

FOUR-HANDED CHESS

BY

CAPT. GEORGE HOPE VERNEY

"Thus have I seen a king at chess,
 His rooks and knights withdrawn,
 His queen and bishops, in distress,
 Shifting about, grow less and less,
 With here and there a pawn."
 DRYDEN.

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BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

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WHITE.

C	Kt	B	Q	K	B	Kt	C
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

C	P									P	C
Kt	P									P	Kt
B	P									P	B
K	P									P	K
Q	P									P	Q
B	P									P	B
Kt	P									P	Kt
C	P									P	C

BLACK.

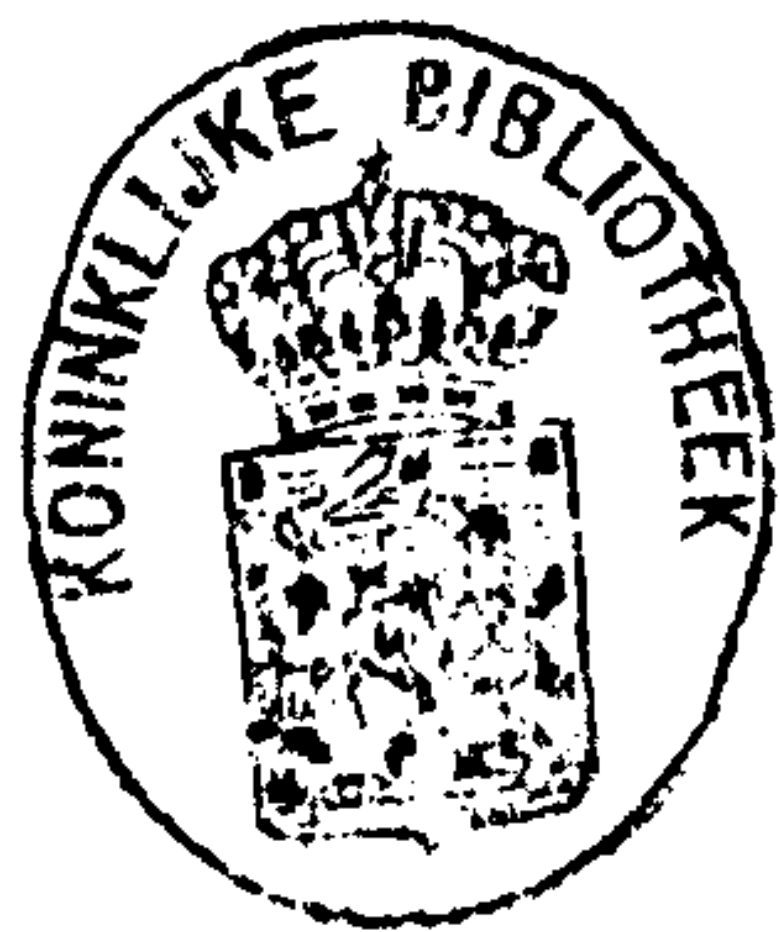
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
C	Kt	B	Q	K	B	Kt	C

YELLOW.



PREFACE.

On the 20th September, 1881, the following extract appeared in a leading article of the "Times:"—"Some years ago great attempts were made to introduce Chess for four players, with many more pieces and many more places on the board. The attempt failed from the fact that four people will generally be found more agreed to play a rubber than to condemn themselves for a long night to one game of Chess. For most people,



and for common use, the game wants simplifying rather than complication, and less strain on the mind rather than more."

I sent the following letter to the "Times," which by the courtesy of the Editor was inserted in the issue of the 22nd September, 1881:—

“FOUR-HANDED CHESS.

“*To the Editor of the 'Times.'*”

“SIR,—As one who for many years has played the game called Four-handed Chess, and who still continues to play it with a few friends regularly every fortnight, will you allow me, through your columns, to point out a few of its salient points to those interested in Chess?”

“The game, beyond the fact of its being played on squares and with two sets of ordinary chessmen, whose moves are almost the same as in the ordinary Chess, bears no sort of resemblance to the original game. The antagonists are placed to the right and left of each other, and each party has to defend himself and attack his enemies on his flanks, instead of in front of him. No sort of rules for play can be laid down after the first two moves of each player, as the variety of moves is so infinite that no two games ever bear the least resemblance to each other after these eight moves are played. For this reason, and also because the game on each side is in the hands of two players, whose play must be thoroughly in accord with each other, instead of in the hands of one

player only, the Four-handed Chess cannot claim the scientific features of the ordinary game; but many good Chess players I have met with have, after a few games, agreed with me that for amusement and interest, the former game far exceeds the latter.

