



BOOK REVIEWS



When Daniel Seeks the Lion's Den...

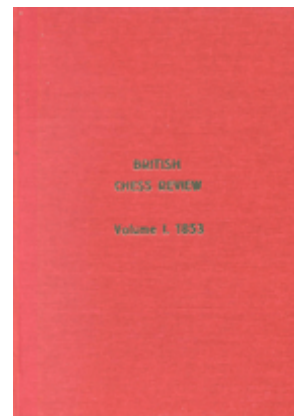
John S. Hilbert

“The wish [is] to have in circulation amongst us a Monthly Magazine which may constitute at once a faithful and complete record of British Chess play, and an impartial medium of chess intelligence ...”
British Chess Review, Vol. 1 (1853), p.1

“Ever since Mr. S[taunton] shirked Mr. H[arrwitz]’s challenge, published in May last, *without objecting to any of the conditions therein proposed*, we felt convinced that no match would take place, because there was no law to compel Mr. S. to play, and he could not afford to be beaten again.”
[Emphasis in the original.]
British Chess Review, Vol. 2 (1854), p.151

British Chess Review, Vols. 1 and 2 (1853 and 1854), Publishing House Moravian Chess 2003, Hardcover 384 pp. and 186 pp., respectively. Retail Price: \$35.00 each.

The two volumes under discussion constitute the full run of issues for the *British Chess Review*, published in 1853 and the first half of 1854. The 1853 volume includes twelve issues, each 32 pages in length, for a total of 384 pages. A quick count shows there were 210 games published for the year, along with 25 problems. The shorter, 1854 volume includes six issues, 31 pages each, for a total of 186 pages, with 101 games and 16 chess problems. Combined, then, the full run of the *British Chess Review* included 18 issues with 312 games and 41 chess problems. The vast majority of the games have never seen the inside of a computer file, and thus are likely to be new to readers. The games appear in an older form of English Descriptive Notation (1.K.P.2, K.P.1 2.Q.P.2, and so forth), although for purposes of this review the games and annotations have been converted to algebraic notation.



The magazine was ostensibly designed, as the quotation above from the first issue’s Introduction suggests, as “an impartial medium of chess intelligence.” The latter quotation at the top of this page gives some indication of how far off the mark the journal finally reached, in terms of “impartial” conveyance of information. In this regard, the *British Chess Review* need not be overly criticized, given the general tenor of partisan writing chess magazines perpetuated during the Victorian period. Indeed, it is for this very reason, its partisan slant, that the *British Chess Review* still makes lively reading today.

The Introduction in the January 1853 issue also noted that Daniel Harrwitz (1823-1884; Elo Historical Rating: 2520) would be entrusted with the position of Chief Editor. Harrwitz's chess ability, the unnamed proprietors of the journal noted, was "so universally known and acknowledged as to render any discussion or comment, even here, superfluous" (Vol.1, p.4).

Readers today may readily be forgiven for not finding Daniel Harrwitz's chess pedigree quite so well-known as the owners of the *British Chess Review* assumed it would be for its original readership. Born on April 29, 1823, in Breslau (Wroclaw), Poland, Harrwitz would not turn thirty until the first four issues of the magazine had appeared. At the age of twenty-two, in 1845, Harrwitz traveled to Paris, and the following year, with Kieseritzky as his companion, moved to London. Although an improving player, Harrwitz in the middle of the 1840s was no match for the elites of the world, as a curiously arranged match with Howard Staunton, then the acknowledged leader in chess, would demonstrate. Harrwitz and Staunton played a match of twenty-one games, draws not counting. Seven were played with the Englishman giving his continental opponent odds of pawn and two moves, seven at odds of pawn and move, and seven on equal terms. The upshot was that while Staunton won the odd game, 4-3, at pawn and two moves, he was slaughtered at pawn and move, Harrwitz scoring 6 wins, with 1 draw and 1 loss. But the crucial confrontation, on equal terms, was an even more one-sided rout: Staunton swept Harrwitz off the board, 7-0. While it was impossible to fully account for the curious difference in results between the pawn-and-move and the pawn-and-two-move scores, there was simply no getting around Staunton defeating Harrwitz 7-0 in even games. Yet even then, according to Hopper and Whyld, writing in *The Oxford Companion to Chess*, "Although Harrwitz was not yet at his full strength Staunton considered it his hardest match."

