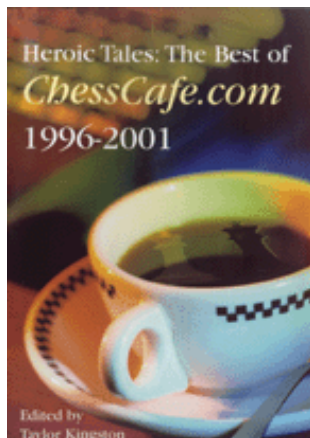




BOOK REVIEWS



Irregular Regularity, Or, The Fifth Series

John S. Hilbert

The Chess Player's Chronicle (New Series), Vol. 1, 1877, ed. by Rev. C.E. Ranken (Publishing House Moravian Chess 2002), pp.288, Retail Price: \$35.00

For approximately sixty years, from 1841 until 1902, British chessplayers could look forward to issues of *The Chess Player's Chronicle*, but without the kind of regularity for the volumes as a whole as now one finds with, say, the *British Chess Magazine*. The full history of *The Chess Player's Chronicle*, in each of its manifestations, is well beyond the scope of this review, although a brief outline can be given. (I am indebted to the late Ken Whyld for clarifying the murkier aspects of this periodical morass.) From May 1841 through 1852, the magazine appeared weekly or monthly under Staunton's direction (weekly for volumes 1, 3 and 8). The second series was published monthly from 1853 through 1856, for four more years.



The third series did not begin until 1859 and ended in 1862 when, in truth, the connection with the original periodical ended. In 1868, however, another periodical, then named *The Chess Players' Quarterly Chronicle*, began, and by the following year changed its publishing frequency to every other month rather than quarterly. The journal's title, however, announcing the publication as a quarterly, continued through the end of 1871, at which time the journal changed its name to *The Chess Players' Chronicle*, and continued publication until the end of 1875 under the editorship of the Reverend Skipworth. Although in truth not a direct descendent of the original magazine, this run of eight years is often referred to as the fourth series.

A curious interlude then ensued when editorship of the magazine was briefly transferred to J. Jenkin, who brought out a January 1876 number under the title *The Chess Player's Chronicle*, referred to as "a monthly record of provincial chess," published only at Glasgow, Scotland. This version of the magazine lasted but three issues, through the March 1876 number, as reported by Philip Sergeant in *A Century of British Chess* (David McKay 1934), pp.168-169.

The fifth series did not begin until January 1877, and brings us to the volume under discussion. The history of the eighteen volumes of the fifth series of *The Chess Player's Chronicle* (note use of the apostrophe had safely returned to the singular for this incarnation of the magazine) released over the next twenty-five years, the starts

and stops and shifts from monthly to weekly publication need not detain us here. For it is with the start of the fifth series that we are concerned now. The rest, confusions and inconsistencies aside, was mere stuff of dreams at the end of 1876, when production of the first issue for the 1877 volume must have been underway.

The January 1877 issue of *The Chess Player's Chronicle (CPC)* came out under new editorship. The Rev. Charles Edward Ranken (1828-1905) held the editorial reins this time, and would continue to do so through September 1880. Ranken was not, however, solely responsible for the revived journal's content. Listed too on the publication's first cover were four other individuals who assisted Ranken: J. Crum (responsible for chess problems), G.B. Fraser, the Rev. A.B. Skipworth, and the Rev. Professor Wayte. The publication by committee, as it were, included three of the "fighting reverends" long associated with Victorian chess. The group produced, at least initially, and certainly for the full first volume, a regularity that was somewhat rare in this period of halting and fitful publication schedules the nineteenth century witnessed.

Certainly an examination of the twelve monthly issues of the *CPC* during 1877 reveals that a clear conception of how the magazine should be put together followed throughout the year. Each of the twelve issues consisted of 24 pages. Had nine games appeared in each issue, a total of 108 games would have been produced. The *CPC* in 1877 missed this mark by precisely one game, publishing 107 contests, all annotated, through the year. Eight chess problems each issue appeared for a total of 96. And each issue included several pages under the heading of "Chess Intelligence" that considered the doings of the chess world month by month. This section did undergo a transformation during the year, but only a most logical one, the first number being limited to British chess matters, then in succeeding issues extending coverage first to the Continent and then to the United States and Canada, no doubt mimicking the ever-widening circle of contacts the newest incarnation of the *CPC* made as it exchanged copies with a growing number of other magazines and chess columnists. By the end of the year, "Chess Intelligence" was truly world-wide in scope, and yet the basic pattern of its presentations did not alter significantly during the year. All very regular.

