

FREE EXTRACT

EMANUEL LASKER

VOLUME I STRUGGLE AND VICTORIES
WORLD CHESS CHAMPION FOR 27 YEARS

Edited by Richard Forster, Michael Negele, and Raj Tischbierek
With a foreword by Thomas Weischede

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Sonnabend 27.

allerliebste: Du erste März 1938 ist bald
21. Wir sind dann 21 Jahre verheiratet.
Durch allehand Dick und Dünn sind wir
zusammen gegangen und zuletzt sind
wir wie eine einzige Person geworden,
gleichsam zusammengewachsen.

Ich finde es sehr schön, auf diese
Weise verdoppelt zu sein. So habe
ich vier Augen und vier Ohren und
zwei Herzen und eine Seele,
mehr als verdoppelte.

Ich danke dir, dass du mein
Leben so bereichert hast. Vor allem,
dass du meinem Ehrgeiz, der oft
genug abenteuerlich ist, soviel

Verständnis und Verständnis
zubringst. Ehrgeiz ist
das richtige Wort, denn man
Ehren ist mir nicht
legen. Zuletzt habe ich
von Wissenschaft und
Weisheit, denn ich zu
Du verstehst mich darin wohl
besser als ich mich selbst.

Hoffentlich wird unsere gemein-
same Lebensfahrt uns nun viel
heiteres, sonniges Wetter bringen
und noch recht lange dauern. Es
unermüdet bühneniger Liebe
Dein alter Partner Emanuel

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EDITED BY
RICHARD FORSTER MICHAEL NEGELE RAJ TISCHBIEREK



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A BIOGRAPHICAL COMPASS: PART I

Michael Negele

SIN JUNE 1947, A TINY BOOKLET ABOUT THE CHESS giant Emanuel Lasker appeared in the small books series of the chess magazine *Caissa*. The author, Walter Loose, concluded with the question: “Have we succeeded in solving the riddle of the Lasker Sphinx?” The answer then still strikes at the heart of the matter: Emanuel Lasker remains a phenomenon. Not only in chess, but also in his way of life and creative energy. Loose presciently wrote:

Our times are fast paced. Let us tarry for a moment and reverently lose ourselves in what the former world champion created. In our modest way, let us try to emulate him, mindful of his inspiring dictum, which as a shining symbol should light the path especially of our young chess players: “I love the vigor that dares the utmost in order to reach the reachable.”¹

In 2014, the British grandmaster John Nunn published an entire textbook based solely on Lasker’s chess games. In his introduction, the renowned author explained why he decided on this approach. Nunn’s conclusion, following a deep study of Lasker’s oeuvre, seems applicable, in a figurative sense, also to the life of the second world chess champion:

His talent lay in creating situations in which the normal rules and evaluations didn’t apply; his opponents would fail to realize that something was amiss until it was too late. ... As a consequence, the myth has developed that many of Lasker’s wins were based on swindles, pure luck or even the effect of his cigars. In reality, there was nothing mystical or underhand about his games; they were based on a deep understanding of chess, an appreciation of deceptive positions and some shrewd psychology. ... Lasker was a great fighter and had a strong will to win, but his winning efforts hardly ever crossed the boundary into recklessness.²

A closer inspection reveals certain contradictions: Emanuel Lasker the chess player at times escaped the serious side of “real life.” The present attempt at a stringent description of the actual events and—where possible—an appraisal in the contemporary historical context is intended to help demythologize one of the chess world’s greatest figures. Room is

1 Loose, *Lasker*, 32. The Lasker quote comes from Lasker’s preview in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* of the 1908 match with Tarrasch (Lasker, *Lasker–Tarrasch*, p. 1).

2 Nunn, *Chess Course*, p. 7.

given to the German viewpoints in particular, and readers are invited to compare and contrast Lasker's life story in the period from 1868 to 1901 with the British and American views outlined elsewhere in this volume.³

Be forewarned against overly lofty expectations: Lasker held his cards close to his chest both in his games and in private life. His decisions and the motives behind them are obscure, especially in his youth. Lasker repeatedly spoke out critically about the imposition of others in interpreting someone else's decision-making processes:

Nobody has the right to speak thus, for it is beyond any man's capacity to so deeply look into the heart and brain of another as to be competent to judge of that mysterious and fleeting thing—a man's talent and ability. The same difficulty arises when we judge of nice shades of difference in the works produced of several men. If we cannot avoid passing judgment, we should be all but hasty or positive, since a slow evolution and the cooperation of many minds is needed to make the task of such criticism fruitful or even possible.⁴

“Weltschachmeister,” an old-fashioned term for world chess champion, was Lasker's own iconic title. But in real life he acted markedly less focused than at the chess board. That can already be said for the course of his school years, and with certainty it applied to his studies of mathematics, which extended over ten years.⁵ Lasker's efforts at the beginning of the 20th century to pursue an academic career failed.⁶ His applications occurred unsystematically, and the lack of tenacity reinforces the impression of an inconsistent and erratic approach. After Lasker had given up these ambitions and decided on a career as “professional chess champion,” he did not conform to the image of the typical professional player. Time and time again he sought pursuits outside the chess world. Moreover, there were numerous voices in the United States and Europe that were put off by the demands he had as a professional “chess artist.”⁷ Lasker's often imperious attitude and his negotiating style, which repeatedly led to delays in his title matches, made the world champion a highly controversial figure among chess organizers and officials.

At the beginning of World War I, he advocated a rather naïve pro-German position in the *Vösische Zeitung*, which cost him the approval of many associates. Consequently, he faced con-

3 Furthermore, the reader may notice a certain degree of overlap between this essay and some of the subsequent, more specialized ones, which, for the sake of coherency, was inevitable.

4 *LCM*, August 1907, pp. 159–161, here p. 161 (“A Review of Dr. Tarrasch's Review”), taking issue with Tarrasch's book on the Lasker vs. Marshall match.

5 See pp. 65, 70, and 192–195 in the present volume.

6 See pp. 197–200 in the present volume.

7 See pp. 159–168 and 263–265 in the present volume.

siderable hostility in Great Britain and the United States in the early 1920s.⁸ After negotiations for a title match in the Netherlands with his Cuban challenger, José Raúl Capablanca, had failed, on 18 June 1920 he announced in Amsterdam that he would surrender the World Championship by default. When, in Havana in the spring of 1921, the contest with Capablanca was staged after all, it took a one-sided course. Lasker appeared unprepared and in poor physical shape. After 14 games, hopelessly lagging behind by a score of 0–4, he prematurely abandoned the match.

Afterwards, Lasker strove anew to turn away from tournament chess. He invested in real estate and dabbled in farming. Just when obscure business plans in the Netherlands threatened to fall through,⁹ he succeeded in an impressive comeback at the chess board starting in 1923.

In the New York Tournament of 1924, Lasker triumphed in a manner never seen before.¹⁰ From 1925 onwards, he could live very comfortably off the earnings of his publications and lectures as “world champion without a throne.” He publicly turned away from chess, intending to devote his golden years to instruction for mind games and to philosophical questions.¹¹

However, the incipient world economic crisis of late 1929 and overly risky stock market investments served to obliterate Lasker’s capital assets. He was left stuck with virtually worthless properties and a mountain of debt. To pay this off, Lasker started working in the Netherlands at the beginning of 1932 as a bridge instructor and organizer. When this did not fetch a sufficient income he moved to London, where he generated a modest income with his journalistic work and newly resumed chess activities. It remains unclear whether his relocation to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1935 happened primarily for economic reasons or if he had some further motives. The same holds true for the subsequent move to the United States in autumn of 1937. Originally planned purely as a visit to his granddaughter in Chicago it turned into a permanent resettlement.



A youthful portrait of Lissi Ellen Hirschberg, later Danelius, granddaughter of Lasker’s spouse Martha. From 1934 onward, she lived with her husband in Chicago, where her cousin Hans Bamberger had already taken up residence.

8 See T. Preziuso, “Aus der Schreibmaschine des Schachweltmeisters” in Forster/Hansen/Negele, *Lasker*, pp. 185–188; also volume III of the present series.

9 See P. de Jong, “Laskers Beziehung zu den Niederlanden” in Forster/Hansen/Negele, *Lasker*, pp. 101–128; also volume II of the present series.

10 See J. Donaldson, “Weltmeister ohne Titel” in Forster/Hansen/Negele, *Lasker*, pp. 631–645; also volume II of the present series.

11 See S. Poldauf, “Lasker und die Berliner Boheme” in Forster/Hansen/Negele, *Lasker*, pp. 191–211; also volumes II and III of the present series.



Emanuel Lasker in a likeness that he published in 1892 in the Christmas edition of his *London Chess Fortnightly*.

Lasker's life saw many twists and turns, not only from a geographical point of view, but also in terms of alliances, friendships, and adversaries, as has been pointed out, for example, in George Gallagher's "psychobiography" (see separate text box on the next two pages). Lasker would align himself anew, frequently severing relationships that had been cultivated opportunistically during many years. Pronounced goodwill abruptly turned into emphatic rejection.

The attentive reader will at times be surprised at the vituperative tone in Lasker's observations on events of chess history, but also regarding some of his fellow human beings. However, such opinions he expressed only very rarely in public. Mostly we know them through the numerous letters to his (later) wife from 1903 onwards.

This correspondence also brings a contradiction to light between a marked idealism and an occasional advocacy of embarrassingly narrow-minded materialistic considerations—by no means always stemming from his own financial hardship. Judging from a present-day perspective, we can discern that Lasker often went too far in his reasoning, and sometimes put himself in the wrong. Even friends that were favorably inclined lacked understanding for this.

