PAUL MORPHY
His Later Life

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BY
C. A. BUCK.

WILL. H. LYONS,
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C. A. Buck of Toronto, Kansas is the author of this interesting and comprehensive biography of Paul Morphy.

Mr. Buck has gathered from authentic sources facts and data in the later life of Morphy that have never been published. Several years were devoted to securing information; a month was then spent in New Orleans verifying and adding to his store of facts; Morphy's relatives and friends giving him great assistance. The matter first appeared in a prominent Western newspaper. With Mr. Buck's consent, I now offer it in its present form. I have added a portrait of Mr. Morphy from a photograph taken immediately after his return from Europe, also his autograph.

WILL H. LYONS.
PAUL MORPHY.

The chronicles of Chess, amplified as it is by a literature richer than that of any other game, offer to the student nothing to compare with the career of Paul Morphy, the game's greatest master. A number of circumstances conspire to make Paul Morphy an unique and monumental character in chess history. The two salient factors of his fame were, of course, his wonderful chess play and of his extreme youth during the period of his active chess career. Incidentally, the fact that he was the only master of the first class that America had produced up to his time augmented his prestige; and then, too, his personality, marked as it was by many graces of the mind, added lustre to his fame. His later life, during which he met with many disappointments and reverses, finally resulting in a mild form of mania, adds a melancholy in-
Paul Morphy. It was such a contrast to what his youth gave promise of that it seems almost tragic in its aspects.

It is curious to note that while the name of Paul Morphy is known wherever chess is played, and most every practitioner of the game is familiar with his chess, yet there are few players of to-day who know of his later life, dating from his return from Europe in 1859. A sketch of Morphy's later life, however brief and fragmentary, should properly be prefaced by a review of his chess career, not only in the interest of a harmonious whole, but that the reader may have a better understanding of some phases of his character that developed with the maturity of years.

Paul Morphy was born in New Orleans, June 22, 1837. He learned chess at the age of ten, graduated at Spring Hill college, near Mobile, Ala., in 1854, studied law and was admitted to the bar in April, 1857. He was gifted with a wonderful mind, its precocious
powers being revealed not only in chess but in his studies as well. It should be noticed that before he was twenty years old he had graduated at college and at a law school, his learning embracing fluency in fourlanguages and ability to recite from memory nearly the entire Civil Code of Louisiana.

Morphy's chess practice during his childhood was mainly with his father and his uncle, Ernest Morphy. He gave evidence of a keen aptitude for the game and was soon able to defeat them both, although his uncle especially was a strong player. His natural capacity for chess was shown in his seeming divination of the proper moves in the openings before he had ever studied them. Ernest Morphy wrote to Kieseritzky in October, 1849, that his nephew, then a little over twelve years old, had never opened a chess treatise but that "in the openings he plays the 'coups justes' as if by inspiration." As a matter of fact, Morphy did not at any time have the benefit of chess books in the
sense of keeping a number of them at hand for study and reference. What few books he made use of he went through quickly as possible, and after having mastered the contents he gave them away. James McConnel, the elder, of New Orleans, has a book of the tournament of 1851 which Morphy gave him when fifteen years old. The book had been issued but a short time when Morphy secured this copy. He soon played over all the games and then gave it to his friend. The volume is especially interesting on account of numerous marginal notes in Morphy's own handwriting by which he expressed his opinion of the games and certain moves. As is well known, this book was edited by Staunton, and young Morphy, like a child of genius, made a captious comment on Staunton's chess play by writing on the title page to make the authorship read like this: "By H. Staunton, Esq., author of the Hand-book of Chess, Chess-
Player's Companion, etc. (and some devilish bad games)."

