



## C O L U M N I S T S

## *New Stories about Old Chess Players*

Jeremy P. Spinrad



## Chess Disputes

There have been wonderful disputes surrounding chess matches. I recall with perverse fondness the bizarre manipulations of the Karpov-Korchnoi matches. Some accusations, such as Korchnoi's family being held hostage, were serious. Others, such as Korchnoi's decision to counter the influence of Karpov's psychic by bringing in some wackos from a sinister religious group, known for putting poisonous snakes in its enemies' mailboxes, should have generated coverage in the *Weekly World News*. Bobby Fischer, of course, manages to be a one-person walking dispute.

Thankfully, for the entertainment of chess historians, these vicious disputes have always been a part of chess history. This section looks at some of the wrangling among 19th-century players. Rather than deal with the often bitter but well-known disputes over match negotiations (e.g. Steinitz-Zukertort and Lasker-Capablanca, to name only two of the more heated), we will focus on more offbeat points of contention.

For those familiar with Alexandre Deschappelles, it may not be a shock to learn that he was involved in a number of public chess disputes, in all of which he felt his honor was deeply affronted. Deschappelles went far beyond having disputes with mere individual opponents — he had major controversies with his own teammates, and even with entire countries.

The attack on his teammates came during the Paris-Pesth correspondence match, which took place over the years 1842 to 1846. These correspondence matches were considered quite a matter of national pride, and Paris assembled a top-flight team to maintain their self-perception as the dominant power in world chess. The Paris team consisted of Saint-Amant, Calvi, LaRoche, Devinck and Deschappelles; they were to be opposed by a Hungarian team led by Szén, Löwenthal and Grimm, in a battle of two of the major chess centers. Although Deschappelles considered himself to be quite a booster of France, national pride certainly took a back seat to self-pride where he was concerned. Deschappelles decided that the team should play the Greco counter-gambit, an opening that had at least as bad a reputation in top-level play then as it does now. When his teammates refused to play this opening, Deschappelles angrily challenged them to a match in which he would play the gambit. Depending on which side you believe, either the committee accepted the challenge and Deschappelles backed down, or the committee refused to acknowledge the honorable terms Deschappelles wanted. In any case, Deschappelles quit the Paris team, which lost the match.

An even more momentous dispute arose between Deschappelles and the entire country of England. In 1836, Deschappelles apparently became enraged about an article that appeared in an English paper. This paper questioned the veracity of an incident recounted by Deschappelles, in which he said he routed the best German players, who consulted against him while he gave rook odds. Deschappelles whipped off a letter (which was placed by Saint-Amant in *Bell's Life* during a trip to England) challenging any English player to a match giving pawn-and-two-moves odds for a sum of 500 pounds. The English found a champion (the question of who this champion was is quite interesting, and will be discussed in an article on unresolved research questions) and raised the backing in no time, and negotiations for the match began.

The negotiations foundered on issues that may seem fairly minor, but honor meant everything to both sides. The English wanted it clearly stated in writing that the odds had not been originally requested by the English as an acknowledgement of inferiority; Deschappelles declined to answer them on this point. Deschappelles insisted that the English also reveal the name of his potential opponent, and answer letters more promptly.

I would argue that this challenge, which was quite the talk of the chess world at the time, was crucial to invigorating English chess and led directly or indirectly to a hugely important event, the Staunton–Saint-Amant chess matches. We now leave the cantankerous Deschappelles, and move on to the almost equally cantankerous Staunton.

Everyone knows of the famous blame game between Morphy and Staunton, when Staunton did not accept Morphy's challenge, with each trying to place responsibility on the other. This is merely one of a long list of quarrels involving Staunton, who managed to have disputes of varying degrees with nearly every major player he encountered (or, as in Morphy's case, refused to encounter).