And all largely glossing over the irregularities, largely xenophobic in nature, that had caused the *CPC* edited by Jenkin from January to March 1876 to cease publication. Readers today may well be forgiven for finding the following passage, appearing near the end of the February 1877 issue, more than obscure. Ranken wrote as follows:

The Editor is authorized by Messrs Skipworth, Wayte, and Fraser, whose names appeared with his own as co-operators in the late series of the Chess Player's Chronicle, to express with him their regret that certain offensive statements and insinuations, seriously affecting the honour of some eminent players, were published in that Magazine in the letters of a correspondent signed "A Looker On." The Editor wishes to say that the co-operation in question having consisted only in the contribution of Games, &c. to the Magazine, he and the above-named gentlemen were in no way responsible for the publication of those letters. He would also like to declare his belief that the statements referred to were untrue, and without foundation.

Chess Player's Chronicle, Vol.1 (Feb. 1877), p.45

No further enlightenment as to this passage's meaning appears in the volume. Philip Sergeant's *A Century of British Chess* once more does, however, offer an explanation. Jenkin during the three months of his tenure publishing the *CPC* in Glasgow had

allowed several letters signed by “A Looker On” to appear in the magazine’s pages. Those letters had attacked foreign born players, especially Steinitz and several others, who had switched allegiances from either the St. George’s Chess Club or the City of London Chess Club to the West End Club. It was in the pages of the magazine as edited by Jenkin that “A Looker On” let his hatred of foreigners appear, for instance saying that it was the formation of the West End Club that had “cleared away the disturbing foreign element which whilom infected the Divan.” And how “the hot-headed little Austrian,” Steinitz, had gotten himself in an awkward situation with his publishers. The same source accused foreigners of playing fixed matches in England for the past thirty years. These attacks continued through the March 1876 issue of *CPC*, which was the last Jenkin edited and the last to appear until the present volume. No wonder the editor and his associates of the fifth series wanted to distance themselves from the editorial hand of the 1876 issues!

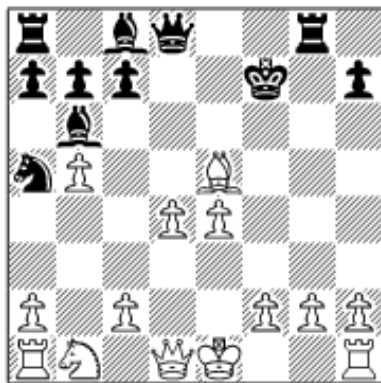
And distance themselves they did. Although the connection between the paragraph above and other material appearing on the same page was not made, it was clear to anyone familiar with the situation that the rift between the various factions needed some healing. And something of the sort was embraced that same month, as the same February 1877 issue of the *CPC* announced that Steinitz and Zukertort, the two leading foreign players in the country, had been unanimously elected Honorary Members of the St. George’s, that most English of upper class English chess clubs. For a time, at least, something of the rift had been smoothed over.

I mention this matter largely to explain why the 1877 *CPC* may well have been at least one of the most content-neutral volumes to appear on the English scene for some time. Readers will find no furious fulminations against rival editors or columnists, as one will find a scant few years later in Steinitz’s *International Chess Magazine*, or Hoffer and Zukertort’s *The Chess Monthly*. Here it is chess that rules supreme. And whether one misses the invective of other magazines or not, one can hardly blame the amateur players who ran the *CPC* for wanting their publishing venture to steer clear of warfare off the chessboard.