On the other hand, we also find examples of personal devotion and generosity. For instance, in correspondence with his parents Lasker mentioned the delight of inviting his nieces and nephews to a treat at the bakery¹² as well as a monthly allowance to his sister Amalie, who in 1901 was raising five boys.¹³ Further examples of Lasker's generosity can be found in his support of the widow Baudet,¹⁴ and his initiative to collect money for the almost destitute William Steinitz in 1897.¹⁵

Last but not least, Lasker had a keen sense of humor.¹⁶

12 Letter to his parents, 14 May 1899, Autograph Collection of the Cleveland Public Library, Ohio.

13 See p. 49 below.

14 See volume II of the present series.

15 See p. 40 below.

16 See, for example, p. 251 in the present volume.

LASKER: THE AMERICAN VIEWS

John Hilbert

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

ACCURATE OR NOT, FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE important. Lasker's arrival in America was no different. Some knowledge of the youthful German player preceded his 28 September 1892 sailing from Southampton, bound for New York, as reported in his own short-lived journal.¹ Americans knew Emanuel Lasker had won tournaments in London and had dominated Blackburne and Bird in match play. Excitement grew as he came closer to American shores. His arrival on the steamer *Spree* aroused anticipation of his play against eight, hand-picked masters of the Manhattan Chess Club, including New York State champion Albert Hodges, in three-game exhibition matches.

Lasker visited the Manhattan, Brooklyn, and City Chess clubs in New York, receiving a cordial welcome from club officers, members, and the cream of players then residing in America, including Samuel Lipschütz, Sam Loyd, and world champion William Steinitz. His stay, expected to last only until Christmas 1892, quickly expanded into 1893 and later.² As is well known, Lasker dominated his Manhattan exhibition match opponents 20 to 2, with 1 draw (and a forfeit win), causing at least one newspaper to conclude that "he has shown himself to be at least one of the three great chess masters of the world, who are Steinitz, Chigorin, and Lasker."³ By 9 November 1892, Lasker had established his strength as a player before his new



Albert Beauregard Hodges (1861–1944) was the New York state champion in the years 1892 to 1894. For a short period in 1894/95 he was arguably the chess champion of the United States.

¹ *London Chess Fortnightly*, 1 October 1892, p. 31.

² *London Chess Fortnightly*, 1 November 1892, p. 47.

³ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 7 November 1892. Unfortunately, Lasker's initial play at the Manhattan Chess Club has never received complete, detailed treatment. The first half of his play at the Manhattan, including all twelve games and information about his reception in the United States, are documented in Hilbert, Lasker's First Two Months. The scores with citations of all recovered games played by Lasker in this, his first United States tour, appear in Whyld, *Collected Games* (see especially games 127–154).



Carl August Walbrodt (1871–1902) achieved some remarkable successes despite a comparatively short chess career. He shared first place with von Bardeleben in the Kiel master tournament in 1893 and was second to Charousek at Berlin in 1897.

American acquaintances. After a similar, successful series of games at the Brooklyn Chess Club, he traveled to Montreal, Quebec, Baltimore, and the little known Logansport, Indiana, where a short match was begun in mid-December with Jackson Whipps Showalter. Two of three scheduled games were played in what was originally supposed to be a three game match, which the following April was expanded into a ten game one.⁴ By the end of 1892, however, Lasker returned for a two-week engagement in Philadelphia. He established cordial relations with many prominent American players and club members, his warm and modest personality winning them over.

But not everyone. And certainly not in Havana, where Lasker arrived on 17 January 1893, with the expectation of simply playing simultaneous and exhibitions games. Instead, members of the Havana Chess Club wanted him to play a six-game match against Carl August Walbrodt. A Berlin master, Walbrodt was nearly three years younger than Lasker, but had achieved master level play by 1890/91. He had good results in several German competitions. More importantly, his

chess strength was rapidly increasing.⁵ The Cubans expected Walbrodt would prove a difficult opponent for Lasker.

Lasker refused to meet Walbrodt, stating he was opposed to matches of a limited number of games, and that he hoped to meet him in a more important match under better circumstances.⁶ The matter soon became heated and personal. Unlike Lasker, Walbrodt had no quarrel with his treatment in Havana, and wrote in the 19 March 1893 *New York Tribune* that “It is impossible for me to share the views of Herr Lasker. Everybody generally reaps what he has sown.”⁷

Lasker defended his actions in Cuba against Walbrodt’s comments in a letter published in the 2 April 1893 *New Orleans Times-Democrat*. Walbrodt had upbraided Lasker for allegedly using his name without permission, in response to which Lasker testily wrote that “I have used Herr Walbrodt’s name only in connection with the fact that his engagement

4 Regarding Lasker’s early American itinerary and match with Showalter, see generally Whyld, *Collected Games*, games 127–205, 230–236.

5 Cheshire, *Hastings 1895*, p. 354.

6 *London Chess Fortnightly*, 28 February–14 March 1893, pp. 118f. Meanwhile, in the week of 22 to 29 January, Lasker had successfully contested two small series of informal games against the leading Cuban players, Celso Golmayo y Zúpide (+2 –0 =1) and Andrés Clemente Vázquez (+3 –0 =1).

7 *London Chess Fortnightly*, 30 March–14 April 1893, p. 122.

with the Havana Chess Club was for such and such an amount, and this being no private affair, nor intended to be, Herr Walbrodt may keep his permission for himself.”⁸

As for Walbrodt’s remark about people reaping what they have sown, Lasker branded it “an insinuation, and not the slightest effort is made to explain it. I do not see what reproach can be made to me. I am invited by the Havana Chess Club to give some performances and play some matches with local players. In the meantime all preparations are made to arrange a match with Walbrodt; but the fact of his invitation is intentionally concealed from me. I arrive in Havana, and from the first day to the last, fulfill all my engagements. But that is not what the Cubans want. Their coup is to get me into a match with Walbrodt. I do not wish to play, because, for once, I do not see my way to sacrifice all my interests to the entertainment of people whom I had never before seen—and, then for the more forcible reason that, after my long and wearisome journeys, I do not wish to trust my nerves to stand the tremendous strain.” As for Walbrodt’s insinuations, Lasker concluded that the young master “should express himself openly and frankly, or else keep silent in such a matter.”⁹

Lasker’s defense of his refusal to play against Walbrodt had in part sprung from criticism he received from Louis Uedemann of Chicago, then one of the strongest chess players in the United States living outside New York or Philadelphia.

Uedemann had written in the 2 February 1893 *Chicago Times* that Lasker avoided facing strong players, such as Tarasch, Lipschütz, and Walbrodt, instead seeking only money for simultaneous and exhibition play.¹⁰ In a 5 April 1893 letter from Kokomo, Indiana, Lasker responded, calling Uedemann’s piece “a conglomeration of insinuations.” He carefully refuted each charge, noting that a match in Havana would be “in a climate which was unknown to me and which at present I do not consider favorable to good chess.” As for the author, “Mr. Uedemann is either writing about something of which he knows nothing or else willfully misrepresenting facts; he can choose whichever horn of the dilemma he likes.”¹¹ Lasker’s



Louis Uedemann (1854–1912) was a chess journalist of German origin, who competed with success in several tournaments in the United States. His name is linked to the “Uedemann Code” for communicating chess moves via telegraph.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 *Chess World*, May 1893, pp. 61f.

11 Ibid., pp. 63f.



Jackson Whipps Showalter (1860–1935), “The Kentucky Lion,” was a ferocious attacking player and the most successful chess master in the United States between Mackenzie’s death in 1891 and Pillsbury’s meteoric rise in 1895.

taking issue with statements in the American press would, as time went on, become more caustic.

Starting in early March 1893, Lasker established his first formal credentials in America outside the chess realm when, in connection with an engagement at the New Orleans Chess, Checkers and Whist Club, he gave a series of lectures at Louisiana’s Tulane University on Linear Differential Equations “for teachers and students of higher mathematics.”¹² “I gave in the whole twelve,” Lasker wrote, “in the course of about a month. They have been well received, the audience numbering about eighteen ladies and gentlemen, from the beginning to the end.”¹³

Lasker had been reluctant to play serious matches before the end of March 1893 because of his extensive expenditure of energy during his first six months in America. However, in April 1893, in Kokomo, Indiana, Lasker continued his match with Showalter that had begun in December 1892 at the Indiana State meeting in Logansport.

Showalter had divided the first two games with Lasker in December 1892. But on resumption of play four months later, Lasker dominated the Kentucky master, winning the match 6 to 2, with 2 draws (the first draw decided without play).

PURSUING STEINITZ

Edward Winter has written that “The pen-portrait is a form of chess reporting that has fallen into desuetude (as has the word desuetude).”¹⁴ Not so in the 1890s, when it flourished. This is particularly fortunate for a study of Lasker, as several detailed pen-portraits of him appeared in the American press. A *Chicago Herald* reporter visited Lasker’s rooms in 1893, and found the chess player

unravelling abstruse mathematical problems, such exercise being a light diversion for him. The reporter was cordially received by the young champion. Mr. Lasker possesses a refined and intellectual face, with an unmistakable Jewish cast of countenance. His features are clear cut, his eyes dark and piercing, yet at times bright and merry in their twinkle. His thin, compressed lips, evincive of strength and firmness, are

12 *The Times-Democrat* (New Orleans), 3 March 1893.

13 *London Chess Fortnightly*, 30 March–14 April 1893, p. 127.

