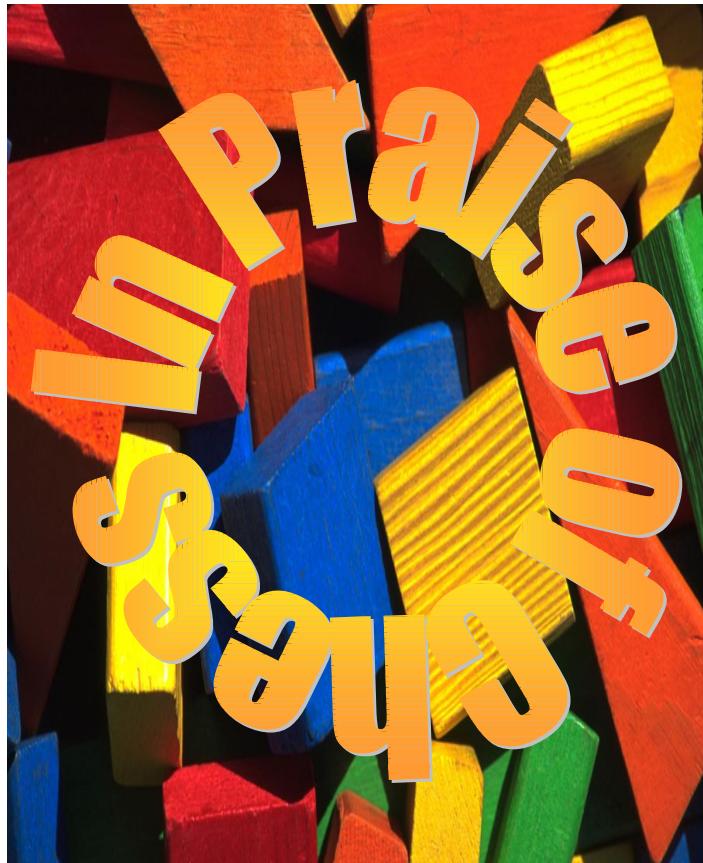


My Poems



Gillian A Moore

In Praise of Chess

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated my fellow chess players everywhere

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In Praise of Chess

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In Praise of Chess

PREFACE

Gillian Moore's beautifully written book of poetry "In Praise of Chess" will delight both chess players and non-chess players alike. Lovers of poetry will find within the book's 10 sections a variety of diverse and appealing topics. All do have some connection with chess, even the delightfully written verses about Gillian's holidays and travels, reflecting upon places visited for her annual tournaments and other chess events. Here her humour and unique style bring such colour and joy to these entertaining adventures that her readers almost feel they are there.

Other sections are more directly dedicated to the deep and varied aspects of the game of chess. It is here that Gillian's deeply philosophical nature and outlook on life become more apparent, as she often compares the game of chess with the game of life. Her observations on both are profound, giving readers much to think about. All her writing reflects her philosophical outlook on all life's many experiences. These she expresses with a simplicity that is only possible from a deep understanding of a lifetime of study of yoga and deep daily meditation.

Gillian's poems along with her humour often have a hidden depth, cleverly crafted and skilfully executed. She is as much an outstanding and skilful poet as she is an outstanding chess player.

Lesley Maybee

In Praise of Chess

INTRODUCTION

For most of us, cessation of some our usual activities has been forced upon us, due to the Corona virus pandemic these last two years.

Since March 2020, my Southampton chess club has been closed, with all its matches and those in the local league. In addition, my usual holidays with the British Chess Championships and the Devon County (Paignton) Chess Congress were off. Furthermore, until July this year we did not even have total freedom to visit family members and friends.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Well, into my time gaps I created new meaningful activities at home, since it was those outside of it that were impaired or not possible. So, I have been playing chess by phone and online. Furthermore I wrote this book. Luckily, the muse has been with me non-stop, creating all but four of the poems this year.

The rhythm of my verses is in various forms of traditional meter, and almost all of them are rhyming too. My poems about The Knight and, most fittingly, Stratford upon Avon, are in the format of a Shakespearean sonnet.

Such as I am and such as it is, my aim is to give what I have to give by this latest book, nothing more, nothing less. My hope is that all who read my words are enjoying life as much as you can.

In Praise of Chess

My previous books are also available for free download on
the Hampshire Chess Association website
<https://www.hampshirechess.co.uk/>

- * My Chess Career and Holidays
- * My Chess Revealed – A Book of Selected Games

With best wishes to my readers,

Gillian Moore

October 2021

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to my long-time special friend and fellow traveller on the spiritual path of Self-realization, Lesley Maybee, for her kind words and praises from the heart in her Preface.

To Jerry Dowlen, my fellow chess player, author and new friend, I am indebted for his labours in proof-reading the whole book, and for his many suggestions, great appreciation and encouragement throughout.

In Praise of Chess

PART 1

HARD TIMES 2020/21

In Praise of Chess

FREEDOM FOR ALL

Freedom, we want freedom,
It is what we all do seek.
The chessmen too would tell us this,
If only they could speak.

We feel for them when they're distressed,
When pinned or kept in thrall.
For free and easy movement
Is the nature of us all.

This is a truth of recent times
We know only too well,
When the Pandemic came to power
And liberty did quell.

If chessmen they could march with banners,
And en masse could chant,
“We want freedom, we want freedom,
What do we all want?”

In Praise of Chess

SOUTHAMPTON CHESS CLUB

"As proved by evidence, [chess is] more lasting in its being and presence than all books and achievements; the only game that belongs to all people and all ages; of which none knows the divinity that bestowed it on the world, to slay boredom, to sharpen the senses, to exhilarate the spirit."

- Stefan Zweig



Southampton Chess Club it was formed
In eighteen eighty three,
And ever since has been the hub
Of much activity.

I joined this venerable club
After the last century year.¹
Alas, its doors are shut now and
No player ventures near.²

¹ After long breaks from competitive chess, I joined Southampton club in 2001.

² The club has been closed since March 2020, due to the pandemic.

In Praise of Chess

But chess is everliving and
It cannot fade away.
Its format changed a year ago,
Yet it is here to stay.

How long it is since I stood inside
The chess club I hold dear,
Where every week on a Tuesday night
I was present, always there.

I gain some comfort in familiar
Activities and places,
And the people that I know, with their
Good cheer-affecting faces.

I do not know when once again
I'll enter through the door,
For matches at my club to play
In-person chess once more.

In Praise of Chess

HAMPSHIRE CHESS

Where there is need, there often comes supply.
So Providence it cast a kindly eye
On all the clubs in Hampshire and their leagues.
Thus an association was convened³
To foster and support the game of chess
With all its pleasure, goodness and finesse.

We put on matches in the Chiltern League,
With Hampshire versus other counties there.
And once a year we held our big event:
The Hampshire Congress with its tournaments,
Open to all players everywhere,
Of every level and experience.

In recent years, a comfortable hotel⁴
In Fareham, it has served the congress well -
Accommodation, restaurant and bar,
The spacious playing hall and other rooms
Spread all over the whole of the first floor.
Now this is just a pleasant memory.

3 Hampshire Chess Association

4 The Lysses House Hotel

In Praise of Chess



Gillian Moore officiating at the Hampshire Congress 2013, with Roger Marsh our grading officer.

And for the service rather than esteem,
I am an officer within the team
Of the committee of the HCA.
I look after the money and accounts.
I oversee the entries to our Congress,
And deal with any queries that arise.

Alas, as the pandemic still exists,
And life is not quite back to normal yet,
As masks and social distancing persists,
We are in limbo. For we do not know
When we will play in-person chess again.
For now, we still must play the waiting game!⁵

⁵ Due to the pandemic, alas, our annual Hampshire Chess Congress has not been held since November 2019.

In Praise of Chess

REMEMBERING THE HAMPSHIRE CONGRESS

The tournaments⁶ engross us and
The tournaments are fun,
As every round results reveal
Who's lost and drawn and won.

Our great pursuit nicely allows
A social side, what's more.
Not during play but afterwards
Of course, or else before.

It's good to see the faces of
The players known to us,
And catch up with the news and what
Is pleasing to discuss.

'Post mortems' after every round
Dissecting games we played,
We like to note which moves were wrong
And others rightly made.

And when the congress is all done
And victories are known,
A prizes presentation comes
Before we all go home.

⁶ The HCA congresses consisted of the Open, the Major and the Minor tournaments. I usually completed in the Major, although I have once or twice braved the Open among the toughest opponents!

In Praise of Chess

We gather for official pomp
With camera and its flash -
The Mayor presents the trophies and
The envelopes of cash.⁷

And whether disappointed or
We're pleased that we did well,
We know that chess results are but
A merry carousell!

⁷ In the Hampshire Chess Congress we always invited the local Mayor to do the honours of presenting the winners with their prizes.

In Praise of Chess

THE EAST DEVON WEEKEND CONGRESS

EXETER MARCH 2020⁸

The guest house where I stayed provided
 Just a room for me,
So eating out for all my meals
 Was a necessity.
Breakfasting at Wetherspoon,
 Each morning it was good
To start the day before the play
 Replete with vegan food.
 This is my diet now, for I
 Have chosen thus to live,
And do my bit to help myself
 And animals to thrive.

The congress was towards the end
 Of our in-person chess:
The national lockdown came anon
 And put us all to test.
Between the rounds it was a pleasure
 Friends of mine to meet,
 But due to the Corona virus
 Not with hugs could greet.
And shaking hands with the opponents
 It was banned. Instead,
 A smile, perhaps a thumbs up sign
 Or nodding of the head.

8 My last face to face tournament.

In Praise of Chess

Facial tissues and waste bins
There was display of these,
In order to enhance the hygiene
When we cough or sneeze.
Regarding frequent hand washes,
In wash rooms there was fuss
With notices of how to wash
For twenty seconds plus!
Now we all know the story how
So many lives were lost,
And change affected all and came at
Not a little cost.

