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E. B. Stearns



V I D A ' S

G A M E O F C H E S S .

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,

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O X F O R D :

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M.DCC.LXXVIII.

H  
me juvenilis industria sua  
lucum qualemcumque,  
ad continuandam sui memoriam,  
bene valere & bene sapere jubens,

Elia B. Slater

donat  
suis praeceptor emeritus



J. S.



## P R E F A C E.

THE Original of the following Piece was written in Latin about the year 1540, by Vida, bishop of Alba, one of the principal ornaments of the age of pope Leo the tenth. His Poems, all of which are in the Latin language, are various, and some of them much admired: But in all he has borrowed so largely from the Poets of ancient Rome, as in a great measure to invalidate his claim to the character of an Original Genius. But in none is this Plagiarism carried to so great a degree, as in the *Poem upon Chess*, in which the expressions, and even the compleat lines which are transferred from Virgil, form no inconsiderable part of the Piece. If considered separately from this objection, it stands at the head of all Vida's Performances, and exhibits a perfect model of Mock-heroic poetry. The Invention which is displayed through the whole conduct of the Game, the ease with which the most intricate descriptions are finished, together with that serious and imposing air, which is spread over every circumstance, has raised this poem very high in the estimation of the most judicious Critics.



With respect to the Translation here offered to the Public, I believe it is the first which has appeared in our language. Vida's Poetics have already been translated by a masterly hand, and it seems rather singular that this Poem upon Chés has not had the same advantage. I remember indeed to have seen a specimen of a Translation of it, in one of the *Literary Magazines*, which were published about twenty years ago: it was carried on as far as the 83d line of the following Translation. But as my thoughts were then otherwise engaged, and as since that time I have not been able to procure the book, or to recollect precisely in what year it was published, I can give no account of it or its Author. That the English Reader may form some opinion of that Poem, by means of which, the Game of Chés has been regarded among scholars in a classical light, is the object of the present performance.

March 30, 1778.

## C H E S S.

**I** Sing the form of war, the bloodless plain,  
 Armies of ivory, and a mock campaign ;  
 How two bold Kings in different armour veil'd,  
 One black, one white, for conquest fought the field.  
 To you, ye nymphs of *Serius'* flood, belong  
 Such mighty deeds as yet unknown to song ;  
 No path to guide me, and no light to cheer,  
 Still to press on with eager steps I dare,  
 By youthful ardor fir'd ; nor you disdain,  
 Immortal virgins, thro' the dreary scene  
 To guide your vent'rous bard, for none so well  
 The various beauties of this art can tell ;

5

10

You

You by th' Italian shore first taught the game,  
And fix'd for aye your sifter *Scacchis'* name.

Far to the south beneath the burning zone, 15  
Jove and his vassal Deities were gone,  
Old Ocean's guests; for on the God's request  
Fair Earth had smil'd, and this the bridal feast.  
The festive day with jollity is crown'd,  
And Ethiopia's shores their mirth resound. 20  
Soon as the rage of appetite was past,  
And all rose fated from the rich repast,  
With some unlook'd for sport the Father sought  
To please his guests: a chequer'd Square he brought.  
Eight lines are drawn erect from either side, 25  
And into equal parts the Board divide;  
Each part the same in form, in size the same,  
And eight times eight compleat the wond'rous frame:  
Their colours change in regular array,  
And like the tortoise' back alternate hues display. 30  
Then to the wond'ring Gods thus spake the Sire;  
This field for battle and this camp admire,  
Where two contending Kings their hosts engage,  
And mimic heroes fight with mimic rage.

Such sports employ the daughters of the deep, 35  
 When Ocean smooths his bed, and tempests sleep.  
 But see the warriors which the field adorn.

He spake; and pour'd from out th' inverted urn  
 His iv'ry troops; like pygmy chiefs they stand,  
 They seem to breathe, and own the workman's hand. 40

Two equal bands engage the wond'ring fight,  
 Twice eight are cloath'd in black, twice eight in white.

But not to all one name or form is giv'n,

Their office diff'rent, and their pow'er unev'n.

Two Kings with crowns above the rest are seen, 45  
 To each for arms prepar'd his warrior Queen.

With arrows some, and some on horseback dare

The combat; some on foot expect the war:

And many an Indian Elephant appears,

Each on his back a frowning castle bears. 50

At once they place the combatants aright,

And either host is marshall'd for the fight.

Where the last rank confines the chequer'd board,

On the fourth square abides the battle's Lord.

His royal Peer upon the farther side 55

Securely fronts the foe; six squares divide

Their

Their distant stations: the white King demands  
A fable feat, on white the fable stands.

Close beside either King, his guardian Queen,  
Each on the color of herself, is seen: 60

One guards the left, and one defends the right,  
The black on black abides, the white on white.

To these two Archers cloath'd in white succeed,  
Two more in fable to the plain proceed:

The foremost honors of the field they claim, 65

And *Friends to Mars* in Greek their honor'd name;

By these at once inclos'd on either side,

Securely stand the Monarch and his Bride.