Some chess histories seem to present Staunton-vs.-Saint-Amant as a gentlemanly affair, in which the champion of England boldly challenged the French champion, and wrested the scepter of chess eminence in spirited but mutually respectful combat. It is true that each acknowledged the other as a prominent master, but these matches had more than enough acrimony to go around. There were, in fact, disputes before, during, and after each of these matches. Indeed, even calling these matches can be a point of controversy.

Disputed points include whether the first encounter should be called a match at all, whether Saint-Amant had the right to a return match, whether the pieces used put Saint-Amant at a disadvantage, which player used more time on his moves, whether each had insulted the other in print, arguments about translations of comments, and other issues. Thus, the *Chess Player's Chronicle* eventually writes (this is taken from Levy's biography of Staunton):

*M. Saint-Amant has vainly tried by every subterfuge to avoid an encounter he has neither the skill nor courage to undertake. His pitiful evasions have been met and baffled by the unflinching straightforwardness of his opponent. Hemmed in on all sides, without a loop-hole for flight from one or other of the cartels, his last desperate resource is to escape under cover of a rupture with whom he dare not fairly meet across the chess-board.*

I cannot begin to discuss details of all of Staunton's disputed match results. I give some very brief summaries of disputes with various other players below. In some cases, the other party chose not to argue the issue with Staunton, but complained privately about Staunton's presentation of results of games with them. From A to Z:

- Alexandre: A quarrel between Staunton and Alexandre is said to have left the Westminster club shattered (*A Century of British Chess*, pg. 53).
- Anderssen: Staunton's claims of sickness, as an excuse for not winning London 1851, caused a dispute with the German chess community; Staunton also felt he had the right to a match with Anderssen.
- Brien: I don't know the exact origin of the dispute, but Brien changed from being a fan of Staunton to a bitter opponent some time after taking over the *Chess Player's Chronicle*.
- Buckle: Said to have been privately upset that in a series of games played at pawn-and-move odds, Staunton published his lone win and only a couple of the far more numerous losses.
- Cochrane: Privately upset over game selection for the *Chess Player's Handbook*; thought it made him look like a pawn-and-move duffer, when he had beaten Staunton in their last even series.
- Harrwitz: Vicious fight over negotiations for a match that fell through.
- Löwe: Staunton was accused of refusing to go on with a match, with Löwe giving pawn-and-two, after finding that Löwe was too strong for him at these odds, and subsequently of abusing Löwe in print.
- Löwenthal: Staunton started being harsh on Löwenthal after the latter lost a match to Harrwitz, while being viewed as a surrogate for Staunton; Harrwitz used this victory to challenge Staunton. *The Oxford Companion* attributes their falling out to a disagreement over who had won more in a series of informal games.
- Medley: I take the following quote from *A Century of British Chess*, page 138. Staunton is discussing Medley's writing in the book of the 1862 Chess Tournament: "Medley, when he is interesting is a plagiarist; when he would be historical, he is the poorest of analysts; when he would be smart, is commonplace."
- Morphy: We all know this one!
- Mucklow: Staunton was angry that Mucklow insisted in playing in the championship section of the London 1851 tournament, so he minced no words denigrating his play in the tournament book.
- Saint-Amant: See above
- Steinitz: I give a sample of Staunton's remarks about Steinitz below.

- George Walker: Accused by Staunton of being a plagiarist (see below).
- Elijah Williams: Became an enemy of Staunton after beating him in the London tournament, and then beating him in a match afterwards (Staunton actually won more games in this match, but lost because he spotted Williams some games). Staunton started constantly implying that he only won games by playing slowly, though there is evidence that he was not such a slow player in general. Many people were upset by Staunton's treatment of Williams. This will be discussed in more depth in an article on Elijah Williams.
- Zytogorski: Dispute on the results of a match at pawn-and-two odds; various sources give hugely different scores for this, from 6-0 in favor of Zytogorski to 3-0 in favor of Staunton.