But as I write⁹, it's looking bright
With no more 'house arrest'.
I'm getting out and about again
And, hoping for the best,
I look for further stages of
The world's normality.
Meanwhile, I embrace each day.
And my philosophy
Is working at my game of life,
In order not to lose,
Succeeding or else learning by
Each thought and act I choose¹⁰.

⁹ In July 2021

¹⁰ "I never lose; I succeed and I learn"
~ Nelson Mandela

In Praise of Chess

CHESS BY INTERNET AND PHONE

The matches that I now enjoy
Take place by Internet -
It's not the same as live opponents
Sitting opposite.

Yet it is good and keeps me going
At the game I love,
As my computer mouse does help
To execute each move.

But what do players do who have
No means to go online?
Or anyone, indeed, how do
They occupy their time?

A friend of mine without the web -
He also lives alone -
Is very glad of chess with me
Over the telephone!

This national drama will resolve
In time, for you and me,
By careful strategy, and faith
And hope and charity!

In Praise of Chess

CHALLENGING TIMES

What strange times we've been living in of late,
A challenging and most abnormal state.
It's like a cat lady without a cat¹¹,
Or a royal lady with no fancy hat,

As a migratory swift with injured wing,
Faithfully, with hearts that still could sing,
In longing did we chant by heaven's door,
"We want our chess back as it was before!"

The much loved board with squares of sixty four,
In solitude before us as we pore,
Some real opponents solid to the sight
Would help a lot to put our living right.

The signs are there now that the Powers That Be
Have taken pity on our long-held plea¹².
Come chorus, now let's chant by heaven's door,
"We thank you, we have much to thank you for!"

11 I have loved cats all my life, but alas do not have a cat!

12 As at August 2021, some clubs are reopening, and a congress or two is planned once again.

In Praise of Chess

GOOD CHANCES OF TOUGH CHALLENGES

I've viewed the lockdowns as a guest to greet;
It's po-faced challenges with smiles to meet.
For though with forced restrictions, it is true
I've not been at a loss for things to do.

Having to spend much time at home alone,
My 'visits' were over the telephone.
My chess club friend and I also did play
Scores of social distanced games this way.¹³

We've made up for in-person matches lost
And kept ourselves amused without a cost,
For I've a useful deal with my BT,
And phone calls are no extra charge to me!

And when for daily exercise I've walked,
The passers by, unusually, they talked
At least to say a 'morning' in all weather,
For feeling we are in this state together.

And in these strange times, lots of poetry
Was minted from my mind for you and me.
And that's another thing that's sprung up new,
Which shows what challenges of change can do.

13 And as at August 2021 we are still playing several times a week over the phone, since the club has not reopened yet.

In Praise of Chess

A DAY TRIP TO WINCHESTER

It's getting better now that we
May visit whom we please,
And be with family and friends
With naturalness and ease.

My Winchester, I've missed you
When our lives were not so free,
But I'm coming back to visit
Now there's more normality.

The statue of King Alfred
In the High Street sets the scene,
Reminder that the city
England's capital has been.

I've walked around the science museum
On a chess weekend.¹⁴
It was most fascinating, and
To go back I intend.

Now several fine museums here
I'm eager to explore,
And the long walk by the river
I will so enjoy once more.

14 The Winchester Congress weekend 2013 or 2014

In Praise of Chess

My friend it is her birthday soon,¹⁵
And we'll celebrate our way:
To catch up with our latest news
And have a happy day.

We've been on many outings.
Now at Winchester, we'll share
Fine dining at the Japanese,
With scrumptious vegan fare¹⁶.

15 On 21st August 2021

16 The Wagamama Japanese restaurant caters very well for vegans,
offering lots of appealing choices.

In Praise of Chess

CASTLE CHESS CONGRESS¹⁷

FAREHAM.

Return to over the board games

The congresses over the board
Are something I have missed,
And entering this one at Fareham
I could not resist.

Several times before, I've stayed
At the Lysses House Hotel,
Competing in the Castle Chess
At this hotel as well.

I'm coming back, and I am like
A puppy with two tails,
Which wags each time that I recall
The pleasure it entails.

For I am very overdue
For formal rated play,
But with a congress that is planned,
I'm heading soon that way.

17 The weekend 1st to 3rd October 2021

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My job and friend in Fareham

I'm coming back to Fareham,
Where so many times I've been.
I worked there long ago, before
Retirement changed my scene.

An extra boon is my good friend
Who lives in Fareham town.
And she is looking forward, now
She's heard I'll be around.

Shirley she does not play chess,
This Fareham friend of mine,
But we enjoy a good rapport
And get along just fine.

We'll go out for an evening meal
At a favourite venue,
We'll have good food with fun and banter
Like we always do.

Back at the congress, I'll make sure
My schedule works out right:
I'll take a bye on the round four,
So I'll be free that night.

In Praise of Chess

Return to over the board play

Now sat across my table
A real person there will be,
And every round results upon
The player chart we'll see.

I'm coming back, I'm coming back
To play over the board,
And everyone will be aware
How Gillian has scored.

But when we play at chess, results
They are not everything.
The satisfaction of the play
It is a vital thing.

So when the tournament is through,¹⁸
I can say, hopefully,
I have enjoyed the whole event
And done quite well for me.

18 I'm competing in the Major tournament

In Praise of Chess

PART 2

THE PIECES AND PAWNS

In Praise of Chess

THE KING



The humble king upon the board stands tall,
As he's the most important piece of all!
His modest action his true value hides,
For when he's lost the game is lost besides.

So in the vastness of a mental screen,
With vistas of position changes seen,
We sit for silent hours and, and watching, strive
Above all else, to keep the king alive.

For with the king in his impending doom,
The losing player feels the monarch's gloom,
Though sportsmanlike we try to stifle pain,
And with a cheerful visage to remain.

Though some there are, for reasons understood
Of human nature, still do not feel good
For hours or days beyond the sad lost game.
Emotions thus have ever been the same!

For if the king lives long and we pursue
The game until a victory will ensue,
We feel all praises for the sport that brings
A pleasure richness more than wealth of kings!

In Praise of Chess

THE QUEEN



The powerful queen is consort to the king,
And all she does is love and care for him.
And he depends upon his queen to be
The power behind the throne to great degree.

For he is private with high purpose filled.
So others work around him, and they shield
His Majesty. The bishops, rooks and knights
Are high deserving staff with royal rights.

And these fine chessmen all protect their queen,
With caring that's unspoken but is seen.
As bodyguards they clearly have their say
In shielding her from turmoil and harm's way.

And with the queen, devotedly they give
Their service, knowing that they cannot live
Without their king. For with his sad demise,
It would be death for all of them, likewise!

In Praise of Chess

THE KNIGHT



The knight now, he is different from the rest,
Original, eccentric we could say.
For in the mighty battle known as chess,
He serves the cause in his peculiar way.
Where other chessmen find their passage barred,
The knight jumps over everything outright.
And to his target vision is not marred.
How schemes of his can hide in plainest sight!
With tricky tactics he's adept, we know;
Mere sight of him is somewhat worrying.
Most shocking when he charges near the foe,
And takes them prisoner for his treasured king.

Of all the chessmen, especially the knight
Shows us the way to follow our own light.

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THE BISHOP AND THE KNIGHT



The bishop and the knight, how can it be
That they are said to have equality,
When their respective strengths and skills and flaws
Bear no resemblance to each other at all?

The bishop with his mitre, he is lord
Of the diagonals across the board.
One colour only, yet his scope is vast
To travel where he's needed far and fast!

The knight now with his finely chiselled face,
Moves nearby only but with agile grace.
What unique style he has to jump and spring
With deft delight and over anything!

Of course, as with all chessmen, both are fine
At thrills, perhaps with tingles up the spine,
As with their skilful tactics both equate
With shocking threats of forks and checks and mate.

We say the bishop and the knight are joint
In having value equal to three points.
Yet what a paradox to thus declare
Two chessmen who are so beyond compare!

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THE ROOK



The rook now, he's a piece of mystery
With double purpose and identity.
Like one who shifts his shape in myth or dreams,
He's magic and not always what he seems!

We look at him sometimes and he is stone -
A castle that the king can call his home,
A place wherein His Majesty can go
In safety with a lookout for the foe.

Another time we see him, and we know
The rook's alive with plans and schemes to show
His heart and mind, with strength and will to bring
His loyal service to his sovereign king.

Now freely like a chariot he moves
Rolling around the ranks and files, which proves
Deception sometimes of a casual look
At him, the splendid piece we call the rook!¹⁹

19 In chess, rook comes from the Persian word *rukh*, meaning a chariot.

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PAWNS WITH A PURPOSE



The chessmen, as we know, comprise a splendid team
Whose divers members differ in the player's esteem.

Yet every piece, no matter what the rank or role,
Partakes of the potential of the player's whole.

For, on the board there is a place and time for all --
Each piece has its allotted space and interval.

And every piece is gifted with its strengths to share,
Yet none has access all the time to everywhere.

True, merest pawns may not assume immediate rights
And attributes of queens and bishops, rooks and knights.

Instead, those plodding pilgrims, patient questing souls,
Must tread the files as paths towards their glorious goals.

Remember, pawns are valued least, yet their devotion
Can crown their service with success of pawn promotion.

When time is ripe and higher purpose supervenes,
Those pawns might stride as powerful and free as queens!

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THE ISOLANI



The isolani is a pawn
Who lives upon his own,
And yet with proper care and choice
He need not be alone.

Although he has no pawn support
On an adjacent file,
With nearby chessmen for his friends
He can afford to smile.

His nature is the same as other
Pawns that seek high goals,
Moving ahead in twos to find
And realise their souls.

The nature of a pawn is such,
Though this might not be seen,
To vanquish every obstacle
And one day be a queen!

In Praise of Chess

TEAM COOPERATION

When pieces work in harmony
With others and their plights,
It augurs well for good results
And the whole game delights.

But when in selfish thought too much
 The pieces plain forget
The purpose of the greater good,
 They come to feel regret.

A piece might try a project, that
 It's very keen to do,
But is the timing right – and others
 Will they like it too?

