

Willy Hendriks

The Ink War

Romanticism versus Modernity in Chess

New In Chess 2022

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Prologue

‘Shortly before the opening of the tournament of the British Chess Association in 1872, four conspirators met one evening in the Strand at a restaurant which was at that time the hebdomadal rendezvous of certain well-known chess-players.

“Well,” said one of them, “I think I have found a man who can beat Steinitz.”

“Who is he?” asked Löwenthal.

“Zukertort”, said the discoverer. “He has just won a match against Anderssen.”

The matter was talked over, and the conspirators – all committee-men of the British Chess Association – resolved to invite Zukertort to this country, and offer him twenty guineas towards his expenses.”

Our conspirators could not have suspected that with this invitation, which was accepted by Zukertort, they gave the green light for a rivalry that would become increasingly fierce over the years. Fourteen years later, it would culminate in the first match for the World Chess Championship. This book tells the story of this struggle, which was fought on the chessboard but also, to a significant extent, in chess magazines and in columns in newspapers. First and foremost, this battle was about who was the strongest, and who could eventually call himself the first World Champion. But there was more at stake. Chess and chess theory were in full development and the ideas about how the game should be played were quite divergent. Steinitz had a very outspoken position and saw himself as the foreman of a scientific modern school. For our story it would be nice if Zukertort represented the other pole, the romantic attacking school, but things are not that simple. The larger public, however, understood the rivalry between the two for the greater part along these lines. Thus, the struggle on and around the chessboard was closely linked to the societal developments of the time, such as the rise of science and technology and the romantic resistance to them.

The somewhat tragic protagonist of our story – although it should be added that his opponent’s life was not exactly rosy either – is **Johannes Zukertort**. He was born in Lublin, Poland, in 1842 and learned to play

* MacDonnell, *The Kings and Knights of Chess*.

(good) chess in Breslau under the mentorship of Adolf Anderssen, who is often portrayed as the great man of romantic chess. Zukertort exchanged Breslau for Berlin, became one of the strongest German chess players, and left for London, the centre of the chess world at that time, in 1872. That is when our story picks up speed, for it was there that Zukertort met his great opponent, **William Steinitz**, who was born in Prague in 1836 and had come to London ten years earlier to make a living as a professional chess player, just like Zukertort.

Steinitz was the (not quite undisputed) number one in the chess world and at first Zukertort could not match him. But he slowly came closer, and when in 1883 he achieved a great success by winning the London top tournament by three points, the call for a match against Steinitz became louder and louder and it finally took place in 1886: the first official match for the World Championship.

That match was the culmination of a series of paper hostilities that had begun much earlier, around 1881, but in fact the whole thing started with Zukertort's arrival in London. The battle on paper at times became so fierce that it was later given the name 'The Ink War'. That such an enormous rivalry could develop between these two players (and many others around them) is difficult to understand for the contemporary observer, so this requires some explanation. Character certainly played a role and that will be discussed, but that is something of all times. At least as important, however, is the fact that the players of those days had to fight much harder for their reputations, and this is a recurring theme in this story. Life for a professional player was difficult; there were few tournaments and matches, the Elo-rating did not yet exist and there were few people who could judge performance and playing strength, let alone the wider public. So for your place in the rankings and for the appreciation of your games and ideas, you had to stand up for yourself.

It is difficult to predict what are the things that will most impress a time traveller moving from the mid-19th century to the present, but the ubiquity of sports could be one of them. Both Steinitz and Zukertort came to London to make a living as professional chess players, which was not an obvious career choice at the time. It was hard to make ends meet and this further stimulated the competition between them. In addition, there was a lot of resistance to chess as a profession, and Steinitz and Zukertort, as immigrants of Jewish origin, had an even harder time.

Serious competitive chess as we know it was still in its infancy. The transition 'from the coffee-house to the tournament arena' is a story in itself, and this modernisation was also the source of many discussions.

There was still a lot to learn in this field and much of what is taken for granted by today's competitive players was discovered in this period.

The battle on the board was often continued in the analyses in chess journals and magazines. The art of analysis was still in full development – an art, incidentally, that in our time, with the rise of the chess engines, is already disappearing. For the contemporary chess player, it is hard to imagine what it means to analyse entirely on one's own, without the possibility of consulting the electronic oracle sooner or later. Analytical differences of opinion could, in the absence of electronic adjudicators, develop into controversies of enormous proportions, and we can only look back with melancholy on this fascinating part of chess culture. Of course, in retrospect, we can use the engine and that gives us the possibility (as a small consolation) to come to final judgements, but also to add a lot of beauty to what people in those days already managed to conjure up.

The setting for the greater part of this book is London. It was a centre of progress in the fields of science, technology, trade and industry, and it was certainly the absolute centre as far as the chess world was concerned. There was a thriving chess community, and the various chess sections in newspapers and magazines provided a good opportunity to report on chess life and on the latest theoretical developments, but also to do battle with competitors, both over ideas and over the issue of who were the best players.

Whether there has been any progress (with or without a capital letter) in history is an open question for some, but if you look into the world of chess at that time, it certainly applies in the field of health. Many talented players disappeared from the scene at an early stage and our main players also had to contend with health problems. Zukertort's fragile constitution had a great influence on his career, and the 'medication' he took probably also had its effect on his play, for better or worse.

Autobiographies of chess players sometimes bear titles like 'chess was my life' and that certainly applies to our protagonists. We know a bit more about Steinitz's life outside the chessboard than about Zukertort's, but for both of them chess came before everything else. In this introduction, the word 'romantic' has appeared several times, but not in the 'amorous' sense of the word, and it is good to warn the reader who expects a lot from the coming story in this respect: the adventures of our main characters are compelling, but not in the field of love.

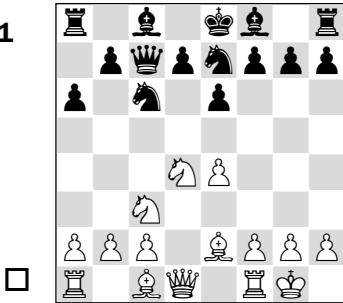
With that, the main ingredients of this book have been introduced. We will meet many other chess players (and chess writers), top players as well as lesser gods, and the diversity in level will provide instructive and beautiful but also cheerful moments. A nice aspect of 19th-century chess

is that it is somewhat more in touch with the experience of most players than the almost perfect chess of today's elite.