“I should be glad to hear from any interested in the game, with a view to bringing it more into use, more particularly in Chess clubs.

“Yours faithfully,

“GEO. H. VERNEY.

“THE CEDARS, ESHER,

“Sept. 20, 1881.”

Since the above letter appeared in the “Times,” I have received so many communications on the subject of Four-

handed Chess, that I have determined to have the rules of the game printed for the benefit of those who take an interest in the game, or for the benefit of those who wish to obtain a knowledge of it:

In laying down rules, I only give those which govern the play of a few friends and myself, who have met together now for some years for the purpose of playing the game, and they are quite open to such modifications as may be found acceptable at the time of play. I have ventured to add a few remarks of my own, which I think will interest the players of the game, and I also hope may assist those who wish to learn it.

I shall be very glad to hear at any time from players of Four-handed Chess,

and to promote as far as possible its introduction both in Chess clubs and private families.

GEO. H. VERNEY.

THE CEDARS, ESHER, SURREY,
Oct., 1881.



RULES OF FOUR-HANDED CHESS.

THE Rules of Four-handed Chess are in every way similar to those of the ordinary game, with the following exceptions:—

The board consists of one hundred and sixty squares, and thirty-two Pieces and thirty-two Pawns are used for play.

The engraving facing the title-page represents the board prepared for the beginning of a game.

The players who are opposite to each other become partners, and it is their object to checkmate the other two, and *vice versa*. Therefore the players,

Yellow and White, have to unite their forces both for attack and defence against the combined forces of the partners, Red and Black.

On placing the Pieces on the board it is necessary to be careful to place all the Queens on the same colour. In practice we have found it best to place them all four on the white squares, as the game is sufficiently complicated without adding to it, by having the Queen sometimes on a white square and sometimes on a black.

Each player in turn makes a move, passing from right to left, as in Whist. No communication of any sort or kind is allowed to take place between the players with reference to the game; and no consultation is allowed between partners; as one of the chief features

of the game consists in the players finding out each for himself the object of each move, both of his partner and of his adversaries; and silently assisting the former in his plans, and defeating the tactics of the latter.

The Pieces and Pawns of those players who are partners have no antagonistic influence over each other, as for all purposes they are working together for the common object of checkmating their adversaries. In this way the Kings of partners could meet on adjoining squares, as in no case do the Pieces or Pawns of one partner attack the Pieces or Pawns of the other.

No player is allowed to move a Piece or Pawn, which move would open his partner's King to a check from either of his adversaries; any more

than he may uncover his own King to a similar check.

Castling is not allowed in Four-handed Chess.

The Pawns can only move one square at a time, and not two squares in the first move, as in the ordinary game.

A Pawn to become a Queen must by moving diagonally reach the rear squares of the enemy's game, which can only be done by its taking the Pieces or Pawns of one of its adversaries; therefore, the Pawns cannot be exchanged for Pieces when they reach the squares at the opposite end of the board from which they started; such squares being friendly squares, because in the hands of their partners. But should a Pawn by repeated captures, and thereby moving diagonally, reach

the edges of the board in the ground of either of its enemies, it becomes a Queen.

When a Pawn has attained either one of the ultimate squares of the board, belonging to a partner, such Pawn remains there as a Pawn, and moves back again as a Pawn, one square at a time, in the same direction; that is, towards the player. A Pawn, therefore, which has reached either one of the ultimate friendly squares, should be marked in some way to show that it has exchanged its own line of march for a power exclusively of backward motion. Should such Pawn return to the line from which it originally started, it moves forward again, as it did at first.

As the partners sit opposite to each other, it sometimes happens that their

Pawns meet on the board. In every such case, they are allowed to leap over the friendly Pawn, and place themselves in their move on the square beyond; always preserving their forward or backward progression, as the case may be; but never leaving their file, save to take a Piece or another Pawn.

The game is only won when two of the partners are checkmated. Should one be checkmated, and the other be stalemated, the game is drawn, as if both were stalemated.