And Harrwitz was rapidly improving. In 1848 he traveled to Breslau where he played against Adolf Anderssen for an eleven game contest. When the score stood 5-5, the two agreed to call it a draw. In 1852, Harrwitz defeated Elijah Williams, one of the strongest players in England, in the first of two matches by a score of 7-0, with 3 draws. Another match with Williams took place late in 1852 and early the following year, in 1853, at the same time Harrwitz was assuming his editorial duties with the *British Chess Review*. Indeed, the matches with Williams appeared in part in the first issues of the new journal. Each match was to go to the first player to win seven games. The matches were played at the London Chess Club, which provided the prize as well, which was to be divided between the players, the winner's share being three-fourths of the total. In the second match, "every game [*was*] to be commenced with the move 1.e4 on each side" (Vol.1, p.8). While leading 4-2, with 3 draws, Harrwitz returned to the continent, for his health. Game nine was played January 4, 1853, while game ten did not take place until March 8, 1853, over two months later. Harrwitz proceeded to win the next three games and finished the match with a score of 7-2, with 3 draws. Clearly Harrwitz was becoming a much stronger player than he was at the time he was trounced by Staunton in their twenty-one game match.

Under Harrwitz's editorship, the *British Chess Review* became something of a showcase for his talents, although the magazine by no means ignored the larger British and international chess scene of the times. Still, Harrwitz found splendid opportunities to highlight his own games, as in the following game against Paul Journoud (1821-1882), played during Harrwitz's trip to Paris while taking a break from his second match with Williams. While very light, the game does illustrate nicely the dangers of excessive greed on Black's part

in the Evans' Gambit.

Harrwitz - Journoud [C52] **Paris Series, 1853**

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 It seems to be the opinion of the authorities now, that at this point it is better to play the bishop to c5.
6.d4 exd4 7.Qb3 Qf6 Preferable perhaps to playing her to e7. **8.0-0 d6 9.e5 dxe5 10.Re1**



10...dxc3 Black appears to be very little versed in the intricate attack and defense to the Evans' Gambit; he has no time to make this capture, but should rather have retreated ...Bb6. **11.Nxe5 Nxe5 12.Qb5+ Kd8** From this point Black's game is hopeless. **13.Rxe5 Qc6 14.Qxc6 bxc6 15.Rxa5 h6 16.Nxc3 f6 17.Ba3 Ne7 18.Rd1+ Nd5** He has nothing else to do. **19.Nxd5 cxd5 20.Raxd5+ Ke8 21.Rd8 mate 1-0**

British Chess Review, Vol.1 (1853),

p.114.

During early 1853 Harrwitz was apparently approached by Löwenthal and negotiations for a match between the two of them took place. Those negotiations initially broke down, and on May 1, 1853, Harrwitz issued his own challenge to the Lion of London, Staunton.

At this point, matters became much more interesting, but readers of the *British Chess Review* are likely to receive anything but an "impartial" account of the proceedings from the pages of that journal. Nor are they more likely to receive an unbiased account from either Staunton's *Chess Player's Chronicle* for 1853 and 1854, or from his chess column appearing in the pages of the *Illustrated London News*. In all likelihood the truth stands somewhere between these two extremes, but we will probably never know for sure. What the *British Chess Review* does, though, is in effect present the minority opinion on the ensuing negotiations, public pronouncements, and character-maligning statements that issued both from the Staunton camp as well as that of Harrwitz's. And if for this reason alone, the journal is a valuable addition to mid-1850s British chess history. This is particularly relevant since the most sophisticated discussion of the Staunton-Harrwitz controversy as well as the Harrwitz-Löwenthal match, in *A Century of British Chess*, by Philip W. Sergeant (David McKay 1934), does not mention the *British Chess Review*. The pages Sergeant devotes to the Staunton-Harrwitz affair are replete with references to the *Chess Player's Chronicle* and the *Illustrated London News*, both obviously supportive of Staunton. Sergeant mentions, for instance, Harrwitz's supporters at the London Chess Club and George Walker in the pages of *Bell's Life* being jubilant at his dramatic comeback against Löwenthal, but Sergeant does not appear to have had access to, or perhaps knowledge of, the *British Chess Review* and Harrwitz's position as detailed therein. Not surprisingly, Sergeant concludes that "It does really appear as if Staunton were far more ready than Harrwitz to engage in the match, for all that he had much more to lose in reputation in event of defeat." Readers of the *British Chess Review* would hardly agree.

