

The Chess Player
George Walker/WS Kenny (1840)

THE LAWS OF CHESS, ADOPTED BY THE FIRST CHESS
SOCIETIES.

LAW I.

Should the board or men be improperly placed at the commencement of the game, or should any of the men be wanting, the players must begin that game again, if the error be discovered before the completion of the fourth move. But if four moves have been played, the game must be finished as the pieces stand.

REMARKS.

A move, in Chess, is understood, when the term is used as above, to signify a double move; thus we say, three moves have been played, when, in fact, each party having played three, the tyro would suppose there had been executed six. So we say, "the game lasted twenty moves;" each party having played that number before the termination. To illustrate Law I, suppose the following cases:—
A, and B, discover, on beginning the game, that the Chess Board is improperly placed; the black corner being on the right hand, instead of the white. If this is found out, before each party has played his fourth move, the game must be recommenced, with the board correctly placed; but if not discovered till after that time, the game must be finished with the board wrongly placed.

Again, A, and B, find, just after starting, that one of the men is set up on a wrong square,—that the set is incomplete, there being a piece wanting,—a pawn substituted for a piece, or any similar defect,—three Bishops, and only one Knight, &c. Any omission or errors of this description, may be rectified; provided they are discovered before the completion of each party's fourth move; after that point, no addition nor alteration can be made, but the game must be played out, just as the men stand.

LAW II.

If a player undertake to give the odds of a piece or Pawn, and forget to remove such man off the board, on beginning the game, he is at liberty to take away the piece, and re-commence the game, provided the error be discovered, before each party have played our moves. But if the four moves have been completed, the game must be finished with all the pieces as they stand; and even if the superior player gives Checkmate, he shall not be allowed to claim the victory, but it shall be judged a drawn game.

(Thus the inferior player has a chance of winning, with the certainty of not losing; by way of punishing his adversary's forgetfulness.)

LAW III.

When the parties play even, they draw lots for the first move, which is afterwards to be taken alternately; but should any game be drawn, the player who commenced that game begins also the next; a drawn game reckoning as no game. Lots are also to be drawn for choice of men, as to colour, &c., which men are not to be changed during the sitting. A player giving odds has the choice of men, and is entitled to the first move in every game; unless otherwise stipulated.

REMARKS.

It is usual, on beginning the first game, for one player to take a black Pawn in one hand, and a white Pawn in the other; extending his hands to his adversary for choice.

A gentleman always offers the courtesy of the move to a lady. The move is taken alternately, during each sitting; but if a match be made of any given number of games, the move must pass, each game, by turn, during that match, without regard to the number of sittings requisite to its completion. Many persons have contracted the foolish habit of preference, as to the colour of the men with which they play. This makes it imperative that the choice of colour should be decided by lot; as, otherwise, if both parties wanted the same men, considerable difficulty would arise. But it is properly ruled, that each player shall use the same men during the sitting, for to change the colour

every game, might tend to confuse the faculties of the mind. It is reasonable that the superior player giving odds, should always be allowed the first move, as well as his choice of men, or side of the board. In giving the Pawn, the move is almost always given with it,

LAW IV.

A player, giving the odds of a piece, may give it either from the King's or Queen's side; but in giving the odds of a Pawn, it is always understood, that the King's Bishop's Pawn is the one to be given. When a player receives the odds of a certain number of moves at starting, he must not, in taking these moves, cross from his own half of the board.