14 Winter, *Chess Omnibus*, p. 41.

almost hid by the drooping, neatly trimmed dark mustache. The glasses which bridge his firm Roman nose impart to his visage a sedate and scholarly appearance. The quiet dignity of his bearing, the easy grace of his poses, and the measured reticence of his conversation indicate the artist's temperament, and the conformation of the frontal cranium discovered to the phrenologist an abnormal development where the group of intellectual faculties have their abode. Mr. Lasker is not a voluble talker, but he expresses himself easily in good English. When the subject of chess is broached his eyes light up with interest and his conversation becomes animated.¹⁵

Few today realize this word picture of Lasker appeared directly before his well-known comments stating he expected to defeat Steinitz, and that

I wish to say that I have never played my best chess, for I have never been required to exert myself to defeat such players as I have encountered. ... I am imbued with an ambition to be acknowledged chess champion of the world, and if the match with Steinitz can be arranged that ambition will soon be gratified.¹⁶

Lasker's words today may seem prophetic. But when they were uttered, they carried with them the braggadocio of youth. The American chess world did not universally believe Lasker's chances against Steinitz were that good. Lipschütz and F. J. Lee, for instance, two very strong players themselves, were convinced, once the challenge was issued 31 August 1893, that Steinitz would defeat his young opponent.¹⁷

Lasker enlarged his circle of American admirers, and perhaps to a degree their willingness to back him against Steinitz, when in October 1893 he won the "Impromptu" masters tournament held at the Manhattan and Brooklyn Chess Clubs by the astonishing score of 13–0. His play caused great excitement, especially his game against one young American. According to a local report, "The most wonderful thing Lasker did in this tournament was in the game against Pillsbury. The game during the whole of its progress was besieged by scores of chess players, and it was with the greatest difficulty one could get a glance on the board."¹⁸

Steinitz and Lasker signed their match articles 5 March 1894. Although originally stakes of \$5,000 were hoped for, the final agreement acknowledged that the winner, taking all,

15 *Newark Daily Advertiser*, 30 June 1893.

16 *London Chess Fortnightly*, 30 April 1893, pp. 172f.

17 *Newark Daily Advertiser*, 15 September 1893.

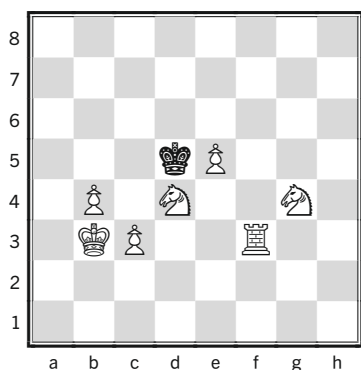
18 *New York Times*, 22 October 1893. The top scores were: 1 Lasker 13/13; 2 Albin 8½; 3–5 Delmar, F. J. Lee, and Showalter, 8; 6 Hanham 7½; 7 Pillsbury 7; 8 Taubenhaus 6; etc.

Lasker also won first prize at the solving contest held on the occasion of the centennial jubilee of the Vereenigd Amsterdamsch Schaakgenootschap on 17 December 1922. He solved all three problems in 38 minutes.²²

Let us briefly summarize Lasker's achievements as a problem composer.

His compositional work was the product of an occasional ancillary occupation and therefore remained quantitatively very small. The spread over a long period contributed to the fact that the "composer Lasker" only occasionally attracted the attention of the problem world. As he refrained from participating in composing tourneys, none of his problems ever won a tourney award, and he did not manage to compose the one outstanding problem that would have made his name immortal. His few problems generally ranged from pleasing to notable, and were demanding for the solver. He was appropriately honored by commendation and recognition from the expert audience at the time. However, it is obvious that Lasker's achievements in problem chess were insufficient to give him a higher rank in the "gallery of problemists".

Below is a selection of Lasker's chess problems.



Mate in 3 moves (7+1)

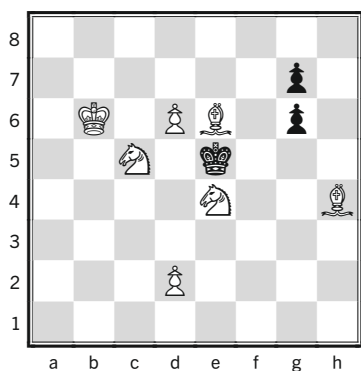
Problem No. 1

Hereford Times [1892]²³

1 ♖c2! Zugzwang. ♜e4 2 c4 ♝×d4 3 ♞f4‡

Eight pieces, rex solus with knight sacrifice and a concluding model mate. The short mate after 1 ... ♜c4 2 ♜e3‡ slightly spoils the good impression.

A version of a well-known five-mover by Auguste d'Orville (*Le Palamède* 1837: ♖b2, ♜f3, ♜d3, g4, ♠b3, c2, e4—♞d4; mate in 5 moves. Solution: 1 ♜ge5 ♜e3 2 c3 ♞d2 3 ♜c4‡ ♝×d3 4 b4 ♝×c4 5 ♜e2‡), who uses a bishop instead of a rook (diagonal mate instead of horizontal mate) and shows two knight sacrifices.



Mate in 2 moves (7+3)

Problem No. 2

1895. (Source?)²⁴

1 ♜g5! Zugzwang. ♝×d6/♞d4/♞f4/♞f6 2 ♜f7/♜f3/♜d3/♜d7‡

22 H. Reerink, "Lasker und Holland" in Kotowski/Poldauf/Wagner, *Homo ludens*, pp. 173f.

23 Reprint: *Leeds Mercury*, 25 June 1892, ("composed for *Hereford Times*" according to Whyld, *Lasker*, p. 218); *Evening News and Post* (London), 25 June 1892; and *Hampstead & Highgate Express*, 28 April 1894 (according to Whyld, *Lasker the Composer*, p. [8]); further No. 1780, *DWS*, 18 December 1892.

24 Reprint: *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, 16 March 1895, and *Baltimore News*, 20 July 1895 (according to Whyld, *Lasker the Composer*, p. [8]).

Star-flight by the black king with symmetrical mates by the white knights. The key gives two new flight squares (d6, f6) to the black king.

Of course, there are innumerable two-movers with star-flights by the black king, especially in miniature form. While not being a miniature, Lasker's early composition gains some charm from the echo-like knight mates.²⁵

Problem No. 3

with **Richard Teichmann**

Womanhood (London) 1900

1 d7! ♖e3, ♖f4, ~ 2 d6 ~ 3 d5‡

No matter in which direction the black king escapes (g4 or f2), the discovered mate on the third move is inevitable. The successive advance of the white triple pawn appears original and does not lack humor.

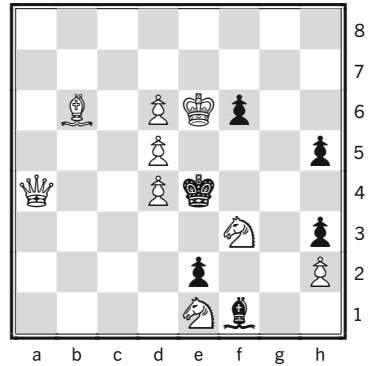
A. C. White comments as follows, including two other thematically similar problems:

The cumulative spirit is recognized not only where all of a mainplay falls to the share of a specified piece, but also where the bulk of the mainplay is made by one piece or by separate pieces of a given kind. I take my illustrations this time from the humble Pawn. In No. 10B [four-mover by H. and P. Johner] a Pawn makes three of the four moves, and this is amply sufficient to give the position a strong task flavor. No. 10A [four-mover by R. L'hermet] has the first two moves by two Pawns. This would not be very distinctive, were it not that the moves are so closely similar as to provoke an odd sense of repetition. The cumulative effect is the same as which makes us laugh more heartily if we see two people fall down together on the ice than if we see only one person do so.²⁶

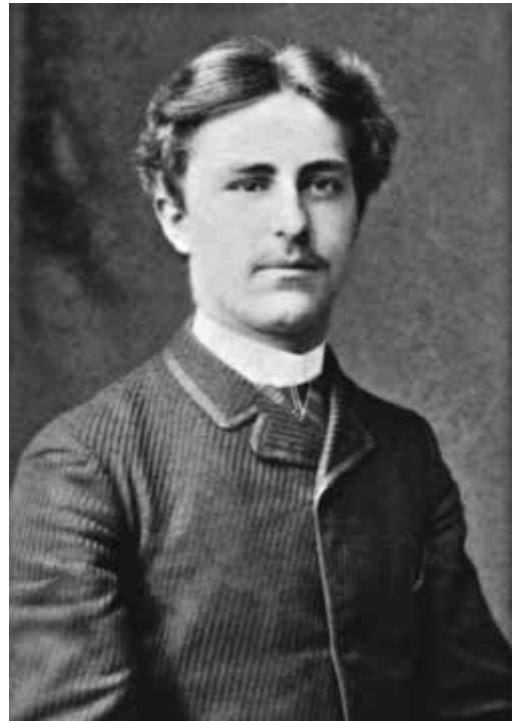
A similar memorable solution can be found in an earlier five-mover by J. Kohtz and C. Kockelkorn, which, however, can by no means be regarded as an anticipation: ♖h4 ♗h3 ♙c6 ♜d1 ♜e6 ♙g2—♙e4 ♙c2 ♙d5 ♙b1 ♜h2 ♙e5, *Le Palamède* 1865, honorable mention; solution: 1 ♖h5! ♙a2 2 ♖h6 ♙b3 (2 ... ♜g4‡/♙c4 3 ♖g5/♜g5‡) 3 ♖h7 4 ♖h8 5 ♗h7‡; Bristol clearance by the king for his queen.