Next these, two Knights on horseback join the band,

In golden vests on either side they stand,

Plumes on their head, and lances in their hand. } 70

To flank both armies to the Tow'rs belong,

Each by an Elephant is born along.

Eight Pawns are rang'd along the second line,

And form the battle's front; on foot they join, 75

\* *Two Archers*—What particular reason induced Vida to give the name of Archers to these Pieces, I know not. It is said, that the original Piece was an Elephant. The English call it a Bishop, and the French *un Fou*.

The first, the boldest, in the dangerous fray,  
 And part the King, and part the Queen obey.  
 Such were the stations, which both armies held,  
 While gleam'd their different hues across the field.  
 As if the Gauls should leave fair Europe's coast, 80  
 And lead their regiments, white with Alpine frost,  
 'Gainst Afric's sun-burnt troops, the dusky Moor,  
 Or Memnon's fable sons, on Ethiopia's shore.

Then thus the hoary Father of the main ;  
 These are the combatants, and this the plain. 85  
 Attend, while yet the laws of war are taught,  
 Not without laws these mimic fields are fought.  
 Each King whome'er he wills to battle sends ;  
 By turns this right they claim ; the white defends,  
 Whene'er a fable chief has aim'd a blow, 90  
 Nor more than one at once attack the foe.  
 All to a man unite in one design,  
 The hostile King amid them to confine ;  
 For should no feat remain from danger free  
 Thus ends the war, and this the victory. 95  
 Meanwhile not less the work of death proceeds,  
 Where'er the King commands, the battle bleeds.

The checquer'd plain a lessning number bears,  
And thin'd with frequent death each host appears.  
By turns they kill, they die; no other way 100  
To find the fenceless King an easy prey.  
Whatever chief has laid his foe in dust,  
Must seize with dauntless step the vacant post:  
There wait the next attack; and there maintain  
His well earn'd conquest from the vengeful train; 105  
Then seek for shelter 'mid his joyful friends,  
If safety calls, and good success attends.  
Of all the warring host, so hard their fate,  
The Pawns, when once advanc'd, can ne'er retreat.  
Not by one rule does each his armor wield, 110  
And all in different paces walk the field.  
Direct, in front the steady Pawns come on,  
They pass at single step one square alone:  
Yet when at first they move against the foe,  
To pass two squares at once the laws allow. 115  
When hand to hand some fatal blow they strike,  
The weapon enters from an aim oblique:  
Nor death nor wounds when front to front they fear,  
The side alone unarm'd receives the spear.

Not thus the Indian monsters move along, 120  
 When girt with tow'rs, they join the battle's throng:  
 Onward they march in front, retreat behind,  
 The right, the left they traverse unconfin'd;  
 O'er all the vacant field secure they go,  
 Yet still they front the table's outmost row; 125  
 For ne'er with pace oblique they scour the plain,  
 Such pow'r the Bowmen only can maintain:  
 These above all the rest by Mars belov'd,  
 Across the board with sidelong steps are mov'd:  
 Skill'd in the twanging bow they join the fight, 130  
 Nor this can move from black, nor that from white;  
 What tho' he pass the field with single bound,  
 Ne'er from one color shall the chief be found.  
 Scarce by his Knight the fiery steed repress,  
 Bounds from the earth and high o'erleaps the rest: 135  
 The laws of war prescribe his utmost flight,  
 To pass two squares and on the third alight.  
 His wayward course no even path confines,  
 Where'er he moves, he moves in curving lines;  
 For if a fable post the chief contain, 140  
 A white he seeks, whene'er he moves again;



Oft as with dire intent his feat he leaves,  
So oft a square of different hue receives.

Wherever danger calls, the raging Queen,  
The battle's main support at once is seen. 145  
Now like a Castle o'er the field she hies,  
And now an Archer thro' the battle flies:  
But still an even line confines her force,  
The Horseman only wheels a circling course.  
No bounds thro' all th' affrighted host she knows, 150  
Far as the table's length at once she goes,  
When free and vacant lies her destin'd way,  
And none of either host her passage stay;  
For not the Queen herself o'erleaps the croud,  
The Knight alone such licence is allow'd. 155  
The cautious King moves on with tardy care,  
His people's trust, the bulwark of the war:  
While yet they fight beneath their Monarch's eye,  
All stand resolv'd to conquer or to die;  
Should fate demand his life, the contest ends, 160  
On him the fortune of the war depends.  
For this they guard their King with anxious zeal,  
And 'midst the thickest of their troops conceal:

For

For him by danger prest, not death they shun,  
 And for their monarch's life resign their own. 165  
 'Tis not for him to join the warring host,  
 Enough in safety to preserve his post ;  
 Yet should some ventrous chief an insult dare,  
 He feels quick vengeance from the monarch's spear.  
 With silent pace he steals his easy way, 170  
 Nor dares at distance from his line to stray.  
 When first he moves two squares he passes o'er,  
 And seeks protection from his friendly Tow'r :  
 This past, by single squares he marches on,  
 Or when he seeks the foe, or tries to shun. 175  
 Such laws of old have o'er this game prevail'd,  
 Now see both eager hosts dispute the field.  
 So spake the Sire ; but Jove, who knew before,  
 When war imbrues the earth with human gore,  
 That e'en Olympus rings with fierce alarms, 180  
 And scarce the Gods themselves refrain from arms,  
 Forbids e'erwhile to join in mortal fray,  
 Hard fate be his, who dares to disobey.  
 Then call'd Apollo, and fair Maia's son  
 In youth and beauty 'bove the rest they shone : 185  
 Not

Not yet to Hermes were his sandals giv'n,  
Not yet the winged Messenger of Heav'n:  
Nor young Apollo thro' the torrid zone,  
Had urg'd the fiery coursers of the sun;  
His polish'd quiver o'er his back was slung, 190  
With decent grace the golden tresses hung.  
These two the mimic war alone to guide,  
And chose, as fancy leads, their fav'rite side,  
The God commands, whose mandate rules the skies,  
Then nam'd a rich reward the victor's prize. 195  
The greater Gods sit down; on either hand  
The lesser Deities promiscuous stand.  
But first one common law shall rule the board,  
That none to either part their aid afford, }  
Whether by secret looks or open word. } 200  
At length with equal chance the lots they throw,  
Who first should march against th' embattled foe:  
The snowy King obtains the wish'd for lot,  
No mean advantage this success he thought.  
Now paus'd Apollo, while with doubtful fear, 205  
He thought which hero should commence the war.

At

At length resolv'd, he bids a Pawn begin,  
 That Pawn, which guards in front the impatient Queen.  
 Two squares he past; his progress to oppose,  
 An equal chief the fable Monarch chose; 210  
 From the same line the daring foe to stay,  
 The adverse Pawn advanc'd, and block'd the way.  
 Thus on the middle of the plain they stood,  
 With thirsty rage each fought the other's blood;  
 But front to front in vain their arts are tried, 215  
 Nor death nor conquest either can betide.  
 Swift from both hosts advance the bold compeers,  
 And ready aid on either hand appears;  
 By turns from either camp the field they gain,  
 And every pass with fixt resolve maintain. 220  
 But none as yet the deathful fray begin;  
 The God of battle walks the ranks between,  
 Nor yet unsheaths his sword; they guard with care  
 Against the foe's attack, nor venture far.  
 This saw with restless rage the fable Pawn, 225  
 The chief who foremost led the battle on:  
 His rapid falchion aim'd a sidelong blow,  
 And laid a white unguarded warrior low.

Swift to the vacant post the victor flies,  
 Nor at his side a vengeful foeman spies,  
 Falling he quits the growing fight and dies. } 230  
 Now from his post removes the sable King,  
 And leaves the center for the safer wing ;  
 Conceal'd he stands behind his guardian Tow'r,  
 In front th' embattled Pawns their King secure. 235  
 Then from the left arose the warrior Horse  
 Of either host ; they wheel their doubtful course  
 This way and that the thickest ranks amid,  
 And death and danger o'er the table spread.  
 Before the rest (since theirs the foremost feat, 240  
 And cruel fate forbids them to retreat)  
 The Pawns, unhappy chiefs, are strew'd around ;  
 The work of death begins ; the rapid hoofs resound.  
 While thus Apollo bends his whole design,  
 To fill with slaughter'd Pawns the foremost line, 245  
 While thus he whirls his Knight o'er all the plain,  
 The fierce destroyer of the jetty train ;  
 More daring schemes in Hermes' thoughts arise,  
 By stealth some vent'rous station to surprize.

His

His left Knight wheels around; nor deigns to stay, 250

Tho' many a Pawn presents a transient prey;

Still towards the King he casts a secret eye,

Resolv'd at once his every art to try.

At length he stops: and now the wish'd for feat

The patient Chief obtains: for instant fate 255

Hangs o'er the King and Tow'r; that Tow'r which far

Shone to the right, and high o'erlook'd the war.

Deep sigh'd Latona's Son, when warn'd to bring

Some ready aid, and save his threat'ned King:

For still the fenceless Elephant he spies 260

Expos'd to death, th' exulting Horseman's prize;

Nor yet from both the rigid laws allow

To ward at once the meditated blow.

But still the King demands the first relief,

Tow'rd the right wing he bears th' affrighted Chief: 265

Uprose the fable Knight; his sword he drew,

And soon the mighty Elephant o'erthrew;

Sad was the loss, for ne'er except the Queen,

A Chief more useful on the plain was seen.