While the editor and his assistants of the *CPC* were indeed amateur players, with full and often distinguished careers outside the realm of chess, they were not wholly divorced from the finer points of the game. Here, for example, is a game from the first issue of the magazine, pitting one of the contributors against a rather well known opponent. It suggests, too, the interest in opening play that was a fairly significant aspect of the magazine:

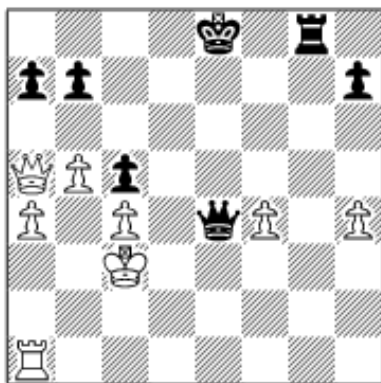
**Zukertort - Wayte [C51]
St. George’s Chess Club,
October 1876**

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bb6 5.b5 Na5 6.Nxe5 Nh6 7.d4 d6 8.Bxh6 dxe5 9.Bxg7 Rg8 The *Handbuch* and Dr. Zukertort prefer 9...Qxd4, leading to an exchange of Queens and rooks, and pronounce the game even. The play in the text was chosen in order to test Paulsen’s variation on the eleventh move. **10.Bxf7+ Kxf7 11.Bxe5**



11...Bg4 The *Handbuch* gives 11...Qg4 and 11...Rg6, and (somewhat inconsistently with its previous remark) conducts both to the advantage of Black. The only printed game in which we have seen 11...Bg4, appeared in the *Chess Player's Chronicle*, Vol. 1 (1868), p.40. **12.Qd3** Paulsen's opponent here played 12.f3. Dr. Zukertort thinks that White's policy is gradually to advance the pawns, and that he ought to win. In practice, however, we believe that, owing to the exposed situation of White's King, many opportunities are likely to occur (as in the present game) for

breaking them up. **12...Qg5 13.Nd2 Rad8 14.h4 Qe7 15.f4 Ke8 16.c4 c6 17.a4 Bxd4** Black foresees the loss of a piece, but trusts to the curiously paralyzed situation of White's imprisoned Queen, after capturing the knight. **18.Bxd4 c5 19.Qc3 Rxd4 20.Qxa5 Rxe4+ 21.Nxe4 Qxe4+ 22.Kd2 Qxg2+ 23.Kc3 Bf5 24.Rhe1+ Be4 25.Rxe4+ Qxe4**



26.Rc1 26.Rd1 was greatly preferable, and would have ensured a drawn game [*Ranken here added, in his editorial capacity, that "Even in this case it seems to us that by playing 26...b6, Black must win." The remainder here is Wayte's note.*] e.g.: 26.Rd1 Qe3+ (best; 26...Rg3+ 27.Kb2 Rg2+ 28.Ka1 and White ought perhaps to win.) 27.Kc2 (best; 27.Rd3 loses: 27...Qe1+ 28.Rd2 Qc1+ 29.Kd3 Rg3+ and wins.) 27...Rg2+ 28.Rd2 Qe4+ 29.Kb2 (best) 29...Qd4+ 30.Kc2 Qxc4+ and draws by perpetual check. **26...Rg3+ 27.Kb2 Qd4+ 28.Rc3 Rg2+ 29.Kb3** And mates in three moves.

If 29.Ka3, Black wins either by 29...b6 or 29...Qd2. **0-1 Annotations by Wayte, Chess Player's Chronicle**, Vol.1 (Jan. 1877), pp.9-10

Wayte was not one to pride himself excessively on the win of an offhand game, and with due deference to the ability of his opponent noted at the game's conclusion that "This game is given as an illustration of the opening, and not as a specimen of Dr. Zukertort's play."

The magazine's "Chess Intelligence" section in the premier issue considered happenings first at the St. George's and then at the West End Club. The two clubs met for a match, although the top players for neither side appeared, that was duly won by the St. George's, 10-3, with Wayte directing for the St. George's team and Potter handling the same duties for the West End Club. The same section announced the death on December 4, 1876, of Robert Bownas Wormald, editor of the *Illustrated London News's* chess column following Staunton's death.

