

FRAUDS IN CHESS

CHESS Forgeries are fortunately rare, but they are not unknown; and so editors of chess publications, whether national in scope or limited to regional or club circulation, should always exercise extreme care in selecting the material they publish. For when a chess forgery is circulated, it is not only a deception foisted upon the unsuspecting reader but is a damaging and base libel on the reputation of the alleged victim in the forgery.

Recently in a western club publication there appeared two game scores in which a 17-year old player "came up with a pair of amazing sacrificial orgies." The alleged victims of V. R—— (as we will designate this young player) were C. Bagby, a noted player of San Francisco, and former U. S. Open Champion Arthur Bisguier.

Our curiosity was aroused immediately by the alleged 13-move victory over Bisguier, which supposedly occurred in a "stake game" at New York in July of this year. It seemed improbable to us that Bisguier would be a victim of such a trap in a much analyzed variation of the Ruy Lopez—an opening in which his familiarity and skill are well known—particularly in a "stake" game. Our curiosity was increased when we were informed by a Californian correspondent that the alleged victim in the other published score, C. Bagby of San Francisco, denied categorically that he had played the game in question or that he had participated for the Mechanics Institute in an interclub match in December, 1950. Our correspondent further stated that he could not trace any record of such an interclub match in December, 1950, as alleged in connection with the published score of the game.

In consequence, in the interests of truth and justice, we asked our New York correspondent, Mr. Eliot Hearst, to contact Mr. Bisguier and gain his statement regarding the validity of the published incident. We quote below the pertinent passages from a letter received from Pvt. Arthur Bisguier, now at Ft. Jackson, S. C.:

I received a piece of correspondence from Eliot Hearst which contained the score of a chess game I was supposed to have lost with a Mr. V. R—— as the victor in the alleged encounter. I have never heard of Mr. R——, the score of the game is completely unfamiliar to me, the variation is one of my favorites (I would never fall victim to such a trap in the gambit variation of the Ruy Lopez), and last, but by no means least, I was inducted into the armed forces June 27, 1951, and I did not visit New York until October 1, 1951. Since the alleged game was supposed to have taken place in New York sometime during the month of July, Mr. R—— evidently confused me with some other gentleman.

It becomes very obvious therefore that the "brilliancy" in question is spurious; it occurred only in the over-imaginative mind of young Mr. V. R——, who psychologically may have confused fact and fancy. That this confusion can occur we know from the researches of Dr. A. Buschke and Fred Reinfeld into the earlier career of Dr. Alexander A. Alekhine, for both these authors have produced verified instances in which Dr. Alekhine published as actual game scores what were in reality only analysis of possible but unplayed variations in the actual games.

We can possibly condone these lapses from the truth in the case of Dr. Alekhine because his genius has contributed so much of beauty and art to chess; but Mr. V. R—— can scarcely claim such leniency.

Editors cannot always avoid being deceived by forgeries, however carefully they may check the known facts before publication; but they owe an eternal duty of vigilance to their readers in order to prevent the publication of such forgeries, whenever possible. And we trust that the editor of the chess publication who was victimized by Mr. V. R——'s plausible forgery, will undeceive his readers in his next issue by publishing the true facts regarding this fraud. He owes this much to Mr. Bisguier's reputation as a player to relieve him of the onus of being the victim of a spurious brilliancy. And henceforth all editors of chess publications will be well advised to view with scepticism any future scores submitted by Mr. V. R——, unless well authenticated from other sources.

In passing, we might also mention the very reprehensible habit of some editors in printing chess problems and end-game positions without giving full credit to the composers. This actually constitutes theft in a moral and quasi-legal sense, for while it is always permissible to republish problem compositions, it is never permissible to deprive the composers of their just due as the creators of such positions. Editors sometimes err through a failure to realize that a definite standard of professional ethics covers the republication of any previously printed material—a standard of ethics that all reputable publications recognize and follow.

It is even more reprehensible to publish a modern problem composition (as one club periodical did recently) with the statement that it was discovered in an "old chess magazine." For this erroneous statement implies to readers who recognize the authorship of the problem that the modern composer plagiarized it from an older position. The implication is a nasty one, and every honest editor will avoid creating such unfounded implications simply by publishing the source from which the problem position was actually obtained and the name of the composer. Failure to publicize source and authorship of any material reproduced from other sources is unethical in the extreme and such