Alas a punishment is due
 With every sort of crime.
This makes the pieces keen to learn
 And mend their ways in time.

In Praise of Chess

Just like we humans with mistakes
We tend to ruminate,
And if it's serious, hopefully
We rehabilitate!

For they are games of give and take,
Both chess and human lives,
And everyone is happy when
Cooperation thrives!

In Praise of Chess

PART 3

THE GAME

In Praise of Chess

THE GAMBIT

"I have come to the personal conclusion that while all artists are not chess players, all chess players are artists."

– Marcel Duchamp

Oh what is it about a gambit
That attracts me so?
At first I found the explanation
Difficult to know.

I see that in the opening stage
I like a lively game,
Not holding back my restless pieces
Feeling cramped and lame.

And so to gain initiative
A pawn or so I spend.
The other player thus attacked,
Is needing to defend.

And sometimes it is hard for him
To find the best replies,
And therein the psychology
Of chess we see arise.

In Praise of Chess

For we all want some free and easy
Good development,
And when a compromise arises
We don't feel content.

Material worth is not the only
Sort of wealth, I say,
But richness of a good position
And the pieces' play.

And 'oft the one who snatched the pawn
Might need to give it back,
So that the gambit player suffered
Just a short-term lack.

When Black adopts the Dutch Defence,
My feeling is 'hurray',
For then my favourite Staunton Gambit
Comes into the play.

And when he takes my gambit pawn,
That suits my purpose fine,
As I pursue with my move four
The Tartakower line.

In Praise of Chess

Just try it out! Without a doubt
This fancy foxy move
Is fun to play, and in due course
Its worthiness can prove.²⁰

20 The Staunton Gambit, Tartakower Line: 1. d4 f5, 2. e4 fxe4, 3. Nc3 Nf6, 4. g4! The threat is for White to push the defending knight away with 5. g5, or else Black allows a nasty hole at his g6 if he responds with 4 ...h6. White then follows up with 5. f3, opening up the line from d3 to the g6-square.

In Praise of Chess

TIME CONTROLS

Our chess ability sometimes
Is not the stumbling block,
But rather we are beaten by
The ever-present clock.

In correspondence chess, perhaps,
We satisfy our need
For deep analysis, yet might
Feel guilty for the greed.

For when such time is spent, there comes
Lament, as it is true
With everything that life presents
There's usually much to do!

The opposite is rapidplay,
Or lightning chess with a scurry
To move and press the clock, when nerves
Might jar with too much hurry.

At end of season at my club
We hold this tournament²¹,
Which is not serious or graded,
Just a fun event.

21 Southampton chess club Lightning Tournament

In Praise of Chess

The buzzer dictates when to move,
With silliness the cost,
With sundry pieces insecure
And queens and kings are lost.

And after all the lightning strikes,
And stress – we need be thrifty -
The winner he is clapped, perhaps
Receiving three pounds fifty!

In Praise of Chess

THE ONE TRUE OPPONENT

"I never tried to compete with others, I always competed with myself."

- Former world champion Vladimir Kramnik

Our chess games by the hundred we might play,
In various competitions countless days,

And yet no matter who sits opposite,
The opposition is the same, I say!

My holidays with tournaments are fun,
And games and trophies sometimes I have won
All over England, Wales and Scotland too.
So how can all these players yet be one?

A new opponent comes with each fresh game,
And varies in appearance and in name,
And young, mature or getting on in years.
So what's the meaning saying they're the same?

Some players casually dress with ruffled hair,
Others are tidy, smart and debonair,

Some thin, some stout, some sitting straight or bent,
Some faces pink or bronzed and others fair.

Now, will I clearly see or else be blind,
And wisely use my time or get behind?

Will moves I make be skilful or inept?
The Challenger is ever thus My Mind!

In Praise of Chess

EMOTIONS

1. Shock



I turned the tables on the foe
One day to my delight²².
Etched in my memory this game,
And the opponent's plight.

His grading it was higher
And his chances they looked good.
He'd won material too, but I
Remained in tranquil mood.

Anon, when it was clear that prospects
Turned around to me,
The poor man was astounded and
Was shaking visibly.

This player shortly he composed
Himself as best one can,
And his behaviour towards me
Was as a gentleman.

22 15th December 2015 in the Southampton League, playing for Southampton B away to Fareham A

In Praise of Chess

EMOTIONS

2. Depression



Another clear example of
Emotions being expressed,
Was after I had beaten a man
Who then became depressed²³.

It was his third loss in a row,
And this was hard, I'm sure,
And the thought of losing yet again
Was too much to endure.

When looking down the player chart
The next day in the morn,
I saw that, sadly, this poor player
He had been withdrawn.

What happened to him I can't say,
But wish him all the best,
And hope he strengthened for the future
By his three-loss test!

23 5th August 2007 in the British Seniors Championship at Great Yarmouth.

In Praise of Chess

EMOTIONS

3. Annoyance



Another time I played a match²⁴,
In which my castled king
Was vulnerable to fierce attacks
The opponent there might bring.

He set his ammunition well
Aimed at the castle wall,
Intending to blow it to pieces,
Castle, king and all.

I knew the sinister intent,
And ah, I was prepared!
So when I overthrew the plot²⁵,
The other player declared,

In his annoyance, a choice word
That I will not repeat!
For with one oversight of his,
My win was rather neat.

24 1st March 2014 in the Chiltern League, playing for Hampshire away to Berkshire at Crowthorne.

25 I call this game, “The Gunpowder Plot”.

In Praise of Chess

DYNAMIC WILL POWER

Dynamic will power is a force
With a promise we can trust,
When having faith in a great goal:
“I can, I will, I must”!

With longed-for wins and victories
In our hearts and minds instilled,
No forces of obstruction then
Can bend our iron will.

Let's sally forth with all our worth,
With the positive power of “yes”,
And destiny in due course shall
Our great endeavours bless.

Not every game will be a win,
Of course that cannot be;
But with our adamantine will,
The trend we'll upward see!

In Praise of Chess

LONGING

Longing has its place in life
To guide us to our goal,
Be it perfection in our work
Or matters of the soul.

And as to chess, we long to conquer
Trials from game to game.
To do our best and prove ourselves
As winners is the aim.

To be successful there's no time
For wishy-washy play.
For longing comes before fulfilment
All along the way.

That concentration, too, it must
Be steady, there's no doubt,
With reason and our feeling going
Hand in hand throughout.

Then we'll be glad and no more sad
Of aims that went awry,
When longing and our skills at peak
Performances we try.

In Praise of Chess

PASSION

A person without passion where
 The zest for life has fled,
That person is just half alive;
 The other half is dead.

Passions there are many, and
Some harmless, some are not.
The harmless ones we may pursue
 And worry not a jot.

With me I also love to write.
 Uplifted by the muse,
I find when inspiration comes,
 I never can refuse!

There are some passions with no harm
 So long as we're aware
That other things in life also
 Deserve our love and care.

Our chess it is a good passion,
 Certainly not bad,
So long as we don't let it make us
 Dour, depressed or mad.

In Praise of Chess

A few, well-known – let's name them not -
Succumbed to misery,
Enslaved by chess turned into tyrant
Lacking clemency!

In Praise of Chess

BALANCED LIVING

Other aspects of our lives, no doubt,
Deserve our rapt attention and our time:
Relationships with family and friends,
And with our fellow beings as a whole.

And as to health, in earnest we must tend
To our well-being, body, mind and soul.
Also the countless tasks inside the home
Are helpless of themselves without our aid.

Ah yes, the work in life we undertake,
Whether paid or as a volunteer,
Deserves our due attention not to shirk
From this necessity and benefit.

So how with all these facets of our lives
Can Chess survive and thrive and be improved?
I do suggest that balance is a key
To make all things work well in harmony!

In Praise of Chess

HIDE AND SEEK

Imagination brings with it
A daring turn of mind,
And there's no telling what fantastic
Moves by it you'll find.

So why not put the 'what if' option
Squarely to the test?
For we all know that obvious moves
Are not always the best.

At first the brilliant moves are veiled
From the enquiring mind,
In this our intellectual sport
Of hide and seek, and find.

You'll be surprised what meets the eyes
When peering past the veil
Of hidden possibilities
Awaiting to prevail.

If you think 'what if this' and study
With a piercing look,
Amazing admirable moves
Become an open book.

In Praise of Chess

IMAGINATION

"When you see a good move, look for a better one."

– Emanuel Lasker

Imagination allows we players to see
The dramas of a new reality.
With this unfailing ‘crystal ball’ of chess
We view some future scenes at our behest.

Imagination helps the strategy
Of knowing where the pieces they should be,
And visualising new positions, then
We think about manoeuvring the men.

If I should move my bishop there to pin
His knight against his vulnerable king,
That would be good, beginning to unfold
Good fortunes that my clear foresight foretold.

So there’s a brilliant square to lodge my knight,
But will the moves to get him there be right?
If not, I’ll peer again with my mind’s eye
To analyse another plan to try.

In Praise of Chess

Or there's a semi-open file, anon
To place my rook to dominate thereon.
I'd love to move him there, that would be great,
So should I seize the chance before too late?

But if immediate threat to me is dire,
I must prevent calamity and ire
Of having made my good moves all too fast.
So patience first, for victory at last.

In Praise of Chess

ENDLESSNESS

I love endlessness, the vast
Expanse of sky above,
And inwardly unfolding my
Ability to love.

Endless are the charms of life
We venture to explore,
And finding some we are inspired
To seek and find some more.

Endless are the chess positions
That we ever reach.
Endless is the knowledge that
The game can ever teach.

Endless the mistakes, as well as
Moves of which we're glad.
Endless are the ups and downs
Of chess we've ever had.

Endless is the challenge to
Our brain's capacity,
And to this endless longing, seems
To be no remedy.

In Praise of Chess

But in this quest, let's do our best,
And the remedy comes clear:
The joy of chess, like love, is what
Forever we hold dear.