25 A two-move star-flight miniature, in which all mating moves are carried out by a single knight, was first achieved by H. Hultberg in 1943, but only at the expense of a checking key.

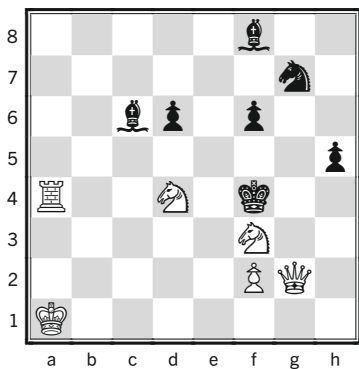
26 White, *Tasks and Echoes*, p. 37.



Mate in 3 moves (9+6)



Richard Teichmann (1868–1925) in 1889, just before he started his studies of modern languages in Berlin. In the German capital he almost certainly met with Emanuel Lasker, who was his junior by one day. In later years, Teichmann also became a respected problem composer.



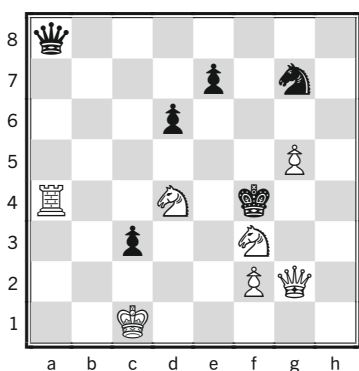
Problem No. 4

1902. (Source?)²⁷

1 ♖h4! (threat 2 ♖g6/♖xc6♯) 2 ♜xg2/♜e4 2 ♜df3/♜g3♯

The defense 1... ♜xg2 turns out to be a harmful critical move for Black. Unfortunately, the double threat is a significant weakness. In 1986, Robert Clyde Moore achieved an improvement with enriched content; see the following version 4a (in a slightly more economic version).

Mate in 2 moves (6+7)



Problem No. 4a

Version R. C. Moore

No. 190, R. C. Moore, *Two-Move Chess Problems*, 1986
Improved version.²⁸

1 ♖h4! (threat [1... ♜e5] 2 ♖g6♯)

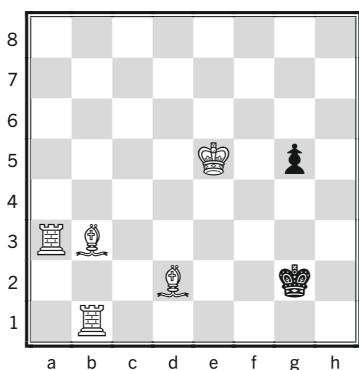
1... ♜xg2 (critical move) 2 ♜df3♯;

1... ♜e8 ([Høeg-]pericritical move) 2 ♖c6♯;

1... ♜e4 (block) 2 ♜g3♯

This has only one threat; the second threat from Lasker's problem now becomes the mating move after the pericritical defense 1... ♜e8 (after Moore).

Mate in 2 moves (7+6)



Problem No. 5

Checkmate, June 1903

The ambush 1 ♖b2! creates a second bishop-rook battery and threatens (1... ♜~2) 2 ♜xg5† ♜~3/♜~1 3 ♜e6(d1)/♖a1♯.

1... ♜~3 2 ♜e1! ♜g4 3 ♜d1♯, 2... g4 3 ♜e6♯

In the threat, two direct bishop/rook batteries become effective; in the solution the mate is given by an indirect bishop/rook battery. Note that the black king has the maximum of eight flight squares after the key. A pleasing miniature with an appealing final position.

Otto Wurzburg wrote the following introduction to this problem in *Checkmate*:

Mate in 3 moves (5+2)

27 Reprint: No. 287, *Lasker's Chess Magazine*, March 1906.

28 A black bishop e7 in Moore's version was replaced by a black pawn e7. The problem is included in this version in the online databases (Meson; Chess Problem Database Server) with the source *LCM* 1906 and without a reference to later reworkings.

The above problem, an original contribution to CHECKMATE from the most eminent of the masters of the game, will be viewed with interest by all problem enthusiasts. It bears the earmarks of “a player’s problem,” but has a definite theme which is very well handled. Though the author modestly speaks of himself as “an inexperienced but ambitious composer,” we must congratulate him upon the success he has already achieved in this new field for his energies.²⁹

Problem No. 6

No. 285, *Checkmate*, July 1903

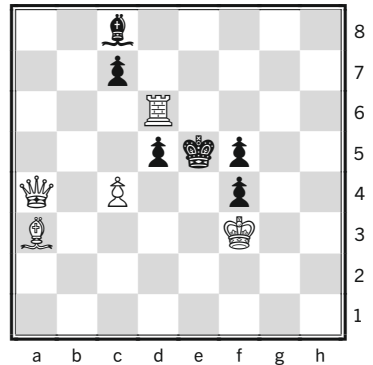
- 1 ♖b5! (threat 2 ♖×d5‡ and in two moves 2 ♖b2† d4
 3 ♖×d4‡)
 1 ... ♜b7! (2 ♖b2‡? would now be countered by the cross-check defense 2 ... d4†) 2 c×d5! (3 ♖b2‡) c5 3 d×c6 e.p.‡!,
 2 ... c×d6, ♜d4 3 ♜b2‡;
 1 ... c×d6 2 ♜b2† ♜e6 3 ♖e8‡;
 1 ... c5 2 ♖×c5 ~ 3 ♜b2‡;
 1 ... ♜d4 2 ♖×d5† ♜c3 3 ♖d3‡

An unexpected *en passant* mate in a variation which even today could prove a touchstone for some solvers.

Two contemporary comments:

Overlooking an aggressive key we find a piquant rendering of a cunning little idea. Evidently the Champion’s abilities are not limited to one branch of the art.³⁰

The World’s Champion has only composed a limited number of problems, but they have invariably been marked by a freshness and charm of unusual quality. Readers of *The White Rooks* will remember his masterly handling of the miniature in No. 68 of that work. No. 11 is another of his clever themes, and by far the best horizontal *en passant* mate I have come across. As a player, Lasker understands that the peculiar character of the Capture must be accurately introduced, and he has succeeded very well in forcing Black to play 2 ... c5 instead of 2 ... c6. The mate itself recalls closely that of No. 10 [two-mover by J. Kohtz and C. Kockelkorn], but the latter we saw was inaccurate in execution and consequently of much smaller value.³¹



Mate in 3 moves (5+6)

²⁹ *Checkmate*, June 1903, p. 203.

³⁰ *Checkmate*, September 1903, p. 282.

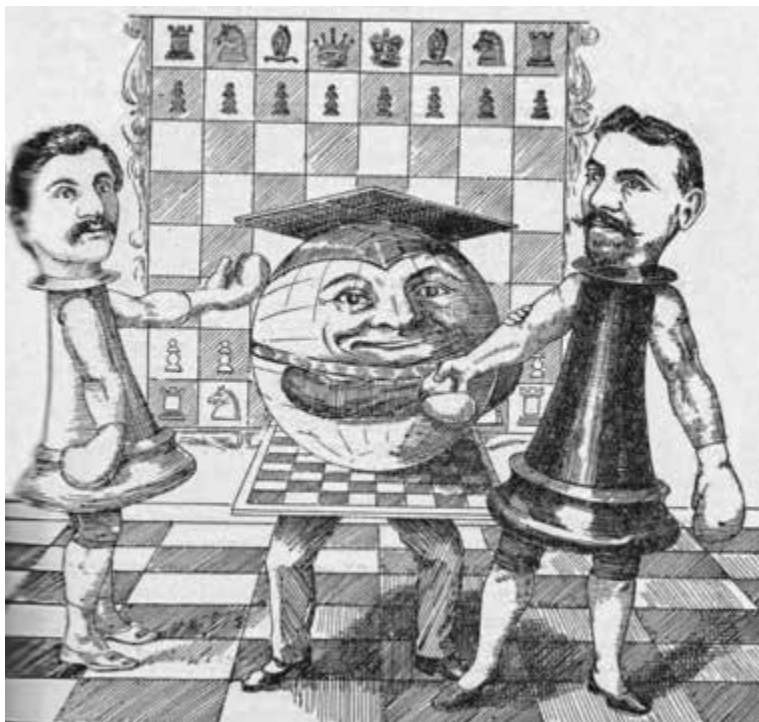
³¹ White, *Gauntlet*, p. 85.

moment.⁴⁰ Thus, he was without much practice when he sat down at the board for the first game.⁴¹

The contest took place at a point in time when World War I was not yet in sight. Germany was in the process of outstripping England economically, and was rising to be the biggest economy in the world. The term “made in Germany,” once coined as a stigma, started to be a symbol for quality.

Chess life in Germany was prospering. Besides the German Chess Federation with 140 affiliated clubs, there existed a Bavarian and an East German Chess Federation. There were also three nationwide chess publications: The *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, the *Deutsches Wöchenschach*, and the *Süddeutsche Schachblätter* (predecessor of the *Deutsche Schachblätter*). Right before the beginning of the Lasker–Tarrasch match, the sixteenth German Congress was held in Düsseldorf.⁴²

The Masters’ Tournament was won by Frank James Marshall, who recently had been clearly outplayed by both his match opponents. In the *Hauptturnier A* a 15-year-old Alexander Alekhine, in his first international appearance, shared fourth place. At the end of August, the future world champion traveled on to Munich and attended the Lasker–Tarrasch match as a spectator.⁴³



The chess world was eagerly anticipating the clash. Artwork by Frederick Orrett (1858–1939) from the *British Chess Magazine*, June 1908.