Should you give, for instance, the odds of the Knight, without stipulation, as to which Knight, you are at liberty to give either the King's, or Queen's Knight; and you are not compelled to allow the same Knight every game during the sitting, but may choose each game, which Knight you will give. There is little difference as to the Knights, but it is slightly better to give the Queen's Rook, than the King's Rook, as the latter can be sooner brought into action. The odds of the Bishop are never given; I know not wherefore, unless it arises from the difficulty of framing an attack, in the commencement of the game, without the two Bishops. The reason why the King's Bishop's Pawn is the one always selected to be given, in odd, is, that it is of greater value than either of the others, from the opening its loss makes upon the King. To give one of the other Pawns would be less odds, and to receive a Rook's Pawn would be hardly any odds at all. Were you permitted to cross the centre of the board, in taking moves given in advantage, such odds could not be allowed, as you might at once force Checkmate. For instance, a very common description of odds is the Pawn, and the three first moves. Now, were you at liberty to take these moves as you choose, you could force Mate at once, through the exposure of your adversary's King. You would only have to move, Firstly, your King's Pawn one square; Secondly, your King's Bishop to your Queen's third square; and, Thirdly, you would check with Queen, and compel Mate; for you might take the interposed Knight's Pawn, with either Queen, or Bishop. In trying these three moves over, on your board, remember to take off your adversary's King's Bishop's Pawn.

LAW V.

If a player touch one of his men, it being his turn to play, he must move the Piece, or Pawn, so touched ; unless on the first instant of touching it, he say "j'adoube,"

The integrity of Chess cannot be preserved, without the strictest observance of this very proper rule; which it would be as inexcusable of you, to suffer to be broken by your antagonist, as by yourself.

The "rationale" of it is, that a piece once touched must be played. To provide, however, for the contingencies of your merely touching a man in order to adjust it on its square, or replacing a piece which may have fallen down, you may do so, without being compelled to play it, if you say "j'adoube" on first touching it; the meaning of "j'adoube", being, "I arrange," or "I adjust." Of course, when it is not your turn to play, you may touch the men with impunity,

CASES OF ILLUSTRATION.

A, finds, after playing two or three moves, that his King's Knight, and Bishop, are transposed in position; and, it being his turn to play, he touches the Knight without saying "j'adoube," intending to place it on its proper square.

He may rectify the error, in such case, without saying "j'adoube."

B, oversets a piece. it being his turn to play, and replaces it on its square, without saying "j'adoube." He must move the piece.

C, has to play, and in snuffing the candle, knocks his Rook down to the floor, with his sleeve. He picks it up, without saying "j'adoube," and replaces it. He must move that Rook, hard as it appears to be.

In all cases of government by written law, there occur individual hardships, which cannot be helped, but must be considered as a tribute, paid to order. Nothing can be easier than to acquire the habit of saying "j'adoube," when necessary, and a little reflection will convince you of the propriety of following, to the strictest letter of the law, a rule, which prevents persons of careless habits from touching half-a-dozen pieces by turns, or all at once, before making their move. Indeed, were it not for this law, I believe some people, while calculating their move, would take off a Rook or two, to

play with.

D, is to move, and lifts a Bishop, with the evident intention of setting it on a certain square; then replaces it, saying "j'adoube," and proceeds to play elsewhere. He certainly should play elsewhere, for he should not play with me. The Bishop most of course be moved. The expression "j'adoube," is not allowed to exonerate you, when you touch a piece with the bona-fide intention of moving it.

LAW VI.

If a player touch his King, with the intention of moving him, and then finds that the King cannot be played without going into check, no penalty can be inflicted, on his replacing the King, and moving elsewhere. If also he should touch a man, which cannot be played without placing his King in check, he must move his King; but if the King be unable to play, without going into check, no penalty shall be inflicted.

LAW VII.

If a player, when about to move, touch one of his adversary's men, without saying "j'adoube," in the act of touching it, he must take that piece, if it can be taken. Should it not be "en prise," he must, by way of penalty, move his King; but if the King cannot play without going into check, no penalty shall be inflicted. In case of being compelled to move the King, by way of punishment for any breach of the laws, you cannot castle on that move.

REMARKS.