We do love chess for its own sake,
For giving us so much,
And there's no need to reach beyond
This endlessness as such.

In Praise of Chess

MYSTERIES

Our chess is not only a game,
 But an enigma too
That causes questioners to seek
 And find why this is true.

Those limitless positions strange
 And beautiful galore
Do puzzle us with questions, still
 Unanswered evermore.

Our scientists of far-flung space,
 Where galaxies enthrall,
Discuss the theories of the start
 And meaning of it all.

And divers of the ocean deeps
 Where stunning scenes abound
Have not yet reached the total spaces
 Of the bottom ground.

And likewise with the grandmasters,
 In deepest thoughtfulness,
They never have uncovered all
 The mysteries of chess!

In Praise of Chess

HOW TO PROGRESS

"You may learn much more from a game you lose than from a game you win. You will have to lose hundreds of games before becoming a good player."

- José Raúl Capablanca

If you do love the game and have
A longing to excel,
Then practice, study, perseverance:
These things augur well.

When you have lost a game,
Then analyse and introspect,
To ascertain exactly what
Is needed to correct.

Various are the ways to aid
Attainment to evolve,
Like books to play through master games
And puzzles to be solved.

Or joining to play matches
In a club or tournament.
Or even with a chess computer,
Money is well spent.

In Praise of Chess

Another way improving players
Sometimes do approach,
Is online services of tutoring,
Or else a coach.

With all this help available,
And time enough what's more,
Players of chess can watch and wait
To see their ratings soar!

In Praise of Chess

A DEGREE OF MASTERY



Life is a university
Of how to live, I say.
So shall we learn our lessons well,
Or fritter time away?

Now some there are who introspect
And realise many a thing,
But others understand less well
What their own actions bring.

When losing just one game, far better
Not to moan or mope,
But think of better things and keep
Alive our innate hope.

For it's our overall results
Of various recent chess
That gives a truer picture of
Our level of prowess.

In Praise of Chess

If disappointed still with losses,
There's no need to weep,
But with a positive resolve
Our confidence to keep.

By analysing what and why
Our hapless moves were wrong,
We learn from our mistakes, and then
Can keep on keeping on.

To study well and play a lot
Does help us to improve
And gather up more expertise
Of finding the strong move.

Let's do our best and leave the rest
To flourish, and anon
With passion for our great pursuit,
Let learning carry on!

For, as in life, it matters not
So much the happenings,
But what in time by all of it
The goodness that it brings.

By understanding chess this way,
Think 'misery be gone!'
Just do our best until the day
Our skill is very strong.

In Praise of Chess

CHESS COMPUTERS

“Chess is thirty to forty percent psychology. You don’t have this when you play a computer. I can’t confuse it.”

– Judit Polgar

As they are now

The chess computer is a wonderful thing,
And lots of pleasure and help to us can bring.

At home it is an ever-ready way
To get some practice in with extra play.
For challenging and trying out a line,
The artificial brain is superfine.

But unlike us, it cannot tiredness know,
Or faults and foibles in its playing show.

It is not prone to fumble or forget,
And pleasure, pride, annoyance and regret
Is unknown to an electronic mind,
Despite the genius of superior kind.

And as to playing on the board of wood,
You make the moves for it, just as you would
For a blind player with his ‘feely’ board
And in his mind’s eye the position stored,
As the software crunches numbers for its meal,
And no emotions can it ever feel!

In Praise of Chess

Being fanciful

Perhaps one day a robot we will make
That looks alive and hands with us can shake,
And sit and speak like humans, but instead
A chess engine is hidden in its head.
And on its bosom is a lighted screen,
Where moves and the positions can be seen.

And when a game is finished, it's polite
To shake the hand of the opponent, right?
So do it, turn it off, before you share
The robot's presence with its lifeless stare,
In suspended animation to remain,
Until you reach to turn him on again.

In Praise of Chess

THE GAME OF LIFE

So many parallels exist
I notice and could name,
Within our daily living and
Our super lifelike game.

Analysing what we face,
Deciding what to do,
All this applies to moves of chess,
And daily living too.

Some lives are strewn with rosy paths
And charmed until the end,
Some stricken with the weeds of woes
We never would intend.

The various tasks that take our time
At home, at work and yonder -
No time for boredom on the board
Of life, at which we ponder.

There's ups and downs and in-betweens,
Good fortunes and the wins,
The bad times when your luck is out,
Or miseries of sins.

In Praise of Chess

Losses, changes, disappointments,
Sadness and distress,
All this is in our human lives
And in our lifelike chess.

The calm enjoyment of the play
When troubles do abate,
And halcyon days when life is good
Is a most welcome state.

Excitement too of chances new
Makes energies spring forth,
Enhancing pleasure of the game
Of life, and what it's worth.

In Praise of Chess

PART 4

WOMEN AND SENIORS

In Praise of Chess

AS A WOMAN PLAYER

My chess career it has been long indeed
Since teenage years, and has fulfilled some need.
I've come and gone, but fully now intend
To keep up playing chess until the end!

In the world of chess predominantly male,
Where equal opportunities prevail,
My treatment as a woman has been good,
Accepted and respected as I should.

I've never felt uncomfortable to be
A member of the small minority
Of women players. That's just how things are.
And at my club it doesn't feel bizarre.

I've mostly been the only woman there.
These twenty years gone by²⁶, it has been rare
For another female player to appear.
They briefly stay, alas then disappear!

Here in this book I've detailed many a thing
About adventures that the game does bring,
And the various benefits that do assist
The intellect and psyche to uplift.

26 I started playing at age 13 but joined Southampton Chess Club in my 50s.

In Praise of Chess

WOMEN PLAYERS

The question

Oh why is it within the world
Of the adult chess contender
That overall a small percentage
Is of female gender?

Perhaps it is the hormones
That affect the female brain,
Encouraging the men to rule
The serious chess domain?

And also circumstances of
The ones who tend to be
The home-makers and natural carers
In society?

The situation

For in our hospitals where patients
Have angelic care,
We see the largely female nurses
Ministering there.

And it is true in soldiering,
Forever there has been
More men than women in the forefront
Of the fighting scene.

In Praise of Chess

Those military heroes who
Risk much in service there
Perform another sort of vital
Universal care.

So differences between the sexes
Do exist for sure,
Though gender boundaries are now
More softened than before.

The conclusion

Both nature and our nurture, therefore
It appears to me
As cause of women players being
The minority.

In neuroscience, though, we know
Of brain plasticity,
And passion has a lot to do
With our capacity.

So, given enough chance, and with
Her talents all unfurled,
A woman one day could emerge
*As champion of the world!*²⁷

27 The story of Judit Polgar, generally considered the strongest female chess player of all time, is most interesting.

In Praise of Chess

MY GOLDEN YEARS

Now in my golden years, some dreams
Have been materialised,
And some of life's deep understandings
I have realised.

By trial and error, time and learning,
Life becomes more whole,
And now at last at least I have
Serenity of soul.

I bought my home, and sought and found
At last the right career²⁸ -
Fulfilling paid work; also ventures
As a volunteer.

And gifted with good company
Along my life's pathway,
How special friendships do enrich
With value every day!

28 Originally a civil servant in Government Departments, my final career was as a sessional tutor teaching adults uses of the personal computer. The clients were users of the mental health services and those with physical disabilities.

In Praise of Chess

Some friends are teachers, counsellors,
A scientist, a nun,
Yet somehow there's connection to
Myself in every one.

And chess became a special blessing
From an early stage,
And I remain an active player
In my golden age.

For chess, I've travelled far and wide
All over the UK,
To congresses affording, too,
A welcome holiday.

And still before my life is through,
More projects I intend.
As life's a game, come let us play it
Well until the end!

In Praise of Chess

PRODUCTIVE RETIREMENT

Although a senior citizen, they say,
I'm glad to rise and greet each new-born day,
And daily breath fresh air amidst the green
Of nature's semi-rural local scene.
By grace of Mother Nature it is true,
I'm lucky to be fit and healthy too.

I'm happy and contented with my age,
And wouldn't swap it for an earlier stage.
A minor thing like now my silvery hair,
My stylist says is pretty, so why care?
And age is just a number. Far more real
Seems how within myself I think and feel!

Retirement it can be a useful state,
And not with idle apathy equate.
When hectic working life it does abate,
It's time to spring to action, to create
Deep thinking and enjoy some forms of art,
From a relaxed and focused mind and heart.

When to the senior years we have progressed,
It can be opportunity much blessed,
To fully be engaged in life and grow,
Though differently from many years ago,
With old careers and cluttered living past,
Pursuing other purposes at last!

In Praise of Chess

Now with more time and energy to spare,
See, lately I have written books to share.
Now various things that I enjoyed before
Are carried on, and sometimes even more.
And friendships with our kindred spirits, yes,
And not forgetting our beloved chess!

In Praise of Chess

COMPETING WITH SENIORS

1. The Devon County Congress

In great Torquay on Devon's sandy coast,
A summer congress here does yearly boast.²⁹

A morning tournament in this I play,
Which gives me free time for a holiday.

And of the morning pairings I faced here,
Was once a player in his ninetieth year.
And his great keenness with longevity
And skill, was inspirational to me.

His play was strong and nearly conquered me,
Until one 'touch and move' fatality.
But any player such a slip can make,
And fall with this regrettable mistake!

I saw this chap again the following year,
An ardent player still, and it is clear
For any age-group or capacity
Caissa³⁰ blesses every devotee.

29 The Devon County chess congress has not, alas, been able to take place in 2020 and 2021, due to the Corona virus pandemic.

30 Caissa, the goddess of chess.

In Praise of Chess

2. The British Seniors Tournament

The British Championships: another way
To take part in the chess, with holiday.
In summertime in airy summer-wear,
I'm glad to be a part of it each year.

And in this multifaceted event,
I enter in the Seniors tournament.
Some interesting places thus I've been,
Which likely otherwise would not have seen.

All over England it has been my pleasure
Competing in fine chess and taking leisure!