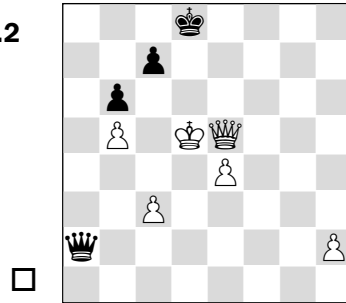
The 19th century is sometimes called 'the century of progress' and this is certainly true as far as chess is concerned. That progress took place against a background of constant polemics. I hope that the reader, whether he or she is attracted more to the romantic camp or more to the modern camp, will be able to benefit from that progress.

Exercises Chapters 4 and 6

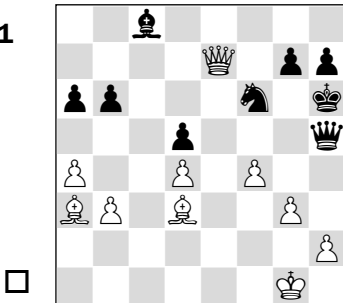
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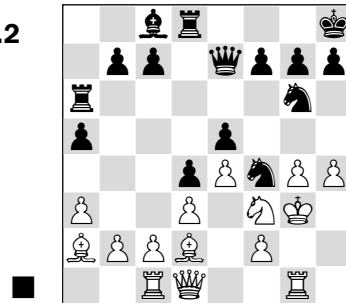
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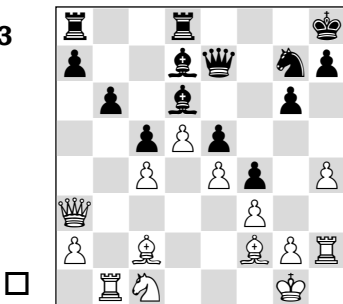
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London 1872

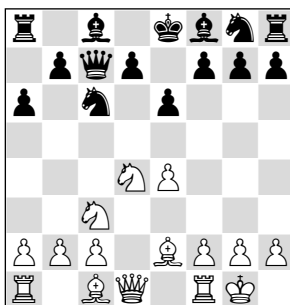
Soon after his arrival in London, Zukertort could start playing in two serious tournaments of the British Chess Association. Of the two, the Grand Open had the most prestige, although it was a somewhat messy event spread over several weeks. It was single round-robin with eight players, with Steinitz, Blackburne and Zukertort as the favourites.

In the beginning of the tournament, Zukertort impressed against Cecil De Vere with the following miniature, which anticipates later theoretical developments in the Sicilian Defence by almost a century.

De Vere was considered to be a natural talent and was sometimes called 'the English Morphy', but he contracted tuberculosis at a young age, took to the bottle on top of it (or as a cure for it) and died in 1874, only 28 years old.

Johannes Zukertort – Cecil De Vere London 1872

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c3 e6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 a6 6.♚e2 ♚c7 7.0-0

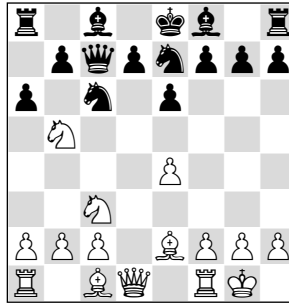


This was the first game in which the starting position of what would later be called the classical variation of the Taimanov appeared on the board. One of the ideas with which Mark Taimanov (almost a century later) had great success in his original approach to the Sicilian was to exchange the knights on d4 and then play the other knight (with tempo gain) to c6. De Vere seems to be planning something similar, except there is a hole in his move order and this was keenly noticed by Zukertort.

7...♘ge7?

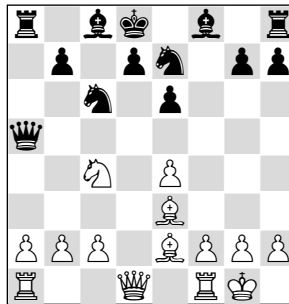
(Exercise 4.1)

8.♘db5!



There was hardly any experience with this type of position at the time, so Zukertort had to come up with this 'standard idea' entirely on his own. Black's opening mistake was repeated in many later games, and many of the White players did not find Zukertort's refutation.

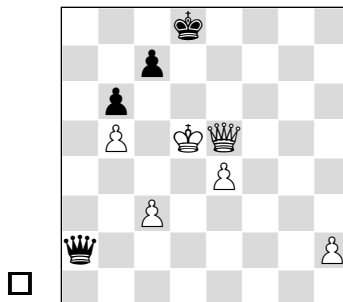
8...axb5 9. ♖xb5 ♗a5 10. ♘d2 ♗b6 11. ♙e3 ♗a5 12. ♘d6+ ♔d8 13. ♘xf7+ ♔e8 14. ♘d6+ ♔d8 15. ♘c4!



Threatens the queen and at the same time a beautiful mate in two.

15... ♗b4 16. a3 ♗xc4 17. ♙xc4 1-0

Zukertort, however, was only able to compete for first place for a short time. He lost to Blackburne and the following disaster happened to him against MacDonnell towards the end of the tournament.



**Johannes Zukertort
George MacDonnell**

London 1872

(Exercise 4.2)

Of White's three legal moves, two are winning, the simplest being 47.c4, after which Black does not have a perpetual. However, there followed:
47. ♖c6?? ♚a8 mate!

We will meet MacDonnell again quite regularly because of the enmity that developed between him and Steinitz. He seemed to get on much better with Zukertort, although the latter also was a professional player, something MacDonnell was not entirely positive about. But someone who plays the move 47.♖c6 in his first game against you, you can't help but smile at for the rest of your life.

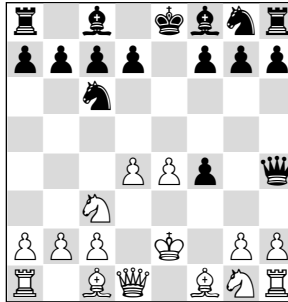
Zukertort would build up a reputation as a strong tactician, but moves of this type accompanied him throughout his career. Maybe he was never quite able to shake off the smooth coffee-house style he had grown up with. The remark 'hastily played' is often found in his analyses of his games.

Zukertort had previously lost to Steinitz as well, so he ultimately had to be content with shared third place. In that encounter, Steinitz won with one of his favourite openings, the gambit named after him. Zukertort had written an article about it in the *Neue Berliner Schachzeitung* a few years earlier and he had also played against it once, winning that game. So it was no surprise that Steinitz was prepared, but an article written much later (in 1886) by Hoffer throws a special light on this 'preparation'. It should be noted that Hoffer, like MacDonnell, was to become one of Steinitz's greatest enemies, so it is questionable whether a reliable witness is speaking here.