Sometimes these disputes bleed into each other for no apparent reason; I will share a little example that I feel illustrates the point. In a particularly long rant against Harrwitz, by a supporter of Staunton in the *CPC* of 1854, pg 188, a single paragraph gives rise to three odd footnotes. Walker ("such a hackneyed scribe as the chess writer in *Bell's Life*") had apparently supported Harrwitz in the dispute. The entire screed is both fascinating and tedious: great in small doses, but it does go on!

The first footnote perhaps makes sense: to a sentence accusing Walker of plagiarism it adds:

*the old epigram — Jack stole his discourse from the famed Dr. Brown; But reading it wretchedly, made it his own — is well exemplified in the borrowed but diluted doses of Mr. Lewis, given us by Mr. George Walker.*

His second footnote, to a flowery insult directed at Walker, continues the theme:

*Mr. George Walker is such a reckless copyist that he even reprints Mr. Greenwood Walker's misprints. For instance, in the 28th game between McDonnell and La Bourdonnais, he reprints, three moves running, three misprints. Bearing the name and being the mere copyist of Mr. Greenwood Walker, he may be styled *nominia umbra*, or the Greenwood shade. Dryden has alluded to the connection of an oaf, named Simple Cymon, with him. Speaking of Cymon, the great poet says - To the Greenwood Shade he took his way. Hence poor Cymon's piteous complaints in letters, to *Bell's Life* in London, in which sense, truth, and style are all on a par.*

There follows a sentence in Greek, here both transliterated and translated:

*We dismiss him with one caution; as some of the ancients divided education into three branches, two of which were *mousiki* (music) and *grammata* (letters), we recommend him to confine his attention to the*

*music.*

To this is added the footnote:

*Mr. George Walker has not confined his compilation — (does he know that the classical derivation of compile points to those acts which the ‘vir trium literarum’ indulges in?) to Chess, but has taken it to Music.*

And that is just about Walker for supporting Harrwitz! For Harrwitz himself, the rhetoric goes on and on and on. I count insults to Harrwitz on pgs 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 31, 45, 47, 55, 56, 57, 58, 81-91, 123, 124, 155-157, 180-189, 358-359 (in poetry!) of the 1854 *Chess Player’s Chronicle*. It is hard to decide what to include here from these rants. From the analysis of Harrwitz’s match against Löwenthal, when Löwenthal playing Black announces mate in 4 in game 20, Staunton gives a footnote, which reads:

*Mr. Harrwitz evidently plumes himself on this ‘announcement’ as an exploit almost superhuman. It came, he tells us, ‘like a thunderbolt upon White, who had to look a long time before he discovered the way it is done.’ Poor White! No wonder he has latterly disappointed all his friends, and lost so many games, if this petty mate could shake his nerves and baffle his penetration!*

But the real gems are reserved for the later articles. In the article on page 180-189, Harrwitz is called a retreating general, the Runaway Apprentice, a coward, the Chess Kaleidoscope, below contempt, Proteus, a charlatan, a juggler, some form of beggar (I cannot understand the entire taunt here), a diminutive dog, and other terms of endearment. There is no way to convey the entire tone in a single quote; a snippet goes:

*Even a juggler may find it hard to tumble out of a cesspool. Herr Harrwitz, like our old friends Punch and Judy, has had his day. The puppet rises, wags his head, struts about the stage, jeers passers by; but in the end Punch is shut up in a box.*

Here is a little quote from Staunton about Steinitz, which even a less touchy person than Steinitz might have taken badly:

*We understand that Mr. Steinitz has challenged Professor Anderssen to a match of chess, but we cannot believe that even Mr. Steinitz has succeeded in carrying presumption so far. The thing would be ridiculous, were it not incredible. We decline to insult Mr. Steinitz by crediting him with a display of ignorance so gross; with impudence which would make him the laughing stock of Europe. No, no, even Mr. Steinitz could not have descended to such a fit of absurdity. Self-advertisement is doubtless valuable, and Mr. Steinitz doubtless would be pleased to see his name coupled with that of the illustrious Anderssen. But to challenge the great master to a match — no, the*

*thing is too preposterous. Our bump of credulousness is not large enough to take it in.*

Of course, Steinitz won the match in question.