Paul Morphy first showed the genius of a coming master in the three games he played with Lowenthal, the distinguished Hungarian player, in May, 1850, when he was not quite thirteen years old. Of these games he won two and drew the other. His encounters, about this time, with Eugene Rousseau, a native of France but then a resident of New Orleans, further showed a surpassing mastery of chess for a boy just entering his teens. Rousseau's rating as a chess player may be judged by the games he played with Kieseritzky on even terms, of which there were more than one hundred, the latter winning a bare majority. Morphy and Rousseau played over fifty games during the years 1849 and 1850, and Morphy won nine-tenths of them.

Regarding the games with Lowenthal, it is a curious circumstance that five years after Morphy's death there appeared in the
Chess Review of Havana an apochryphal game wherein Morphy accepted the odds of pawn and move, the claim being made that the game was the third one of the series played with Lowenthal in 1850. The game had previously been submitted to no less a chess scholar than Max Lange who pronounced it genuine. There were several things, so it was claimed, that clothed this bogus game with verisimilitude, chiefly the fact that of three games played the scores of only two were preserved. Fortunately, however for Morphy’s reputation, Charles A. Maurian, than whom no one is better qualified to pass an opinion on anything pertaining to Morphy, has proved that Morphy did not accept odds on that occasion. The claim, notwithstanding Max Lange’s support of it, has been utterly exploded.

From his thirteenth to his twentieth year Morphy was devoted to his studies, but during his vacations, which were spent for the most part at home in New Orleans, he
played chess with the strong amateurs of the city and with such players of force who were sojourning there. Hence, when the first American chess congress convened in New York in October, 1857, his renown as a chess player had preceded him and he was the cynosure of the chess enthusiasts. He won the first prize in this event, and after the tournament he issued a challenge to play a match with any New York player and yield the odds of pawn and move. This was accepted by C. H. Stanley, who was one of the foremost players of his time, having defeated Rousseau in a match by a score of 15 to 8. The proposed match was for seven games up, but Stanley resigned after five games had been played, Morphy winning four and Stanley one. This challenge at the odds of pawn and move was also leveled at James Thompson, a player of some force, who participated in the main tournament of the congress. Morphy and Thompson had played as many as eight games together
on even terms, including the games in the tournament, and Morphy had won all of them, yet Thompson was not prepared to admit that the disparity of pawn and move existed between them. As Thompson would not accept the odds in casual play Morphy sought to tempt him with the odds in a match. Referring to this matter in a letter home at the time Morphy observes that "he seems to fancy that it is beneath his dignity to accept odds of a player who has won every game contested with him. My impression is that I can give him the odds and make even games." But Thompson did not accept the challenge. Attention is called to the chess vanity that prevented Thompson from playing Morphy and take the odds of pawn and move, because after Morphy's return from Europe eighteen months later he defeated Thompson decisively at the odds of a knight! Winning this match at such odds against a player of
Thompson's ability is regarded by some as Morphy's greatest achievement.

Before leaving New York Morphy amended his challenge to the New York players to embrace any player in America. The effect of this was to offer the odds of pawn and move to Louis Paulsen of Iowa, the second prize winner of the congress—a player who, like Morphy, made his first appearance before the chess world at this congress, and who, with Morphy eliminated, would have been the most conspicuous player there. No result came of the challenge however.

Morphy went to England in June, 1858, to play Staunton, the representative of English chess, but failed to meet him in a match owing to default by Staunton. They did meet however, in consultation play, Morphy's ally being Thomas Wilson Barnes and Staunton's confere being Rev. J. Owen ("Alter" in chess circles). Two games were played, and Morphy and Barnes won both. Morphy played a match with Low-
enthal, and won by a score of nine games to three, with two draws; also a match with Rev. J. Owen, at odds of pawn and move, winning five games and losing none, with two draws. In France he played three matches, winning against Anderssen, 7 to 2, and two draws; against Harrwitz 5 to 2, and one draw; Mongredien 7 to 0. While in Europe Morphy gave four seances in blindfold play, at Birmingham, at the London Chess club, at the St. George's Chess club (London), and at Paris. In each contest he played eight games, and made the unique record of losing only one game, although several were drawn, six by agreement. His performance at Paris, considering the strength of his adversaries, is held by some critics to be the crowning achievement in blindfold play. Morphy never regarded this form of chess seriously; he remarked one time that "it proves nothing." He held to the opinion that a player's
strength was measured by his play against single adversary across the board.

