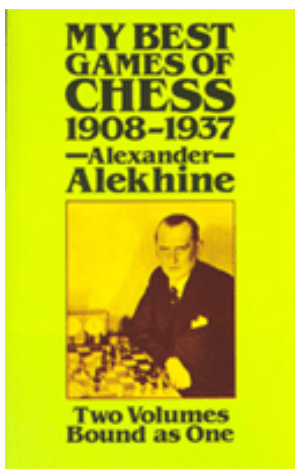




SKITTLES
ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, ChessCafe.com has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the [ChessCafe](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

As the great New York Tournament of 1924 approached, grandmaster Alexander Alekhine was in the United States giving simultaneous exhibitions. Hermann Helms, the publisher of the *American Chess Bulletin*, along with Norbert Lederer, the prime organizer of the tournament, were in the final stages of negotiating with Alekhine for him to do the annotated tournament book. The following letter was written (originally in German) by Alekhine just a few weeks before the beginning of the legendary tournament. It would become one of the classic tournament books of all time.

Alexander Alekhine Letter

February 21, 1924

From: Alexander Alekhine

To: Norbert Lederer

Date: February 21, 1924

Dear Mr. Lederer,

A few days ago Helms wrote me about the tournament book and asked me, among other things, when I believe I'll be finished with my work and whether this would occur before my departure for Europe. As I already wrote you in my last letter, it lies in my interest AT LEAST AS MUCH AS IN THAT OF THE

COMMITTEE to finish the book as quickly as possible if possible. But mind you, only in a way which should not influence the quality of work unfavorably. Correspondingly, I intend to do a large part of the work already during the tournament, and mainly the assessment of the games with respect to variations. According to my experience however, it is impossible to write a good tournament book if one is forced to gloss MORE THAN THREE GAMES DAILY ON AN AVERAGE. As a result, I believe that, in the interest of things, it will be best to make a calculation with this corresponding consideration. At present, I cannot say whether the work will be finished before my departure for Europe, out of the simple reason that I don't know how long I will remain in the States after the tournament. This will depend on many circumstances and on my success at the tournament. But I believe that this is absolutely unimportant if I still pledge to deliver the work at a certain date. If I send it to you from Europe, it is a difference of only 6-7 days.

Helms makes an interesting suggestion in his letter, which is that I dictate my work to a stenographer, instead of using my horrible handwriting for it. I fear, however, that he is completely forgetting that I will write IN FRENCH* [*as we discussed with you several times] (by the way, this would be one of the reasons it would perhaps be better to finish the work in France. From there I can commit myself to deliver the manuscript to you STENOGRAPHED. By the way, I also hope to be able to do this here with the help of my Canadian friends. I still will clarify this last question in Montreal before the beginning of the tournament.) In case it would be possible, however, to find someone in New York for this work, (daily for the morning hours 9-11,) I would be willing to pay for it, since it would mean an enormous economy for me as well as strength in terms of time.) Of course, if it is not too expensive...

Now a last question. Helms writes me about the project to suggest OFFICIALLY to all masters to gloss their games. THAT APPEARS TO ME TO BE PURPOSELESS AND USELESS, because 1) first of all, such a pious wish on the part of the committee according to experience will never be fulfilled – apart from, perhaps, if it is a question of advertising in the special press, that is, a matter of direct material advantage. The chess masters are, of course, lazy in general, and especially during a tournament being held.

2) In addition, it would be difficult to get around the fact that the names of the masters in question be mentioned as glossers. This would DIRECTLY CONTRADICT my interests agreed upon with the committee.

3) Basically, however, the idea of considering the opinions and assessment of the participating masters is of course entirely correct. Only it is usually carried out much better in a private way, (as Maróczy did in London and Carlsbad.) Each master has a CERTAIN (but not sufficient to sit down and write the glosses himself) interest that his games be judged correctly in the tournament book. In addition, each enjoys showing his achievement to a colleague following a completed win or draw. Consequently it will be easy for me to collect the necessary material, since I have good relationships with the great majority of the masters participating in the tournament. The masters will

already have it hard enough without burdening their work with unnecessary OBLIGATIONS.

In any case, I hope to see you the 7th of March and finally to discuss all these questions. I depart from here in two hours for the Grand Canyon and California, and I hope there to gather my strength for the great battle.

Please don't forget the room and performance questions!

With best regards Yours /s/ A. Alekhine

P.S. I regret, of course, that you must slave away to decipher my handwriting already again. I really do endeavor to write halfway decently – it just doesn't work!



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