While the second issue also included games by Wayte, they were supplemented by specimens of play by the likes of Steinitz, Zukertort, and Gunsberg, as well as with two reprinted games from earlier incarnations of the *CPC*, in this instance sharing with contemporary readers two games by the much lamented Löwenthal, who had passed away July 21, 1876, in Hastings, while the *CPC* had been dormant. Coverage too was extended beyond the confines of the larger London clubs, with news of happenings at Lincolnshire and at the Liverpool Chess Club. By the April 1877 issue, the "Chess Intelligence" section was responding to contacts around Europe and in the

United States as well, including the *Dubuque Chess Journal*, the *Cleveland Leader*, and even the *Lebanon Herald*, the last named published out of Tennessee.

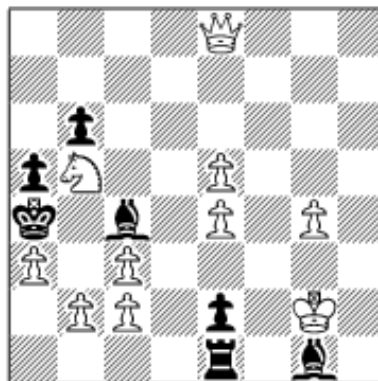
Readers will find as well several pieces on opening analysis of the times, as well as an interesting review of W.N. Potter's entry for "chess" appearing in the recently released, ninth edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which the Reverend Wayte noted appeared between entries on "chemistry" and "Chinese," and for which he praised Potter, calling his work "a striking union of judiciously selected and closely compressed matter with vigour of style." Wayte elaborated when considering the charge that chess was too much hard work for an amusement, telling his readers that

The truth is that men of active minds require, as a change from the serious business of life, not mere rest but a new form of activity; and chess, from its absorbing demands on the imagination as well as on the reasoning faculties, possesses in a singular degree the power of taking a man out of himself, and not only giving fresh exercise to his intellect, but relieving him from care and worry.

Chess Player's Chronicle, Vol.1 (May 1877), p.98

Readers will find much of interest here, especially revealing in terms of how chess-related functions were carried off, with great formality and propriety, and often despite warring factions and personalities. For instance, there is a revealing description, also in the May issue, of the fifth annual match between the University Clubs of Oxford and Cambridge (won by the latter, 8-2), at which not only were more than half a dozen toasts reported at the dinner following the match, but wherein the reader learns that Steinitz, who umpired the contest, and Zukertort, who gave some advice in a speech to the young players, both attended the dinner, apparently without conflict or other harm. Those interested in correspondence chess will find at the end of the August 1877 issue the full pairings for the International Postal Card Chess Tourney—really rather a match—between teams in Great Britain and in the United States. It was during this event that the two correspondence games between G.H.D. Gossip, of Gothic Cottage, East Bergholt, Colchester, and Mrs. J.W. Gilbert, of Hartford, Connecticut, took place, both won by the latter, with two of the longest announced mates ever recorded. Also playing for the American team were the masters Eugene Delmar and Max Judd, which may come as a surprise to some interested in American chess history. All in all, the volume is filled with such nuggets.

Nor will those interested in chess problems find nothing of interest here. As the issues appeared through the year, the names of the problemists became better known, with more than one composition by Samuel Loyd appearing in the journal's pages, as well as creations by another of America's finest chess problemists, William Anthony Shinkman, then living in Michigan.



White to Play and Mate in Three Moves
By W.A. Shinkman
Chess Player's Chronicle, Vol. 1 (August 1877), p.191

The problem's key can be found at the end of this review.

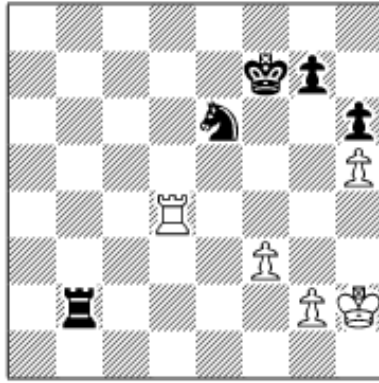
The *CPC*, of course, also gave coverage to one of the more important amateur events in England that year, the Counties Chess Association Congress held at Birmingham. That coverage should have been fairly good comes as no surprise, when one compares the staff of the *CPC* with the list of prize winners. Thirty players appeared and competed in three class events, the winner of the First Class tournament being J. Jenkin of Glasgow, the rather disgraced editor at the end of the fourth series of the *CPC*, followed by the fifth *CPC*'s own "Professor Wayte." A Handicap tournament played at the same time, which netted sixteen participants, was won by *CPC* editor Ranken, with the magazine's associate, Skipworth, finishing second. The following game, between two of the *CPC*'s three reverends, Ranken and Skipworth, was said to have been the deciding game of the Handicap tournament.