40 Tarrasch himself did not give the actual names of these two masters in his “apologia” in the match book (pp. 111–113); it was Lasker who divulged them (Kamm, *Tarrasch*, p. 325 [fn. 256]).

41 The only exceptions are a few negligible consultation games played on 7 June 1908 in Cologne, which a note in the *DWS*, 28 June 1908, p. 227, describes as follows: “One cannot take Dr. T’s failure in Cologne too seriously. You can rather too easily be subject to failure when, after taking a train ride of many hours, you immediately sit down at the chess board to simultaneously attend to several games against strong consulting opponents.”

42 *DWS*, 9 August 1908, pp. 285–290.

43 Skinner/Verhoeven, *Alekhine*, p. 32. Edward Lasker writes: “Frank Marshall, who was the favorite, was already in town and was practicing with a young Russian school boy, who had entered the Major Tournament. ... At this time his name did not mean much to us ... it was none other than Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine!” (Lasker, *Secrets*, pp. 45f.).

Tarrasch was expected to bring the world champion title “back” to Germany. After his longstanding sojourn in the United States, Lasker was not considered a German; mostly he was referred to as “Dr. Lasker from New York.”

The rivalry and suspense were so great that, according to Edward Lasker, Tarrasch allegedly even refused to shake hands with his rival at the beginning of the contest.⁴⁴

THE MATCH GAMES

Emanuel Lasker
Siegbert Tarrasch⁴⁵
Düsseldorf, 1st match game
17 and 18 August 1908

Today, at quarter to four in the afternoon in the rooms of the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf the fight for the chess world championship between me and Dr. Tarrasch began. ... We, the two rivals and our seconds,⁴⁶ sat down in a smaller corner hall reserved for us while a vividly excited vast public was getting ready to follow the events. ... With a demonstration board, visible from afar and attached to the wall, on which the moves of the game were reproduced soon after they had been made, care had been taken that the public could follow the game without trouble.⁴⁷

Much less is known about the setting of the first four games in Düsseldorf than about the rest of the match in Munich, where—according to Tarrasch—“the whole arrangement was much more splendid.”⁴⁸

After weak opening play by Black Lasker reached an advantageous endgame, which he, however, did not treat with the

44 Lasker, *Secrets*, p. 47.

45 References: Tarrasch, *Lasker–Tarrasch*, pp. 27–32; Lasker, *Lasker–Tarrasch*, pp. 6–9; G. Marco in *WSZ*, September–October 1908, pp. 266–268; Soloviov/Khalifman, *Lasker Games 1904–1940*, pp. 38f.; R. Hübner, “Abfall Nr. 28, Teil III” in *ChessBase Magazin*, no. 54, September 1996, pp. 23–32; S. Alapin, “Rezension des Tarraschbuches” in *WSZ*, March 1909, pp. 73–81, and October 1909, pp. 329–335; Nunn, *Chess Course*, pp. 153–157.

46 Unlike today, the seconds were exclusively concerned with administrative tasks. “For the whole time of the match Herr stud. med. Heinrich Renner from Nuremberg was working as my second. Lasker’s second in Düsseldorf was Herr Appunn from Coburg; in Munich Herr Ingenieur Schropp and Herr Privatier Kollmann from Munich were alternating.” (Tarrasch, *Lasker–Tarrasch*, p. 23 [fn. 1]). Others that have occasionally been mentioned as seconds did not have an official role such as Kurt Richter (a namesake of the later Berlin master), mentioned by *DWS*, 6 September 1908, p. 327, or Berthold Lasker (although he did attend the Munich leg).

47 Lasker, *Lasker–Tarrasch*, p. 6.

48 “Surprisingly, the champions hardly mention the setting in Düsseldorf ... which gives rise to the suspicion that the organizational and financial contribution of Düsseldorf had been insufficient. Indeed, the effort demanded by the two major events (there was also the Congress of the German Chess Federation that went before) from the Düsseldorfer Schachverein 1854 and its president Carl Höing can hardly be overestimated.” (F.-K. Hebeker, “Hoffen auf das Höhenklima in München...” in *KARL*, no. 4/2008, pp. 38–44, here p. 40). The author goes on to describe the financial background of the match in detail; the city of Munich contributed 6,000 Marks to the match, Düsseldorf only 500.

necessary precision when playing 30 g5?. Tarrasch, in turn, fell victim to a misjudgment with 35 ... ♕d7?, a move, which according to him, was caused by an “overestimation” of his position. Instead of liquidating into a rook ending with equal chances, he kept the minor pieces on the board but did not offer any significant resistance in the remainder of the game.

1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♜c6 3 ♝b5 a6 4 ♜xc6

Lasker was the first proponent of the Ruy López Exchange Variation and occasionally used it in important games. Particularly noteworthy was his encounter with Capablanca in St. Petersburg 1914.

It is interesting to see what Lasker wrote about his opening choice:

Lots were drawn for the right to make the first move, I was playing with White. Before deciding about my first move I quickly let the images of the various openings with their compensating possibilities and disadvantages pass before my mental eye, and then decided on a game with a lively character.

A hundred years later hardly anyone would use the attribute “lively” to describe the Exchange Variation.

4 ... dxc6 [#1] 5 d4

This move was given an exclamation mark by Lasker. Castling short, which was later made popular by Bobby Fischer, and which today is considered critical, was hardly ever seen in Lasker’s games.

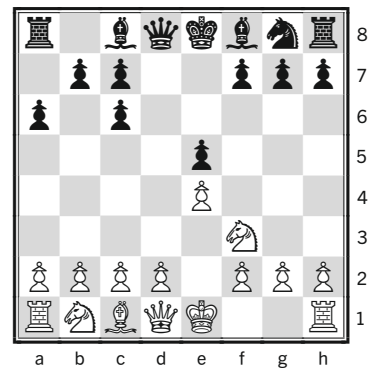
5 ... exd4 6 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 7 ♟xd4 [#2, see next page]
Tarrasch:

After the exchange of queens White has the better pawn structure, namely a compact plus of four against three pawns on the kingside, and a pawn in the center which is very hindering to the black pieces. Black’s pawn majority on the queenside is quite devalued in its attacking power because of the doubling of the c-pawns and does not have the least effect on the center. In turn, Black has the pair of bishops; however, in the long run, his king’s bishop cannot be protected against an exchange because it stands best on d6 and there it is exposed to knight attacks. But if it is exchanged there the pawn will recapture whereby the deficiencies of the black pawn structure are immediately repaired and White no longer has any advantage.

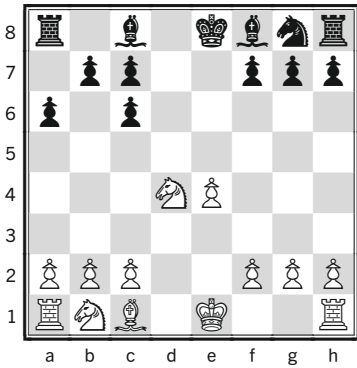
Marco:

Now remove all pieces from the board and have a look at the pawn endgame. Because Black cannot force the undoubling of his doubled pawns he cannot create a passed pawn. However, White will obtain a passed pawn on the kingside, and this is always a decisive advantage if the pawn can be supported by its king. Therefore, theoretically, the game is already won for White; he only has to strive to exchange all pieces.

#1 after 4 ... d7xc6



#2 after 7 ♘f3×d4



The latter characterization neglects all dynamic aspects of the position, but still contributes to its understanding.

7 ... c5

Tarrasch:

A bad move which I borrowed from Steinitz because he had successfully employed it in a match game against Lasker. The move immediately ruins Black's game because if the bishop is later taken on d6 the recapturing pawn will be a backward pawn.

Here Tarrasch was a bit too pessimistic, even though today the more flexible 7 ... ♘d7 is considered to be more precise. After the insertion of 7 ... c5 8 ♘e2 a bishop that appears on d6 can be opposed with ♘c1-f4.

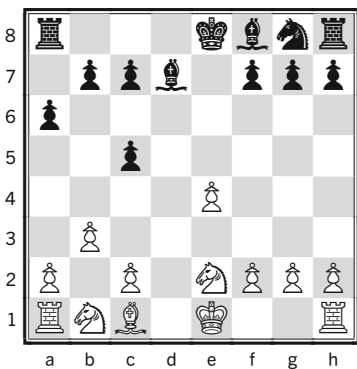
Six years later in St. Petersburg, Capablanca opted for 7 ... ♘d6, and although he objectively solved the opening problems with that move, he never again gave Lasker another opportunity to play the Exchange Variation against him. In their world championship match 1921 the Cuban preferred 3 ... ♘f6 4 o-o d6.

8 ♘e2 ♘d7

Schlechter (quoted by Marco) was on the right track with his recommendation 8 ... f5. However, it is a problem that after 9 ♘b3 f×e4 10 ♘f4 (instead of "10 ♘×e4 ♘d7, followed by 11 ... o-o-o") Black still has not developed the queen's bishop and cannot castle queenside to defend the pawn on c7, which causes some trouble.

The text-move does not deserve criticism.

#3 after 9 b2-b3?!



9 b3?! [#3]

Tarrasch:

I do not at all consider the idea of developing the bishop to b2 as very fortunate. It could not have achieved much on the diagonal if Black had blocked it with ... f7-f6.

9 ... ♘c6?

