

Eye on Chess

I hadn't dropped into my favorite coffeehouse for almost two months; so it was natural that the chess-playing regulars had missed me. No one looked up when I paused by the one game in progress except the old gentleman from Venice, wearing his habitual dark glasses. He had never been known to play chess, but he was the recognized arbiter of any disputes that came up between the players. "Ya touched the piece. Ya gotta move it," he'd rasp, and his seeing-eye dog would nod in agreement.

"Where ya been, Eddie?" he said to me. "I didn't see yez yesterday."

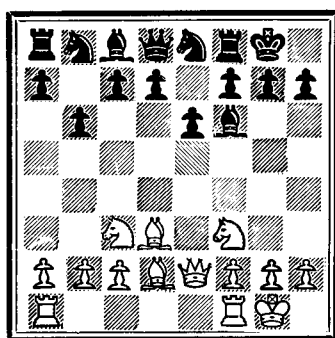
"Well," I began softly so as not to disturb the players, "I've been away for two months, and my name isn't Eddie, it's—"

"Don't let it bug ya, Eddie," said the blind Venetian in his gravelly voice. "I call everyone 'Eddie.'" And he turned his attention back to the board so as not to miss any of the action.

Artie Fax, a hustler so tricky I have often wondered why the administration hasn't called him down to Washington, was playing the erratic mover, Sy Cophant. Sy is so cautious he doesn't even steep his morning tea—he just in-

clines it a little—and this carries over into his chess playing. He has yet to make a move he doesn't want to take back. I was surprised Artie even bothered to play him, but then I learned that Sy was limited to taking back only one move in the entire game. This was a Kissinger-like coup on Artie's part—everyone knew that rather than lose, Sy would take the whole set back to the manufacturer.

Artie was playing the white pieces, and it was his move when I arrived on the scene.



He played 1. Q-K4, threatening mate at Rook seven and attacking the Queen Rook. Instantly Black played 1. . . .



"I'm weary, worn, my bones ache; it's winter, and the pickings are lean; my soul weeps, my spirit is in tatters; I long for the comforting touch of a human; I am as existential about it as far as circumstances will permit, but you have no idea how functional I could become with a single buck."

P-N3. Now, Sy has never seen a mate threat that quickly in his whole life. Artie looked at him suspiciously. "Why did you move that pawn?" he asked.

Sy was indignant. "You think I don't know anything about positional play? I want to put my Bishop on King Knight two. Then I'll really be set."

Artie's eyes narrowed. "You gonna let me take the Rook that's hanging?"

Sy stared in horror and then cried, "Wait a minute. Hold everything. I'm taking that move back. I didn't see you could take the Rook." He replaced the pawn on KN2 and played 1 . . . P-Q4.

"Are you sure you wanna do that?" asked Artie, driving the last nail in the coffin. "You can only take back one move this game; is this the one?"

"Sure, I'm sure," snapped Sy. "I have to save my Rook, don't I?"

"Well," said Artie, as he mated on R7, "if I took the Rook, you could trap my Queen by playing N-B3!"

Sy's appeals to take back the move he took back followed me into the street.

BUT ALL THE swindles don't occur in the coffeehouses. The *British Chess Magazine* reports a beautiful contretemps in Ireland during the Armstrong Cup Tourney this year. It seems that in the game between W. Heidenfeld and N. Kerins, Heidenfeld castled on his Kingside. Kerins launched a tremendous attack, and Heidenfeld moved his King back to the King square. *Then, when things had quieted down, he castled Queenside!* Neither player noticed, but Kerins went on to win against an opponent who had castled on both sides of the board in a tournament game!

To show that the Irish are capable of some first-quality chess, however, we give the following miniature from this year's Leinster Senior Championship.

Pirc Defense

White: E. Keogh Black: R. Cassidy

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|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| 1. P-K4 | P-Q3 | 10. B-B2 | P-N5 |
| 2. P-KB4 | P-KN3 | 11. PxP | PxP |
| 3. N-KB3 | B-N2 | 12. Q-K | N-R3 |
| 4. P-Q4 | N-KB3 | 13. Q-K2 | N-B4 |
| 5. B-Q3 | O-O | 14. QxP | P-N6 |
| 6. P-B3 | P-B4 | 15. BxP | B-QR3 |
| 7. P-Q5 | P-QN4 | 16. Q-B2 | Q-N3 |
| 8. O-O | P-QR4 | 17. R-B2 | NxB |
| 9. P-QR4 | P-B5 | Resigns. | |

FAIRFIELD W. HOBAN

Light Refractions

On Shooting First

A friend who had just read one of these columns was moved to tell me that she was fascinated by the whole spectrum of communication, not only verbal but non-verbal as well. That started one of those nice, rambling conversations that bounce and turn from one thought to another without ever really leaving the subject. We talked about gestures, words, facial expressions, body language, even smells, and we got around to symbols and how people react to them.

