

6. MALAY TERMINOLOGY OF CHESS.

February 4, 1898.

DEAR PROFESSOR RHYS DAVIDS,—At the recent discussion on the game of Chess, nothing was said as to the terminology of the game as played by the Malays, and as this appears to me to illustrate particularly well both the wide extension of the game and the singular purity with which Sanskrit words have been preserved in the Malay language to this day, it seems worth while to enumerate the principal words used in this connection.

The game itself is called *chator* (چاتور), and the names of the pieces are—

- (1) *raja* (راج).
- (2) *mantri* (منتری).
- (3) *gajah* (گاجه).
- (4) *kuda* (کودا).
- (5) *ter* (تیر), and
- (6) *bidak* (بیدق).

Most of these are obviously of Sanskrit derivation, and Nos. 1 to 4 are also the ordinary colloquial Malay words for 'king,' 'minister,' 'elephant,' and 'horse.'

The two last, on the other hand, are (so far as I know) exclusively chess terms. For *ter* ('rook' or 'castle') there seems to be a vernacular alternative *chēmor* (چهور). The etymology of both these words is apparently unknown, though Crawford attributes *ter* to a Dravidian source.

The other words used in the game are *shah* (شه) (usually pronounced *sah*) for 'check to the king,' *mor* (مر) for 'check to the queen' (or rather, 'minister'), and *mat* (مات) for 'mate': these three are presumably of Persian origin, and introduced since the contact of Malays with the Muhammadan traders from Arabia and the Persian Gulf.

The fact that the words for the 'bishop' and 'knight' are the ordinary words for 'elephant' and 'horse' seems to me to be some evidence that those pieces were fashioned to represent these animals when the game was introduced into the Malay-speaking countries; while the unintelligible name of the 'rook' seems in the same way to show that even at that time its original meaning had been forgotten. The game is, I believe, played by Malays according to the rules prevailing in India; but on that point I cannot speak as an expert.

It may be worth while to add that chess is referred to in the well-known *Sajarah Malayu*, a historical compilation of the early years of the seventeenth century, which, however, embodies traditions, and possibly records, of considerably older date. In the eighteenth chapter of that work mention is made of the visit of one Tan Bahra of Pasei (in Sumatra) to Malacca, and the record adds: "Now this Tan Bahra was a very skilful chess-player, and one that was unequalled at the game in that age, and he played at chess with the men of Malacca . . . and beat them all: but Tan Pakarma, son of the Bandahara Paduka Raja, was able to make some resistance . . . and if Tan Bahra threw away a pawn at the corner, then he was beaten by Tan Pakarma." The passage is of some interest as indicating that the practice of giving odds in this way was known centuries ago to Eastern players, though as "a pawn at the corner" would presumably be a rook's pawn, the method seems to have differed in detail from the modern practice.—I am, yours sincerely,

C. OTTO BLAGDEN.

7. PALK'S BAY AND STRAIT.

DEAR SIR,—In Sir W. W. Hunter's "Imperial Gazetteer of India" (xi, 11) "Palk's Bay and Straits" are described as a "gulf and channel between the mainland of India and the north part of Ceylon, named by the Dutch after