

Richard Shorman

Chess

WAR AND CHESS

Franklin K. Young occupies a unique niche in the chess world because of his serious effort to reduce the royal game to a mathematically exact system formulated on the principles of military science. And though he received some recognition around the turn of the century from world champion Emmanuel Lasker, who referred to one of his books as "replete with logic and common sense," today Young's work is invariably treated with ridicule and scorn.

Indeed, taken out of context, his many abstract theorems do seem comically incomprehensible, e.g.:

"Whenever a point of junction is the vertex of a mathematical figure formed by the union of the logistic symbol of a pawn with an oblique, diagonal, horizontal, or vertical from the logistic symbol of any kindred piece; then the given combination of two kindred pieces wins any given adverse piece" ("The Major Tactics of Chess," Boston, 1898, pg. 147).

Irrespective of his merits as an instructor, however, Franklin K. Young did possess deep insight into the nature of chess, as this abridged excerpt from his "Chess Strategies" (Boston, 1900, pp. 3-6) illustrates:

★ ★ ★

"**THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW** of war," says Napoleon, "is this, — the greater force always overcomes the lesser."

There are men who up to this moment have held a different opinion. The mind of average humanity is illogical; it does not think — it merely receives impressions through the senses. Thus its conclusions necessarily are based upon results, i.e., upon things which can be seen, heard, and felt, and hence it readily is deceived and imposed upon through the defects and limitations of the bodily organism. Consequently, many men are of the opinion that it is possible for the weak to overcome the powerful, and who would be astounded to know that the race is to the SWIFT and the battle to the STRONG, the Scriptures to the contrary, notwithstanding.

★ ★ ★

BUT THOSE WHO approach this subject with the desire to learn, readily will detect the peculiar wording of the law. They will note that the great captain uses the term "force," that he does not say "bodies of men," neither does he say "greater number of men."

Now it is essential that the student of this theory comprehend that this "force" has no relation to inert masses of men, but is a pure mechanical power. In chess it is the power inherent in kindred chessmen to eliminate adverse pieces from the surface of the chessboard.

A mass of troops or of chessmen does not achieve victory merely because it numerically is superior to the opponent. The winning is effected in each and every case by operating against a vital point a "force," i.e., a power to destroy greater than the power to defend which at the given time and place is operated by the enemy. Says Napoleon:

"It is only the force brought into action which avails in battles and campaigns; the rest does not count."

★ ★ ★

OF THIS FORCE, AS applied to the chesspieces, a most erroneous idea is commonly held. The Queen, for instance, is termed the "strongest" or the "most powerful" of the chesspieces; the Rook, the "next strongest," and so on. As a matter of fact, the chesspieces are of equal strength: none is either more or less powerful than the other. The Pawn can destroy any adverse chesspiece by eliminating the latter from the surface of the chessboard; so can the Rook, the Bishop, the Knight, and the King — the Queen can do no more. Hence, the force for destruction exerted by one piece is equal to that possessed by any other chesspiece.

The fact that the Queen can attack at eight different points at one and the same time, and that she can traverse the length of the chessboard in a single move, are in no sense manifestations of "force" (for she can capture at only one point in a single move and any other of the pieces is able to do likewise) but of superiority in mobility.

★ ★ ★

THIS SUPERIORITY OF the Queen over the other pieces in mobility is a tremendous advantage in special positions, and greatly enhances her value in the abstract; but this advantage does not take the form of "force," but of extraordinary facilities for bringing force into action.

★ ★ ★

CHESS AND GO STUDIO OPENED

The East Asia Book & Game Center, 5897 College Ave., Oakland (located a few blocks south of Ashby), has opened a game room to accommodate the playing of go and chess. Hours are from noon to midnight, Tuesday through Saturday, with Wednesday night reserved for meetings of the Oakland Go Club.

General members are charged \$3 a month, students \$2, or 50 cents by the day. A 10 per cent discount on all books will be given for a one year membership. Call 654-7313 for additional information.