A fertile field for chess historians would be a detailed comparison of the Staunton-Harrwitz controversy as it appears in the *Chess Player's Chronicle* and the *British Chess Review*. Material presented in the latter journal strongly suggests that at least a reappraisal of the relative merits of Staunton's and Harrwitz's claims should be undertaken. Staunton declined Harrwitz's challenge, and in doing so told the younger man that he, Staunton, was about to issue a general challenge to the world regarding his willingness to play chess matches, and under what terms. This pronouncement, Staunton indicated, was about to be made public to the chess world at the assembly of the Northern and Midland Counties Chess Association, to be held in Manchester on June 6 and 7, 1853.

The *Chess Player's Chronicle* for June 1853 gives a detailed account of the Manchester meeting, Staunton's open challenge, his defense against considering a challenge from the likes of Harrwitz, and a summary of Löwenthal's reasons for not agreeing to conditions the London Club, which backed Harrwitz, demanded of him for agreeing to a match. The Manchester report, which runs nine closely packed, small print pages in the June 1853 number of the *Chess Player's Chronicle* (pp.180-190), presents Staunton in a most agreeable light, speaking amidst outbursts of applause and "hear hears" from the audience as he gave his most reasonable remarks.



HERR HARWITZ OF PRUSSIA.

Daniel Harrwitz, as seen by readers of the Scientific American Supplement, No. 98 (Nov. 17, 1877), in Sam Loyd's chess column. Note the misspelling of "Harrwitz." This line drawing does not appear in the volumes under review.

What no one would learn from this account of the Manchester meeting are the counter arguments and assertions that suggest the Lion of British Chess was perhaps being somewhat less than fully candid in his account of Harrwitz's challenge. Staunton, for instance, told his audience that he could not consider playing a match with Harrwitz when that gentleman had already accepted a challenge to play a match with Löwenthal. At that moment Löwenthal was called upon to speak, almost like a witness in a court of law, testifying that among other dastardly conditions the London Club and Harrwitz had set for a match between the two of them was that the match games would remain the property of the London Club. Löwenthal reportedly said that he insisted the games be public property. The implication was that this refusal to make the games public property was in effect a refusal by Harrwitz to play the match with Löwenthal. The account of the Manchester

meeting appearing in the pages of the *British Chess Review*, however, suggests that the condition insisted upon by the London Club regarding publishing of the games wasn't a blanket prohibition upon their becoming known to the public, but rather that "Mr. Harrwitz had not declined Mr. Löwenthal's challenge, but had offered to play with him, making only the proviso that the games should not be sent to the Editor of the Chess-column of the *Illustrated News* and the *Chess Player's Chronicle*" (Vol.1, p.189). And, of course, the editor of both was Staunton himself.

Perhaps even more revealingly, Staunton's lengthy account of the Manchester meeting does not even mention that Harrwitz attended it as well, and that he sat through Staunton's extended discussion and implicit character assassination of him. The *British Chess Review* gives the following:

"The manner in which Mr. Staunton expressed himself, as to Mr. Harrwitz's not playing upon Mr. Löwenthal's terms, was such that Mr. Harrwitz rose to speak for himself. But, as the Chairman objected to allow Mr. Harrwitz to speak, Mr. H., considering that the promise which had been made to him, that he should receive no provocation in the course of the meeting, had been broken, left the room. During Mr. H's absence, a good deal of discussion and altercation ensued, and the Secretary of the Manchester Club finally requested that the gentlemen would attend to the business of the meeting, rather than to matters quite foreign to the object of the Association." (Vol.1, p.189)

There is no doubt that Harrwitz attended the Manchester gathering. Indeed, more games played by Harrwitz at Manchester are included in the pages of the *Chess Player's Chronicle* than appear in the pages of the *British Chess Review*. From facts such as these, and many others appearing in the volumes, readers can decide for themselves the relative merits of the arguments set forth by Staunton and Harrwitz. But they can only do that if they are aware of, and have read, both the *Chess Player's Chronicle* and the *British Chess Review*. To date, to the best of my knowledge, no detailed comparison and evaluation of both sources has been undertaken.