'When Steinitz heard that Zukertort was coming over to play in the 1872 tournament, he sat closeted for days in a gentleman's house, who had a large chess library, in order to study Zukertort's analysis of the Steinitz Gambit until he detected a flaw in it. But, not content with that advantage, he invited Zukertort to breakfast. When Zukertort left, Steinitz knew as much of his opinion on certain openings as Zukertort himself, he having cross-examined him for hours upon every conceivable variation, and Zukertort, generous-minded and unsuspecting, believing himself admired by Steinitz, gave readily all the required information, whilst he got none in exchange. I was present on that occasion, and confess to have been quite as unsophisticated at the time as Zukertort.'

Earlier, we saw Anderssen in Berlin presenting his new idea in the Evans Gambit to, among others, Zukertort on the eve of his match against the same Zukertort. But at that time there was no question of that match and even if that was cunning of Zukertort, he was now walking into the same trap.

William Steinitz – Johannes Zukertort London 1872
1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.f4 exf4 4.d4 ♖h4+ 5.♔e2



The starting position of the Steinitz Gambit and our first introduction to one of the key players in our story, the king on e2.

The first time Steinitz played this gambit was in Dundee 1867, against Neumann, and he won that game according to a scenario with which he would be successful very often in this line: the problems with his unsafe king in the centre slowly diminished, while his positional plusses slowly became more important.

The position is of course very similar to the King's Gambit, another of Steinitz's favourite openings, only here White manages to regain the f-pawn more often. The positional advantages are partly the same: control of the centre, more space and sometimes easier development, especially by attacking the queen with gain of tempo.

But then, that king in the middle ...

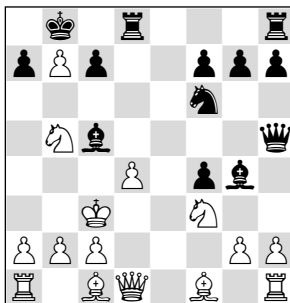
The position is very complicated, Black has many ways to try to take advantage of the vulnerable position of White's king and he must not hesitate to invest material.

Zukertort did so with **5...d5**, a pawn sacrifice that serves to speed up his development. After **6.♘xd5 ♕g4+ 7.♘f3 0-0-0**, Black gets beautiful play and that is how Zukertort had won that earlier game. After Steinitz's move, the position becomes so complicated that it is humanly impossible to grasp.

The chances are about equal according to the engines, but in the end, however, Zukertort does not succeed in making something out of his attack and Steinitz wins with his extra material.

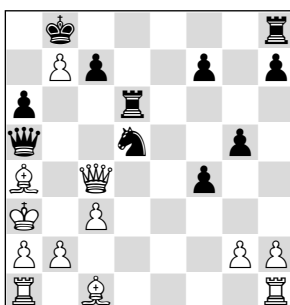
6.exd5 ♕g4+ 7.♘f3 0-0-0 8.dxc6 ♕c5 9.cxb7+ ♖b8 10.♘b5 ♘f6 11.♔d3 ♖h5 12.♔c3

Steinitz must have prepared up to here somewhere.



Black's next (second) piece sacrifice turns out to be insufficient, but nobody will blame Zukertort for missing the mark in this chaos.

12... ♖xd4+ 13. ♘bxd4 ♙c5+ 14. ♚b3 ♜b6+ 15. ♙b5 ♙xf3 16. ♜xf3 ♜xd4 17. ♜c6 ♜a5 18. c3 ♜d6 19. ♜c4 a6 20. ♙a4 ♘d5 21. ♚a3 g5



White gave back one piece, but now he forced an exchange of queens with **22. b4! ♜b6 23. ♜d4 ♜xd4 24. cxd4** and simplified into an endgame that he then won. A strong defensive performance by Steinitz.

So the first stroke was for Steinitz, who also outplayed all others to take first place with 7 out of 7, ahead of Blackburne with 5 out of 7 and only then Zukertort with 4 out of 7.

The second part of the Congress of the BCA in which Zukertort played was the knock-out handicap tournament. It was less prestigious than the main tournament, but Zukertort managed to eliminate Steinitz, winning the third, somewhat unsteady, game after two short draws. In this tournament, games were played with odds if necessary, but Steinitz and Zukertort were in the same class and played on equal terms.

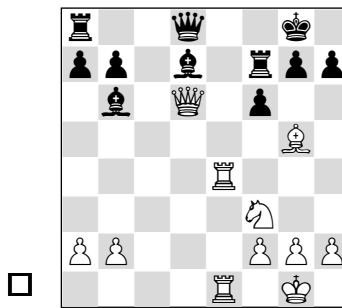
Zukertort was eliminated by Wisker in the next round. Playing with odds is completely extinct in our time, but in those days it was very common to compensate for the difference in level so that both players could have an interesting game.

The first match

The score was now 2-2 between Steinitz and Zukertort and it was thought that a match between the two might make for an interesting fight.

Negotiations for such a match tended to be quite lengthy in those days, but this time an agreement was reached very quickly and the necessary funding was also readily forthcoming. The match started a month later and the English chess lovers were curious to see whether Zukertort could offer Steinitz some serious opposition. Those high expectations could not be met by Zukertort. Steinitz outplayed him on all fronts and won 7-1 with 4 draws. Steinitz played not so much in a different style than Zukertort but on a higher level, more accurately and with better calculation.

The first game is exemplary for the whole match.



Johannes Zukertort
William Steinitz

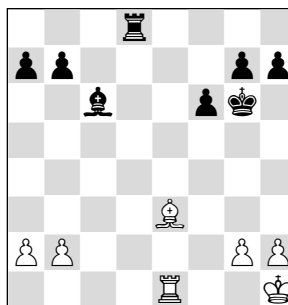
Match London 1872 (1)

From the opening, Zukertort had got a strong attack, but now it is not so clear anymore. After 20.♙e3, the chances would be about equal but maybe Zukertort thought that his attack still had great force and that his next move would be a hammer blow. But Steinitz had seen better.

20.♘e5? ♙xf2+!

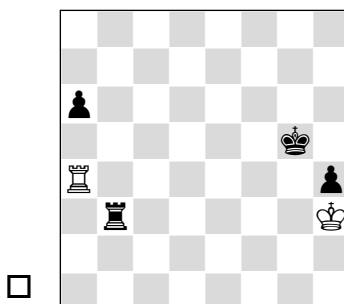
A fine refutation. After 21.♖xf2 fxe5+ 22.♔g1 ♗xg5, Black has gained a piece.