In vain you think, enrag'd Apollo cries, 270

That unreveng'd my fav'rite warrior dies:

Swift at his word the Pawns advance their aid,  
 Surround the Knight, and form a close blockade;  
 Unusual terrors in his breast arise,  
 And round and round a hasty flight he tries : 275  
 In vain ; for here the marshall'd Phalanx stands,  
 And here the vengeful Queen the pass commands :  
 Pierc'd by her lifted sword he yields his breath,  
 Pleas'd at the last to meet an honorable death.  
 With twofold rage the white-clad Heroes burn, 280  
 Their ranks disjoin'd and weak'ned wing they mourn.  
 Thus when a Bull, whom lust and rage invite,  
 Has rent his better horn in single fight ;  
 He seeks the foe, more desp'rate than before,  
 His sides and swelling neck are bathed in gore, } 285  
 The woods around re-echo to the roar.  
 Such hopes of vengeance fir'd the white-clad Host,  
 And such their fury for their Castle lost.  
 Impatient rage Apollo's bosom warms,  
 He stirs his hardy combatants to arms : 290  
 Unfeeling havoc and revenge he breathes,  
 And either Host in wanton slaughter bathes :  
 And

And can he see some hostile Chief o'erthrown,  
 Oft-times to certain death presents his own.  
 Hermes, each stroke, with cautious foresight, spies 295  
 In sure succession from the former rise :  
 And oft to seize the Queen his arts are tried,  
 Intent at once the combat to decide.  
 He bids a guarded Pawn the Heroine meet,  
 And tempts her vengeance with the proffer'd bait; 300  
 For this he heaves a well difsembled groan,  
 And seems to wish the former stroke withdrawn.  
 Now the black Archer tries his wily art,  
 Tow'rd the white Queen he points the fatal dart;  
 Nor yet did Phœbus spy the latent snare, 305  
 But urg'd a Pawn unwilling to the war.  
 Bright Venus saw with grief, th' impending fate,  
 From where to Phœbus opposite she sat :  
 By pity mov'd to avert the sad mischance,  
 She gave th' incautious youth a secret glance. 310  
 Alarm'd, confus'd he cast his eyes around,  
 And soon the Bowman's treacherous ambush found :  
 Back to his former seat the Pawn he brought,  
 The Queen with joy a safer station sought.




But Hermes fills the shore with clam'rous cries, 315  
 And claims with eager voice the Queen his prize:  
 Th' assembled Gods on either hand divide,  
 Some favor one, and some the other side;  
 At length uprose Apollo from his seat,  
 And thus prepares himself to vindicate. 320  
 ' Whence, Son of Maia, this acclaim, and why  
 ' The incautious hand's mistake to rectify  
 ' Should raise this fierce debate, for well you know  
 ' No laws as yet such licence disallow.  
 ' But if, as now, this practice you disclaim, 325  
 ' Attend, from hence a novel law we frame:  
 ' Whatever Chief has mov'd, of either train,  
 ' There in the post he chose, shall fixt remain,  
 ' Abide the chance of war, nor change again.' }  
 So spake the wily Youth; the Gods approve 330  
 The well-tim'd scheme: but all-observing Jove  
 Cast on the Queen of Love an angry look,  
 Nor Maia's Son perceiv'd the God's rebuke.  
 Grief at his bosom sat: in silent woe  
 He mourn'd the wreath, just ravish'd from his brow, 335  
 And

And scarce withheld his hands ; but long demurr'd  
 To mix both Armies and o'erturn the Board.  
 At length in better mind his arts he tries,  
 And aims by lawless stealth to gain the prize :  
 He bids an Archer, issuing to the fight, 340  
 Assume the step and semblance of a Knight ;  
 He leapt on high, and to the snowy Queen  
 Immediate death denounc'd ; nor past unseen  
 By Phœbus' watchful eye the fraudulent stroke  
 He smil'd, and thus the Gods around bespoke ; 345  
 ' Tho' Hermes' skill in theft and fraud we know,  
 ' Not unobserv'd this treach'rous scheme shall go.  
 ' In vain for me, my friend, such snares are laid,  
 ' For now reverse the stroke you lately made.'  
 Loud peals of laughter thro' the assembly ran ; 350  
 While conscious Hermes, moving back again,  
 The treach'rous Bowman towards his former place,  
 Denied the charge of fraud with well-feign'd grace,  
 With twofold care Apollo view'd each blow,  
 Suspects an ambush, and prevents the foe ; 355  
 For oft, while leading on his warrior train,  
 He whirl'd his active fingers o'er the plain ;

And

And then, if ever unobserv'd he might,  
 Would bid two chiefs at once advance to fight.  
 Now the white Archer bends his stubborn bow, 360  
 To stop the sable Horseman's destin'd blow;  
 He guards the Pass the Knight aspir'd to win,  
 And thus from danger free preserves his Queen.  
 Then from the right uprising here and there  
 The snowy Elephant provokes the war. 365  
 The white Knight burns some daring Post to gain,  
 And stops midway between the King and Queen:  
 One fate o'erhung them both; the Queen at least  
 He thought to win; already glow'd his breast  
 With hopes of spoil; an Archer, station'd near, 370  
 Resolv'd not long such rude affront to bear,  
 Tho' death attend the deed: he bends his horn,  
 He seeks the foe, ah! never to return:  
 Deep in the Courser's side the dart was fixt,  
 The steely weapon with his entrails mixt; 375  
 He falls, and rolls along; convuls'd in death  
 He paws the air, then fullen yields his breath.  
 Struck by a neighbouring Pawn the Archer dies,  
 Beneath another Pawn the Victor lies;