In Praise of Chess

PART 5

TORBAY

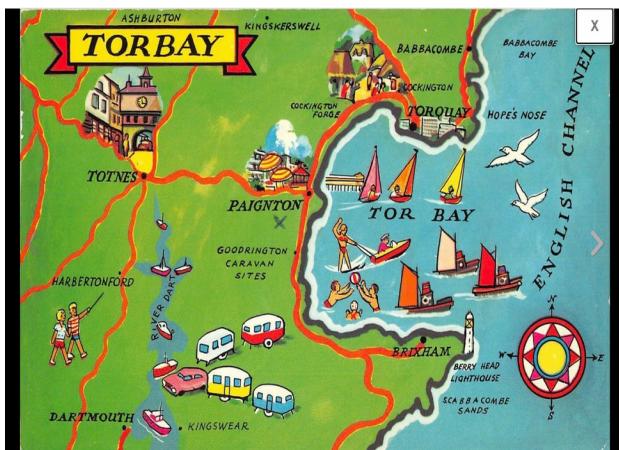
In Praise of Chess

INTRODUCTION TO TORBAY

To Devon's red stone coastline in Torbay,
For the Devon Congress and a holiday,
In summertime I stay beside the sea
In Paignton, or its neighbouring Torquay.

The British Championships have sometimes too
Arranged to have Torquay as its venue,
Held at the spacious Riviera Centre,
And always at this chess event I enter³¹.

And many a trip I've taken by bus and train
To various coastal towns in this domain.
Here follows just a glimpse of many things
Of what a holiday in Torbay brings.



31 In the British Seniors tournament

In Praise of Chess

PAIGNTON

I've holidayed in Paignton many a year.
This English seaside venue has it all:
Amusement arcades, theatre and pier,
And large white seagulls with their morning call.

The restaurants are within an easy reach
Of the children's playground and the donkey rides.
Near to the promenade and sandy beach,
Are ice-cream parlours, fish and chips besides.

With panoramic views far out to sea,
I once espied a dolphin in the bay,
When on the cliff-tops strolling leisurely,
Near to the Paignton guest house where I stay³².

From Paignton harbour sometimes out at night,
I've taken a small boat around the bay
Sight-seeing all the charming coloured lights
Of Torquay and the area of Torbay.

I've visited the spacious Paignton zoo,
Where birds have vast enclosure nets to fly,
And certain animals are spaced out too,
With grass beneath and open to the sky.

32 Rosemead Guest House in Garfield Road.

In Praise of Chess



Paignton cliff-top gardens



Paignton harbour

In Praise of Chess

OLDWAY MANSION

Oldway Mansion was a great location
To hold a popular chess congress in Paignton.

The Devon County chess for sixty years,
In the ballroom richly hung with chandeliers,
Took place each year from nineteen fifty one.
But then the Mansion closed for everyone.³³

This loss to all the players is a shame,
And moving to elsewhere was never the same.

The public still appreciates the grounds,
But the building with its immediate surrounds
Is sadly showing signs of much neglect,
And the pleasure has declined in this respect.

The Torbay Council hopefully one day
Will let the congress come again to play.

Hundreds hold nostalgia for this place,
With all its opulence, its charm and space:
The wooded winding pathways to the sight
Of the grand old building in resplendent white.
Here countless visitors have trod to view
The gorgeous flower beds, and the Mansion too.

33 The last Paignton Chess Congress took place here in 2009.

In Praise of Chess

Mr Isaac Singer once resided here,
And Singer sewing machines of yesteryear
Are on display inside on the ground floor,
In cabinets of glass just past the door.
Then at the marble staircase if we stand
With its balusters of bronze it looks so grand.

But all its history and loveliness
Is more than words of mine here can express.³⁴



Beautiful Oldway Mansion

34 An excellent book all about Oldway Mansion is:

Robert H. Jones, *60 Years in the Same Room, A History of the Paignton Chess Congress*, Keverel Chess Books, 2010

In Praise of Chess

KINGSWEAR

The steam train blows from Paignton to Kingswear,
A scenic harbour town. My friend and I
Enjoy some quiet wooded walking here,
Beside the river and beneath the sky.

The other passengers were ferry-bound
Across to Dartmouth, pleasantly enough,
Though with the crowds commotion can be found,
So we decided on more peaceful stuff.

What could be better than good company,
A bench to sit on and admire the scene,
A sandwich and the mind's simplicity,
Embraced and nourished in dear nature's green.



Kingswear Harbour

In Praise of Chess

BRIXHAM

Brixham is a fishing harbour town
Where bobbing, tinkling boats and seagulls meet,
And tales of former piracy abound,
And gourmet fish food plentiful to eat.

'Aye my hearty' Thursday pirates day,
When costumed men with earrings and long hair
Enact a duel with swords, but all mock play.
Or there's the evening ghost walk if we dare!

Sir Francis Drake he sailed the Golden Hind
Around the world, thus making history.
And in the vessel's replica we find
A museum packed with much to do and see.



Brixham – Replica of the famous ship: The Golden Hind

In Praise of Chess

TORQUAY

A coloured little street train here is found,
To navigate the town delights with ease,
As tourist fancies everywhere abound,
Like cafés, shops and Devonshire cream teas.

The open bus-top tour guide he was keen,
Informative as well as rather funny.
And with some really stunning coastline scenes,
Afforded us good value for the money.

Now in this gala summertime event,
How gusty as we rode on merrily,
And I had to hold my hat down, to prevent
It lifting off and blowing out to sea!

Up in the air balloon I soared one day -
I'm glad that it was safely tethered too -
To take in the expanses of Torbay,
In higher reaches of a birds-eye view.

In Praise of Chess

The prehistoric caves outside Torquay
I found to be most interesting of all,
With bones and tools of archaeology,
Where humans lived with cave bears nine feet tall.

And then of course the foodie things appeal
When in the area I like to do:
The dining out for a good evening meal,
And English breakfasts are most welcome too!



Torquay Gardens by the seafront

In Praise of Chess

PART 6

VARIOUS PLACES VISITED

In Praise of Chess

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

*"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove;"*

- Shakespeare's sonnets (from number 116)

One happy summer day upon vacation,³⁵
Upon the banks of river Avon's delight,³⁶
The town was redolent with celebration
In the birthplace of our poet and playwright.
Immortal Shakespeare of great verse and plays,
Within your church I've stood before your grave
Where your remains are buried. But always
The spirit conquers flesh. You live to save
High purposes of wisdom and pursuit
Of love. To these all humans are led on
In their own ways, by wide or narrow route,
To truth of truths, and love of loves, anon.

Around the town I walked the guided tour,
And learned and thought about your life much more.

-
- 35 THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS, COVENTRY, 2015, held on the campus of the University of Warwick. I competed in the British Seniors tournament.
- 36 One morning before the afternoon round started at 2.30 pm, I took a bus trip to Stratford-Upon-Avon.

In Praise of Chess

ABERYSTWYTH

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2014

The journey and destination

My journey in July one day -
It was so hot and long -
Was to the British Championships
In Wales, the land of song.
Entrained for glorious Aberystwyth,
Speeding through the miles,
No air conditioning was on,
And people crammed in aisles.

And certain passengers were challenged
Coping with the heat,
And had there been a need for help,
No one could leave their seat!
With health and safety thus ignored,
It seemed a hell-bent train,
But once I reached my destination,
All was well again!

In Praise of Chess

In Aberystwyth campus
Of the University,
I booked a simple student room
Quite adequate for me.
Then daily to the Congress hall
Within the campus still,
I took some welcome exercise
Just down a little hill.

Leisure pursuits

And outside of the playing hours
My time was free to use
In exploration of the town,
And doing what I choose.
And there was much to see and do
By way of holiday,
And I am reminiscing now
Some highlights of my stay.

Now Dylan Thomas was a man
Of Welsh poetic fame,
Who clearly was in love with words,
Like I can say the same.
I looked around an exhibition
In the library
Of Dylan's life and work – that year
Was his centenary.

In Praise of Chess

By film and voice and documents,
I learned a lot that day,
Including the sad circumstance
Of how he passed away.
This gifted writer was too young
For him to cease to live,
And lost forever now, whatever
More he had to give.

Another day a stage production
Musical was fun,
Called 'Sister Act', after the film
With a singing, dancing nun.
It was a highly entertaining
Show for young or old,
And in this last performance, still
No ticket went unsold.

The last day of sojourn in Wales,
I took the mountain train;
The Vale of Rheidol steam train rode
Through picturesque terrain.
And slowly climbing up the hill
And 'round a scary bend,
Until the Falls of Devils Bridge,
Our mountain journey's end.

In Praise of Chess

EDINBURGH

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2003³⁷

The anticipation³⁸

They say that home is where the heart is;
 Feelings there uplift,
And when we stay in such a place,
 Our consciousness does shift.

A friend who lives in Michigan,
 She said that she did find
That Scotland is not just a place,
 But more a state of mind.

Now, for the British Championships
 I travelled there one year,
And gained a sense of why my friend
 Holds Scotland oh so dear!

Though one week is too short to know
 Scotland entirely,
Herewith I shall relate some wisps
 Of my clear memory.

37 I played in a weekend tournament, a non-championship event.

38 This was my first visit to Scotland.

In Praise of Chess

The journey and experience

Entrained for Edinburgh I watched,
 The window seat beside,
When lo, a mass of purple heather
 Greeted us outside!

And hills with swirling mists, as if
 In fairy town now lost -
From England to fair Scottish land,
 The border we had crossed.

Beneath the famous Edinburgh Castle,
 Was our chess début -
The British Championships took place
 At a famous school venue³⁹.

One day in Princes Street I strolled
 With time away from chess,
And saw, delighted, what I'd hoped:
 A man in national dress!

A famous hill called Arthur's Seat
 I climbed another day,
And in the valley far beneath
 I heard the bagpipes play!

39 The historic George Heriot's School founded in 1628.

In Praise of Chess

HULL

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

A city of culture⁴⁰

To city of Hull I came a week to stay
For a chess event and pleasant holiday.
On the banks of the river Humber I did find
The flow of living waters of the mind.