The most obvious symbols, we agreed, are flags. In recent years the American flag was thought by many of us to have been captured by the far Right. In fact, there was a film a few years ago called *The President's Analyst* (a very funny picture—the archfiend out to destroy the world turned out to be the telephone company) in which there was a line that went something like, “My neighbors are real Fascists. You know—fly the American flag. That kind of thing.”

Lately, ringing reaffirmations by some of the Ervin committee senators of what I like to think of as American principles have made a beginning, in my mind at least, in restoring some of the glory to Old Glory.

The trouble with flags is that they seldom symbolize the highest human ideals of a nation. They take on their greatest emotional power when it's “us against them,” especially in a war.

There was a group passing out free American flags to spectators going to the

Rose Bowl game a couple years ago. There must have been thousands in that crowd who wouldn't accept them because at that time to wave a flag almost certainly would have been taken as an indication of support for our involvement in Southeast Asia.

Responses to symbols vary. One person might react to the stars on a general's shoulders with awe, another with vague distrust, and another with loathing. Few would react to the *man* without considering the stars. That, I suppose, is one of the reasons for the stars.

From symbols it's only half a shuffle to stereotypes.

It's difficult to escape stereotypes. We need abstractions in order to think effectively, and having abstracted, we often tend to stereotype. “What does the cop on the beat think about gun control?” Right away we're asking for trouble. We've implied that there is such an entity as “the cop on the beat.” Having done that, we'll try to tell you what he thinks about gun control; and if we're not careful, we might try to tell you what he thinks about a lot of other things; and before you know it, we'll have gone from the abstract “cop on the beat” to a stereotype.

The important thing to have as a control element somewhere in your mind at all times is the awareness that though you may want to talk about “the cop on the beat,” “the Black Panther,” or “the military mind,” there is no such thing. There are lots of different cops on lots of different beats, lots of different Black

Panthers, lots of different military minds.

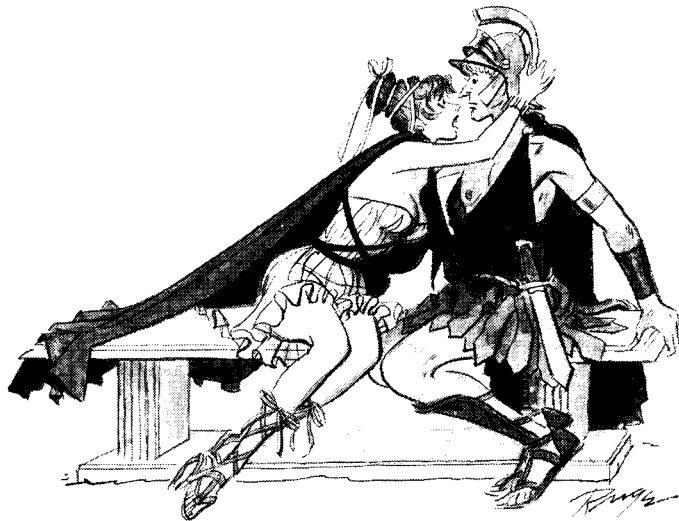
About a year ago, while I was making up a puzzle, a television set was droning in the background, and a momentarily alert part of my ear picked up a line that brought me up short. I repeated it to myself incredulously and wrote it down on a slip of scratch paper. Wayne Morris evidently had said the line to Paul Fix. I went to the TV section of the paper and learned that the film was *Star of Texas* (1953). The line was, “You can't blame the rancher, Bill. He saw a man he thought looked dangerous, so he shot him.”

Recently, while I was working on another puzzle and the Watergate hearings were on the same TV set, I happened across that scrap of paper in my desk drawer. Somehow the line is even more chilling this year than it was last.

The classic Western has been described as a morality play. Talk about stereotypes! The guy in the white hat; the guy in the black hat; the guy who runs the saloon and probably the town, smokes expensive cigars, and is surrounded by a gang of red-eye-drinking gunmen; the good-natured dance-hall girl who will probably get shot saving the hero's life. Most of us were raised on such stereotypes. I'll bet my boots and saddle that Wayne Morris in *Star of Texas* was a hero in the white-hat tradition. The man Wayne Morris's rancher couldn't be blamed for shooting might have looked dangerous because he was wearing a black hat. In the past seven or eight years the black hat has been replaced in real life by the “hippie” look, at least in the minds of many club- and gun- and power-wielding citizens. At the 1968 Democratic convention, you couldn't blame the Chicago police. They saw a lot of kids they thought looked dangerous; so they cracked their heads. At Kent State in 1970, some National Guardsmen saw some kids they thought looked dangerous; so they shot them.

It's a principle that's worked its God-awful mischief on an international scale, too, of course. Millions and millions of people have been killed because other people thought they looked dangerous, started building and displaying stereotypes, and came out waving their symbols and ultimately their weapons.

THOMAS H. MIDDLETON



“Oh, Oeddie, dear! What's your mother got that I haven't got?”