In addition to disputes between players, it seems to be very natural to have disputes between different chess clubs from a single city. Disputes seem to have been part of chess club life since chess clubs have existed. An article in the *London Times* of Feb 19, 1824, says that the Paris club was on the verge of dissolution because of disputes between members. London had the most chess clubs in the mid 1800s, and with Staunton there to fan the flames, there was always some club angry at another. Things turned particularly bitter around the time of the great chess tournament in 1851; the St. George club crowd led by Staunton was in a war with both the London Club and Simpson's Divan. In fact, a sizable portion of the 1851 tournament book is devoted to Staunton's complaints about the London Club for failing to support the tournament; this, incidentally, is no doubt why Harrwitz did not play in that famous event. Meanwhile, the whole Divan crowd was incensed at the treatment of Williams and Löwe in the tournament book, with Staunton shooting back deprecating remarks about the players there.

Things were not much better in the leading chess center in the United States. These quotes show that the New York chess world was divided into rival factions not on good terms, from a very early date.

*New York Times*, April 23, 1860:

*A chess-player in this city writes ... that the progress of the game in New York is checked — in fact, so to speak, checkmated, by cliques, and jealousies. He says that honorable men who love the game are overawed by 'a pack of meddling parasites, intent on nothing but their own names, oysters, and champagne,' and indulges in some severe reflections, expressed with sufficient causticity. Here is a challenge for the New York Chess Club, which body is clearly bound to purge itself from this contempt.*

Even early correspondence chess featured a good deal of bickering. One of the most important early correspondence matches was played between London and Edinburgh. According to Lewis, the match was decided on a strange form of touch-move violation. In the deciding game, to save time the London club sent a three move sequence (the 26, 27, and 28th moves) in one letter. Immediately after delivering the letter, a serious error was discovered on the second move. The club members begged the post office for the letter back, but this was refused. Since the letter had not been sent, the London club wrote a second letter asking that only the first move be played at this time. The Edinburgh club received both letters at the same time; should they hold the London club to the entire sequence or not? Edinburgh held them to the moves and won the match, over the objections of London. I read this account

in an 1849 article in *Littell's Living Age*, taken from *Quarterly Review*. Staunton describes the superiority of the English side in *Chess Player's Chronicle* of 1850 as follows:

*In an ordinary contest, indeed, over the board, it was the old odds of Lombard Street to a China orange! Maugre all the advantages of superior skill and practice, however, the Londoners lost the battle, and lost it by a blunder as ridiculous as it was vexatious, at the very moment, too, when the game was in their hands.*

Apparently I was not the only one who noticed this article. Twenty years after the match, this account stirred the blood of the Scotsmen, who compared it to Napoleon's insistence that he ought to have won at Waterloo, or saying that Hector might have beaten Achilles. Thus, the Scottish side puts their case to the public in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* July 1849. They first point out that if the English side was so superior, as the writers say, what happened in those other games of the match? They scoff at the notion that the Scottish side would have been slaughtered over the board, saying that it could just as well be argued that more advantage accrues to the superior player in a correspondence match. They also point out that the Scottish side missed winning possibilities (e.g. move 51 of game 3), and never whined about it.

However, they more specifically address the question of whether London lost only because of this blunder. In fact, the writer says, the moves that London wished to retract were as good as any other moves in the position. According to their version, an Edinburgh player offered to prove the point by playing a "back-game" with the London Club in which the 27th and 28th moves were withdrawn (as well as another from an earlier position), and the London Club after several weeks declined the offer, having concluded that their 27th and 28th moves were as good as any other. In fact, it was the 26th move that threw away the win, and the London Club still had a draw if they played correctly after their 27th and 28th moves; they had simply overlooked some Scottish resources and blown move 26. Move 27 was not a "ridiculous blunder," but a promising sacrificial attack that the Scottish side defended against accurately. They then go into the question of what should be considered a "touch move" in correspondence chess, drifting away from the chess issues, but noting that the rules had been agreed to clearly beforehand, and that London had held them to a severe penalty in a very similar case in one of the earlier games. After sending an illegal move accidentally (and realizing this before the letter had left Edinburgh, but feeling bound by the rules not to retract it; they did add a note on the outside of the envelope), moving the knight to a square occupied by the king, London forced Edinburgh to move the knight to a different square, leading to the loss of game 4, while if they had been allowed to move the king (an option which was sometimes used under rules of the day), they might have had a draw.