This move initiates a completely misguided opening concept. The bishop on c6 will not only bite on central granite, but the plan of playing ♘f8-e7-f6 (which, if executed immediately, would have failed to 9 ... ♘e7 10 ♘b2 ♘f6 11 e5!, followed by e5-e6) runs counter to the requirements of the position. Black loses his only advantage—the pair of bishops—and thus any chance for dynamic play that would compensate his worse pawn structure. Consequently, Black winds up in a position without prospects.

He had a number of better continuations:

a) A good option was $9 \dots 0-0-0$ 10 ♖b2 f6 . Then depending on how White proceeds, Black can decide later on the position of the knight (both ♗g8-e7 , followed by $\dots \text{♗g6}$ or ♗c6 , and ♗g8-h6-f7 come into consideration), and after developing the ♕f8 the king's rook can be put on e8.

b) Also worth considering was $9 \dots \text{c4!}$?, which was Alekhine's choice one year later against Verlinsky in St. Petersburg, a move to reduce radically the structural disadvantages of the position.

c) The strongest is Nunn's $9 \dots \text{f5!}$. An exchange of the central pawns would give the black bishops scope while 10 e5 would allow the second player a kind of favorable "Berlin setup"—in contrast to the line that later became tremendously popular, since Black here still has the right to castle. Moreover, the long diagonal remains closed and White's last move turns out to be rather useless.

Thus, instead of 9 b2-b3? ! the simple 9 ♖b1-c3 , which Lasker had already played in his 1894 match against Steinitz, was preferable.

10 f3 ♕e7 11 ♖b2 ♕f6 12 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♖d2 0-0-0
14 0-0-0 [#4]

Because of his healthier pawn structure, for which Black no longer has compensation in the form of the pair of bishops, White now has a stable long-term advantage. Black's position is solid but cheerless. Chances for counter-play can only be found on the queenside. With this in mind, $14 \dots \text{b5}$ now came into consideration.

14 ... ♖d7

This achieves nothing.

15 ♖f4

The immediate 15 ♖c4 would be weak because of $15 \dots \text{♕b5}$, after which White, too, would be settled with doubled pawns. After the text-move 16 ♖d3 b6 17 ♖e5 is threatened.

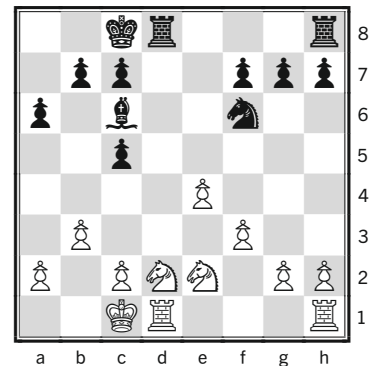
15 ... ♖e8 16 ♖c4 b6 17 a4

Planning to play a4-a5 at the appropriate time, when after the reply $\dots \text{b6-b5}$ the pawn c5 would be considerably weakened. But was it really necessary to become active on this wing? The following fixing of the queenside structure entails some disadvantages for White, whose pawns all end up on squares where the enemy bishop can attack them. Moreover, Black can later resort to $\dots \text{c7-c6}$ followed by $\dots \text{b6-b5}$.

17 ... a5

In this move Lasker saw only "the nasty side effect of paralyz-

#4 after 14 0-0-0



ing the offensive strength of Black's queenside. In general, the game—Tarrasch did not seem to have a good day—continued to take a form in which all the initiative remained with White.”

Lasker does not seem to have spent much energy on the analysis of the game; his characterizations are astonishingly one-sided. Hübner even went as far as to characterize Lasker's annotations to all the match games as “almost completely useless.”

18 ♖×d7 ♜×d7 19 ♞d1 ♚e5 20 ♜×e5 ♞×e5 21 c4 [#5]

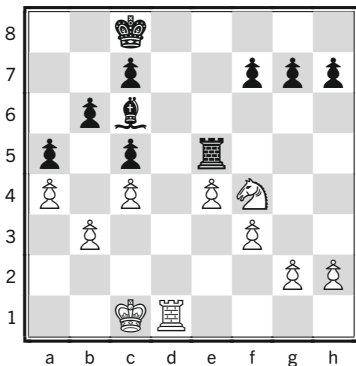
Forced. Otherwise Black plays ... c5-c4.

Tarrasch:

Now White is definitely superior: the pawn structure is in such shape that Black's pawn majority on the queenside is completely paralyzed by White's three pawns. In addition, White's pieces are also significantly better placed; the rook has possession of the only open file and the knight has an excellent post, whereas Black's pieces bite on granite everywhere.

On the whole one can agree to this; however, the wording “definitely superior” creates the wrong impression that White is already on the verge of winning. In the following stage Tarrasch himself criticizes only one inaccuracy by White (after which the position is immediately equal) and in addition suggests several improvements for Black.

#5 after 21 c2-c4



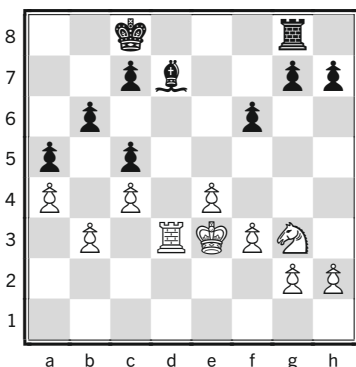
21 ... ♞e8 22 ♜h5 ♞g8

Black wants to follow-up with ... f7-f6 and ... ♚c6-e8 to chase the annoying knight away from h5. A mistake would be 22 ... g6 23 ♜f6, with additional structural disadvantages, but a more active way to get at the knight on h5 was 22 ... ♞e6, with the idea of ... ♞h6 (23 ♜×g7?! ♞g6).

23 ♞d3 f6 24 ♞d2 ♚e8 25 ♜g3 ♚d7

In order to create counter-play on the queenside, it seems more logical to put the bishop to f7. But after the immediate 25 ... ♚f7, the reply 26 ♜f5 would be annoying while after 25 ... g6 (to keep an eye on f5), followed by ... ♚e8-f7, a later ... c7-c6 would be problematic because of ♞d3-d6. Black would therefore first have to aim for an exchange of rooks with ... ♞g8-d8, which is very committal as it is doubtful that his counter-play would then still come in time.

#6 after 26 ♞d2-e3



26 ♞e3 [#6] ♞e8

Tarrasch:

The move is not bad but still not aggressive enough. Now was the most favorable chance to initiate the vigorous mobilization of the queenside: ... c7-c6, ♞c7, b6-b5, etc.

This sounds logical, but realizing this idea runs into practical problems. For example, after 26 ... c6 27 ♖e2 (Currently the knight does not do much on g3; with this move it clears the way for the g-pawn and it will either go to f4 or c3 or return to g3 after g2–g4.) 27 ... ♖c7 28 g4 the move 28 ... b5 loses a pawn after 29 a×b5 c×b5 30 ♖d5, even though the situation is not entirely clear. Instead, if Black tries to press ahead with his plan by playing 28 ... ♖b8 first, the move 29 ♖f4 looks annoying, planning to lunge to h5 again.

27 ♖h5 ♖e7 28 g4 c6 29 h4 ♖c7 [#7] 30 g5?
Tarrasch:

White very nicely attacks on the kingside but this move is premature. He should first remove the king from the e-file with ♖f4; then g4–g5 would have either forced the liberation of the e-pawn (after ... f×g5) or the isolation of the f6-pawn (in case of g×f6).

Of course, Black must not sit idle. After 30 ♖f4 he has to take measures against the threat of g4–g5 with 30 ... h6. If White blindly continues 31 g5?, he loses a pawn because of 31 ... f×g5 32 h×g5 ♖f7+.

An alternative is 30 ♖f4, followed by ♖d2. The knight can then be brought to d3 where it has an eye on the c5-pawn, making ... b6–b5 more difficult or preventing it altogether. Moreover, after ♖d2–g2 the advance f3–f4 followed by e4–e5 becomes an option. With the knight on d3, g4–g5 also comes into consideration because ... f6–f5 can then always be answered with e4–e5. Whether White's superiority is sufficient for a win is debatable, but 30 ♖f4 would definitely have kept a long-term advantage.

30 ... f5

Tarrasch: "This strong move now allows the equalization of the game."

31 ♖g3 f×e4 32 ♖×e4 [#8]

After four hours of play the game was adjourned, to be continued on the next day. Tarrasch sealed his move.

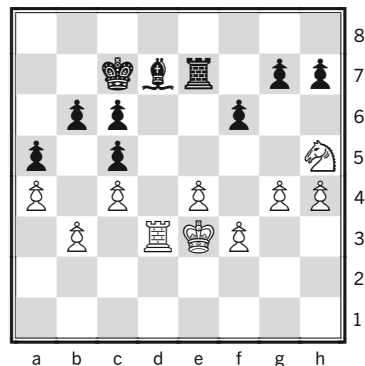
32 ... ♖f5

Alapin's proposal 32 ... b5 (mentioned in Tarrasch's notes) was sufficient to equalize the game, but there is nothing wrong with the text-move.

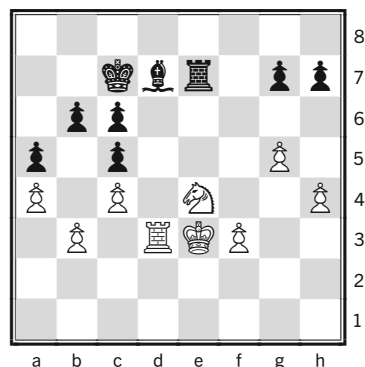
33 h5 ♖d7!