Should a player be checkmated, his pieces are not removed from the board, but must remain in the same position as when the checkmate occurred. His partner continues the fight single-handed, while the player who is in checkmate cannot move, and therefore

misses his turn; but while his pieces are inert and useless, both for attack and defence, they are not liable to capture by the adversaries, and remain on the board merely blocking up the squares they actually occupy, and devoid of all offensive or defensive properties; thus should the squares be open, the adversaries' Pieces and Pawns may move between them, going into their check or range with impunity.

A partner may so far use the Pieces of his checkmated partner as to, without moving them, protect his own Pieces from attack by sheltering them behind the inert pieces of the checkmated party, whose Pieces still offer the inoffensive resistance of a lifeless mass.

A partner may at any time, if he can, release from checkmate the party

who is mated, by either capturing the Pieces of his adversaries which hold the checkmate, or by forcing these Pieces to move in such a way as to release his partner from that predicament. The Pieces of the partner thus released regain life, resume their functions, and he moves again in his regular turn.

An opponent having checkmated a player, can at any time release the checkmated adversary, should he consider it desirable to do so, but he cannot in the same move by which he releases the mate, take any of the Pieces or Pawns of the adversary so released.



REMARKS.

IN venturing to offer a few remarks on the Four-handed Chess, I do not in the least wish to set up as an authority on the subject, but merely to record a few of the experiences which my friends and I have encountered in the course of play during several years.

THE BOARD.

In making a board similar to the engraving facing the title page, I have found that it is better to have it of a large size, so as to have the game clearly mapped out in front of the players; and therefore I have each of the squares made two inches square,

which makes the size of the board two feet four inches square.

For stowing away, the board can either be made with hinges to fold, or in four pieces to join together with little pegs in the edge of each of the four pieces, similar to the leaves of some dining-tables. An ordinary country carpenter has made mine, and with complete success. I prefer the squares painted in plain black and white, as giving the clearest definition.

THE CHESS-MEN.

I use two sets of Staunton men—one set is of black and yellow wood, and the other is of red and white bone. The latter was made to order for me at the Civil Service Store in the Haymarket, at a cost of about eighteen shillings. The base of the King measures one and five-eighths of an inch, and is three and

a-half inches high. The above will give some idea of a good proportion both of the board and the men.

RULES OF PLAY.

It cannot be too strongly urged that the ordinary rules of Chess, with the exceptions and additions mentioned in a former chapter, should be strictly adhered to in Four-handed Chess, more particularly that rule which is so often neglected by moderate players, that when a player touches a piece he must play that piece, and if he takes his hand off the piece the move must be considered as completed. In an ordinary double game, whether of Chess, Draughts, or any other game, there is only one adversary to consider who may be affected by relaxing this rule; but in Four-handed Chess two adversaries and a partner have to be considered, and any

deviation from this golden rule is liable to give rise to very serious inconvenience, and to mar the harmony of the game.

We have never found it necessary to impose a penalty in the case of a player moving, or attempting to move, out of his turn. Great care should be taken, however, that nothing of the sort should occur, as the irregular moving of a piece might, and probably would, reveal to the other players, both partner and adversaries, the intentions of the player in moving out of his turn, and might give an unfair advantage to either side.

THE FIRST MOVE.

We have always found that the partners who secure the first move have such a decided advantage over their adversaries, that we have arranged not to leave this to any chance, but to take

the first move in strict rotation among ourselves.

OPENING OF A GAME.

I do not think that any better move for the first player and his partner, the third player, can be found than that of their King's Pawn to their King's third, as these moves at once bring into play their two most valuable pieces, viz., their two Queens and their King's Bishops. It is a very dangerous game for their adversaries, viz., players two and four, to adopt, and almost invariably leads to their disaster; though on the following page is an example of the opening by the King's Pawn by all four parties, who find themselves, at the end of fifteen moves, having each lost their Queens and their King's Bishops.

Four-handed Chess.

	YELLOW.	RED.	WHITE.	BLACK.
<i>1st round</i>	K. P. to K. 3.	K. P. to K. 3.	K. P. to K. 3.	K. P. to K. 3.
<i>2nd "</i>	K. B. takes Red's K. B.	Q. takes White Q. (Check).	K. takes Red Q.	K. B. takes White's K. B.
<i>3rd "</i>	Q takes Black Q. (Check).	K. takes Yellow B.	K. to K. square.	K. takes Yel- low Q.
<i>4th "</i>	Any move.	Any move.	K. takes Black K. B.	

Four-handed Chess.