***Skipworth - Ranken* [D40]
Counties Chess Association
Handicap Tournament, July-August 1877**

1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.a3 c5 4.e3 d5 5.c4 Nc6 6.Nc3 a6 7.cxd5 This position is now that of the Queen's Gambit refused, and the usual continuation here is b3, Bb2, etc. **7...exd5 8.Bd3 cxd4 9.exd4 Be6 10.0-0 h6 11.Be3 Bd6 12.Qd2 Rc8 13.b4**



13...Nxb4 The soundness of this move is very questionable; for if White take the piece, Black cannot, we believe, recover its equivalent without getting an inferior game, e.g.: 13...Nxb4 14.axb4 Bxb4 15.Rfc1 Qc7 (best, for 15...Ne4 would be still more unfavorable to him) 16.Nxd5 Qxc1+ 17.Rxc1 Bxd2 18.Rxc8+ Bxc8 19.Nxf6+ gxf6 20.Nxd2 and we should take White's game for choice. **14.Nb5 Nxd3 15.Nxd6+ Qxd6 16.Qxd3 0-0 17.h3 b5 18.Bd2 Qb6 19.a4 Ne4** 19...Rc4 is far stronger play. **20.Bb4 Rfd8** He should rather have moved this rook to e8 perhaps, avoiding the exchange of Queens, and posting the other rook afterwards to c4. **21.axb5 Qxb5 22.Qxb5 axb5 23.Ra5 Bd7 24.Ne5 Be8** Black must now give up the pawn or the exchange, and, as in the latter case he gains another pawn, he prefers that course. **25.Be7 f6 26.Bxd8 fxe5 27.Be7** 27.Bb6 would not do, on account of 27...Nd2 28.Rfa1 Nc4 29.Ra6 b4 30.Bc5 (best) 30...b3 and the passed pawn must win. **27...exd4 28.Rd1 Rc4 29.f3 Nc3 30.Rd2 Bg6 31.Ra8+ Kf7 32.Ra7 d3 33.Ba3+ Kg8 34.Bb2 d4 35.Ra1 Na4 36.Rad1 b4 37.Kh2 b3 38.h4 Kf7 38...Rc2** at once would be more decisive, e.g.: 39.Bxd4 b2 40.Bxb2 Nxb2 and wins. **39.Ba3 Rc2 40.Rxd3 Bxd3 41.Rxd3 b2 42.Bxb2 Rxb2 43.Rxd4 Nc5 44.h5 Ne6**



45.Rd5 It is strange that both players should have twice overlooked that Black could take ...Rxc2+ with his rook. **45...Kf6 46.Kg3 Re2 47.Rd6 Ke5 48.Ra6 Rd2 49.Ra7** 49.Ra8 was rather better, though in that case Black could still without danger have played the knight to c4, e.g.: 49...Nf4 50.Re8+ Kf5 51.Rf8+ Kg5 52.Rxf4 Rxc2+ 53.Kxc2 Kxf4 and wins. **49...Nf4 50.Ra5+ Rd5 51.Ra7 Nxc4+ 52.Kh4 Kf4 53.Rf7+ Nf6 54.g4 Kxf3 55.Rxc7 0-1** *Chess Player's Chronicle*, Vol. 1 (Sept. 1877), pp.205-207

By year's end, the "Chess Intelligence" section of the *CPC* had expanded even more, and coverage had also expanded in the game section, with, for example, the contest between Louis Paulsen and Zukertort at Leipzig appearing in its pages. The *CPC* had firmly established itself as a journal of chess, without controversy, serving the needs of its largely provincial readership.

For today's readers, such a volume makes a fitting antidote for those who may have gorged themselves too long on the more vitriolic side of chess reporting. For anyone interested in British chess history, the volume forms an essential link in the coverage of the late 1870s, before *The Chess Monthly* (first issued September 1879) and the *British Chess Magazine* (January 1881) came on the scene.

Problem Key: 1.Qg8.

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