You should never, by any chance, touch one of your opponent's pieces, except for the purpose of taking it if they are misplaced on commencing, or at any time require adjusting, you should point out such irregularities, and desire them to be corrected. The observations suggested by Law V. apply likewise to the present Regulation, as to the manner in which you may avail yourself of the magical word "j'adoube." To move the King, and to Castle the King, are two things; the first being a simple, the second at compound operation, requiring the union of two pieces. It is quite clear, therefore, that when called upon to play the King, by way of penalty, you must forego the power of Castling; and do literally that which you are commanded to do—and to which you have made yourself liable, by a breach of the Laws.

LAW VIII.

So long as you retain your hold of a piece, you may move it, where or how you will, according to the laws of Chess. But if you once quit your hold, and let your man go, the move is made, and shall not be recalled.

REMARKS.

This Regulation gives rise to the very unpleasant circumstance, of players occasionally touching three or four different squares, with a man, before they have decided to which the piece shall be played. But such is strictly the law, and to it we therefore bow, though it might easily be altered for the better. I take this opportunity of pointing out another practice, which, though legal, is extremely annoying and improper:—I mean the touching several squares with the finger, while calculating n move. This is one of the worst habits a Chessplayer can fall into ;— useless to the party adopting it, and irritating to the nerves of his antagonist.

LAW IX.

Should you move one of the adverse men, in mistake for one of your own, you are compelled, as your opponent shall think fit, and most to his advantage, either to take the piece you have touched, if it be "en prise"—to replace it from whence you took it, and move your King—or to leave it on the square to which you have played it.

REMARKS.

Your adversary has a choice of three different modes of visiting your carelessness, and the regulation is extremely useful. You are paying him a poor compliment, if you are so inattentive, while playing, that you mistake his piece for your own, and ought to be punished accordingly. The law already quoted, applies to the present and every parallel case, that if, in carrying out the penalty, you are required to move your King, and cannot do so without going into check, that part must be remitted. You will observe throughout this code of Laws, that wherever the word " piece " is introduced, it

generally includes the Pawn under that denomination.

LAW X.

Should a player capture a man, with one that cannot take it without making a false move, he is compelled, at the option of his adversary, either to take such piece, (should it be "en prise,") with one that can really take it, or to move the piece touched.

REMARKS.

Suppose, therefore, you inadvertently capture one of your adversary's men with a Rook, giving your Rook the move of the Bishop, you must expiate the error as here stated ; your antagonist choosing whether you shall move your Rook, or whether you shall take his man, should it be legally "en prise." Every species of false move, in Chess, should incur a heavy penalty; and this remark equally applies to the next regulation.

LAW XI.

Should you take off one of your own men, in capture, by mistake, for one of your adversary's, you are forced to play either of the two, as he shall prefer.

REMARKS.

Let us assume, by way of example, that you take off one of your own Bishops, with your Knight, unthinkingly supposing the Bishop to be your opponent's; you must, in such case, move either the Bishop, or Knight, at his pleasure.

LAW XII.

If you are guilty of playing a false move, your adversary may compel you either to let such false move stand, or to replace it, and play your King.

REMARKS.

To illustrate this law, in which, indeed, several of the previous regulations merge; suppose A, having the move, moves his Rook as if it were a Knight. His antagonist, in this case considers which of the two modes of exacting the penalty will be most advantageous, and chooses accordingly; compelling A, either to let the false move stand, or to replace the man and move his King instead. Another way in which a false move sometimes arises, is this :-B moves a man (say the Bishop) to a square which is not in his proper line of march but on an adjoining diagonal.

The same penalty is exacted as in the foregoing case; his adversary having the option of compelling the Bishop to remain on the square, to which it has been inadvertently played, or to replace it, and move the King instead.

LAW XIII

Should a player move out of his turn, (that is, twice running,) his adversary may insist on both moves standing.

REMARKS.

In every sport practised, the mistake of the one party is the game of the other, as in the present instance. It might frequently be more to the advantage of your opponent to insist, on both moves remaining, as played, than to allow you, as he has the option of doing, to retract the second move.