The battle burns around: each mighty tow'r 380  
 Sustain'd on high unweildy moves to war:  
 On every side the twanging bow-strings found,  
 And from the plain the horses' hoofs rebound.  
 Both armies meet the foe with equal rage,  
 And croud the field of fight. At once engage 385  
 The daring Chiefs of either martial train,  
 The gathering troops around the fight sustain.  
 All join the war in one promiscuous tide,  
 And chance and valor o'er the field preside.  
 Victorious now along the chequer'd plain 390  
 They drive the foe: now wheeling back again  
 Pursued they fly; by turns they drive, they yield,  
 The tide of conquest fluctuates o'er the field.  
 Thus when the tempests from their prison free,  
 Put forth their rapid wings, and stir the sea: 395  
 Loud roars the flood; with forceful blasts they sweep  
 The vast Atlantic or Ionian deep:  
 The rolling billows gain upon the coast,  
 Then back revolving in the waves are lost.  
 But chief and foremost of the warring train, 400  
 The white-clad Heroine walks th' ensanguin'd plain.

A Bowman first, when rushing on, she flew,  
 And then retiring back a Tow'r o'erthrew :  
 Now to the right and now the left she flies,  
 And thunders o'er the field ; with dread surprize 405  
 She throws her active lance : on either side  
 The sabel Troops with hasty fear divide.   
 Thro' darts, thro' gathering foes she dares to go,  
 And seeks a glorious death ; the outmost row  
 Her high undaunted spirit scarce can stay, 410  
 She breaks th' unwilling ranks and bursts away.  
 At length the Monarch of the jetty Bands  
 His Queen's support in suppliant tone demands.  
 Fir'd with her Sov'reign's cause she quits her Post,  
 Flies to the field, and heads her scatter'd Host. 415  
 Who first, who last, by thee, brave Queen, were slain,  
 What snowy Chieftains press'd the bitter plain.  
 The dying Steeds and Horsemen roll along,  
 And Pawns unnumber'd fall the slain among,  
 From either host ; nor Mars himself could save 420  
 His fav'rite Archers from th' appointed grave.  
 Ah, who such deeds of dolor can rehearse,  
 Or sing the fallen Chiefs in equal verse ?

With

With undistinguish'd aim they kill, they wound,  
 Triumphant slaughter stalks the plain around; 425  
 Both eager hosts, unknowing how to yield,  
 Engage; the falling Ivory strews the field:  
 For still both Queens in female armor drest,  
 Direct their spears against each other's breast,  
 Resolv'd, while life remains, the war to wait, 430  
 And only quit the field, when forc'd by fate.

Meanwhile both Kings their captive foes confin'd,  
 Deep in a neighbouring pris'n, the Camp behind:  
 For fear their Pris'ners should again advance  
 To fight, or those that died, revive perchance. 435  
 But Thracian Mars, young Hermes' firmest friend,  
 Stood unobserv'd and o'er Apollo lean'd:  
 His active eyes on every side he roll'd,  
 To lend the Arcadian Youth what aid he could.  
 Two Chiefs by stealth he took; a fable Knight, 440  
 And him, that arm'd with arrows, march'd to fight,  
 From where they lay o'erturn'd among the slain,  
 And plac'd unseen upon the Board again:  
 They feel their wonted strength from slav'ry freed,  
 Once more they wield their arms, and to th' assault proceed. 445

Thus when some Colchian Dame, as legends tell,  
 Has found a corpse just-earth'd; with horrid spell  
 She calls up Hecate, and her hagg'd clan;  
 Then breathes fresh spirit thro' the lifeless man:  
 He sees, he speaks, he stands erect again, 450  
 And walks once more the social ways of men.

Vulcan alone perceiv'd the treach'rous deed,  
 And lest superior craft should gain the meed,  
 He bids Apollo well review the field,  
 And what his self had seen aloud reveal'd. 455

The Thracian God grew pale with shame oppress'd,  
 And rage deserv'd arose in Phœbus breast.  
 To calm their clam'rous wrath, impartial Jove  
 Rebuk'd his martial Son: then bade remove  
 The pensive heroes from th' unlicens'd place, 460  
 Unwind the Game and every stroke retrace.  
 Both Chiefs, alas! again submit to fate,  
 And either host resum'd its former state.

But now both Kings with tenfold fury burn,  
 Throughout the scatter'd host their Queens in turn 465  
 Range far and wide: their polish'd arms they stain  
 In dust and blood, and ravage all the plain.

