

## OUR CRITICS ONCE MORE.

To the Musical Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR :

SIR,—When Mr. Frederick Bayham was appointed Art critic to the *Pall Mall Journal*, that ready and erudite gentleman, after having turned over a few pages of Mr. Smee's lectures to the pupils of the Royal Academy, declared his perfect willingness to accept that important position; and very successfully did he discharge his duty. To say that a certain picture of Mr. Blank's represented a *Contadina* dancing with a *Trastaverino*, at the door of a *Loranda*, to the music of a *Pifferaro*, read very prettily, and gave a fine idea of the extensive attainments of the accomplished contributor. But in those days there was, fortunately for the peace of mind of our amusing friend, only one critic of the sort; and he continued on his course without having to rebut the carping strictures of opposing charlatans.

It is not so now, particularly as regards musical art. Every little smatterer thinks himself qualified to give an opinion on the great Art-Masters, and, worse, to indulge his vanity by finding fault with the performances of virtuosi whose abilities he is incapable of appreciating. Like Mr. Bayham, a few slang terms of art furnish his quiver with all the requisite arrows,—“rendition,” “magnetism” (whatever that may mean), “conscientious interpretation,” and a dozen words and phrases of a like value form his sole stock-in-trade.

In no case is this *outré* more frequently observed than in the reports that appear in our daily papers after the occurrence of any musical entertainment. The performance of “the Messiah” on Thursday last was noticed—I cannot say criticised—by two gentlemen, who, evidently, do not agree as to what does or does not constitute perfection in music. Let us compare their opinions:—

(A.)

“The orchestra was certainly susceptible of improvement. For one thing, they are too conscientious to rest, and the silence more eloquent than words which the composer has freely interspersed throughout the oratorio was more often than not broken by the scraping of some vile fiddle, while occasionally the whole orchestra combined to improve on the original, although the pauses were well marked by the conductor.

“The Hallelujah Chorus gave the noisy orchestra an opportunity to distinguish itself, which it did principally by drowning the voices in perhaps the finest passage, ‘The Kingdoms of this World are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.’”

(B.)

“The greatest praise that can be given of the chorus and orchestra is, that they did their conductor credit. Sustaining and sympathizing with each other, correct in modulations, swelling out in triumphant accord, it need not be wondered that the effect was grand in every sense of the word.”

In one thing they agree—their English is below criticism; but no one thing can be more diametrically opposed to another than the opinion of critic A to that of critic B as regards the instrumental performers. It is possible that one or more blunders were committed by an eager, too eager, neophyte; but as a whole the performance was far more free from faults than I could have anticipated. Nothing was more remarkable throughout the evening than the, I may say, extraordinary command which Mr. Lucy-Barnes had obtained over both orchestra and chorus, considering the short time he has had to perfect the drilling of his forces. Taken altogether, I do not hesitate to say that the idea of the great composer was more clearly and fully developed on Thursday night than on any other occasion on which I have been present since I left Europe.

The fugue in the overture was charmingly played, accurately and “con brio,” whilst the Pastoral Symphony, with all its delicacy of light and shade, left little to be desired.

I am not a professional musician, but I was, so to speak, nursed on Handel; and, as I have had the pleasure of listening to the performance of his marvellous music by all the greatest executants of my time, from 1832 downwards, when I say that the Oratorio, as given by the Philharmonic Society, gave me almost entire satisfaction, my judgment must be taken for what it is worth, and no more.

Yours truly,

Arthur R. Jenner-Fust.



Montreal, Dec. 27th, 1879.