LAW XIV.

When a Pawn is moved two squares, it is liable to be taken "en passant," by a Pawn, but not by a piece.

REMARKS.

This, and several other of the Rules, having been uniformly given by SARRATT, and other writers, I repeat them although quite unnecessary; it being as much a part of the constitution of Chess that a Pawn may be taken "en passant," as it is that the Queen shall not move like the Knight, and therefore altogether useless to provide for such contingency, in the laws of the game. The same remark may be applied to the law on Castling, which ought to be confined to a statement of the penalties applicable to Castling illegally, and need not detail the proper modes of Castling; they being part of the integral elements of Chess. A full explanation of the term "en passant," will be found in my list of technical phrases.

LAW XV.

If you touch both King and Rook, intending to Castle, and then play elsewhere, you must, move one of the two pieces, at the option of your adversary.

LAW XVI.

You shall not Castle in either of the following cases:-

Firstly, if your King has moved at any time during the game; secondly, if the King is at the time in Check; thirdly, if the Rook, with which you wish to Castle, has been played; fourthly, if either of the squares to which, in Castling, the King must move, or cross over, be commanded by an adverse man; fifthly, and lastly, if, in Castling, you capture a piece. The penalty for Castling improperly is, that you shall replace the King and Rook, and move whichever of the two your antagonist directs; or, if more to his advantage, he may insist on the "false Castling" being left as played.

REMARKS.

In castling there is the double object in view, of placing the King in a more secure place and bringing the Castle immediately into play. I think it necessary to explain the law for Castling by the following familiar examples:—

A, has moved his King twice; that is, once out, and then home again: can he Castle?—Certainly not. B's King is checked by a Pawn; is he allowed to Castle? No; the King cannot Castle, if in check, at the moment, by either a piece or Pawn.

C, has taken a piece with his King's Rook, and has then, on a subsequent move, retreated the Rook to his proper square; he cannot, of course, Castle with that Rook. ' 1

D's King's Rook is attacked by an adverse Rook: may he Castle with his King's Rook?—Yes: for the Rook being "en prise," does not affect any of the conditions of the law.

E's King's Bishop's square is commanded by an adverse Bishop: may he Castle with the King's Rook?— Certainly not; for the King must not, in Castling, traverse a square, on to which, if he were played, he would be in check.

F's Queen's Knight's square is commanded by one of the hostile Rooks: may he Castle with Queen's Rook? Yes; for though the Rook passes a square under attack, the King does not.

G, wishes to Castle, the space being clear between King and King's Rook, with the exception of an adverse Knight standing on his King's Bishop's square: may G take that Knight with Rook, and Castle at the same time, by playing King to Knight's square?—No; you must not take, in Castling. I cannot pass over this law, without noticing an impropriety, frequently committed, in touching the Rook before the King, in the act of Castling. When you Castle, first move your King, and then move your Rook over; it being the King that Castles, and not the Rook. The consequence of being allowed to touch the Rook first, is, that the player is not compelled to Castle, until he has let go of the Rook, or touched the King; but may move the Rook instead, if he think fit. It is the custom, and therefore legal, to touch them indiscriminately; but common sense would suggest the reform of this bad habit.

LAW XVII.

When a player gives the odds-of the Rook, he may Castle on that side of the board, from which he has taken off the Rook.

REMARKS.

Should you have given the Queen's Rook, you may Castle on the Queen's side, provided the other conditions are observed, as if your Queen's Rook were on, the board; that is to say, you play your King, at a leap, to the Queen's Bishop's square. The rationale of this regulation is, that when you undertook to give the Rook, you did not agree to waive any of the privileges belonging to your King; and, as I before observed, it is the King which is supposed to Castle, and not the Rook.