Yorkshire's city of culture, you do smile
On visitors who stay with you awhile.
Art gallery, museums and much more,
I found engrossing interest to explore.

Museums

Here was a man deserving of the height
Of his great monument's imposing sight.
Famous citizen, William Wilberforce,
He caused the abolition in due course,
By politics and his philanthropy,
Of the British Empire's shameful slavery.
Ambling through the museum's fine display,
I marvelled and I pondered much that day.

40 UK's city of culture, 2017

In Praise of Chess

In the maritime museum I did see
The details of the fishing industry,
And whaling in the Arctic history,
Where man and beast faced perils of the sea.
Some whaling images displeased my eye,
But I understand and accept the reason why.
Some fascinating stories of the wives
Detailed the hardships of the whalers lives.

A unique aquarium

The great aquarium they call The Deep,
Three thousand creatures in their care they keep,
And at the heart of it is education.
They also do much work for conservation.
Spectacular with such variety,
From seahorse to the sharks enormity,
I walked what seemed like miles that day, and stood
For rests, but the experience was good.

In Praise of Chess

SHEFFIELD

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011

The town and accommodation

Oh why should I of Sheffield write
Where industry was vast?
That is an image now more rightly
Fitting of its past!

It has been granted an award
For spaces that are green,
And trams that serve the city well
Do help the air stay clean.

And when I didn't know the way
For getting anywhere,
I found the people oh so helpful -
Maybe it's the air!

My quest house out of town, it gave
Good quality though cheap,
With vibes of peaceful restfulness
Conducive to sound sleep.

In Praise of Chess

But friends who stayed at the posh hotel
And paid the higher price,
Were vexed by noises of the town
At night, which was not nice.

And riding to the tournament
By tramcar every day
Was quick and easy, and enhanced
The pleasures of my stay.

The Botanical Gardens

On certain mornings I relaxed
Where Botany is shown
In Gardens full of species rare,
Or others more well-known.

When settled in a sunny spot
Or else a shady nook,
I made escape from chess travail
By reading a good book.

I go for factual reading matter
Like biography,
Where persons of significance
Hold interest to me.

In Praise of Chess

A leisurely barge trip

A barge trip from Victoria Quays
I found to be a rest
From mental hard work that's entailed
In competition chess.

And as we leisurely progressed
Throughout the long canal,
We passengers were entertained
With commentaries as well.

The boat cruised gently as a whisper,
Hurry put aside,
No need for pace to reach a place
When going for the ride.

Competing in the British Seniors
As I usually do,
Each afternoon, refreshed, I relished
Those adventures too!

In Praise of Chess

OXFORD⁴¹

City of inspired magnificence,
Bustling crowds and spacious woodland bowers,
Where scholars in pursuit of excellence
Meet river dreams in recreation hours!

The university it does deliver
Theologian, statesman and their ilk,
But punters with their long poles on the river
Are carried on her flow of rippled silk.

By coach and car, day visitors galore
Here dine and buy, and view the oldest seat
Of learning in the land. Restaurant and store
Contrasting with robed choirboys in the street.

City of sudden side street quaint old nooks,
Romantic walkways, side by side with strife
And drinkers on the bench, and dreams and books,
Fatigue of you would be fatigue of life!

41 Over the years, I have many times visited Oxford, both for county chess matches in the Chiltern League (Hampshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxon), and for day trips with friends.

In Praise of Chess

HASTINGS

THE INTERNATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS

Along the Sussex coast lies Hastings town
Of contemporary and historical renown.
William the Conqueror once battled here⁴²,
But now the chess congress plays every year.

In these mind contests several times I've played,
And one year I did venture, unafraid,
To enter in the Masters tournament⁴³ -
A truly international event.

The titled players they did conquer me.
But some of us of lesser pedigree,
To master level having no pretence,
Could enter too for the experience.

And various were the nationalities
Of those I played, with kinship forged with ease.
For we were all united in the bond
Of our great game of which we all were fond.

Apart from those who come from the UK,
Opponents ranged from Russia to Norway,
My opposition furthermore it spanned
Nigeria and France and Switzerland.

42 The 1066 Battle of Hastings.

43 A nine-round tournament from 28th December 2009 to 5th January 2010.

In Praise of Chess

PART 7

PHILOSOPHICAL

In Praise of Chess

CAISSA⁴⁴

Did you know we have a goddess,
Caissa is her name,
Who deals in destinies of our
Divine-engendered game?

Though she might be a figment of
Our fancy, some might feel,
It's true her inspiration for
Our chess is very real!

Mythology personifies
Some qualities in us,
And to embody these abstractions
Ever was it thus.

For players whom we could describe
As chess play devotee,
It's fitting for them to implore,
“Oh Caissa, be with me!”

44 Lots of detailed and delightful poems about Caissa can be found at
Caissa's Web: <https://web.archive.org/>

In Praise of Chess

WORLD PEACE AND HARMONY

Chess is a silent language understood
By peoples of the world, and this is good
To break down barriers of the spoken word
And clash of cultures, human herd to herd.

International folly of discord,
Now more than ever needs to be abhorred.
Asleep for ages to our grave mistake,
Now is the time for all to come awake!

The openness of chess suggests a way
To greater peace and harmony one day:
The brotherhood of one humanity,
From every country and ethnicity!

Guardians of this fragile earth are we,
Yet climate change destruction that we see
We have called forth, and now without a doubt,
The causes we created must root out.

But let's not give up hope about the state
Of shocks and horrors of the world of late;
We're changing over to a better age,
And shaking up the world is just a stage.

In Praise of Chess

THE FINEST CONQUEST

Beyond our chess with all its pleasure filled,
What is the purpose of this life of ours?
Are enemies to be curtailed and killed,
Just as we do in chess, and fill each hour
With scenes of those we slay beneath our feet,
So we as victors over them do tower?

Both yes and no, depending what is meant!
To conquer folly we all can and must,
And make this higher purpose our intent,
Commanding our soul selves confront and bust
The dismal deeds our lower selves would do.
As humans we are given this sacred trust.

Not to the deadly battles that we find
That history and current times display,
Should we devote the powers of the mind,
But wisdom, peace and goodness need hold sway.
With joy in all the world as ruling king,
What finer conquest could there be, I say.

In Praise of Chess

A MOST WORTHY PURSUIT

The game of chess is good, so it is said,
For those who are beset with woes and cares.

For life is full of opposites in pairs:
The changing states of fortune, and the nights
And days, and various pleasures and delights
With pain and grief forever alternate.

Yet with the 'gift of gods', our priceless game,
The trusty board and men remain the same -

No matter what our outer lives present,
The world within our world we know as chess
Is innocent diversion at its best,
For those of us who know its calm content.

For though the moves make threats of many kinds,
With menaces to centre, left and right,
And sometimes horrors overtake outright,
And even might end killing the poor king,
We do not suffer loss of life or limb,
For all is harmless sport within the mind!

And what a sport engrossing to the core,
Where silent stillness brings us to a state
Of peaceful concentration, where we find
A fathomless enchantment! We are blessed
Who study, strive, devoted evermore
In love and wonder of our matchless chess.

In Praise of Chess

A CRITIC REBUFFED

But some would say that chess is idleness
When so much in the world cries out for aid,
 And to be up and doing is the best
 For how humanitarians are made.

A lady long ago once said to me,
“I thought you were more practical than that!”
 With due respect, I greatly disagreed
And thought her dumb, but did not answer back.

Now to that lady we can answer back,
Though she is long since dead, and mute and still,
 And show how uninformed she was, with lack
 Of honour to our greatest game of skill.

Intense and serious chess need not prevent
 A balanced life of body, mind and soul -
I deal with many things that life presents,
 So all is part of my harmonious whole!

I exercise and relish healthy food,
I nourish wholesome friendships with like minds,
 And think of others for the greater good,
 And strive to be compassionate and kind.

In Praise of Chess

BENEFICIAL TO ALL

So let us put our thesis to the test:
Pure logic has great value as we know,
And *patient perseverance* at our chess
Enhances logic that refines and grows.

There also is good opportunity
Of overcoming our lost games distress,
By practising an *equanimity*
By learning from mistakes we make at chess.

All this, *imagination and strong will*
Are sterling qualities and useful tools
In daily life, which chess play can instil
If nurtured on curricular in schools.

Or any stage from childhood to old age
Is time for chess to feed the higher mind.
For prince or pauper, simple soul or sage,
Chess plays its part to succour humankind!

In Praise of Chess

THE SUBLIME PURSUIT

To play at chess, I say, makes perfect sense;
This world needs anything that's good and right.
So let's be studious, ardent and intense,
Pursuing the sublime and lofty fight.

This ancient game that's evermore in vogue,
For centuries to come it will endure
For anyone, be they saint or rogue,
Innocently 'hooked' by its allure.

Our patron saint, Teresa⁴⁵ is her name,
With raptures of the highest states akin,
Encouraged sister nuns to play the game,
As well as checkmate of their Lord to win.

Now chess in prisons is a well-known fact
To combat boredom and aggressiveness,
By teaching inmates 'think before you act',
So they become ennobled by their chess.

45 Saint Teresa of Avila, 28th March 1515—4th October 1582. Teresa advised her sister nuns to play chess in the monasteries, even against the rules, in order to "checkmate the Lord." She mentioned chess in one of her works, *The Way of Perfection*, a special guidance for fellow sisters of the Carmelite Order. She used an analogy to chess to describe the preparations for prayer and contemplation.

In Praise of Chess

Ideally when in partnership with love
For others, and for nature and the earth,
Then chess can lead us onward and above,
With our essential goodness given birth.

That chess cannot be everything: agreed,
But it does supply a part of our great need.

In Praise of Chess

TO BE A CHAMPION

If I should be a champion
Of all the players on earth,
I know it makes no difference
To my essential worth.

No doubt it would give satisfaction,
Admiration, wealth,
But what if with such accolades
I failed in my own health?