## THE CHESS WORLD IN 1879.

AS WITH our individual lives and the world at large, so also with the doings of the Chess world, is the close of the year a most fitting occasion for taking a retrospect of the past, and this being the last opportunity in the present year on which we can address our friends and patrons, we have thought it advisable to devote our column to this purpose. At the commencement of the year, Chess was undergoing a lull after the Paris Congress of 1878, but the young new year soon gave promise of life, and at its close we may, on the whole, call it an eventful one. In the month of January, the Montreal Chess Club had the pleasure of entertaining Capt. G. H. McKenzie, the Champion of America, who had been paying visits to the leading cities of the United States. This event will long be pleasurable remembered by the Montreal Club. The early months of the year, too, were notable for the many exhibitions of Living Chess,—an agreeable change from the uncompromising, unimpassioned, ebony and silver. These exhibitions originated at Sewickly, a small town in Pennsylvania, and culminated in the magnificent entertainment given in the Academy of Music in New York under the auspices of the Manhattan Chess Club on April 16th. The cities of Pittsburg, St. Louis, Holyoke, Cincinnati, and Washington all gave entertainments of this kind, principally for charitable purposes. Since then the Living Chess mania has had a decided relapse.—In the month of April the awards were announced in the Problem Tourney of the Paris Congress. These were, however, afterwards reversed, M. Emile Pradignat, who had previously been adjudged the winner of the first prize, being disqualified, and Mr. J. Berger of Gratz, in Austria, taking it instead. The final award gave all the prizes to foreigners, so that French composers had no share in the honours of the Tourney. The effect of such unpleasant *contretemps* should be to make committees, whose business it may be, especially careful in drawing up the rules and regulations for Tourneys. In this case nothing seemed to prevent any competitor from entering more than one set, which M. Pradignat had done, and the Committee had no alternative but to disqualify him for what was considered an act opposed to custom and justice. The Problem Tourney was also remarkable for the large number of sets which were unable to stand the test of examination, and consequently thrown out,—as many as fifteen, we believe, being consigned to oblivion. The Champion

*Cis-Atlantic Problem Composer*, Mr. S. Loyd, took the third prize. In the month of May, commenced a match between this gentleman and Mr. Eugene Delmar, of New York. Few encounters occasioned more interest, but in this case it arose more out of partizanship than enthusiasm in the cause of chess. It terminated rather disastrously to Mr. Loyd, and somewhat, we suspect, to his own surprise, the score being Delmar 5, Loyd 1, drawn 2, and the result tends to prove that a first-class problemist is not by any means necessarily a strong player. On June 16th commenced a more memorable encounter, that between Messrs. Potter and Mason, which dragged its slow length along till September, and ended in a draw, the record standing 5 each with 11 draws. All the games showed a determination on the part of both players not to lose, but the match has not added anything to Chess, the Fabian policy of each player rendering the games comparatively dull and uninteresting. Another match which we must notice is that recently concluded between Mr. Delmar and Mr. Barnes, and was of a totally different character, in which care and analysis were pitted against boldness and brilliancy. In over-the-board encounters the latter is possibly more successful, but in another match between the same gentlemen, to be played shortly, we confidently predict a very considerable difference in the result. The score at the end was:—Delmar 7, Barnes 4, drawn 2. In September the Dominion Chess Association met at Ottawa, and, though not a pronounced success, its deliberations were watched with some interest, in consequence of the discussion on the “Move or No Move” question, which it had to decide. The result is now well known, and, though it may not have given entire satisfaction to the Editor of *The Chess Players' Chronicle*, is nevertheless, we think, such as will prove to be the best in the end. The fifth American Chess Congress, to be held in New York in January, is now thoroughly organized, and bids fair to be a decided success. It is, however, a matter which properly belongs to next year. The Canadian Correspondence Tourney, conducted by Mr. J. W. Shaw, of Montreal, by far the most important event in Canadian chess for many years, is rapidly approaching its conclusion. From recent accounts, Mr. J. Henderson, who has completed all his games, with the handsome score of 12 won out of 14 games played, must stand an excellent chance for the first prize. The International Postal Card Tourney approaches its end, which, we believe, many of the combatants will be heartily glad to see. The score now stands, United States 28, Great Britain 25, drawn 12. The latest sensation connected with it is Mrs. Gilbert's decided success over Mr. Gossip. This lady, the *Venus victrix* of chess players, has won three games from Mr. Gossip in handsome style, announcing mates in 35 and 21 moves in two of her games; the fourth game, we also expect to hear, has been resigned by Mr. Gossip. During the last month or two Mr. Blackburne, the celebrated blindfold player, has been giving a starring tour throughout the English Counties, and his marvellous powers in this direction have astonished all who have had the chance of partaking in the contests or visiting them. It is to be remembered that Mr. Blackburne is not alone in the possession of this faculty, Zukertort, Steinitz and Paulsen being all fine blindfold players; but we believe no one can conduct ten games simultaneously without sight of the men, with the same ease, accuracy and brilliancy as Mr. Blackburne. Mr. Blackburne intends visiting the United States in January next, and we hope he may be induced to exhibit his powers in Montreal.