Not too surprisingly, after Staunton's and Löwenthal's remarks at Manchester, Harrwitz did not paint a very attractive picture of the two. As Staunton played little at this time, it was Löwenthal who more often felt the barb of the editor's pen in the pages of the *British Chess Review*. In publishing a Löwenthal game against a consultation team, for instance, Harrwitz introduced the encounter by saying that "We have great pleasure in giving insertion to the subjoined stiffly-contested game, which was played at Glasgow some time ago. We are informed that several other games, played about the same time, and won by Mr. Löwenthal, have appeared in the *Chess Player's Chronicle*, and although the opponents of Mr. Löwenthal in the following game have sent it to the editor of that publication, it has not been published" (Vol.1, p.239). No doubt Harrwitz's pleasure in publishing the game was great indeed.

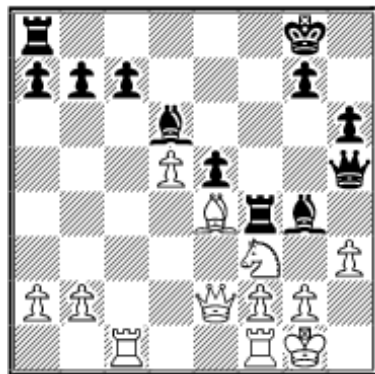
Harrwitz did eventually come to terms with Löwenthal for their own match, and the match itself is a contender for the most dramatic comeback in the history of match play. The story is well-known, but as with the Staunton-Harrwitz controversy readers will find a different perspective on the course of play in the pages of the *British Chess Review*. The match was to go to the first player winning 11 games, draws not counting. After losing the first two games, Löwenthal scored 7½-½ in the next eight, to take the lead at 7-2, with

1 draw. Harrwitz at that point pleaded the need to revive his failing health, and went to Brighton for a few days, forfeiting the next two games. With the score at 9-2 in Löwenthal's favor, a revived Harrwitz returned to grind down his opponent, and over the course of the remaining nineteen games outscored Löwenthal 9-1, with 9 draws, to miraculously win the match 11-10, with 10 draws.

The games, of course, as well as the amazing comeback, appeared in the pages of numerous journals at the time. But it is in the pages of the *British Chess Review*, and there alone, the reader will find Harrwitz's own annotations to the match games. Here, for example, is the twenty-fourth. According to Sergeant, the games were played at a private room at "The Ship," Charing Cross. By the twenty-fourth game, Harrwitz had narrowed Löwenthal's lead to 9-7. This game brought him one point closer to tying the match.

**Harrwitz - Löwenthal [D20]
"The Ship," Charing Cross
Match Game 24, 1853**

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 e5 4.d5 f5 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.Bg5 Bd6 We should certainly have preferred playing 6...Bc5. **7.Bxc4 0-0 8.Nf3 h6 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.Qe2** Had he castled, Black might have obtained an almost irresistible attack by advancing his pawns on the kingside. **10...Nd7 11.exf5 Qxf5 12.Bd3 Qh5** If **12...Qg4**, White replies with **13.Qe4**, and if then **13...Qxg2**, Black would lose the game in a few moves, as the following variation shows. Suppose **12...Qg4 13.Qe4 Qxg2 14.Rg1 Qxf3** and White checkmates in three moves. **13.Ne4 Nc5 14.Nxc5 Bxc5 15.0-0 Bg4 16.Be4 Rf4 17.Rac1 Bd6 18.h3**



18...Raf8 A miscalculation, and yet Black took twenty-six minutes over this move. **19.hxg4 Qxg4 20.Rfe1 Bb4** Black consumed twenty-six minutes over this move. **21.Nh2** We believe he might have played **21.Nxe5** with safety. **21...Qg5 22.Rf1** White gives up another pawn, in order to exchange pieces. **22...Rxf2 23.Rxf2 Qxc1+ 24.Rf1 Rxf1+ 25.Nxf1 Bc5+ 26.Kh2 Bd4 27.b3 Qg5 28.g3 Kf7 29.Qf3+ Ke7 30.Qf5 Qxf5 31.Bxf5 c6 32.dxc6 bxc6 33.Kh3 g5 34.Nd2 h5 35.Bg6 h4 36.gxh4 gxh4 37.Kxh4 Kd6 38.Kg4 38.Ne4** before moving King would have been safer; but the best was to play **38.a4**, and **Bf7**. **38...Kc5 39.Kf5 Kb4 40.Nc4 c5 41.Bf7 a5 42.Nb6 Ka3 43.Bc4 Bc3** Had he played **43...Kxa2**, the b-pawn would have become a Queen. **44.Nd5 Bb4 45.Nxb4 cxb4 46.Bb5** The only winning move. **1-0**