A, has given the Queen's Rook, and has no piece on his Queen's side, but an adverse Bishop stands on his Queen's Rook's square: may he Castle, by leaping King to Queen's Bishop's square?—No; it would be contrary to the spirit of the rule, which assumes, as a species of legal fiction, that the Queen's Rook is on the board.

LAW XVIII

When you give check, you must always apprise your adversary thereof, by saying "Check:" or he is not compelled to notice it, but may move as if you had not given check. After this omission, should

the King remain in check for one or more moves, and should you then perceive it, and cry "Check," at the same time attacking one of his pieces, you cannot take such piece; for all moves that have been played since you first checked his King, must he recalled on both sides, and provision made for the original check.

REMARKS

You are not to say "Check," when you attack the Queen, although they do so in France; indeed, it appears to me that it would be a slight improvement on our custom, to abrogate the use of the word "Check," when applied to the King. This word is almost the only exception to the total silence in which Chess is played, for the fatal "Checkmate" is not uttered, until the game is over and as checking is nothing more than attacking. I do not see why we should point it out, any more than we should an attack upon any other piece. It ought to be incumbent upon a player, to look out for himself in this respect; and if he does not provide for a check, he ought to smart for his carelessness. Of course, this is only my individual opinion, and I give it with great diffidence. As the law stands, you must always cry "Check," when you attack the King. Should your adversary forget to say "Check," and you perceive the omission, it is uncourteous to attempt availing yourself of the inadvertency.

LAW XIX.

Should you discover your King to be in Check, and to have remained so, during two or more moves, without our being able to recollect how it originated, you are at liberty to retract your last move, and provide for the check.

REMARKS.

This rule might be consolidated with LAW XVIII, of which it is part and parcel. The case cannot well happen, except to a beginner; but the same thing may be said of the application of most of the rules. Good player seldom need to refer to them.

LAW XX.

Should your adversary say "Check," without really giving check, and should you, in consequence, have provided for the check, you may retract your move, provided you discover the error, before your antagonist has made his next move.

REMARKS.

The case must be of rare occurrence indeed in which the one player fancies he gives check, and the other fancies the receipt thereof, without such check being actually given. It is not unusual for a player to say "Check," intending to check; and then, changing his mind, to play elsewhere. There is no penalty, in this case, incurred by saying "Check," provided you have not touched the man with which you intended to check; but I class it as an impropriety, to utter the word "Check," until you have so far committed yourself, that you are compelled to give it.

LAW XXI.

A Pawn advanced to the eighth square, or extreme rank of the board, shall be replaced by any piece chosen by the proprietor of the Pawn. The player may thus demand a second Queen, a third Knight, or any other piece he prefers. "

REMARKS.

The rule, fifty years back, used to be, that you could only demand, for your Pawn, any piece you might have lost; but, for the last thirty years, the law has stood as above quoted. No human institution can be perfect; and there certainly appears to be an anomaly in the permission to have a plurality of Queens, Bishops, 600. If the case were of frequent occurrence, the manufactures of Chessmen would do well to provide for the contingency, by furnishing an extra Queen for each set. On the other hand, it was much more inconsistent with the spirit of Chess, to provide nothing for the circumstance of a Pawn's advancing to the eighth square, before the loss of any piece whatever. In this case, the ancients kept the said Pawn in a state of happy inactivity, until the loss of a superior piece allowed it to be put in commission. It is almost needless to say that the constitution of the game will not permit your demanding a second King; nor may you call for a Pawn, and replace it at the starting post. On your Pawn's reaching the goal, you must replace it with its piece, before your

adversary moves, or he may take it off the board as forfeited. Should you have lost no piece, you may still demand a Queen, Knight, &c. for your Pawn. As the law now stands, a player may call for a third Bishop for _his Pawn; his two Bishops being still on the board. This would present a curious appearance, as two of the Bishops must then run on the same coloured diagonal; and the having two Queens would seem more in keeping with the character of Chess. It is, I admit just possible, that in calling for the Queen, you might give Stalemate; which might be avoided in demanding the third Bishop. Further remarks on this law, will be found in another part of this volume.