At length fatigued, one common line they chose,  
Defend their Monarchs, and themselves oppose.

But see! the Heroine of the snowy Train

470

Leap'd on her sister Foe, nor leap'd in vain :

The female warrior fell: the Victor's pride

Not long the shining spoils in peace enjoy'd,

Herself was slain in turn, an Arrow pierc'd her side.

At once both Armies turn their eager eyes,

475

At once the shrieks of female grief arise ;

And while each breathless corse away they bear,

Tears seem to flow. From all sides far and near

The troops assemble, and their Kings inclose,

Their fears collect, and mutual terror grows.

480

Yet still both hosts a common fate had borne,

The sad mischance of war alike they mourn.

But not as yet the hopes of either train

Inglorious sink ; for still to both remain

Some Chiefs unwounded yet : three Pawns are thine,

485

Apollo, guardian of the fable line :

With these an Archer and a Castle's Pride

Survive the fatal fray ; on Hermes' side



As many more escap'd their fellow's fate,  
 All but the luckless Elephant, who late 490  
 Felt deep a deadly arrow in his breast,  
 While fixt at home he fought inglorious rest.  
 But still the sable King had fav'd a Knight,  
 Which stood the guardian of th' exhausted right;  
 War, cruel war had all the rest destroy'd, 495  
 Thin'd the sad ranks and left the Table void.

All hopes of conquest Hermes now resigns,  
 He mourns his captive Chiefs, and broken Lines:  
 Nor yet retires from fight, with surer care.  
 He moves his hopeless remnant of the war, 500  
 If haply yet the fates their aid might give,  
 And after all his loss the game retrieve;  
 E'en to the last with firm resolve he waits,  
 And every way to mischief meditates.  
 Apollo, now successful, vaunts aloud, 505  
 And stirs th' unequal fight. In fullen mood  
 The chiefs and troops appear; with numbers rare  
 The ranks are peopled, and the camp left bare.  
 Both widow'd Kings their vacant bed bemoan,  
 Both hate alike an undivided Throne: 510

And

And tho' their former love unchang'd abide,  
 Fate urges on to choose another Bride.  
 First the white King invites the female train,  
 Once the firm guardians of their Mistrefs slain,  
 To share the royal Bed ; in mad despair, 515  
 Soon as their slaughter'd Queen forsook the war,  
 They courted danger from the sable foe,  
 Resolv'd by death their steady zeal to shew.  
 But lest a Virgin of less generous fame  
 Her Sov'reign's Love, and bridal Bed should claim, 520  
 What spirit warms each breast the Monarch tries,  
 And bids superior merit bear the prize.  
 He bids them strive to pass the watchful foe,  
 Break thro' the ranks and reach the farthest row :  
 For none must hope to gain their Monarch's Bed, 525  
 Such was the Law to which both Kings agreed,  
 But she, who rushing thro' th' opposing host,  
 Should gain the outmost Line, the royal Post,  
 Ambitious hope inspir'd each female heart,  
 All for the glorious goal with transport start : 530  
 But one with swifter step surpass'd the rest,  
 A nearer prospect warm'd her daring breast ;

On the third line she mov'd with rapid pace  
 Tow'rds the right wing; the rest gave up the chace.  
 Onward she flies to gain the glorious meed, 535  
 That thought gave tenfold vigor to her speed.  
 And now no fence remains to guard the way,  
 Nor did the fable King her passage stay:  
 His self too weary of the life he led,  
 Sought a new Mistress for his vacant Bed. 540  
 By turns the Pawns advance with hafty strides,  
 Each from her rival foe one rank divides;  
 Yet by one step was Maia's Son too late,  
 For now the white-clad Virgin gain'd her feat,  
 The glorious Prize; her foes she past between, 545  
 Then fix'd her footsteps on the farthest Line.  
 At once the snowy Monarch bids prepare  
 The Crown, the Sceptre, and imperial Chair,  
 Which once gave lustre to his former Queen;  
 Then call'd with joy the peerless Heroine 550  
 To love and nuptial rites; with eager cries  
 Her host exults and loud the black defies.  
 Tears flow'd down Hermes' cheek, with deep lament  
 He mourn'd his fate, and well-wrought garments rent.