**21.♖h1 ♙xe1 22.♘f7 ♖xf7 23.♗d5+ ♔g6 24.♝xe1 ♙c6 25.♗xd8 ♜xd8
26.♙e3**



White managed to escape with a pawn less, although the black position is close to winning.

Twenty moves later, a position was reached whose finer points were very hard to dissect, so it is not surprising that both players missed the best move a couple of times. To be fair, without the help of the tablebases, I certainly would not have been able to find them either. However, the move with which Zukertort finally gave away the draw was anything but subtle.

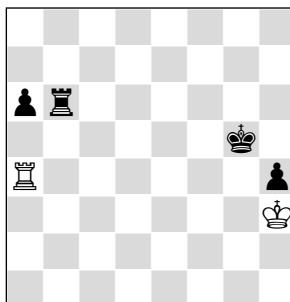


The two moves that White can choose from here don't seem to make much difference, but 49.♔g2 is the only move that draws. After 49...♚b6 50.♕f3 ♜h6, White has 51.♞a5+ with an immediate draw. Therefore, a more subtle try is 50...♞f6+ 51.♔g2 ♜h6 with the intention to move the king to the queenside, but after 52.♕f3, White threatens again that check on a5. It is remarkable that we have a zugzwang position after 51.♔g2: if White was to move, it would be a loss instead of a draw.

49.♔h2(?) ♚b6 50.♔h3

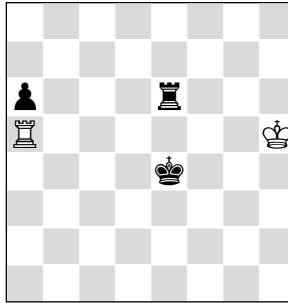
So after 50.♔g2, Black should have found 50...♞f6, with the zugzwang position. On rook moves, for example 51.♞a1, comes 51...♕f4 52.♞a4+ ♕e3! 53.♞xh4 a5! followed by 54...♞a6.

If the king moves to the h-file, for instance with 51.♔h3, 51...♞h6 follows and Black can move his king to the queenside with 52...♕f5 (53.♞a5+ ♕e4). Then it is still not easy, but in the end, again with the help of zugzwang, Black will manage to put his a-pawn in motion.



So here Black could have played 50...♖h6 and then walked to the queen-side with his king. Maybe he thought he couldn't make any progress there, or he thought that what he was doing would win as well. Many top players today would not have a ready-made answer to those two questions either.

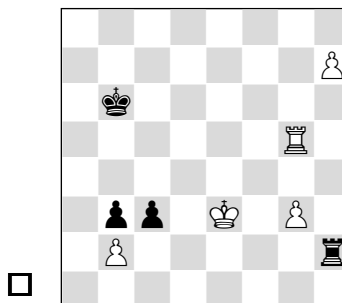
50...♗f5(?) 51.♗xh4 ♠g6 52.♗h5 ♠e6 53.♠a5+ ♗e4



If White had played 54.♗g4 now, it would have been a draw, even though Black could still try. The question with Zukertort's next move is not what he thought, but why he did not think for a moment. Even if he believed his game was lost, he would still have wanted to try to give Black a hard time. 'Hastily played', most probably.

54.♗g5?? ♠e5+ 0-1

That was a bad start and, unfortunately for Zukertort, characteristic for the rest of the match. In one of the last games, a somewhat similar blunder happened to him and he gave away another half point.

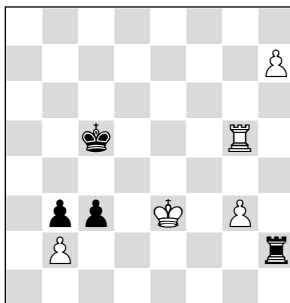


William Steinitz
Johannes Zukertort

Match London 1872 (10)

Black had been lost for a long time, but now, thanks to his breakthrough on the queenside, he again has the draw in hand. White has to force perpetual check with his rook on the g-file and that is sufficient because if Black tries to move his king to the kingside, White can take on c3 and then keep Black's b-pawn under control with his rook on the b-file.

48.♠g6+ ♗c5 49.♠g5+



49...♔c4??

After 49...♔c6 50.♖g6+, the peace treaty could have been signed. Black's move doesn't look like a try for a win, and perhaps Zukertort thought that it didn't matter whatever he chose, but he can't have thought about it for long.

50.♖g4+ ♔c5 51.bxc3!

Now that the white rook has the b4-square at its disposal, this is possible. To make matters worse, after

51...♗xh7 52.♗b4 ♖a7 53.♗xb3

the endgame was just won for White.

Mind and body

This first attack on his position as the number one in English chess was apparently easily repelled by Steinitz. Nobody doubted by now that Steinitz was indeed the stronger of the two, but it was suggested that the score could have been more favourable for Zukertort if he had been in better health. The *Westminster Papers* wrote that 'during the later stages of the match it became evident to all observers that Mr. Zukertort was suffering from severe indisposition.' Zukertort's poor health would become a recurring theme throughout his career.

'I have never won against a healthy opponent' is a well-known statement that has been attributed in many variations to different chess players. Health problems are one of a chess player's most common excuses to avoid admitting that the opponent was simply stronger. That does not alter the fact that health can occasionally play a role, and this was much more true in the 19th century than it is today. Health standards were on a much lower level, which shows in the fact that people on average didn't get nearly as old as today.

Steinitz had a foot defect and bad eyes. Later on, he would suffer from the effects of a sunstroke for several years. Zukertort seems to have suffered even more from problems with his health. On several occasions,

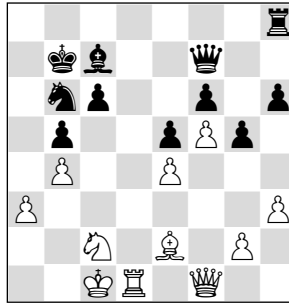
he himself mentioned congenital problems with his heart as his greatest ailment. Zukertort often made a restless and nervous impression, which might be related to a heart condition. However, it is not entirely clear what exactly was the nature of his heart condition, and perhaps it was not clear because medical diagnostics were not very well developed at the time. The same applies to the available treatments and medication. As far as the latter is concerned, it is questionable whether the substances used by Zukertort had a favourable effect. Various ‘medicines’ are mentioned by Zukertort, but also by others, which he is supposed to have used, including addictive but also highly toxic substances.

Zukertort was not very transparent about his personal life, but he probably did not lead a very healthy one. He was a bachelor all his life, although there are indications that he had a (secret) love affair from which two daughters were born. Details of this affair will always remain a mystery, which of course suits a romantic hero very well.