So the dispute could still ignite tempers 20 years later, and for all I know may still do so. The game is given below, with some *Fritz8*-assisted analysis.

*London-Edinburgh*, correspondence, 1849

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Bc4 Bc5 5.c3 Qe7 6.O-O dxc3 7.Nxc3 d6  
8.Nd5 Qd7 9.b4 Nxb4 10.Nxb4 Bxb4 11.Ng5 Nh6 12.Bb2 Kf8

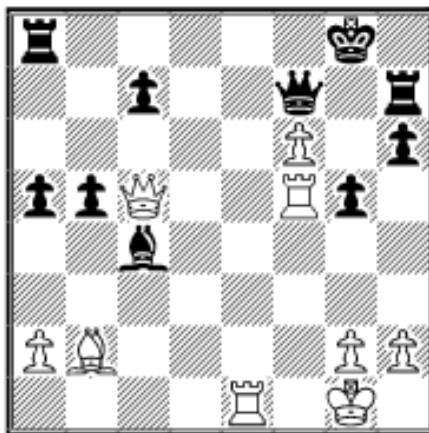


13.Qb3 — Missing a win with 13.Qd4!, and either 13...Rg8 14.Nxh7+, or 13...f6 14.Ne6+ Ke8 15.Bb3 Qe7 (if 15...Bc5 16.Nxc5 dxc5 17.Qxc5+–, or 15...Ba5 16.Qd1 Qe7 17.Qh5+ g6 18.Nxc7+ Bxc7 19.Qxh6+–) 16.Nxc7+ Qxc7 17.Qxb4+–. 13...Qe7 14.Nxf7 Nxf7 15.Qxb4 Ne5 16.f4 Nxc4 17.Qxc4 Qf7 18.Qc3 Be6 19.f5 Bc4 20.Rf4 b5 21.e5 dxe5 22.Qxe5 h6 23.Re1 Rh7 24.f6 g5?

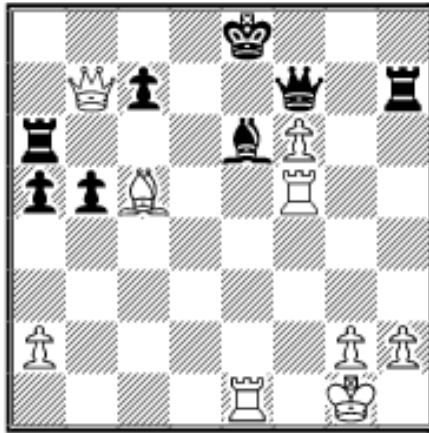


25.Rf5?! — Missing another chance: 25.Rd4! Be6 (if 25...Bxa2 26.Qf5+–) 26.Ba3+ Kg8 27.Qxe6 Qxe6 28.Rxe6 winning easily. 25...a5 — Now begins the sequence of three moves sent together, that became such a bone of contention. 26.Qc5+ — Not best, but contrary to the Scots' claim, it does not throw away the win. Several other lines were more decisive, e.g. 26.Qe4 Re8 27.Re5 Rxe5 28.Bxe5 Bd5 29.Qd3 Bc6 30.Bd6+! etc.,