One step alone remain'd; and that once past, 555  
 The fable Pawn had gain'd her point at last;  
 But the fierce Elephant the rank commands,  
 And threatning death along the table stands:  
 Secure from harm he guards the farthest Line,  
 And check'd the fearful Virgin's last design. 560  
 Proud of the dignity, which late she found,  
 The female Warrior scatter'd death around.  
 With royal love and fortune's gifts elate,  
 She flies like lightning to the field of fate:  
 O'er the black Camp her rapid course she bears, 565  
 E'en heaven alarm'd her desp'rate valor fears.  
 Far from her spear the fable Chieftains shrink,  
 Beneathe the gaping earth they wish to sink:  
 This way and that with trembling haste they throng  
 To let the thundering Heroine pass along. 570  
 Fear joins them all in one collective band,  
 The Ranks they close, and round their Monarch stand.  
 Thus when a Wolf invades the scatter'd kine,  
 All fear his fury, and each other join:  
 The lordly Bull's assistance they require, 575  
 And scorn, by him supported, to retire:

With

With clatt'ring horns defiance loud they bring,  
 The groves and vallies to their bellowings ring.  
 The furious Queen along the Table drives  
 The minish'd host; but chief of all she strives 580  
 To seize the King : around the regal Chair  
 She bears her rude alarms. Now here, now there  
 She guides her steps, and but her eager mind  
 O'er-look'd the advantage which she fought to find,  
 One stroke had fix'd the fable Monarch's fate, 585  
 And Hermes mourn'd the loss he spied too late.  
 For had she seiz'd at once the snowy Square  
 On the fourth Line, that step had clos'd the war,  
 There might she find the Monarch all expos'd,  
 Nor ought the fatal enterprize oppos'd. 590  
 The Son of Maia spied the danger near,  
 And while his bosom heav'd with doubtful fear,  
 He bids Apollo haste, and artful tries  
 (If yet the Foe might overlook the prize)  
 To hurry on the stroke: his long delay 595  
 He blames with feign'd impatience; ' thus to stay'  
 He cries, ' might well awake Apollo's shame;  
 ' Slow as you are, my readier hand you blame;

' Whence

' Whence comes this tiresome tardiness; proceed,  
 ' Perhaps you stay, 'till night the game decide.' 600  
 Stung by reproof, he bids a Pawn advance,  
 O'erlook'd his Queen, and pass'd the proffer'd chance.  
 Young Hermes hails his well-deserv'd success,  
 And moves his Monarch from the dang'rous place;  
 To stop the furious Queen's unsafe career, 605  
 He bids the willing Knight in front appear.  
 Next on the Tow'r he forms a bold design;  
 For still the female Pawn aspires in vain  
 To share her Sov'reign's Bed; with constant care  
 The Tow'r o'erlooks, and guards the destin'd Square. 610  
 Sent from a bow, he felt the fatal steel,  
 And low to earth th' indignant Monster fell.  
 With joy the Pawn th' unguarded Pass espied;  
 And while his utmost skill Apollo tried  
 To inclose the sable King, she reach'd, unseen, 615  
 The end of all her toils, and mov'd a Queen.  
 And now both Kings again for fight prepare,  
 And send their second Brides to rouse the war.  
 But though the scale of conquest still remain  
 In equal poise, and either host maintain 620

Their hopes alike, yet Maia's treach'rous Son

(As tho' the battle were already won)

Affects an artful joy: with well-feign'd voice

He bids his troops in certain hope rejoice:

Then feigns a triumph o'er th' astonish'd foe,

625

And aims by fraud to bring their courage low.

Apollo soon his childish art discern'd,

Rebuk'd the boasting Youth, and thus return'd.

' Not yet, my friend, has fortune fix'd the game,

' And yet your eager shouts success proclaim:

630

' Then when sure conquest shall your efforts crown,

' Insult my fortune and applaud your own.

' This hand, howe'er, shall make your boasting vain.'

He spake, and mov'd his Queen to war again.

At once with desp'rate rage th' assault begins,

635

Alike to conquest either host inclines.

All rush alike on danger: pallid Fear

Stalks o'er the field, and Death brings up the rear.

Each singles out his man, and all oppose

The common Fate: one while they drive their foes

640

Back from the post they seiz'd; content to save

Themselves, their Monarch from the threat'ned grave.

Now

Now gathering strength a bolder war they wage,  
 And storm the hostile camp with dauntless rage :  
 Their transient hopes are rais'd and sink by turns, 645  
 Each anxious breast with fond impatience burns.  
 The female Warrior of the fable train,  
 With unresisted havoc fills the plain ;  
 Nor did the snowy Queen her rage prevent,  
 By secret paths she fought the Monarch's tent : 650  
 In vain the luckless Guards assistance bring,  
 She bursts thro' every Pass ; the fable King  
 Confest his fears ; her trembling Lord to screen  
 In deep distress arose the watchful Queen.  
 Soon as she spied the daring Foe from far 655  
 E'en to the tall Pavilion bear the war,  
 She left in haste the conquest half compleat,  
 And flew like lightning tow'rds her Monarch's seat :  
 Resolv'd to die, if yet to die might give  
 Her King and tott'ring country to survive, 660  
 But now a worse mischance the fates decree,  
 The fatal lot, Apollo, falls to thee.  
 For Hermes whirl'd his Horseman here and there  
 With dubious march, and held the field in fear.