After his sojourn in Paris, Morphy returned to London and played many informal games with the strongest English players, notably with S. S. Boden and Thomas Wilson Barnes. Morphy regarded Mr. Boden as the strongest English player.

The consensus of opinion seems to be that Morphy's chief claim to preeminence in chess rests upon his victory over Anderssen, winner of the world's tournament in London in 1851, and admittedly the best player in Europe. In addition to the match games, Morphy and Anderssen played six informal games, of which the Prussian master scored only one. The informal and match games made a total of seventeen games played by these masters, of which Morphy won twelve, and Anderssen three, and two were drawn. Such a result was so overwhelming as to cause consternation in European chess circles, and the chess writers of the time
sought to sustain the shattered prestige of their master by explaining that Anderssen was in poor health and out of practice at the time. As to the question of practice, Anderssen himself felt that he could play good enough to win the match, and as to his health, he was well enough to travel from Breslau to Paris in order to play. On the other hand, Morphy had been ill in bed for several weeks before the match, was still confined to his bed when Anderssen arrived, and was unable to sit up for several days thereafter. His physician finally permitted him to play the match in the hotel and thus avoid the fatigue incident to playing in public at the Cafe de la Regence.

It was while in Paris, during the month of December, 1858, that Morphy's so-called aversion to chess began to manifest itself, and his feelings in this particular became so aggravated in later years as to create the general belief that he grew to positively dislike the game. This is a mistake. His
experience in European chess circles was a revelation to him. It should be remembered that he was a boy, inspired by the ardor, enthusiasm and high ideals of youth; and loving chess as he did, he was shocked and disgusted at the sordid conventionalities of chess practice that was in vogue. The taint of professionalism was repellent to him, and when he saw how the game was made a business of, his disgust led him to forsake the haunts of chess. Morphy's idea regarding the morals of chess is not suggested for the purpose of making any invidious comparisons, but simply to establish the fact that it was not chess that he grew to dislike, but the practice of it by those who would make a living by it. As Morphy was fated to be in a way an involuntary victim of his fame as a chess player, his ideas in this respect are important as explaining a peculiar phase of his character.

Morphy returned to America in May, 1859, and was greeted with all the enthu-
siasm due a conquering hero. In the presence of a vast assembly in the chapel of the University of New York he was presented with a testimonial in the shape of a magnificent set of gold and silver chess men, with board to match, the most costly, perhaps, that were ever wrought. The festivities of this occasion were unhappily marred by a dramatic episode that showed Morphy's growing sensitiveness to the 'profession of chess.' Colonel Charles D. Mead, president of the American Chess association, was chairman of the reception committee which greeted Morphy, and in his address of welcome he made an allusion to chess as a profession, and referred to Morphy as its most brilliant exponent. Morphy took exception to being characterized as a professional player, even by implication, and he resented it in such a way as to overwhelm Colonel Mead with confusion. Such was his mortification at this untoward event that Colonel Mead
Paul Morphy withdrew from farther participation in the Morphy demonstration. The Union Chess club of New York presented Morphy with a superb sterling silver wreath as a token of victory over all. In Boston, also, Morphy was given a banquet, at which Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Agassiz and many others eminent citizens were present to tender him their congratulations.

So great an interest did Morphy's achievements create in chess in this country that Robert Bonner, the enterprising publisher of the New York Ledger, started a chess column in his paper, and secured for it at once widespread popularity by engaging Morphy as chess editor at a salary of $3,000 a year, paid in advance. The feature of the Ledger column was the publication of about fifteen of the games between De La Bourdonnais and MacDonnell, annotated by Morphy. Morphy intended to publish all the games between these two masters, as he considered them the finest specimens of
chess on record.

