my day's income."

At Lord Ancester's Vandracken sees a letter that had been given him by another millionaire who has no use for it. The letter runs as follows:

Sir: I have made an invention of interest only to the young man who has many millions to spend, the young man who would like to buy millions' worth of enjoyments, but dare buy only thousands because of the consequences of buying more he knows too well. Through my invention these consequences he can make another man take. So he can have the pleasure and pay only with money. I

will only sell the invention to one man; my pay would be one hundred thousand pounds, one thousand paid down before I discuss the matter.

ABDUL VON TARSENHEIM.

Vandracken buys the invention and becomes a shockingly dissolute person. His vices, however, cost him nothing but money, so far as the ordinary observer can see, for by virtue of the arrangement with Von Tarsenheim it is another man who coarsens and takes on the appearance of the roud.

Vandracken has two years of debauchery, and then true love rescues him and leads him toward matrimony. He does not reach that destination, however, for his fiancée backs, out and eventually marries the man who has worn the yoke of the millionaire's iniquities.

The millionaire dies a suicide, leaving the bulk of his wealth to trustees, who are instructed "to employ it as the nucleus of a fund for obtaining legislation by amendment of the Constitution of the United States which shall make it impossible in the future for any man to give in his lifetime or bequeath by will to any individual or corporation a greater sum than \$2,000,000."

One who takes this story seriously will probably feel by the time he gets through it that he has been indulging in an unprofitable literary spree. But there is a lot of trimming to the story that is extremely entertaining, and it is that which makes Mr. Villiers-Stuart's book worth while.

LESSON OF SIMPLICITY IN COTTAGE ARCHITECTURE.

OLD COTTAGES AND FARM HOUSES IN SURREY. Illustrated on One Hundred Colotype Plates from Photographs Specially Taken by W. Galsworthy Davis, with an Introduction and Numerous Sketches by W. Curtis Green, A. R. I. B. A. New York: William Heinemann, 10 East Sixteenth Street. 1908.

WHILE this very beautiful book is primarily intended for the practical architect or student of architecture, the photographs and descriptions will be found full of charm for any one to whom a house means an opportunity to exercise the imagination. The introduction lays stress upon the vitality of the architectural forms used in the old cottages erected by unknown builders to meet contemporary needs, and emphasizes also the desirability of studying such old forms in order to restore a traditional building art without descending to crass imitation. In the course of his argument Mr. Green pays an eloquent tribute to the energy and intellect of William Morris, whose passion for architecture outran all the other passions of his active life. In quoting it we may help to spread the impression that has more or less died out since Morris's death of how much his achievement actually meant to the world in which he made so vivid a figure:

Had it not been for that now famous inner circle of the Gothic revivalists, supported by the writings of Morris and Ruskin, who realized that it was the spirit of the old work which was lacking, the revival would have ended in the imitative school. To them we owe the life and vigor which has marked the best work of recent years. They gathered the broken threads of the old traditions and drew the crafts together. They insisted upon the value of the old work and the necessity for studying it as the foundation of architectural education and good taste. They showed that it was necessary, in order to form an intelligent opinion upon architecture—other than mere likes and dislikes—to understand the reasonableness and continuity of the various steps which produced architecture in the past. They showed that, important as the systematic study of archaeology is, it is not architecture, but that as a practical standard, as a revival of form rather than of spirit, it is an attractive By-Path Meadow Leading to Doubting Castle and Giant Despair.

He continues that if we are to make architecture a living subject of study there is no way but to follow those who have bridged the gap and brought us in touch with the work of our ancestors, to whom building was an art comprising all the handicrafts and trades. Ad-

mitting that the old buildings are neither always beautiful nor well built, he points out that through them all runs the same surprising simplicity and bigness in design, the same straightforward methods of solving problems of construction; "it is not only the simplicity of the nursery, but the logical and final refuge of the complex." Simple as they are, many of the cottages photographed are admirably adapted to the modern country house where the latter has to be built on a small scale. If in America we could bring ourselves to a friendlier attitude toward "cottage architecture" in the true sense of the term, we should have fewer monstrosities in our suburban places and many more suggestions of homeliness and comfortable moderation.

"LETTERS TO A WORKINGMAN."

Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, editor of The London Spectator, has brought out in book form (Macmillan & Co., 25 cents) his "Letters to a Workingman," which have been running in that weekly for some time under the title "Problems and Perils of Socialism." To those who are of the same mind as Mr. Strachey the small volume will be very likely to find a ready welcome; they may even go so far as to read Mr. Law's poem, printed as an appendix. To those of another mind than the author his arguments may not appear particularly new nor vital. The first letter, which advocates the increase of capital as the only solution of poverty, is a very good sample of the rest of the book. Capital is helpless unless it can get labor to employ it, says Mr. Strachey. Consequently, if there is plenty of capital, men who work with brain or hand have only to go out and hire it cheap. This sounds pretty, but one is uneasily conscious of a fallacy. For if this capital were all in the possession of two or three men, and they let none of it go cheap, what are the brain and hand possessors going to do about it? However, Mr. Strachey says a little further on that "the essential thing is to let labor and capital alone." This, he is sure, will make it all come out happily.

The argument against Socialism is no doubt a strong one. But in Mr. Strachey's hands it is a mild, shocked, platitudinous sort of affair. One of Mr. Strachey's favorite axioms is that the tendency of wealth is to spread out, to flow joyously into the pockets of the waiting laborers. We feel a momentary elation, but then cold, calm reason asserts itself, and we turn away with a sigh from Mr. Strachey and his cheerful shout that no matter what the millionaire does, whether he buys old masters and ancient violins in his desperate desire to keep the grasp of the all-powerful laborer from his gold, whether he doesn't buy anything, but just hoards it all, no matter what, it's no use. The laborer will get it, if only he insists on there being plenty of millionaires.

AN ORR'S ISLAND ROMANCE.

The steam yacht Phyllis, steaming up Casco Bay, is hailed by a young woman in a small boat, who asks to be taken aboard and to be conveyed to Orr's Island, where she lives, and because she is a beautiful creature with an adorable figure, lovely auburn hair, bright blue eyes, and incomparable coral lips, her request is granted, and before the Summer is out she is the wife of the man who owns the Phyllis. That is the story William Jasper Nicolls tells us in his little novel, "Brunhilda of Orr's Island," (George W. Jacobs & Co., publishers.) Brunhilda is an orphan who lives with her old uncle, Capt. Hagan Gunther, a Casco Bay fisherman. The man who takes her for his wife is Nelson Thomas of New York, whose vocation is to spend the fortune his father accumulated as a wholesale grocer. The story of the courtship, betrothal, and wedding of Mr. Thomas and the Orr's Island paragon is well told, and much charm is added to the narrative by the frequent introduction of what seem to be real bits of Orr's Island life.

*THE LITERATURE OF CHECKERS.

Embracing all the Books, Pamphlets, and Magazines on the Game of English Draughts. Commonly Known as Checkers. By William Timothy Call. New York: Published by the Author. \$1.