Furious he bounds along; nor stops his pace, 665  
 Till unoppos'd he gain'd the wish'd for place;  
 There the bold Chief triumphant stood between  
 The snowy Monarch and his hapless Queen:  
 O'er both at once his active lance he shook,  
 One, only one could 'scape the fatal stroke. 670  
 With grief Apollo saw the threat'ned blow,  
 He sigh'd, he wept, and tears began to flow:  
 For all his force and all his hopes were lost,  
 And every scheme by ruthless fortune crost.  
 With bursts of triumph Hermes rending heav'n, 675  
 Receives with transport what the Gods had giv'n:  
 Fresh vigor ran o'er all his sinking breast,  
 His eager thought already grasp'd the rest.  
 Beneathe his force the gallant Heroine dies,  
 Her trophied Arms remain the Victor's Prize: 680  
 Struck by the vengeful King the Knight was slain,  
 The loss how great, the recompense how mean!  
 Apollo still the tedious fight maintain'd,  
 And chas'd despair away; two Pawns remain'd;  
 With these, the God of Battle's first delight, 685  
 An Archer form'd the remnant of the white,  
 With these the snowy King renews the fight.

More daring still from adverse fate they seem ;  
 With trembling zeal their fainting King they hem.  
 All aid, alas ! and all defence, was vain, 690  
 The foe drew near, and swept the vacant plain.  
 On every side the Queen her thunder pours,  
 And round and round the Monarch's post explores.  
 Nor stopt her arm, till now the fatal sword  
 Had vanquish'd all defence, and stript the Board 695  
 Of every snowy Chief: of aid bereft,  
 Alone, unarm'd th' unhappy King was left.  
 Thus when Aurora brings the dawning day,  
 The fading stars retire and melt away :  
 Venus alone emits her silver rays, 700  
 Then sinks at last amid superior blaze.  
 But tho' his desp'rate state no hopes afford,  
 Not yet the snowy Monarch quits the Board :  
 One chance alone remains ; he tries to meet  
 Amidst inclosing foes a last retreat, 705  
 There where no danger should his breast affright,  
 Nor yet a square remain secure for flight :  
 For when from danger free, the Monarch stands,  
 While every seat around the foe commands,

And

And stops his safe retreat ; in vain at last 710  
 Such mighty toils has either host surpass ;  
 For none the Prize of Victory shall bear,  
 Nor either King the Conqueror's laurel wear.  
 Th' unhappy Chief to gain such last retreat ;  
 This way and that directs his doubtful feet : 715  
 Still the black King pursues with cautious step,  
 And leaves one passage for the foe to 'scape.  
 When forc'd at length to reach the outmost Line  
 He spied the flying Chief, he bids his Queen  
 Seize on the second Rank ; for that maintain'd, 720  
 One Line alone for farther flight remain'd.  
 Near, and more near the sable Monarch drew,  
 On the last Rank the flying Chieftain flew ;  
 But still one Line their hostile steps divides  
 One on the last, and one the sixth abides. 725  
 When now no farther flight the board allow'd,  
 And face to face the rival Monarchs stood,  
 At once the Queen assum'd the corner square,  
 And all the Line lay open to her spear.  
 No place for flight remain'd ; her ruthless hand 730  
 (While peals of acclamation shook the strand)

Tore

Tore from the prostrate King his life away,  
And fix'd the fortune of the well-fought day.

His skill superior Hermes vaunts aloud,  
And laughing rude insults the vanquish'd God. 735

Whom thus victorious in the mimic field  
Th' almighty Father call'd, and gave to wield  
The pow'rful Wand, which calls the gentle Ghost  
From Styx' black wave, when all its crimes are lost,  
And purg'd away by fire; which dooms to pains 740

Each guilty soul, and everlasting chains:  
Which now gives sleep to men, and now denies,  
And closes up for aye their dying eyes.  
But soon with unimpacted knowledge tir'd,  
To man this beauteous Game the God transferr'd; 745  
First to th' Italian swains he taught the play,  
The laws and manner of the mimic fray.

For once, as Fame reports, his force compress'd  
The beauteous *Scacchis*, fair above the rest,  
The nymphs of *Serius'* stream; what time she fed 750  
Her milk-white Swans beside the flow'ry mead.

Then

Then gave \* of different hues an ivory host ;  
 (Some small return for Virgin honor lost)  
 A chequer'd Board with Gold and Silver wrought,  
 With these he gave, and next their use he taught. 755  
 And still to latest times the Virgin's ‡ Name  
 Shall live transferr'd to this eternal Game,  
 Which Rome, supreme in Arts, with fostering care  
 Protects and loves ; and distant nations share.  
 These strains to me the nymphs of *Serius* shew'd, 760  
 While erst I sang beside my native flood.

\* *Then gave* — If the Reader be desirous of seeing a more satisfactory account of the Origin of Chess, he may find it in the Encyclopædie, under the article *Echecs* : or in a Pamphlet, entitled, *The History of Chess* ; where he will meet with information, however incoherently thrown together.

‡ *The Virgin's Name* — For the information of the English Reader, the Latin name for Chess is *Scacchia*.



T H E E N D.