Or what if I had flaws and foibles
Sullying my name,
The praise of man and all the money
Wouldn't mean the same.

But what if I should sweep the roads,
Or the hungry I should feed,
This too is praise-deserving work,
Supplying a human need.

Or ministering to the sick
In body, soul or mind,
I thus would demonstrate my love
For suffering humankind.

In Praise of Chess

This humble way, my role would play
As much a valued part,
Not world-renowned, perhaps, and yet
A champion of the heart!

In Praise of Chess

COMPULSION

Compulsions there are many,
Some are harmful, some benign.

To eat when we are hungry,
For example, that is fine.

But giving up a harmful habit
That does auger ill,
Our reasoning can help us,
And applying strength of will.

We all know we should take our time
To look before we leap,
And self-control of brain and hands
When playing chess should keep.

But sometimes we can feel compelled
To move the pieces faster
Than it is prudent, risking
Disadvantage or disaster!

A compulsive move encounter
Of ultimate regret
Is being caught in zugzwang⁴⁶
With its deadly losing net!

46 Zugzwang, meaning the compulsion to move, is a chess position in which whatever you move loses.

In Praise of Chess

CHOICES

"Chess is the struggle against the error."

– Johannes Zukertort

Choices, we have choices, all
Along our life's highway,
To turn off right or turn off left
Or straight ahead to stay.

So, will we live angelic lives
Or more like devils be,
In goodness and in wisdom steeped,
Or in ignominy?

Choices, we have choices, every
Minute we're awake,
To think and then decide on how
The best of it to make.

What goes around it comes around.
The destiny of some
Is just deserts, because we have
Invited it to come.

In Praise of Chess

Certainly there are some matters
Out of our control,
Like weather changes, earthquakes, floods
And problems as a whole.

But even then, we have some choice
To make the best of it,
To think and act in helpful ways,
However we see fit.

It is the same with chess, of course,
With every single move
To play it well or face the hell
Of what bad actions prove.

The choice is all our own, of course,
With every move we make,
With gloomy attitude to let
The horrors overtake.

Or better strive to overcome
With all our strength and might,
To turn our prospects right around
And end in much delight!

In Praise of Chess

LIVING FEARLESSLY

I'm confident that I do love the game,
And if, alas, I lose it is no shame.
In confidence I strike out with each move,
For better or for worse that each shall prove.

I'm confident I never really lose
By how I play, or actions that I choose,
For as life's student, always I deserve
Success, or else I'm on a learning curve.

By books and DVDs, and our deep thought
And practice, comes absorption of what's taught,
And so for learning help is ever near,
And fear itself is all that we need fear.

For sure, due caution we must exercise,
And to ignore all perils is unwise,
But sagely with this caveat intact,
With due aplomb and fearlessness let's act.

As advocates of living fearlessly,
Come friends and colleagues live this way with me!

In Praise of Chess

THE GIFT OF THE PRESENT

To live for the ‘eternal now’.
I vow, and do declare
This is a way to make the most
Of minutes, anywhere.

The past it is a history
For me and everyone.
Hopefully we gained from it,
Then it is ticked and done.

The future is a mystery
That cannot be foretold,
So let’s forget it and just let it
In due course unfold.

Forget mistakes, that’s how we learn,
No need to make a fuss
Of ‘should have done’. The present minute
Is the gift to us!

To live for the ‘eternal now’
Can serve our purpose well,
When we refrain from past or future
Too much there to dwell.

In Praise of Chess

WISDOM AND DEVOTION

As humans we have a component
 That we call emotion,
But also the more stable traits
 Of wisdom and devotion.

How we are buffeted about
 By emotion frequently,
Like people cramped in tiny boats
 Upon a stormy sea!

Embarrassed, harassed, worry, sadness,
 Grief, regret and shame,
These states can get the better of
 Our lives and chess the same.

I know what it is like to lose
 A game I should have won,
Then briefly to feel anxious lest
 I lose another one.

But then I reason, and don't let
 These feelings overtake
The calm enjoyment of the game
 I love for its own sake!

In Praise of Chess

TIMELESSNESS

Herewith another topic urging
Me to put in rhyme:
The need for us to ever pay
Our due respects to time.

Though out there in eternity
Where timelessness holds sway,
Down here upon our busy earth
We measure night and day.

And every day and every night
We section off in hours,
Beneath the sun and living on
This spinning world of ours.

Out in the great beyond, there is
No such a thing as time,
Yet here below it is our constant
Living paradigm.

So what's the answer to the question
Of what we yearn to do:
A balanced life with finest chess
For players like me and you?

In Praise of Chess

I only know that we must needs
 Go on as best we can,
Towards the joy for self and all
 In our allotted span.

In Praise of Chess

PLAYERS OF LIFE

This life of ours is made so that
 We learn along the way,
Whether like a master or
 A *patzer*⁴⁷ that we play.

Some souls with aptitude learn fast,
 And others maddening slow,
Depending on the understanding
 And the skills they show.

But many factors influence
 The levels of prowess,
As life is complicated,
 As indeed is true of chess.

Some players of life are lucky
 And high purposes acquire,
Though all at any time can fall
 In misery and mire.

For life is strange, and full of change
 With an unstable mood,
As see-sawing to bottom bump
 Or swinging up to good.

47 A poor player at chess

In Praise of Chess

But it's a test and manifests
As Nature does intend,
To challenge us to do our best
Throughout it to life's end.

Never mind if we feel blind,
And mishaps then we earn;
It is a universal scheme
That by mistakes we learn.

In Praise of Chess

HERE AND NOW

*"Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays."*

- From *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*
(Translation by Edward FitzGerald)

It's true that we cannot forever stay
Down here, but in due course must pass away,
But each of us with all our gifted years,
Let's always do the best we can, I say.

With every minute that brute Time devours,
Let's answer back by conquering the hours,
With worthy work and leisure that's attained
By tapping into our potential powers.

I don't deny the challenges and pain
When life is full of loss as well as gain,
But these are everyone's experiences,
And my philosophy remains the same.

So when the mortal frame is laid to rest,
It can be said that we have passed the test
Of having lived a happy, useful life
And this dear soul was one of nature's best!

In Praise of Chess

SILENCE

Silence, oh my silence, you
Are valued much by me.
With others or in solitude,
You are good company.

I need you for my finest chess,
And for my prosody,
When inspiration from my Muse
Dictates some verse to me.

And when in meditation I
Uplift my consciousness,
It's you my silence outwardly
Within me also bless.

And when I sleep, my silence keeps
Me blanketed in care.
In waking or in sleeping, I'm
So peaceful when you're there.

How Speech is silver, it is said,
And I don't disagree,
But golden Silence of great price,
I am your votary.

In Praise of Chess

HAPPINESS

*"Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse – and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness –
And Wilderness is Paradise enow."*

- *From The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*
(Translation by Edward FitzGerald)

We all seek to be happy
And be free from suffering,
And many are the ways we try
 This happiness to bring.
There was a grandmaster who gave
 Our game high praise indeed,
Regarding this eternal quest
 And universal need.

*He said, like music and like love
 That chess contains the power
To make men happy⁴⁸, (and, one hopes,
 Our miseries devour).*

48 Siegbert Tarrasch, “Chess, like love, like music, has the power to make men happy”.

In Praise of Chess

But though our great endeavours, such as
 Music and the rest
All make a start and play a part
 To make our lives be blessed,
We need to search for deeper sources
 To maintain the stance
Of inner joy, no matter what
 Our outer circumstance.

In Praise of Chess

THE LIGHT OF LOVE

Is there a person in your life
Who lights the mystic flame?
Could but the blessing of such love
Burn in all hearts the same!

A much loved child, a most dear friend,
A husband or a wife -
My wish for all is at least one
Is lighting up each life.

Animal companions with
Endearing ways so sweet,
Also bring us love, and part
Of human needs they meet.

Engrossing interests too, like chess,
Inspiring forms of art,
Do banish boredom, offering
Much solace to the heart.

In Praise of Chess

YOGA MEDITATION RESCUE

"Meditation is neutralisation of the alternating waves of consciousness"

- *Patanjali*

I've learned an ancient method to remain
Content, by turning losses into gain,
By sacred yoga science⁴⁹ of meditation
That tends to conquer forms of life's negation.

Once at the Devon Congress in Torquay,
When my results had disappointed me -
I usually end about an average score -
This year my final placement was so poor.

So what to do? I could by reasoning
Assure myself it was a one-off thing,
But I embarked on doing something more:
In my guest house⁵⁰ room I sat upon the floor.

Cross-legged, meditating peacefully,
A joy and stillness soon stole over me.
And chess results were totally forgot,
And from that hour they mattered not a jot.

49 Kriya yoga is an ancient spiritual science from India, for achieving life-force control (*pranayama*), and higher states of consciousness.

50 I always stayed at Rosemead Guest House, Paignton, and travelled to Torquay by bus for the tournament.

In Praise of Chess

PART 8

MY EARLY YEARS

In Praise of Chess

MY SPECIAL TEACHER AND FRIEND

As memory is a magic wand
To bring back times gone by,
Now to my early years of chess
I'll reminisce and try.
At home as a young child I did
To pondering incline,
And father he taught me the moves
When I was only nine.

At school⁵¹, I had a teacher,
Mrs Weston was her name,
Who watered seeds of learning
About this enticing game.
She set up boards and sets each lunchtime
For our practising,
And in due course a team of girls
In the junior league did bring.

Then in my teenage years, when I
Had victories far and wide⁵²,
So did my teacher, Mrs Weston,
Glow with mentor's pride!
Then as an adult, this kind lady
Was a unique friend,
Bestowing interest in me
Until her great life's end.

51 Weston Park, Southampton

52 Southampton Girls Champion, The Southern Counties Juniors (at Bognor Regis), and the British Girls Champion (joint) 1962 and 1963.

In Praise of Chess

Her caring about me continued
Now I had become
A British Ladies Champion⁵³.
Invited to her home
Occasionally on a Saturday,
It was a treat to spend
An afternoon in visiting
My former teacher friend.



