

“To a Young Lady Playing at Chess”

Rev. Richard Polwhele

- Take heed, my fair-one, how you play;
With Black and Red in trim array,
 To push, or to resist –
Ah! one false step (be not deceived)
5 By you can never be retrieved,
 Or your antagonist.
- Pawns– (‘tis plain truth the Muse alleges),
Pawns, in one sense, are doubtless pledges:
 And lo! If set in motion,
10 Straight onwards they pursue their track
Through thick and thin, nor e’er come back –
 Then manage them with caution
- The powerful Queen upon the wing,
with checks as she assails the King,
15 Bids resolution flag;
And Bishops cringe, and bow, and bless;
And Knights for ladies in distress
 Ride up and down, zigzag.
- In days of old, the Knight, ‘tis said,
20 Was fond to woo the simple maid
 ‘Midst bowering shades and brooks;
Picturing his Castle built in air,
To cheat her with the gaudy glare –
 Your Castles are but Rooks.
- And now, in stale-mate or in scholars,
Whether you play for love or dollars,
 The game may terminate:
And, though you labour thus you lose,
You get your head from out the noose:
30 But marriage is – *check-mate!*

Citation Reference

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