Steinitz lived with a woman, Caroline Golder, although they were not officially married. In 1866, their daughter Flora was born, the mother being 21 at the time. Steinitz would survive them both. Nothing is known about their domestic life. We will meet Flora again, but her mother is an otherwise completely invisible person in Steinitz’s life, even though their relation lasted for more than 26 years.

That Steinitz led a more regular and healthy life as a house-father than the ‘bohemian’ Zukertort is thus no more than speculation. But it is known that Steinitz cared about his physical fitness and liked to walk and swim. He also explicitly stated that a good physical condition contributed to good chess performances. Nowadays this is self-evident, but it was a modern insight at that time. Steinitz was one of the first to consider chess as a serious sport and ensuring a good physical condition was part of that. London was a fast-growing metropolis with big differences between the rich and the poor. Your health was influenced by where you lived in the city. In the poorest neighbourhoods, people on average did not live to a ripe old age, and the conditions regarding sewage, sanitation, fresh air, clean roads and the availability of clean water were often poor. For Steinitz and Zukertort, it was therefore almost literally a matter of life and death to generate sufficient income from their chess activities.

Steinitz was generally more outspoken than Zukertort, but that did not apply to his private life. So we know very little about their lives outside chess, both in terms of their domestic circumstances and their personal (love) lives. Chess came first for both of them, that much is certain. The experiences of our protagonists on and around the board are compelling, but we can say little exciting about their lives outside chess.



analysis diagram

The queen now enters on the queenside, as 33.♙b2 does not help against this because of 33...♘a4+.

In his analyses, Zukertort therefore gave the credit for this move to Steinitz. He also gave another note, however, after White's 31st move: '31.bxa5 ♘a4 32.c4, recommended in *The Field* as giving White a slight superiority, would not be advantageous on account of [...].'

But, according to Steinitz, that recommendation was about move 29 as shown in the above quote (to make that even clearer for Zukertort, he accentuated the relevant parts with capital letters).

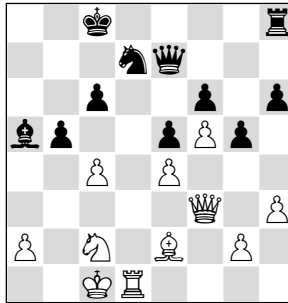
One could say that this was a relatively innocent case: Steinitz had been praised for his improvement 32...♙f7, and Zukertort disagreed with another improvement that he mistakenly thought was related to the position after move 30. This kind of unintentional misrepresentation happened to Zukertort more often, at least according to Steinitz, and the latter was much more precise in his analyses. In defence of Zukertort, it can be said that the form of analysis that was common at the time, namely in the format of notes after the score, did not make things clearer. Moreover, Steinitz's habit of describing his moves in words (instead of in notation with move numbers) could easily put you on the wrong track.

Before the discussion got totally out of hand, Steinitz probably wouldn't have made such a big issue of it either, but now he lashed out mercilessly: 'The whole case resolves itself, therefore, into another stupid piece of misquotation on the part of the C.M.. Go home, Messrs Hoffer and Zukertort, and analyse P takes P, followed by P to Q B 4, again on White's 29th move; then prepare a sleeping draught for the readers of the C.M., containing a dose of analytical laudanum, mixed up with a few laudatory phrases for Mr Blackburne [...] in order to prove that White had not, at that stage "a slight pull". Do not forget [...] for common decency's sake [...] to say "thank you" when you take the whole variation back. That is right. Thank you for saying "thank you". This is satisfactory enough, as far as I am interested. But if you do not apologise to your own readers for such

a gross piece of misrepresentation you will no doubt prove to the Chess world that I am more ashamed of the editorial conduct of your journal than you are.'

The 'thank you' of course did not happen, and as mentioned, *The Chess-Monthly* let the matter rest. A reply was not possible either, especially not after Steinitz's nasty stings with his 'laudanum' and 'sleeping draught'. To the good listener, it was suggested that Zukertort liked to be inspired in his analytical work by opium-containing substances. This may well be true, although Zukertort probably saw these substances as medicines for his health problems.

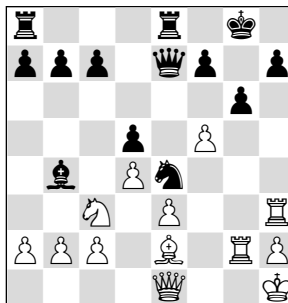
Whether you want to use something in the process or not, it is certainly interesting to have a look at Steinitz's recommendation at the right moment, namely 29.bxa5 ♖xa5 30.c4.



analysis diagram

(Exercise 14.2)

Steinitz thought that White had a slight pull here and claimed that Zukertort could only convince his readers of the opposite if he had first administered them a sleeping potion with a pinch of laudanum. However, here it was mainly Steinitz who did not see things clearly, for if Black now continues with 30...b4!, White does not have a slight pull. On the contrary, Black's position is splendid thanks to his possibilities on the dark squares. Steinitz also comes back to the analysis of the seventh game.

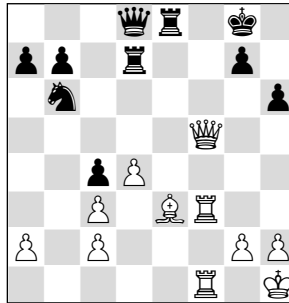


position after 23.♖g2

Johannes Zukertort
Joseph Blackburne

London 1881 (7)

After a long and not very convincing line, Zukertort arrives here at the final verdict ‘and White has fair prospects of getting a good attack’. This would then be one of the cases that contributed to the final 10-1 victory in analysis according to Zukertort. Steinitz describes this judgment as ‘a statement which, by the way, any one is welcome to believe who examines the position at the end of their main variation. I for my part do not.’ He was quite right about that, but he badly went astray at a later moment in the same game.

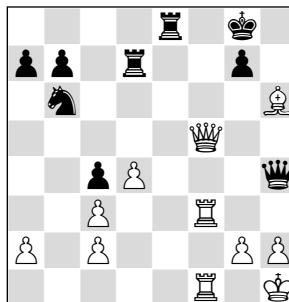


analysis diagram

Earlier, we saw that Steinitz had suggested the improvement 27...h6, and on this ‘country move’ Zukertort continued with 28.♙e3. He then examined four responses and each time White triumphed in the attack. Steinitz: ‘Naturally not a single one of the headings contains the obviously best move which, in the spirit of my own remarks, would aim at an exchange of Queens. [...] They [...] ignore, in a whole column of variations, the plainest of all answers, viz. 28...♙h4.’