Under the new circumstances Black does not need to fear the exchange of rooks. After 34 ♖×d7+ ♖×d7 35 ♖f4 ♖e6 neither

#7 after 29 ... ♖c8–c7



#8 after 32 ♖g3×e4



DOMINATOR OF THE CHESS WORLD

Mihail Marin

THE YEARS UP TO WORLD WAR I FORM THE CORE OF Lasker's chess career. After rising very quickly he dominated his opposition almost at will. It is worthwhile to identify the talents and the specific character traits that allowed him to climb to the top and stay there for more than a quarter of a century.

When trying to define Lasker's style in this period with a single term, nothing better comes to mind than "universal" or "modern." Or, perhaps more aptly but longer: "enterprising but wary." He did not seem to prefer any specific type of position; whether static or dynamic, whether tactical or strategic—Lasker showed a universal strength irrespective of the nature of the game.

ON THE WAY TO THE TOP

Siegbert Tarrasch's controversial refusal to play a match with Lasker in 1892¹ may have created the impression that the latter's standing in Europe was not very high at the beginning of the 1890s. But, in fact, Lasker had already given proof of being an excellent match player, scoring some outstanding results against strong opponents.

Here are two illustrative games from that period.

According to Robert Hübner, Joseph Henry Blackburne was one of the world's top players for many years and at certain stages of his career was the second strongest player after Steinitz. Contemporaries nicknamed him "The Black Death" (after the plague) although it remains unclear which exact connotations they had in mind.²

In 1892 Lasker won the Quintangular Tournament in London, half a point ahead of Blackburne, whom he defeated 2–0. A subsequent match between the two was won by Lasker with the crushing score of 8–2. He did not suffer a single loss. This game was played in the Quintangular Tournament.

1 See page 259 in the present volume—*eds.*

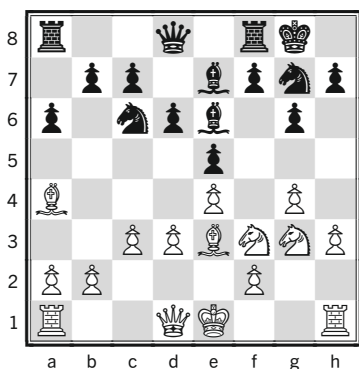
2 See Winter, *Chess Notes*, no. 8014 (29 March 2013)—*eds.*

Emanuel Lasker
Joseph Henry Blackburne³
London, 3rd round
 30 March 1892

1 e4 e5 2 d2f3 d2c6 3 d2c3 d2f6 4 d2b5 d6 5 d3 d2e7 6 h3

A few decades ago such a setup would have been called old-fashioned. But nowadays, when everyone appears to be struggling to achieve any advantage against the Berlin Defense, White frequently resorts to the apparently modest setup with d2–d3. As for the c3-knight, it will soon go to g3, a position which in modern games it usually reaches via d2 and f1.

#80 after 12 c2–c3



6 ... o-o 7 d2e3 d2e8

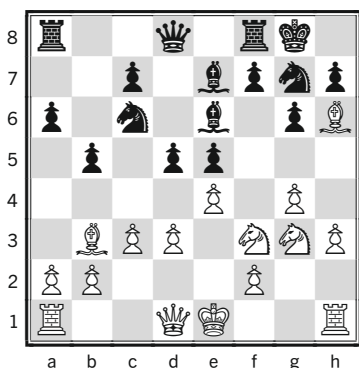
Blackburne anticipates White's plan in time and starts a re-grouping typical of the Czech Benoni and several Ruy López lines with a blocked center.

8 g4 a6 9 d2a4 d2e6 10 d2e2 g6 11 d2g3 d2g7 12 c3 [#80] b5

Blackburne prepares to open the center.

Hübner rightly disagrees with Fred Reinfeld and Reuben Fine, who claim that Black missed a golden opportunity to seize the initiative with 12 ... f5 13 gxf5 gxf5. Indeed, exposing the king so early gives Black nothing but problems, an issue familiar also from the aforementioned openings. 14 d2h6 f4 (14 ... fx4 is not given by any of the commentators mentioned above. It spoils White's pawn structure but leaves him with promising attacking potential: 15 dx4 d2h8 16 h4—planning d2g5—16 ... d2g4 17 d2g1!, and now 17 ... d2xf3 is met by 18 d2xg7+ d2xg7 19 d2f5+ d2h8 20 d2xf3. Better is 17 ... d2f6, leaving White with dangerous kingside pressure after 18 d2f1 d2h5 19 d2d3.) 15 d2f5 (This is even stronger than 15 d2e2, mentioned in the earlier annotations.) 15 ... d2xf5 16 exf5 d2h8 17 d2e2 d2xf5 18 d2xg7+ d2xg7 19 d4, with a clear advantage. After moves like o-o-o and d2c2 White's attack with opposite-colored bishops becomes very dangerous. One important point is that 19 ... exd4? loses the exchange to 20 d2xc6 bxc6 21 d2xd4.

#81 after 14 d2e3–h6



13 d2b3 d5 14 d2h6 [#81]

Everything played according to modern best practice. Black gains space in the center, while White keeps his structure intact and hopes to build up an attack on the kingside.

14 ... d2d7 [#82, see next page]

In view of the variation examined below this is slightly inaccurate.

14 ... d2e8 would not only have created latent pressure along the e-file, but also unpinned the knight, thus preparing to meet the thematic 15 d2f5 by 15 ... gxf5 16 gxf5 d2xf5 17 d2xd5 (The

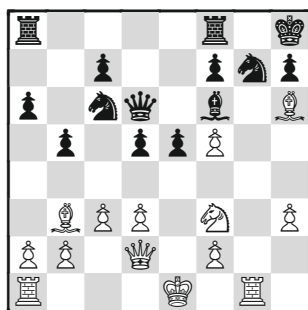
3 References: Reinfeld/Fine, *Lasker's Chess Career*, pp. 27–29; R. Hübner, "Zu den Anfängen von Laskers Schachlaufbahn" in Forster/Hansen/Negele, *Lasker*, pp. 415–574, here pp. 484–487.

point is that 17 $e \times f5$ $\Delta \times f5$ forces the bishop's retreat, which puts an end to White's attack.) 17 ... $\text{♔}d6$ (Not the only good move, but the clearest way of neutralizing White's initiative.) 18 $\text{♟} \times g7$ $\text{♞} \times g7$ 19 $\text{♟} \times c6$ $\text{♞} \times c6$ 20 $e \times f5$ $b4$, followed by ... $e5-e4$, with strong counter-play.

15 $\text{♞}e2$ [#83, see next page]

Lasker misses a good opportunity to take over the initiative: 15 $\Delta f5!$ $g \times f5$ 16 $g \times f5$ $\text{♟} \times f5$ 17 $e \times f5$ $\text{♔}d6$ (The most challenging move since 17 ... $\text{♞}h8$ allows White to continue the attack by simple means: 18 $\text{♞}g1$ $\text{♞}g8$ 19 $\text{♞} \times g7$ $\text{♞} \times g7$ 20 $\text{♟} \times g7+$ $\text{♞} \times g7$ 21 $\Delta h2$, followed by $\text{♞}h5$, $o-o-o$, $\text{♞}g1+$, $\Delta g4$, with a large advantage.) 18 $\text{♔}d2$ $\text{♟}f6$ 19 $\text{♞}g1$ $\text{♞}h8$. [#]

after 19 ... $\text{♞}g8-h8$ (analysis)

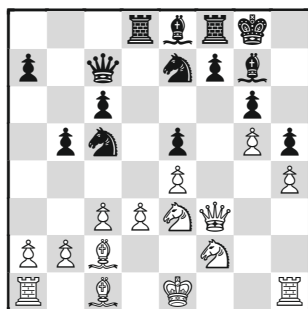


28 $\text{♞}e4$, and Black cannot prevent $\Delta d4-e6$, securing White two pawns for the exchange and complete positional domination. 28 ... $c5?$! would only make things worse after 29 $d4$ $c4$ 30 $d5$, followed by $\Delta d4$ anyway.) 27 $\text{♞}h4$ (threatening $\text{♞}g1+$, followed by $\Delta g5$) 27 ... $f6$ (the first in a series of only moves) 28 $\text{♞}h6$ $\text{♞}f7$ 29 $\text{♞}g1+$ $\text{♞}h8$ 30 $\Delta h4$ $\text{♞}g8$ 31 $\Delta g6+$ $\text{♞} \times g6$ 32 $f \times g6$ $\text{♞}g7$. Black has parried the immediate threats, but being a pawn down and with an insecure king he is clearly worse.