Chess Literature has not been dormant during the year, and many chess works have emanated from the press. We may notice, *Chess Chips*, by J. P. Taylor; a *Collection of Chess Problems*, by Rev. A. Cyril Pearson; 100 *Italian Problems*, by Sig. G. B. Vallé, and *The Nordiske Skakproblemer*, a Collection of 206 Scandinavian Problems, by Messrs. Arnell and Sorenson. The most important addition to chess literature has undoubtedly been Mr. Gossip's *Theory of the Chess Openings*. This work has been so extensively criticised and reviewed that nothing need be said here about it. We hope Mr. Gossip will turn his attention to the preparation of another edition, and sincerely regret to hear that Mr. Gossip, who is now residing in Paris, is in bad health and has nearly lost his eyesight. While noticing these additions to chess literature, we may cast a sigh behind us over the defunct *Westminster Papers*. This journal, which stopped with the April number, had been for more than a decade the chief organ of the chess world, and for that period contains a complete history of the game. We are sure we speak the truth in saying that its cessation was deplored by all chess players. Its place is sought to be supplied by *The Chess Monthly*, which bids fair to become a worthy successor; but it is only in its infancy, and a good book, like good wine, secures by age alone, the affections and good opinion of *cognoscenti*.

We now come to the most melancholy portion of our retrospection—Death's doings of the year. Many old and valued names in the roll of chess fame have been carried away. Though not strictly within the year, we may mention Cochrane (Salvio-Cochrane Gambit), who died in March 1878, and Captain Kennedy in November of the same year. Mr. Wm. Thompson, who was for many years Vice-President of the Old Bristol Club, and who by his generosity, genial friendship and devotion to the game, earned the title of the “Father of Chess in Bristol,” died in February, at the ripe age of 70. He was a great admirer of Lowenthal. If we have in facetiousness styled Mrs. Gilbert the *Venus victrix* of chess players, no one will hesitate to accord to Adolf Anderssen the title of *Hercules invictus*. This celebrated player, the hero of a thousand victories, departed this life on March 14th, aged 60, deeply lamented by all his friends for his excellent nature, and by all chess players, as much for his amiability and uprightness, as that he was a master of the game. Another name, equally famous, is that of George Walker, the pioneer of newspaper Chess Columns, the founder of popular Chess Clubs, author, translator, editor. He died in April, aged 77. We must not omit to record the death of Herr Willmers, the Danish problem composer who took the first prize in the American Chess Congress in 1858, and for twenty years pianist to the Court of Vienna; R. M. Grant, a strong Glasgow player; the Marquis of Tweedale, a devoted chess player and munificent supporter of the game; Major Wernich, a strong amateur of New York, and, to close the melancholy list, John H. Hanshew, editor of several chess columns, and on one occasion of a monthly magazine, entitled *The Maryland Chess Review*, who died quite recently at the town of Frederick in his own State.

In the game of chess itself, we have not been startled by any new development calculated to upset past analysis, but we think that we are on the eve of something of that kind, and may incidentally remark that the Ruy Lopez and King's Bishop's Opening offer fruitful fields for research. To our thinking the correct defence to the Ruy Lopez has yet to be found, while the relative merits of B to B 4 or K Kt to B 3, in reply to White 2 B to B 4, have yet to be decided, and may still ask, Is the Compromised Defence in the Evans Gambit sound? Does not the Centre Gambit call for closer analysis than it has received? We raise these questions from the belief that the Ruy Lopez, the King's Bishop's Opening, the French, and the Sicilian, are the Openings around which the most important battles of the future will be fought. Meanwhile chess players may congratulate themselves on the position the Royal Game holds in the present day and look forward hopefully to a year of activity in 1880.