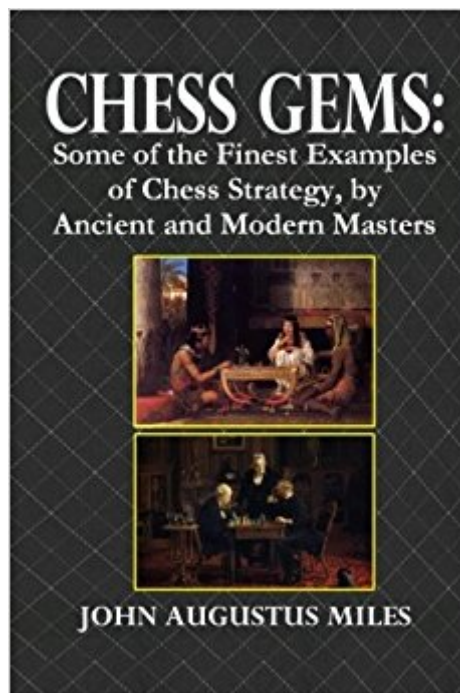




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Chess Gems: Some Of The Finest Examples Of Chess Strategy, By Ancient And Modern Masters



Synopsis

An excerpt from the beginning of the PREFACE: EIGHTEEN years have elapsed since I made an attempt to collect and arrange some of the finest Chess Problems extant. During that time so many beautiful compositions have emanated from authors of all countries, which are scattered among various newspapers and serials, that it appears to me very desirable to collect and arrange the choicest of these, and, at the same time, to make a better and larger selection from the works of our two great English Masters, Bone and Bolton, the decease of both of whom we have now to lament. Messrs. J. and W. T. Pierce have given us an excellent collection of Problems by English Composers only ; but this leaves ample scope for a more extended selection, such as I have endeavoured to make from the works of the old Masters, and of the composers of every nation. In doing this I have deviated from the usual course of separating the problems of each author, and arranging them according to the number of moves in each; and have, instead, placed them together in chronological order, wherever I have found it practicable to do so: thus exhibiting the progressive change of style which may have taken place in any author's compositions. I have given in Chapter I, a small selection from the works of the old Masters of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, in studying which we are struck with their simplicity, and freedom from the depth and intricacy of the problems of the present day: yet the conceptions embodied in them are very fine. Ercole Del Rio (Hercules of the River) was, indeed, well worthy of his name; one of his problems (No. 13) exemplifies two of the greatest beauties of strategy, and in the next one the modern style is foreshadowed in a most remarkable manner. "With the present century commences a new era in problem construction; Mendheim in Germany, and Bone in England leading the way, closely followed by Bolton, D'Orville, Anderssen, Brede, &c, the great Masters of their day, during whose reign, so to speak, Chess strategy made great strides. With the brilliant and forced sacrifices and constant checks of the earlier composers there began to be mingled the quiet coups de repos, which so eminently characterize the stratagems of the present day. Bolton was, undoubtedly, the great pioneer in this track, and it is worthy of notice that, in his later compositions, these fine waiting moves occur more frequently than in his earlier ones. Of these great Masters many retired from the arena some years before their death, and were succeeded by another race, among whom we find (facile principes) Bayer, Healey, Grimshaw, Andrews and many others, the style of whose works is seen to be still gradually changing, hard blows giving place to quiet manoeuvres Compare, for instance, the problems of Mendheim, the hard hitter, with those of T. Smith, who seldom strikes a blow till he gives the final coup de grace! Although many of the authors of this epoch are still living, some of them, alas! seem inclined to retire on the laurels they have won, and to leave the field to be

filled up by yet another race of strategists, the heroes of the present day, whose name is becoming Legion, and whose motto appears to be "Difficilia quae pulchra;" for the simplicity of the olden time has given place to subtlety, depth, and difficulty. Instead of the problems in many moves, in which the old school delighted, and which, for me, will never lose their charm, we have difficult problems in three and even in two moves. As examples of extreme difficulty the following problems of recent date may be cited; No. 433, which gained the prize for the best three-move problem in one of the tourneys just brought to a close; No. 581, No. 726, and No. 732....

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