(Exercise 14.3)

In his analysis, Steinitz then gives three continuations, which lead to nothing, but in turn he ignores ‘the plainest of all answers’, namely 29.♙xh6!



It is quite remarkable that Steinitz did not look at this move, as it already played a leading role in several earlier variations of Zukertort. And it doesn’t

take much time to establish that this sacrifice is winning: after 29...gxh6, there is 30.♔g6+ and after 29...♔xh6 30.♖h3, Black has to give up the queen.

Somewhere at the beginning of the seventh (!) episode, we read the little aside 'for I must now abbreviate my remarks' and that betrayed the fact that the patience of the editor-in-chief had run out by now. Perhaps more and more readers were starting to complain. In an earlier issue, a letter to the editor had already been posted, asking to stop the mud-slinging:

'The Chess World is interested in learning the opinions of such players as Zukertort and Steinitz, but if they cannot conduct a controversy without saying unpleasant things of one another, their reputation must suffer, and the interests of the game must be damaged proportionally. [...] Rival experts of the most intellectual game ever yet invented of man, cannot possibly enhance their reputation by using towards each other language that shows that coarse invective is by no means confined to Billingsgate fishwives.

Let them battle one another with arguments till they are utterly exhausted, but say I for one, in the interests of Chess let there be no abuse.'

In this last article, Steinitz had to squeeze together all his remaining grievances, or leave some out, but he found that hard

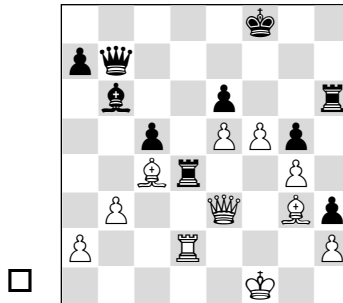
to do. His earlier articles were already difficult to follow for those who were not familiar with the whole history, but that could be solved with diagrams to some extent. Now, however, there was no more room for that, so the reader had to make do with this kind of description:

'The next case (C.M. January, p 142, second part) is one in which they claimed 'a fine counter attack for Black' (September, p 11, note (s)), with a move which I had never dreamt of, while my real proposition was as much as ignored in a small sub-variation. Not a word of apology now, but actually repetitions of such tactics, while it seems that my own move now requires an analysis of 13 moves, with sub-variations, to prove – what? Perhaps a fine counter attack. Oh, no; only a draw. But how do they prove it? Let any expert examine their sub-variation on the 48th move (January), and he will find everything provided for White, excepting the obviously right move, 48.♕e2.'



Billingsgate fishwives

Steinitz seems to be talking here about Zukertort's somewhat exotic variation from the tenth game, which ended with 59...♙g1!!. Readers of the *Chronicle* who also subscribed to *The Chess-Monthly* might now pick up board and pieces and, if I am correct, they would arrive at the following position:

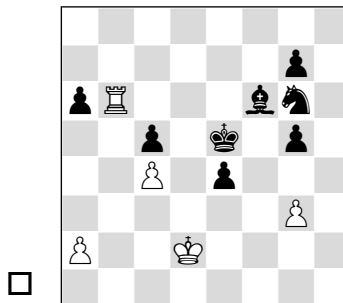


Joseph Blackburne
Johannes Zukertort

London 1881 (10)

In that case, Steinitz can be glad that his suggestion to play 48.♙e2 (again this trademark move!) probably had not found many readers.

To conclude this analytical warfare, here is a fine endgame fragment from the last game.



Joseph Blackburne
Johannes Zukertort

London 1881 (14)

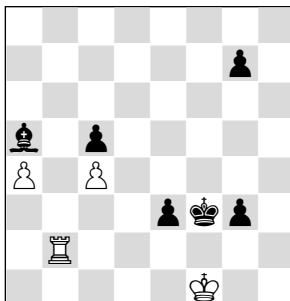
About this position, I wrote that an extensive discussion followed on how to proceed after 42.♙e3 (instead of 42.♖xa6 as played). Zukertort wanted to continue with 42...g4, which was less strong than Steinitz's 42...♙f5, but he insisted that it was sufficient for the win.

We now give Steinitz the last word:

'Fourthly, I only said that 42.♙e3 was White's best chance. I never before said that he had a very good chance, but though *The Chess-Monthly* clearly mean to imply at great length, in September as well as in January, that Blackburne, as usual, had no chance, I beg leave now to aggravate my original sin by saying, that he must have had an excellent, in fact a splendid chance, in actual play against Herr Zukertort, considering the blunders

the latter makes in conjunction with Herr Hoffer in his analytical investigations five months after the match.'

Following Zukertort's analyses, Steinitz arrives a little later at the next position.



(Exercise 14.4)

Black's last move was 49...♔d8-a5, and after 50.♞e2 ♔d2 51.♞g2 ♔e1!, victory was a fact according to Zukertort. However, 'here they clearly overlook that White can drive the King back [...] by 51.♞f2+ instead; and if 51...♔g4, White proceeds with 52.♞f7, and afterwards ♞e7, and I believe it is a draw; if 51...♔e4, White answers 52.♞g2, followed by ♔e2 in reply to 52...♔f4, or by 53.a5 if 52...♔c7, and the work of analysis has to be done over again. They may then win or not. At any rate though they profess to give the most minute analysis they overlook a stalemate combination one move deep. In fact all their errors could obviously be proved by an examination mostly of one or two moves.

And such slovenly investigation is put forth as analysis for the second time, in answer to a mild though public complaint of a rival author addressed to their journal. On such grounds do they base their allegations of gross errors on my part in my original analysis, and in my letter to the C.M., which in reality was only a defence against their unwarrantable attack.'

There is still something to be said about those lines, but that didn't happen, as this was the end of the analytical discussion and 51.♞f2! is definitely a fine conclusion. Because, contrary to Steinitz's claims, such a stalemate is very easy to miss.

As was to be expected, nothing remains of Zukertort's earlier glorious victory in Steinitz's final conclusion:

'The purely analytical part of my reply is now closed [...]. I shall not imitate their comical example of issuing proclamations, in enormous type, announcing my victories. [...] Suffice it to state, therefore, in usual

type, that to the best of my conscience not a single one of their analytical counter demonstrations in the January number is either correct or based on fair representations, and most of them are grossly faulty.’

The art of analysis

Analytical discussions had taken place earlier in chess history, for example between Staunton and Saint-Amant on the occasion of their match in 1843, but not before on this scale. The number of chess publications had increased, the frequency of publication had risen, and that made it easier to have this kind of discussion. This one was somewhat marred by the rapidly escalating hostility, and that was also the most interesting thing about it for a large part of the audience, but in terms of content this fight was very valuable. The increase in the number of published analyses contributed greatly to raising the level of play. What constitutes good analysis was therefore an important question, and in the fight between Steinitz and Zukertort this question clearly came to the fore.