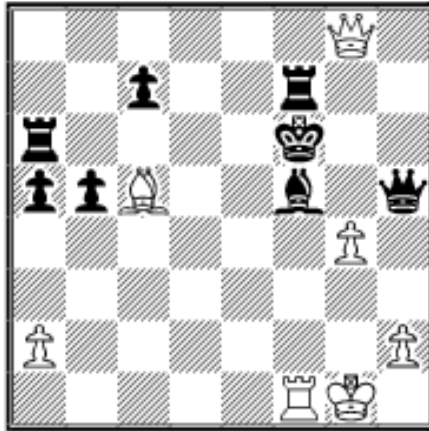
winning handily. 26...Kg8



27.Rxg5+? — The Londoners were right to regret this sacrifice, which is good for no better than a draw. With 27.Qc6, 27.Qd4, or 27.a4, there were still fairly good winning chances. 27...hxg5 28.Qxg5+ Kf8 29.Bd4 Be6 30.Qc5+ Kg8 31.Qg5+ Kf8 32.Bc5+ — Still trying to win. A draw by repetition could be forced by 32.Qc5+ etc. 32...Ke8 33.Qd5 Ra6 34.Qb7

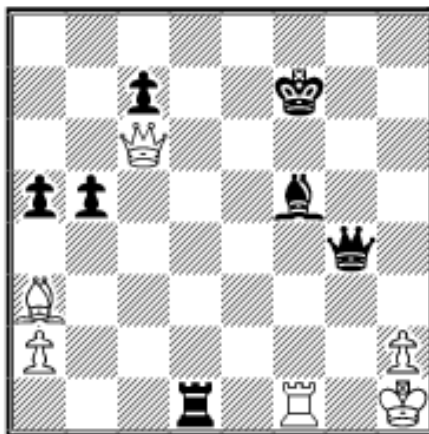


**34...Qh5! 35.f7+ —** If 35.Qxa6?? Qxh2+ wins. **35...Kxf7 36.Rf1+ Kg6 37.Qe4+ Bf5 38.Qe8+ Rf7 39.Qg8+ Kf6 40.g4**



**40...Ra8!! —** Anything else loses. **41.Qxa8?** — The best try was probably 41.Bd4+, when Black could settle for a draw by 41...Ke7 42.Bc5+ Kf6 43.Bd4+ etc., or try for more with 41...Ke6 42.gxf5+ Qxf5 43.Re1+ Kd6 44.Qxa8 Qg4+ 45.Kh1 Qxd4, though the Q-R-2P-vs.-Q-R-3P ending looks very difficult in view of the exposed kings. After the text, the game turns in Black's favor.

**41...Qxg4+ 42.Kh1 Rd7 43.Ba3? —**  
**43.Qe8** was about the last hope. **43...Kf7! 44.Qc6 Rd1!**



**45.Qxb5 Qe4+ 46.Kg1 Kg6 47.Qb2 Qg4+ 48.Qg2 Qxg2+ 49.Kxg2 Bh3+ 50.Kxh3 Rxf1 51.Be7 a4 52.a3 Rf5 0-1**

Every form of chess you can think of has seemed to generate a new form of disputation. The *Chicago Tribune* of July 20, 1879 goes on at length about what was supposed to be a friendly telegraph match between the chess clubs of Toronto and Senforth. One team made an illegal move,

clearly caused by mistaking the queen and king files. The other club demanded that it should be treated as a touch-move violation, but even this is not the end of the matter, since it is not clear which rook (the one on the king file or the queen file) should be considered "touched" when you relay a move of the queen's rook (sitting on the queen's file) to a square on the king's file.

When the American Chess Association decided to hold a problem tournament in 1878, they did not expect it to cause an uproar. For reasons that are not clear to me, certain parties decided that the famous composer Sam Loyd had submitted multiple entries to the tournament under different names, thus giving him a better chance to win the prize. Various problem columns around

the world claimed there was a great scandal, and demanded that the names of all losing competitors be given out. Even after these names were given out, some columnists claimed there was a taint of scandal because they had not heard of a few of the competitors. All this worldwide fuss came over a tournament that received, according to a list in the *Chicago Tribune* of January 26, 1879, just 20 entries.