Shortly after reaching New Orleans Morphy issued a final challenge, offering to give the odds of pawn and move to any player in the world, and receiving no response thereto he declared his career as a chess player finally and definitely closed, a declaration to which he held with unbroken resolution during the whole remainder of his life.

Morphy made arrangements to practice law soon after his return to his native city, but his fame as a chess player was so overshadowing that it seemed people were disinclined to regard him seriously in any other capacity. His fellow citizens looked upon him simply as a marvelous chess player and nothing more, and this so irritated him that he began to have an aversion to playing the game even privately. In fact, he became so morbid on the effect of chess on his career as a lawyer that, in spite of all the efforts of his friends and relatives,
he gave up the work of chess editor of the Ledger, and the contract for which he had been engaged was completed by W. J. A. Fuller. Morphy was associated with D. W. Fiske in the publication of the American Chess Monthly, and although his name was carried on the publication as one of its editors during the five years of its existence (1857-1861) it is known that he did very little of the work.

An incident may here be related as showing how Morphy was often crucified on the cross of his fame. He became enamored of a wealthy and handsome young lady in New Orleans and informed a mutual friend of the fact, who broached the subject to the lady, but she scorned the idea of marrying a "mere chess player." Small wonder that he became morbid and abjured the practice of chess.

During the year 1861 Morphy visited Richmond, Va., seeking to obtain an appointment in the diplomatic service of the
southern confederacy, but he did not succeed and returned to New Orleans. He was there when the city was captured by the federal forces. In October, 1862, he went to Havana in a Spanish man-of-war, the Blasco de Garay, and after remaining there a few weeks he sailed for Cadiz. From there he went to Paris by rail, where he remained until the spring of 1865, when he returned to New Orleans. In 1867 he again went to Paris and remained about eighteen months.

During the ten years following his return from Europe in 1859 Morphy's practice of chess was limited to casual games with intimate friends, chiefly with Charles A. Marian of New Orleans and Arnous de Riviere of Paris. It is thought the total number of games played during these ten years would not exceed 75. The completeness of his abandonment of the game may be inferred from the fact that although the great International Chess Tournament of
1867 was going on in Paris during his third visit to that city he never once visited the scene of its exciting and splendid contests. Morphy played absolutely no chess with anybody after the year 1869.

The mental derangement which overwhelmed Morphy's brilliant mind and clouded his later life is a curious chapter in his career, and has given rise to no little wonder among chess players as to the cause and conditions of his mania. Without going into the details of his mental troubles, two conclusions stand out very clearly, namely, that chess in no way contributed to it, and that the reverses he experienced in his material affairs did. The latter conclusion is borne out by the fact that his mania took the form of a delusion that his brother-in-law, Sybrant by name, administrator of his father's estate, had defrauded him of his legacy. So intensively did this delusion dominate him that his perverted mind conjured up machinations on the part
of Sybrant to poison him in order to quiet his proposed action at law to recover. Morphy was perpetually in fear of being poisoned, and as a precaution would eat nothing except at the hands of his mother or his unmarried sister, Helena. This proposed action against his brother-in-law absorbed Morphy's attention for many years; being a lawyer himself he busied himself with the details of his suit, and was much about the law courts in consequence. It should be stated, however, that Mr. Sybrant discharged the obligations of the trust entirely to the satisfaction of the court, which is a matter of record.

It is difficult to fix the time when Morphy's mind was noticeable unbalanced. When the second American chess congress was held in Cleveland in 1871 strenuous efforts were made to secure Morphy's attendance, but he persistently declined all invitations that were urged upon him. Rumors of his malady were abroad then;
some people who were in a position to know aver that his mania was perceptible even before that date. Morphy was never legally declared insane; he was so harmless and reticent, and lived in such quite retirement at his home, that there was no need of putting him under any restraint. In June, 1882, his family did endeavor to place him in a sanitarium in the hope that he would be benefited. The institution was called the Louisiana Retreat, located near New Orleans, and under the patronage of the Catholic church. Those in the party that accompanied Morphy were his mother, his brother Edward, and his intimate friend C. A. Maurian. When they reached the asylum Morphy protested against his detention with such evident sanity, and discussed his civil rights with such a learned knowledge of the law, that the Sisters in charge were afraid to assume the responsibility, and he was taken back home.