Gillian Moore with the British Ladies Chess trophy 1967

53 In 1966 at Sunderland, jointly with Margaret (Peggy) Clarke.

In Praise of Chess

What was she like, my erstwhile teacher,
Bertha now to me?
Apart from what she taught at school,
Maths and geography,
Her gaze was on the heavenly bodies
Of astronomy⁵⁴,
And in this world she longed for nations'
Peace and harmony⁵⁵.

Upon a little table within
Arms length of her chair,
Was placed a globe of earth; she called it
A 'celestial sphere'.
She loved to view the globe
Which she could turn by hand with ease,
To view the countries of the world,
The oceans and the seas.

54 Bertha C Weston was President of the Solent Amateur Astronomers Society.

55 She was also Vice-President of the British Soviet Society and had been welcomed aboard a Russian ship.

In Praise of Chess

And halfway through the afternoon,
We'd have a little break
From talks of chess and love and life.
A pot of tea she'd make.
And always was the brew a blend
Of bergamot Earl Grey,
With often a delicious cake
Included on the tray.

Retired from teaching now, in fact
She was most elderly⁵⁶,
With sixty years my senior
Like a grandmother to me.
Now after a fulfilling life
And Bertha passed away⁵⁷,
At her memorial, fittingly,
The Planets Suite did play⁵⁸.

56 Having been a headteacher elsewhere, retired and then came back to teaching at my school, she was over 70 when I first met her.

57 She died in 1981 aged 95 when I was 35.

58 Gustav Holst's Planets Suite

In Praise of Chess

WHAT CAME NEXT⁵⁹

Then what became of me after
The height of my success?
After this pinnacle was reached,
I came and went at chess!
I never entered in the ‘British
Ladies’ anymore,
And it took me decades to become
As regular as before.

In youth and middle age
My life was full of many things:
The duties, joys and sorrows
That our living usually brings,
Until once more the game it cast
Its spell on me to play⁶⁰.
And this time I am certain that
My chess is here to stay.

Now mine is the opportunity
To once again explore
The mysteries of the precious game
That devotees adore.
With contests for the club, the league
And county⁶¹, there’s no dearth
Of competitions to pursue
The greatest game on earth.

59 After becoming British Ladies champion in 1966

60 I joined Southampton Chess Club in 2001

61 As at August 2021, a few of these activities are beginning to revive.

In Praise of Chess

PART 9

HUMOROUS

In Praise of Chess

BEDROOM SLIPPERS

Scarborough

Soanes Weekend Tournament 7th August 2004

*"She'll be wearing bedroom slippers when she comes.
Singing, aye aye yippee yippee aye."*

*- as from the old song,
"She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain When She Comes"*

Have ever you been locked out of your home?

Well, I was locked out of my hotel room!

I needed things inside to take with me,

But found alas I didn't have the key

To get back in the room that had shut tight.

What a predicament and funny plight!

For now the cliffs below I must explore⁶²,
In summer dress and slippers, nothing more,

Without the benefit of sturdy shoes,

Or handbag of necessities to use.

I would not be a 'drama queen' and shout
With shock and horror, now I was locked out.

62 The chess venue was held somewhere down the cliffs.

In Praise of Chess

Alas there were no other guests about,
And the hotel staff were also clearly out -
I rang their phone and pressed the hallway bell.

No use, I seemed alone in the hotel.

I reasoned that my play must still go on,
Though in my state the challenge would be fun!

I had no means to comb my hair in place,
Or lipstick to add colour to my face,
No money to assist me down the slope;
Without the cliff-lift I must somehow cope.

So just as I presented now instead
Around the cliff-side pathway I must tread.

Though with improper footwear covering,
My 'best foot forward' I did gladly bring,
To play the man who won the Soanes last year.
Despite no make-up, and my tatty hair,
I won the game and did enjoy the play.
Those lucky bedroom slippers won the day!

*"Are you going to Scarborough fair,
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme?
Remember me to one who lives there,
For he once was a true love of mine!"*

- as sung by Nana Mouskouri

In Praise of Chess

CONCENTRATION

Concentration is of course a boon
To hold the thinking steady, or the spoon.
For if the hand should waver, or the mind,
There follows a misdoing of some kind.

The hot delicious soup, alas, could slip.
In chess, it spells disaster or a blip.
Over the board, mistakes are ranged about,
Just waiting for a chance to catch us out,
And common sense and master moves abound,
With our complete attention to be found.

To concentrate is a necessity
In chess as in our lives, we can agree!

In Praise of Chess

MEAN PIECES

When we play chess we are not normal,
And by this I mean
That though we're harmless people, yet
Our pieces are so mean!
We push the chessmen as we choose
With malice of intent,
But to the other player nothing
Personal is meant.
We shake the hands at start of play
To demonstrate goodwill,
Before the chessmen spring to life,
Their purpose to fulfil.

How patiently we gloat with glee
To capture his poor men,
With details of the planning, spanning
How, and what and when.
We plot with devious skirmishes.
Straight-faced we cogitate
On pins and forks and ambushes,
Discovered checks and mate.
But harmless though we players are
And with a friendly mien,
The competition does expect
Those pieces to be mean!

In Praise of Chess

THE SWINDLE

A game of mind sport, this is why
Chess swindling is allowed,
And when we pull off such a trick
We may feel justly proud.

Psychology of human nature
Plays a major part,
As chess is not only a science,
Also a fine art.

To snatch a piece he's left en prise,
We think we should not dither,
Or else an attractive-looking square
Beckons to come hither.

Ah ha, he's set a nasty trap
And hopes it is not seen,
And we'll be caught out red-faced, as
Oh dear, we've lost our queen!

In Praise of Chess

LADY PLAYERS

In fairest of societies
Where liberty is good,
A woman is allowed to live
Her life just as she should.

So why is it that women players,
Capable and keen,
Within the world of serious chess
So few of them are seen?

Ladies at the local chess club?
Often there are none,
Or else if you enquire they say
Oh yes, we do have one.

The situation reminds me of
A species that is rare:
You have to search them out to find them
Hiding in their lair!

Lest they become extinct, and then
There follows a lament,
Women players do, perhaps,
Need some encouragement.

In Praise of Chess

THE TROPHY

In my long chess career, sometimes
I can say it is true
That I have won a prize, perhaps
And with a trophy too.

In recent years I won a trophy,
The Gibraltar Cup
As ladies champion, until the time
I had to give it up.

Someone said about the Cup
It was appropriate
To quaff some draughts of champagne from it,
Thus to celebrate.

Another quipped with grim remark
That when alas I die,
My ashes could be placed therein
To keep a watchful eye.

Now I'm not keen on alcohol,
But the kindly thought I get,
And as for what the other said,
I'm nowhere near dead yet!

In Praise of Chess

LIMERICKS

Alertness

An elderly player from Fleet,
He dozed at the board due to heat.
And when he awoke,
The opponent he spoke,
"You have lost due to time, I repeat."

Self-control

A junior from Huntington Hoe
Kept snatching his hands to and fro.
His coach said, "Young man,
You must sit on your hands,
'Til you've found the best move that you know!"

Perseverance

There was a keen player from Sway'
Who'd only just learned how to play.
Alas, what a shame,
He got bored with the game,
Giving too many pieces away.

In Praise of Chess

PART 10

A FANTASY: THE KING AND QUEEN SPEAK

In Praise of Chess

THE TRAPPED QUEEN

The Queen's last speech

“As I survey our kingdom’s vanished power,
 My King reposes in his prison tower,
And I am trapped and we’re condemned to die.
 And this for all our goodness, why oh why?

“Now close to ending of my glorious days -
 I love my king and helped in many ways -
He loves me too, and many praise my name,
 But now I wonder, ‘Were it but a game’?

“I do not know what’s given me such a thought,
 Whether by insight or by fancy wrought,
Though wisdom’s guidance ever was my quest.
 I weep now, for I know I’ve done my best.

“Apart as now my King and I do dwell,
I question life and ponder heaven and hell.
 To understand it all is now too late,
Yet I believe we’ll meet at heaven’s gate!”

In Praise of Chess

IMPENDING CHECKMATE

The King's Last Speech

“We've come to keep you locked up on the board
Beyond your castle”, said the ruthless hoard
Of soldiers. What did this strange utterance mean?
This world's not made of wood! They stole my queen,
And forced her far away to foreign parts.
Ignoble captors with their brutish art!
I've ever loved my lady, cherished dear
Each golden glimpse. I long to clasp her near
Again, for she has grown to be a part
Of me, and reigns supreme within my heart.
Devoted consort of my blissful years,
The thought of you now dries my manly tears.

“My kindly subjects try to hide their gloom,
Amidst an air of my impending doom.
Ah, who can flee the consequence of fate,
Whose fleeting joys and sorrows alternate?
Oh joyous isles where my old griefs were drowned,
My head is bowed, which once bore up a crown
For love of countrymen. These sceptred lands,
Were safe in these my now enfeebled hands,
As Destiny deals out his dreadful plot,
Anon to terminate my hapless lot.
The purple folds will soon be laid about
My mortal frame, as friends will bear me out.

In Praise of Chess

“Stiff and sightless in a crypt I’ll lie
Who once surveyed the world in majesty.
And since in solitude as now I dwell,
And stripped of splendour by the enemy,
I question truth and ponder heaven and hell,
And ask the eternal question, ‘Who am I?’
The sages say that life, with happiness
And sorrow, is a kind of great-gamed chess,
And we the chessmen in this sport divine
Will play again, such as this life of mine.
They say that when we die the soul remains,
And in due course to incarnate again.”

In Praise of Chess

REVIEWS

"Well I can only praise again the very entertaining and impressive body of verse that you have created, Gillian. Written from the heart and from the soul, distilling lots of experience and wisdom learned from life. Very cleverly and imaginatively presented through the filter of the game of chess."

*—Jerry Dowlen
Insurance Chess Club member*