Rival chess journals would often have disputes. In some cases, these were simple extensions of fights between the editors of the journals; Harrwitz and Staunton conducted their wars through the pages of the publications they controlled. However, sometimes the disputes were intended to drive the opposing paper out of business. When Stanley's *American Chess Journal* and another magazine called *Chess Palladium and Mathematical Sphinx* tried to go into business at essentially the same time, Stanley attacked with delightful nastiness. Stanley's column in the *Spirit of the Times*, November 14, 1846, affects the tone of an even-handed discussion, while attacking everything from the fact that the *Palladium* stresses its Americanness when the editor is a native of France (on the authority of "a reputable barber, in whose shop the editor of the "sphinx" served for a time as a journeyman)," and calls the magazine "a most ridiculous jumble of unintelligible nonsense" and "sixteen pages of soiled waste-paper."

A particularly petty dispute interfered with a living chess display in Washington, D.C. Living chess displays became quite popular in 1879, starting with comic displays in Peoria, Illinois and Sewickley, Pennsylvania, spreading to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Bergen N.J., and Louisville. New York had a grand display organized by the Manhattan Chess Club and performed at the New York Academy of Music.

Washington went for a different type of display, intended as a major social event. The pieces were to be represented by a team of blondes and a team of brunettes, all coming from the most beautiful and glamorous segments of Washington high society. The social pages talk repeatedly of the practices for these events. However, after a single performance (the paper mentions that one of the beautiful queens had to stand motionless for nearly an entire hour before moving to effect mate!), we learn in the *Chicago Tribune* of May 15, 1859 that all future performances were canceled, because a group of New Yorkers sued for royalties, claiming copyright for this [ancient] form of chess.

My favorite story of a chess dispute takes a rather different view of a person who is often described as the most amiable of fellows. There are a number of versions of what went on between Steinitz (who was highly disputatious) and Blackburne. You can read in some places, for example, that Blackburne once threw Steinitz out of a window. We have a description of what must be the source of this story from Steinitz; Blackburne does not come out so well, but in fairness we must admit that any damage to the window was all Steinitz's fault! *International Chess Magazine*, Nov. 1889, p. 332, says apropos Blackburne:

*And on one occasion at Purssell's about 1867 he struck with his full fist into my eye which he blackened, and might have knocked me out. And though he is a very powerful man of very nearly twice my size who might have killed me with a few such strokes, I am proud to say that I had the courage of attempting to spit in his face, and only wish I had succeeded. On my second occasion, in Paris, we occupied adjoining rooms at the same hotel, and I was already in bed undressed, when he came home drunk and began to quarrel, and after a few words he pounced upon me and hammered at my face and eyes with fullest force about a dozen blows, until the bed cloth and my nightshirt were covered with blood. But at last I had the good fortune to release myself from his drunken grip, and I broke the window pane with his head, which sobered him down a little.*

Steinitz then mentions two further attacks of similar nature against Mr. Israel and Mr. Walker (“who was even a head shorter in stature than myself”).

The June 28, 1896 *New York Times* tells of a number of separate disputes in the chess world, some of which became quite heated over odd matters. The Manhattan Club had two new interesting cases. Mr. Elwell, an adviser to Jackson Showalter, had opened some letters not intended for him, and forwarded them to the club. Innocent mistake, or an attempt to keep Showalter playing for Boston in a match rather than Manhattan? Meanwhile, Pillsbury resigned from the club “due to a refusal on their part to discipline a member, who, he claimed, had sent him an insulting message by servant after taking his umbrella.”

I decided to look a little further at these disputes. The *Times* writes on Nov. 3, 1896, that Justice Maclean, in the Supreme Court yesterday, ordered the Manhattan Club to reinstate John D. Elwell, who had been expelled on Oct. 8. He had been charged by the club with malfeasance in tampering with the United States mails. The envelope, in fact, bore Mr. Elwell's name and business address, the sender neglecting to write “in care of” rather than addressing it directly to him. Somehow, the issue reemerged later, since a report on May 10, 1898 says that Supreme Court Justice McAdam refused to reinstate Elwell. Supreme Court intervention in a chess dispute? And why were they so hot to kick him out over what seems to be an innocent mistake?