W. Steinitz – E. Lasker

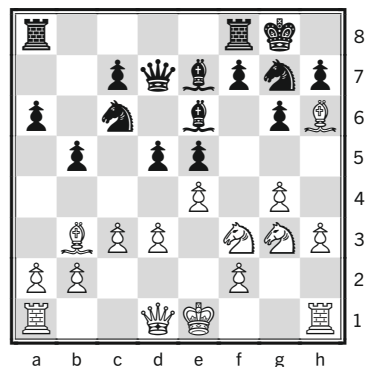
2nd match game, New York 1894

after 20 ... $h6-h5$



$f5-f6$.) 23 $g6$ (threatening $\text{♞} \times h5$) 23 ... $\Delta \times g6$ 24 $f \times g6$ $\text{♟} \times g6$

#82 after 14 ... $\text{♔}d8-d7$

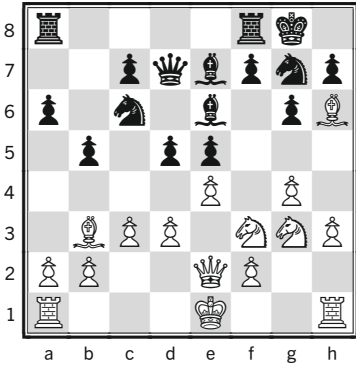


Apparently Black has defended well, but White can already continue the attack by tactical means: 20 $\text{♟} \times d5!$ $\text{♞} \times d5$ 21 $\text{♟} \times g7+$ $\text{♞} \times g7$ 22 $\text{♞} \times g7$ $\text{♞} \times g7$ 23 $\text{♞}g5+$ $\text{♞}h8$ 24 $\text{♞}f6+$ $\text{♞}g8$ 25 $o-o-o$ $\Delta e7$ (The only defense, preparing to meet $\text{♞}g1+$ with ... $\Delta g6$. After other moves, White wins; for example, 25 ... $\text{♞}fd8$ 26 $\text{♞}h6$, followed by $\text{♞}g1$ or $f5-f6$.) 26 $\text{♞} \times e7$ $\text{♔}d6$ (Or 26 ... $\text{♔}d8$ 27 $\text{♞} \times e5$ $f6$

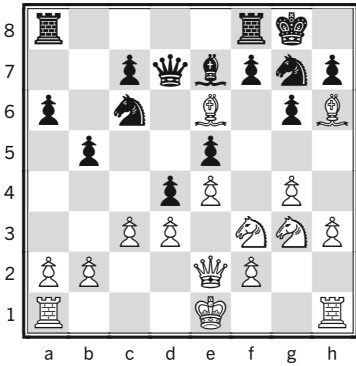
Of course, foreseeing all of this was not trivial; in addition, 15 ... $d \times e4$ 16 $d \times e4!$ $\text{♞} \times d1+$ 17 $\text{♟} \times d1!$ also had to be assessed accurately. Maybe Lasker would have embarked upon this line if this game had been played after his 1894 match with Steinitz, where he received this lesson: [#]

21 $\Delta f5!$ $g \times f5$ 22 $e \times f5$ $f6$ (Black could try to return the piece with 22 ... $\Delta g6$, but White can ignore this with 23 $\text{♞} \times h5$, keeping his f-pawn to threaten

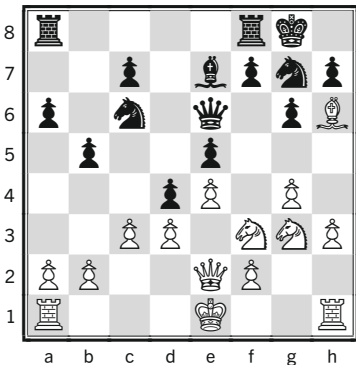
#83 after 15 ♖d1-e2



#84 after 16 ♗b3×e6



#85 after 16 ... ♗d7×e6



25 ♖g1. White's attack is ample compensation for the pawn and the lack of development, and Steinitz went on to win eventually.

After missing this attacking opportunity, Lasker's whole plan results in nothing more than a chronic kingside weakness.

15 ... d4

An ambitious move that was not yet necessary.

Hübner refutes Reinfeld and Fine's recommendation of 15 ... ♖f8? with the simple 16 e×d5 ♗×d5 17 ♗×e5 ♗×e5 18 ♖×e5, winning a pawn.

But 15 ... ♖fe8 was a proper way of maintaining the tension in an equal position.

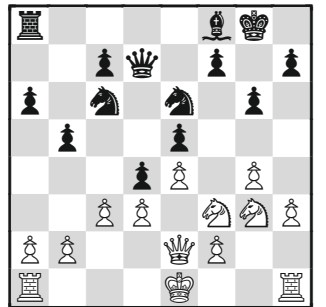
16 ♗×e6 [#84] ♖×e6?! [#85]

The most natural, but also least accurate of all possible re-captures.

From "The Black Death" one might have expected the ambitious positional exchange sacrifice 16 ... ♗×e6 17 ♗×f8 ♗×f8. [#]

His control of the dark squares gives Black excellent compensation. White needs to find the best way of evacuating the king. 18 ♖f1!? (18 o-o-o? runs into a decisive attack after 18 ... d×c3 19 b×c3 b4 20 c4 b3 21 a×b3 ♖b8; while 18 ♗d1 fails to defend properly the d3-pawn: 18 ... d×c3 19 b×c3 b4 20 c×b4 ♗f4 21 ♖c2 ♗×b4 22 ♖b3 ♗b×d3+ 23 ♖f1 ♖b5 24 ♗e2 ♗d6, with at least equal chances.) 18 ... ♗f4 19 ♖d2 d×c3 20 b×c3 ♖×d3+ 21 ♖×d3 ♗×d3, with a pawn for the exchange and a stable position. Chances may be even, but I would prefer Black.

after 17... ♗g7×f8 (analysis)



The simple 16 ... f×e6 would clear the f-file for the rooks, annihilating White's attacking chances. True, the g7-knight is likely to stay passive for a long time and so Black probably cannot claim an actual advantage.

17 o-o?

As pointed out by Hübner, 17 c×d4 ♗×d4 18 ♗×d4 e×d4 would have given White comfortable play. Indeed, the structure is similar to that in the game, but things are slightly less clear here. 19 f4 (I prefer this over Hübner's 19 o-o when 19 ... ♗h4 considerably slows down White's kingside expansion.) 19 ... ♗h4 20 ♖f3 c5 21 o-o c4 22 f5, and White's attack looks more dangerous than Black's.

The move in the game allows Black to stay in control.

17 ... ♖fd8

Hübner is skeptical of 17 ... ♟c5, followed by ... ♞d6 (suggested by Ludwig Rellstab), but his variation is also inaccurate: 18 ♜fc1?! (An unnatural and, for concrete reasons, inaccurate move.) 18 ... ♞d6 19 ♞c2 dxc3! (not mentioned by Hübner) 20 bxc3 (Or 20 ♞xc3 ♟d4 21 ♞xc5 ♟xf3+ with a small advantage for Black as White cannot expel the knight by 22 ♞g2? because of 22 ... ♟e1+!, followed by ... ♞xc5 and ... ♟xd3. It becomes obvious that 18 ♜ac1 would have been better, as the analogous line ending with 22 ♞g2 then leads to approximate equality. Anticipating the knight's unpinning with 20 ♟xg7 ♞xg7 21 bxc3 already allows Black to utilize the more harmonious placement of his rooks with 21 ... ♜ad8 22 ♜d1 b4, and Black has an edge.) 20 ... ♜fd8 21 ♟xg7 (Safer is 21 ♜d1, but it allows the knight to jump to freedom with 21 ... ♟e6, followed by ... b5-b4, with complete control of the dark squares and a small advantage for Black.) 21 ... ♞xd3!, and Black wins a pawn, the point being that 22 ♞xd3 ♜xd3 23 ♟e1 fails to 23 ... ♜xg3+!.

18 ♜fc1 [#86]

Lasker's plan of utilizing his pressure along the c-file to provoke favorable structural modifications eventually works out well—but only because of Black's inaccurate play.

18 ... ♜d7?!

Blackburne does not pay attention to Lasker's intentions.

Hübner gives an extensive analysis of 18 ... ♟c5, aiming to meet 19 cxd4 with 19 ... ♟xd4, gaining a small advantage. After stabilizing the center, Black intends to clear the e6-square for the knight, more or less forcing ♟xg7, which leaves him with an obvious advantage.

According to Hübner, 19 c4, almost completely blocking the position, is relatively best. White will regroup with ♞g2, ♜h1, ♜ag1, ♟f1, and exchange on g7 if the queen moves away from e6. Later, he can think of h4-h5, which is not so much a proper attack, but rather prevention against a possible break with ... f7-f5. Black could transfer his c6-knight to f4, but this would be mostly a symbolic achievement.

The same goes for 18 ... ♜ac8 19 c4 (Hübner).

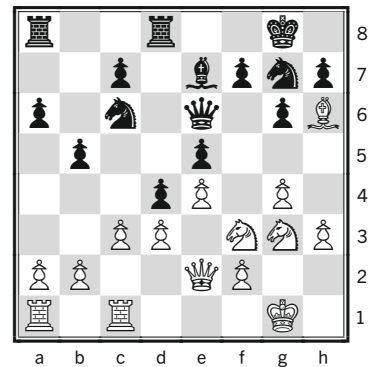
Hübner gives the following line as the best try for an advantage: 18 ... dxc3 19 bxc3 ♞d6 20 ♟xg7 ♞xg7 21 ♜d1 ♟a5 22 d4 exd4 23 cxd4 ♟c4, but this looks at least fine for White due to his strong center, for instance, after 24 e5 ♞d5 25 ♟e4.

Summing up, it does not seem that Black had a way to obtain an advantage.

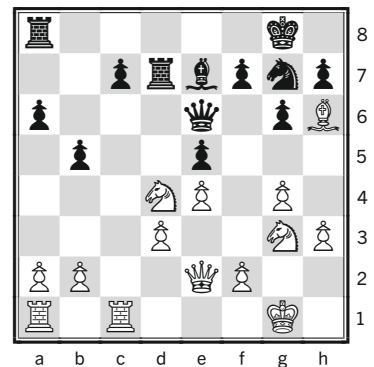
19 cxd4 ♟xd4 20 ♟xd4 [#87] exd4?

This gives White a strong kingside majority at no cost.

#86 after 18 ♜fc1-c1



#87 after 20 ♟f3xd4



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