During all these years of misfortune
Morphy still loved chess, and kept run of the current news of the game down to his death. But he was annoyed, and at times even enraged, at the mention of it. This may seem rather contradictory but it should be remembered that his experience and environments were peculiar. It may be worth while to relate an episode that discloses Morphy's feelings regarding chess better than anything else. Under the pretense of assisting him with his suit against his brother-in-law, a lawyer of New Orleans examined the papers in the case and gave his opinion in Morphy's favor. He gained confidence to such an extent that Morphy ate a piece of rock candy, first seeing that the lawyer himself had eaten a piece. The lawyer then suggested that he would like, at some convenient time, to play a game of chess with him. Morphy seemed alarmed; made sure that no one was in hearing, and then replied: "I dearly love
chess, but not now, not now—when we win the case."

When Steinitz was in New Orleans in 1883 he persistently tried to see Morphy, and Morphy persistently avoided him. After four failures to effect an interview between these two celebrated chess players, friends of Morphy finally secured the promise to meet Steinitz on condition that chess would not even be alluded to. This condition was adhered to, and the interview lasted about ten minutes, but was mutually embarrassing on account of the forbidden subject. When Morphy was first approached by a friend in regard to meeting Steinitz, the remark was made that "Steinitz is in the city," to see what effect it would have on Morphy. He replied: "I know it," and after a pause he continued. "His gambit is not good." There is a world of meaning in these words to one who is familiar with all the particulars to which the words may apply. Morphy was then asked if he kept
a board and men at hand to play over games, and he admitted he did, but he could not be induced to talk further on the subject of chess.

It is said by those most qualified to speak that Morphy's mutual derangement did not impair his chess powers in the least; that at any time during his later years he could have played with all his pristine brilliancy and accuracy.

When Dr. Zukertort was in New Orleans in 1882 he met Morphy on Canal street and handed him his card. Morphy put the card in his pocket without looking at it and then greeted the doctor by name speaking in French. Zukertort was amazed, and exclaimed: "Why, how is it you know my name without looking at my card? And how did you know I speak French?" Morphy satisfied his curiosity by remarking: "I met you in Paris in 1867, and you spoke French then."

Paul Morphy died suddenly at his home
in New Orleans July, 10 1884. He had indulged in a long walk during the heat of the day, and on his return home went to the bath room to bathe. It is supposed the shock of the cold water on his overheated body caused congestion of the brain, for he was found dead in the bath tub shortly afterward.

After his death his trophies were sold at auction. The silver service, consisting of a pitcher, four goblets and a salver, being the first prize won at the chess congress, was bought for $400 by Mr. Samory at New Orleans; the set of gold and silver chessmen was taken by Walter Denegre, acting for the Manhattan Chess club of New York, price $1,550; and the silver wreath sold for $250, also bought by Mr. Samory.

An engaging pastime of chess writers and critics of late years has been that of comparing the latter-day masters with Morphy, but so far the most flattering comparisons have never exceeded that of equality with
the immortal Morphy. None have claimed that he has been surpassed by his successors. It is safe to venture the opinion, however, that a great majority of chess players award Morphy the palm of superiority over players of all times. Certainly, taking into consideration the fact that he was in no sense a chess student, that he regarded the game solely as a pastime and himself as an amateur; not forgetting his extreme youth when he achieved his wonderful victories, nor the fact that his chess career covered a period of less than two years—remembering all these facts in addition to his sublime chess play and then comparing him with the seasoned veterans of the checkered field, who have devoted years to the analysis and practice of the game, it would not seem beyond the bounds of moderation and reason to regard Paul Morphy as the greatest chess player that ever lived.