Meanwhile, the Brooklyn Chess Club was having its own war involving Elwell. In Brooklyn, he was accused of arranging international cable matches for the club without its consent; the June 30, 1896 *Brooklyn Eagle* says that two of the board members were about to resign. The July 8 paper describes some very lively disputes (cabled messages being torn out of each other's hands), and it becomes apparent that there is a big split over whether to let Showalter (who was managed by Elwell) represent the club at events, or whether he should not be considered a club member. Resignations are thrown about; some are accepted, some rejected. The July 3 *Eagle* blames these problems on the summer heat, and hopes things will be better in the Fall.

Surprisingly, I could not turn up more on the umbrella incident. Surely there is a good story there!

Around the same time, Steinitz was becoming furious at the Manhattan Chess Club although he was far away in St. Petersburg. He heard that at a speech at the club, a judge had remarked that “Any two gentlemen may sit down to play a game of chess without prostituting it by playing for money.” Although this was almost certainly a reference to gambling, as is noted in the *Times* on January 15, 1899, where the judge is identified as Judge Jerome, Steinitz felt it was a slap at him, and was furious that the speech had been applauded. He wanted the judge expelled from the club. This incident (probably together with the relatively meager support he felt the club had given him) eventually caused him to resign. Interestingly, Steinitz himself at one point had “taken up the cudgel against the shilling a game hangers on at the chess rooms” in London (*Brooklyn Eagle*, Nov 6, 1877).

In 1897, Lipschütz and Steinitz (and their respective clubs) engaged in a full-blown silly dispute over the Challenge Cup for the New York Chess association. The Manhattan Club (supporting Lipschütz) was apparently claiming the cup because the Secretary of the NYCA had mistakenly said that the first win would decide the match, while the Staten Island Club wanted to go by the written agreement, in which there must be two games played to equalize the colors. Not surprisingly, Lipschütz had received White first. At least, this is the version in the *New York Times*, August 18, 1897. The dispute dragged on, with players making a move, pressing the clock, and “winning” when the opponents failed to play under their rules, but it becomes too tedious to read about for long.

This is hardly the silliest rules dispute issue I have seen from that period. I find the 1891 tiff between the Brooklyn and Manhattan clubs quite a bit stranger. The *Brooklyn Eagle* reports on this on October 8, 1891; apparently two New York papers were playing the dispute up big-time, under the heading “The Chess War.” Brooklyn had apparently been defeated by Manhattan in a 12-board match four years earlier. There had been talk of a return match, and the Brooklyn club stewed on this for four long years until they had a strong team ready. Some of the objections were normal, for example, over players who were members of both clubs. However, I do not quite understand the issues involved in the number of players taking part in the proposed match. The *Eagle*, understandably taking Brooklyn’s side, insists that this is a rematch under exactly the same terms, rather than a new match between the clubs. I must admit their viewpoint does not convince me, given the four intervening years, even though my mother went to Brooklyn College. As the *Eagle* views it, “The objections raised by the Manhattan Club to the playing of twelve on a side are puerile and their desire to increase the number to fifteen is an acknowledgment that they fear defeat with a lesser number.” Such an issue!

Why does chess cause so many disputes? I don’t think it is the game itself, but

the people who play it. Some evidence comes from a lunacy hearing for a Mr. Brand; details of the case are in the *London Times* of August 1830. The defendant had been accused of various types of bizarre activity, and supposedly became particularly strange when playing chess. He reportedly would become extremely agitated when he lost, and had lost large sums of money betting on the game. Various altercations are described by relatives and doctors. His defense, of course, came from surprised chess club members. As one member testified, "He was not more irritable, but less so, than other chess-players." I propose a new motto for chess: Hail to the chess club, where even a violent lunatic can pass as normal!

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