British Chess Review, Vol.2 (1854), pp.7-8

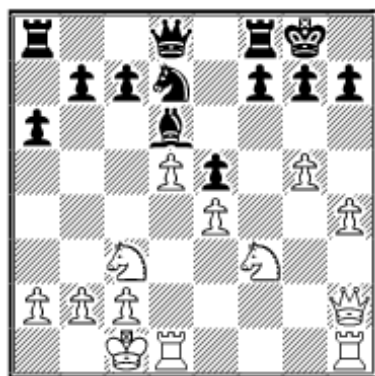
The game had lasted seven hours. Harrwitz's comments after Löwenthal's eighteenth and twentieth moves regarding the latter taking twenty-six minutes for each had more bite to them than simple irritation at what Harrwitz considered slow play. A peculiar feature of the match was Condition Number Ten, which in relevant part stated that "Each party shall be allowed twenty minutes for deliberation on any move. In the event of either party taking more than twenty minutes, he shall be fined the sum of ten shillings for each additional ten minutes" (Vol.1, p.249). This experiment in charging for additional time was a dismal failure, and according to

Sergeant not repeated in any later match. After another draw in the twenty-fifth game, Löwenthal won his tenth point, but after yet another draw, Harrwitz took three out of the last four, with a draw in game thirty, to finish what arguably is the most dramatic comeback in serious match play in the past 150 years.

Readers should not, however, be given the impression that only Harrwitz's exploits are chronicled in the pages of the two volumes of the *British Chess Review*. Many other players of the time are covered, and Harrwitz, in selecting games for his journal, also had something of an interest in providing earlier contests for his readership. Here, for example, is one he included that had been played fifteen years earlier. Harrwitz introduced the game by writing that "The following instructive game was contested on the 10th of February, 1838, between two of the best English players, Mr. G. Walker and Mr. Slous. It is an entertaining specimen of the King's Rook's Gambit, a pretty and lively variation of the opening, less played in the present day than it deserves to be."

**Walker - Slous [C33]
February 10, 1838**

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.h4 d6 The move given by the book authorities as the best at this point is 3...Be7. **4.d4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Bg4 6.Be2 Bxe2 7.Qxe2 Nc6 8.d5 Ne5 9.Bxf4 Nfd7** Preventing White's threatened check with Qb5. **10.Bxe5** Thus to liberate the adverse bishop does not appear correct play on White's part. **10...dxe5 11.Nf3 Be7** To c5, or d6, would surely have been stronger. **12.g4 0-0 13.Qh2 Bd6 14.0-0-0 a6 15.g5**



15...f5 Very well played. **16.gxf6 Qxf6 17.Rdf1 Qh6+ 18.Qd2 Rf4 19.Ne2** This move costs White a valuable pawn, but it is difficult to find anything advantageous for him. **19...Rxe4 20.Qxh6 gxh6 21.Rhg1+ Kh8 22.Ng3 Rg4 23.Nf5 Rag8 24.Nxh6 Rxd1 25.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 26.Nxg1 Bc5** Singularly enough, one knight or the other must now fall. **0-1** *British Chess Review*, Vol.1 (1853), p.44

Even though Harrwitz had, finally, vanquished Löwenthal, admittedly by the narrowest of margins, a match on even terms with the Lion of British Chess never materialized. This is all the more the pity because by 1854 Harrwitz was arguably the strongest player in England, Staunton included. Staunton's Elo historical rating, which only measures a player's best five year performance and can only really be considered in relation to his immediate contemporaries, is 2520. Clearly Staunton's peak years were in the 1840s. Harrwitz, who came to the fore the decade following, also has an Elo historical rating of 2520. A match between the two in the early 1850s would have been a joy for the chess world, and it is unfortunate such an event never took place.

The short-lived *British Chess Review* provides a different glimpse of Victorian chess play in the middle of the 1850s. Readers of only the much better known, and longer lived, *Chess Player's Chronicles* will find the volumes a refreshing antidote to the relentless praise of Staunton that his own journal not surprisingly gave, and will also find in their pages a much more rounded picture of Daniel Harrwitz, the Daniel who sought the Lion's

den in vain.

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