After the opening by the first player of his King's Pawn, the wisest course for the second player to adopt is to move either his Knight on his right hand, or his Castle's Pawn on the same side. Another good opening for attack would be his Queen's Pawn; No. 3 player will probably make the same opening as his partner, viz., his King's Pawn one square; and No. 4 player will be guided in his move by what his partner, No. 2 player, has done.

Before the King's Pawns of the second and fourth players can be moved with any degree of security, they must, by moving out their Knights, give their King's Bishops the protection of their Castles, as it is undesirable to leave these Bishops with only the protection of their Kings, who should not leave their own squares in the early part of the game, because the squares on each

side of them are so easily attacked by their adversaries.

A very pretty attack which I have seen carried out successfully at the beginning of a game, though it is easily met by the opponents, is for two partners to advance each a Knight in such a manner that, when one partner checks the King of an adversary with his Knight, the other partner, in his next move, checks the Queen of the same adversary with his Knight. Unless the adversary receives timely assistance from his partner, he must necessarily lose his Queen by this play, as he must at once get out of the check of his first adversary, and before the move comes to his turn again, his second adversary takes his Queen. This attack can be completed and the Queen taken in four moves by each partner.

THE CLOSING OF A GAME.

When a game draws towards a close, a partner or an enemy left without Pieces at all, or only Pawns, is nearly valueless either as a partner or as an enemy. In any case they are nearly powerless, though their Kings can be of some use both in attack or defence. It is, therefore, generally worth while for a player to make some considerable sacrifice to save the last one or two Pieces of his partner; for should his partner be left without Pieces, he would have to repel the attack of his two enemies alone, which would be nearly the same odds against him as if his partner were in checkmate and of no use to him.

A game may be considered drawn when only one Piece is left on the board,

not including Kings and Pawns, on either side. A double checkmate can then never ensue. As long as one player has two Pieces on the board, or two partners have each a Piece, they can, with the assistance of their Kings, secure a double checkmate; but a game at this stage is scarcely worth playing out to the bitter end, except in the hope of making it a drawn game by the loss of one of the two Pieces, or by securing a stalemate for one of the players.

THE NUMERICAL VALUE OF THE PIECES.

The relative values of the Pieces at Four-handed Chess are somewhat different to those in the ordinary game, and also differ considerably at various stages of it. The following is an ap-

proximate numerical table of the value of the Pieces :—

Pawn	= 1
Knight	= 5
Castle and Bishop	= 9
Queen	= 20

THE KING.

The King is of little value for attack, except just at the close of the game, and then only if the player has lost all his other Pieces. He may then with his King help his partner to secure a checkmate.

THE QUEEN.

The Queen is of even greater value than in the ordinary Chess, and therefore considerable sacrifice may be incurred to secure her capture. The value of a Queen can hardly be estimated, as her range on the board is so extensive, and her powers so great, that she would

prove a formidable opponent to several minor pieces.

THE CASTLES AND BISHOPS.

In ordinary Chess a Bishop and a Knight are considered of about equal value, but in Four-handed Chess the Bishop's value far exceeds the value of a Knight, and very often that of a Castle. Towards the end of a game, the value of a Bishop and a Castle are about equal. The reason of this difference is that the range of the Bishop in the four-handed game is much more extended than in the ordinary game, but the Knight has no such increased advantage. The Bishop is early brought into play, and its influence is felt long before that of the Castle can be brought into the game, more particularly as castling is not allowed. For this reason, if there is no particular attack meditated or defence required, it is well

to advance the Castle's Pawns early in the game, so as to bring the Castles into play when required. In the early part of a game, a King's Bishop is of greater value than a Queen's Bishop.

THE KNIGHTS.

The play of the Knight in the game is of great importance, and probably the Piece the most difficult to make the best use of. For carrying out a checkmate in the early part of a game, with the assistance of either the Queen or Bishop of a partner, its value is very great. Towards the end of a game it rather decreases in value.

THE PAWNS.

The value of the Pawns is considerably less in the Four-handed Chess than in the ordinary game. It is almost impossible to obtain a Queen, as it is

necessary to get a Pawn on one of the back squares of either of the adversaries, and this can only be effected by taking his Pieces or Pawns, and gaining a Queen by working in a diagonal direction, limiting the number of squares on which it is possible to obtain a Queen to six on the side of each adversary. A Pawn can in no case take in the reverse direction in which it is travelling, though in returning from the furthest end of the board, its powers of taking would be the reverse of those it would possess on its journey forwards.

THE END.