Steinitz complained several times that Zukertort misrepresented his variations or intentions, and this was often due to Steinitz’s style of analysis, where he preferred descriptions in words rather than (numbered) move sequences:

‘I prefer this style of notes, which appears to me, at least in many cases, more suggestive and instructive than a string of variations knotted together with columns of letters and figures. But I almost despair of this mode of annotating when I see how much it appears to have confused the ideas of the intelligent editors of the C.M.’

An example of such an analysis by Steinitz is the following description: ‘R to Q Kt sq was the correct move, and if we mistake not it would have been almost sufficient to deter White from the immediate advance of the Q Kt P, for Black might then bring the Kt to Q Kt 2 via Q sq, and whenever the Rook entered at B7 the answer K to Q sq would immediately threaten Kt takes P, while Black’s R had also some good prospect of being made available at Q R sq.’ Based on this, Zukertort came up with a line in which Steinitz’s intentions were, at least according to himself, completely misinterpreted.

Zukertort had a different style of analysis, as we have seen, and he shook the variations out of his sleeve rather easily, and Steinitz complained about the mass of lines that came at him every time. By the way, Steinitz could also use this to achieve a (cheap) analytical success now and then (like the ♖b1 from the ‘analytical nightmare’), because in all those (long) variations by Zukertort, obviously many mistakes could be discovered.

New York

Game one

After years of anticipation, on 11 January 1886 at 2 p.m. in Cartiers' Academy on Fifth Avenue, the first moves are made in this very first World Championship Match. The games are played in a room that, through two wide open folding-doors, is visible to the public but not accessible. However, the game can be easily followed on a large demonstration board in the audience area. At the start, there are about forty spectators and that number grows to about seventy in the course of the afternoon. According to the report in the *New-York Daily Tribune*, the chess-playing public has not changed much in the course of history: 'They are a brainy looking lot of men, however, apt to be rather careless as regards the niceties of dress, and their hair is generally ruffled from a habit of running their fingers through it common to most chess players.'

A touching detail from the same report is that Steinitz's daughter tries to earn a little extra for the family with a small trade in what today would be called 'sports merchandise': 'Near the door Miss Steinitz, who bears a striking resemblance to her father, has a stand where she sells her father's photographs for 50 cents, pocket chess books, chess magazines, etc. She explains that she has not yet been able to get photographs of Dr. Zukertort, but hopes to have them on sale soon.'

The main players are introduced in picturesque style: 'Though Zukertort and Steinitz are the giants of the chess world, in the circle which John L. Sullivan adorns they would be classed as feather-weights.* They are both considerably below the medium height. Their physical development all runs to brain. Steinitz is the heavier of the two men, indeed for such a little man he is burdened with a respectable quantity of avoirdupois. His face is full, his forehead high and bulging. He has a bushy brown beard and



John Sullivan

* John Sullivan was the first more or less recognised world heavyweight boxing champion.

an abundance of dark hair. His face wears an expression of imperturbable amiability. In features Dr. Zukertort presents a striking contrast to him. With the aid of a little stage dressing he would make a first-rate *Mephistopheles*. His face is long and thin, his beard pointed, his nose long and sharp, his hair scant and revealing a little bald patch. He has a shrewd, wide-awake look at all times and has a habit of occasionally bunching his eyebrows, corrugating his brow and scanning his adversary as though he would read his inmost thoughts. It would make a nervous man feel rather uncomfortable, but Steinitz's temperament is evidently phlegmatic.'

Since the London tournament two and a half years before, both had played almost no serious competition games, so it was completely unclear what their current shape was. Age could play a role in a long match, Steinitz was now forty-nine and Zukertort forty-three, but the latter had a somewhat shaky health.

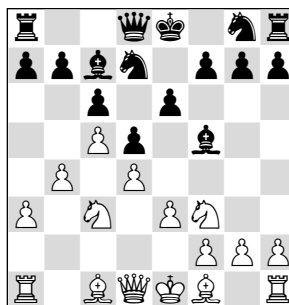
Steinitz had the reputation of being a slow starter, but he was at his very best in this first game. 'The game was one of the most remarkable played in twenty years, fully equal to some of Paul Morphy's strongest in the days when he astonished the masters of chess in America and Europe,' said *The New York Sun*. Morphy was still on a pedestal everywhere, but certainly in America, so that was a great compliment. Later, World Champions such as Mikhail Tal and Garry Kasparov would probably also have been proud of Steinitz's piece sacrifice.



Mephistopheles

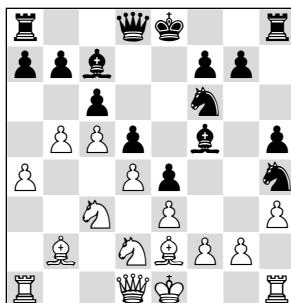
Johannes Zukertort – William Steinitz New York Wch m, 11.01.1886 (1)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f5 4.♗c3 e6 5.♗f3 ♘d7 6.a3 ♘d6 7.c5 ♘c7 8.b4



Zukertort has chosen his favourite set-up, the one with which he was so successful in London, but Steinitz appears well-prepared. The next counter-attack in the centre gives him excellent play.

8...e5 9.♘e2 ♗gf6 10.♘b2 e4 11.♗d2 h5 12.h3 ♗f8 13.a4 ♗g6 14.b5 ♗h4



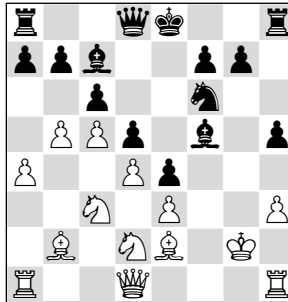
Early on, the game is approaching its first climax. White has already made some advances on the queenside, but Black's attack on the other side is taking more concrete shape. Now 15.♗f1 is a move you don't want to play, and also 15.♘f1 makes a lenient impression, so with his next move Zukertort gives Steinitz the opportunity to sacrifice a piece.

For those who had thought that this match would see a clash between Steinitz's scientific positional approach and Zukertort's romantic attacking spirit, this first game immediately turned this caricature on its head. Zukertort undoubtedly did not think in such clichés and he knew Steinitz well, so he must have taken that piece sacrifice into account.