LAW XXII.

Stalemate as a Drawn Game.

REMARKS

As Checkmate constitutes a won game, so Stalemate constitutes a drawn game. The rule was, formerly, that the player giving Stalemate lost the game. This was grossly absurd, and very inferior to the law now universally adopted. A full explanation of what is Stalemate, is given in the preceding pages.

LAW XIII.

If a player engage to win any particular game, or position, and his opponent succeed in drawing such a game or position, either by Stalemate or otherwise, the player first mentioned shall be adjudged to have lost the game.

REMARKS

It frequently happens, that a player undertakes to win two or more games running; and this being the case should his adversary draw one of the games, the player loses, since he has not succeeded in fulfilling his engagement. There is no clash between this regulation, and the law which declares a drawn game to be no game; as such law applies only to the usual modes of play, and not to cases, in which there exists a special contract.

A, says, after losing the game, "If you will allow me to replace the men, at such a stage, I will win the game." B, consents; the position is arranged; and on playing it out, B, draws the game. Here A, is adjudged to have lost the game, since he has broken his contract.

LAW XXIV.

Should you fail to give Checkmate in fifty moves, in either of the following cases of superiority of force, as well as in analogous positions, the game is drawn:—King and Queen, against King; King and Rook, against King; King and two Bishops, against King; King, Bishop, and Knight, against King; King, Rook, and Bishop, against King; King and Queen, against King and Rook—or against Bishop, or Knight; King and Rook, against King and Knight; &c. Should you, however, have undertaken to Checkmate with any particular piece, or Pawn—or on any specified square—or to compel your adversary to give you Checkmate, or Stalemate,—in all such cases, you are not restricted to any given number of moves.

REMARKS.

This law is wisely framed, in order to prevent a player, ignorant of the mechanical modes by which certain quantities of power can win by their nature, from tiring out his adversary by vain and endless trials. As in every other case in which the number of moves is specified, the moves must be fifty on each side; and they must be reckoned from that point, at which your opponent gives notice that he insists on their being computed. You may also insist on counting out the fifty moves, in cases of perpetual check, or reiterated attacks which compel you to play the same forced moves in answer. Should you be left with the King, and some Pawns only, you are justified in reckoning the fifty moves, if your opponent persist in manoeuvring only his King. Numerous other cases arise, in which a player is right in demanding the application of the rule; and there are also many positions, in which it would be exceedingly difficult to decide whether it is applicable or no. It can never, however, be difficult to catch the spirit of this law; and when you find THAT to be against you, courtesy will suggest that you should immediately give way; since, in a game practised for recreation, whenever there arises a balance of claims, judgment should be given for the weaker party.

LAW XXV.

Whatsoever irregularity may have been committed by your adversary, you cannot demand the infliction of any penalty, if you have subsequently moved, or touched any of the men.

REMARKS.

This regulation applies to false moves, as well as to analogous improprieties. As the proverb says, "Let by-gones be by-gones." If your antagonist touch one of his men, without playing it, or Castle illegally, you must notice it at the time, or you cannot inflict a penalty. You will easily reconcile this law, with such rules as relate to the King's being discovered to have been in check, for one or more moves, &c.

LAW XXVI.

Every dispute as to the laws of the game, shall be referred to a third party; whose decision must be received as final.

REMARKS.

The laws cannot provide for every case which may arise, and disputes will occasionally occur even among the first class of players. It is the best way to refer similar matters to the by-standers, and to agree that their decision shall be considered binding; or, should you prefer so doing, agree upon a written statement of the case, and submit it to a third party of acknowledged skill in the game. When the decision is once given, never revive the matter, should it go against you, but acquiesce with the best grace you may. Of course, you may still consider yourself in the right, but do not say so. Be a victim in your own mind, and bear the honours of martyrdom meekly.