The Sun commented: 'The game was somewhat dull up to the sixteenth move, when Mr. Steinitz made the first break, taking his opponent's king's pawn and crying check. This caused the first sensation, and a chorus of "ohs" arose when Mr. Zukertort took the knight with a pawn.' The newspapers were faced with the task of making it interesting for a lay audience too, and it is amusing to see that the Tribune reporter explicitly stated that: 'To any person unacquainted with chess nothing could be much more monotonous than this game. But those present watch it with that same rapt attention which is depicted on the faces of the Madison Square Garden when Sullivan is engaged in a "knocking out" bout.' We have come across Sullivan before, and the comparison with boxing as a fight in which real, visible blows are dealt is obvious.

Nevertheless, it is quite remarkable to describe the opening so far as 'somewhat dull', while the tension is palpable in this unbalanced position. But a large part of the chess audience still had the ideal of the direct assaults of the King's Gambit or Evans Gambit in mind, and to them this opening might seem somewhat dull.

15.g3 ♖g2+ 16.♔f1 ♘xe3+ 17.fxex3 ♙xg3 18.♖g2 ♙c7



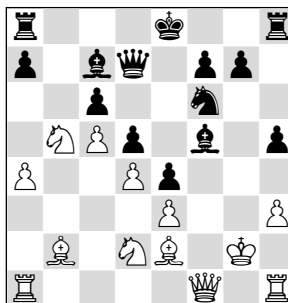
It is clear that Black has a lot of compensation, but is it enough? In any case, to go into this was a very brave decision by Steinitz in such an important game, because he could have played his position just as well without a piece sacrifice. Whether Zukertort started to lose courage here is not known, but his *Chess-Monthly* wrote: ‘Two pawns, White’s exposed king’s position, and the prospects of a formidable attack, are more than equivalent for a piece.’

However, it is only with his next move, which gives Black the opportunity to involve his rook in the attack with a gain of tempo, that Zukertort gets into insurmountable trouble. He himself indicated 19.♙f1, ‘and if 19...♙d7, then 20.♖f2, with chances of bringing the king into safety.’ Steinitz saw a better defence in 19.♘f1 and dismissed 19.♙f1 with ‘19...♙d7 followed by 20...♗h6, etc.’

However, after 19.♙f1 ♙d7, White has a much better idea than Zukertort’s 20.♖f2, namely 20.bxc6 bxc6

(Exercise 21.1)

21.♘b5!:



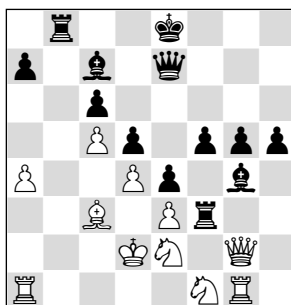
analysis diagram

The knight cannot be taken at the cost of losing the queen, and White is threatening to win another piece, so he succeeds in eliminating the

important attacking bishop on c7, after 21...♙e6 22.♜xc7+ or after 21...♙b8 22.♜d6+ ♙xd6 23.cxd6. If Black then continues with 23...♖h6 24.♙a3 ♖g6+ 25.♝f2, the dark-squared bishop will be sorely missed in the attack. White has the best chances in both cases.

After Zukertort's move, he did not really get into the game anymore. The position remained highly complicated, but Steinitz played the rest of the game extremely well.

19. ♖g1 ♖h6! 20. ♝f1 ♖g6 21. ♗f2 ♗d7 22. bxc6 bxc6 23. ♖g1 ♙xh3+ 24. ♝e1 ♜g4 25. ♙xg4 ♙xg4 26. ♜e2 ♗e7 27. ♜f4 ♖h6 28. ♙c3 g5 29. ♜e2 ♖f6 30. ♗g2 ♖f3 31. ♜f1 ♖b8 32. ♝d2 f5



The rate of play was 30 moves in two hours followed by 15 moves per hour. After four hours of play, there was a two-hour break. Steinitz had sealed the move 32...f5. For those readers who have not experienced the adjournment of games: the player to move did not execute his move, but instead wrote it down on a piece of paper that went into an envelope, invisible to the opponent. In this match, there was again the rule that players were not allowed to spend the two hours break analysing the adjourned position, alone or with the help of others.

Black has meanwhile gained a third pawn for the piece, and that majority has started to move. Add to that Black's beautiful bishops and White's unsafe king and it was clear that Zukertort was having a tough time.

Directly after resuming play, 'both men pull out cigars and begin smoking. Steinitz's face wears a look of placid contentment. The game seems to be going as he desires it. Dr. Zukertort does not look so easy, but he never looks as easy as his opponent under any circumstances,' says the Tribune.

The Sun wrote that 'the progress of the contest in the evening was far more brilliant and brisk than during the afternoon. [...] By moving his pawns forward with masterly skill, and, swooping down with his main pieces when necessary, he kept up his lively attack on the white king's flank until Mr. Zukertort resigned at the end of the forty-sixth move.'

This shows again that, at least for a large part of the audience, the primitive work of chopping was held in higher esteem than the more subtle work of manoeuvring. A glance at the adjourned position shows that what preceded must have been particularly entertaining. In the course of the match, this reproach – a lack of old-fashioned tossing and shoving – became more and more pronounced. That this change in the character of play had to do with the increased level compared to, for example, Morphy's times was not clear to everyone.

33.a5 f4 34.♖h1 ♖f7 35.♗e1 fxe3+ 36.♜xe3 ♜f2 37.♗xf2 ♗xf2 38.♜xg4 ♜f4+ 39.♜c2 hxg4 40.♜d2 e3 41.♜c1 ♗g2 42.♜c3 ♜d7 43.♖h7+ ♜e6 44.♖h6+ ♜f5 45.♜xe3 ♜xe3 46.♖f1+ ♜f4 0-1

Steinitz	1		1
Zukertort	0		0

Game two

This time, perhaps because of the promising start, there is twice as much public as on the first day. However, the visitors keep their overcoats and their hats on, because it is cold outside and therefore also in the playing hall, as not all windows and doors are closed due to the crowds and the many smoking spectators. The players, however, are (too) warm because the only heating in the hall is in the playing room. Miss Steinitz is again present but is shivering at the door. In the meantime, she has managed to add Dr. Zukertort's photograph to her collection. It is a prolific view, in which he shows to best advantage, and she sells many of them.

Newspaper reports invariably mention the difference in the mental states of the two combatants. In the colourful prose of the Tribune reporter, Steinitz is 'looking as placid as a mill pond and Dr Zukertort restless and nervous with deep lines engraved on his sharp cut features.' Yet Zukertort does not seem to be adversely affected by this in this

