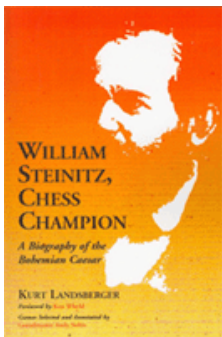




SKITTLES ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by Mark Donlan



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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.com](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives...*

Beginning in the June, 1888 issue of his *International Chess Magazine*, editor and World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz commenced a series wherein he took on any and all critics of both him and the royal game. Steinitz was never one to shy away from controversy and (if you will excuse the mixing of metaphors) his acid pen took no prisoners. We are pleased to present the eleventh of ...

A Literary Steinitz Gambit

Or

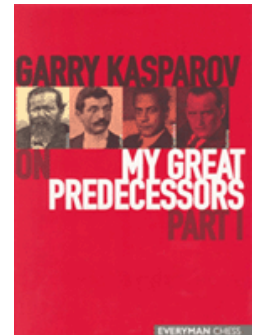
A Lecture on the Mental Derangement of So-Called Chess Critics and Their Treatment

With Living Illustrations – Part 11

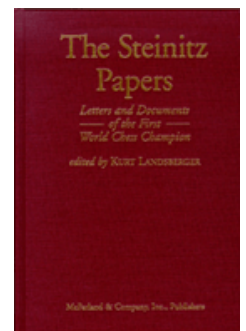
Wilhelm Steinitz

The Chess historical hysterics of the translated editorial Bottom the weaver of New Orleans have yielded for some considerable time to my contempt without silence treatment, and I understand that with the exception of a growl about the “unspeakable Bohemian” (if he will follow my advice he will not speak about him at all) he has joined in silence without contempt the literary enemies who are holding their malicious tongues in chorus. The editorial birch-rod and the heel of my boot may therefore be dispensed with in my further treatment of his unfortunate midsummer night mare’s dreams. But though the fever of our editorial patient has abated in intensity and he is apparently out of danger of a relapse, it will be necessary to use some strong disinfectants in order to destroy the germs of his disease which might otherwise revive at some future time. You will notice especially a shystering and nauseating-discharge coming from the diseased internal organs of his imagination by way of his mouth-piece in the *Times-Democrat* of the 5th of February last, and which resolves itself into a charge against me that I am “convicted” as “a professional libeller out of my own-mouth.” As

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evidence he produces the “non-speaking phalanx” of three of my enemies then already dead and seven more, all alive in Europe at that date, who had ostracised me and whose characters he insinuates I have falsely attempted to blacken while extolling my own. You will no doubt perceive that there was some cunning in his madness, for he evidently fancied when presenting his seven living witnesses as so many paragons of virtue that seven literary armies would at once be formed on the other side of the Atlantic and would be immediately transported to his succor in his journalistic campaign. It may have helped him to recover his senses that in spite of his shystering offer of his gratuitous advocacy he was quite disappointed in his expectations. But in order to make sure of his recovery from that hallucination, I shall apply a strong antidote of contempt without silence which I believe will completely counteract the poison on his mind.

My pettifogging editorial advocate you may now brace up your braces but permit me to pull your shystering nose with my left hand while rubbing into it with my right some of your own filth which you have dropped about, and which I have picked up with a dirty glove. There! It has a strong smell, but don't sneeze.

And now just read aloud a little extract from *Turf, Field and Farm*, October 26th, 1883, already quoted in our last January number, p. 11: “Life is a fight says Darwin. A maxim which does not altogether contradict its comparison by other philosophers with a game of Chess. No doubt during a long career I was inveigled outside of the Chess-board into a series of simultaneous performances in which I had to struggle for the most part singlehanded against press combinations, club intrigues and private cabals. No doubt I found more numerous and ready opponents in that kind of game than over the board, but somehow I had early discovered that the battle of life like the game of Chess is best fought on principles free from deception and trickery, and consequently, if the history of my private combats was fully written (perhaps I shall write it some day) it will be found that I made an excellent score – certainly better in comparison and on the whole than any one of my adversaries.” That's right. And as your perception has been stimulated by my last operation, you will probably understand that I had good reason for saying: “That I was the only one of the *whole Chess community as the clique styles itself* (you have by the way during your aberrations forgotten to quote the inverted commas and the last underlined qualifications) “who at any rate wished to be right.” And allow me to add that just as I was for the greater part of my public career the only standard-bearer of the modern school of Chess, who in theory and practice always tried to make the best move and exposed the follies of playing for snares and traps, so I was also the only one among the Chess masters in England who systematically discarded all trickery and deception in the conduct of the Gambit of life. And let me also tell you that it was very little to boast of when I considered myself to have been at any rate the most honest, not to say the only honest one among the prominent players whom you name, for with perhaps one or two exceptions, all of them did belong or still belong to the pseudo-philosophical school (already described in our last December number) which denies all moral responsibility.

You are still incredulous? You shake your poor demented head. Well, then, let me give you some practical proofs in addition to my theories. You know that not one of your Pleiades of virtue had courage enough to accept your public invitation of joining you in consultation in the journalistic gambit. Two of them have died since. With one of those two as you were well aware but forgot to mention, I had made my peace long ago. Be there peace to his ashes, for he has suffered cruelly at the hands of the very parties who made a tool of his weakness and vanity. You were also aware but forgot to repeat (though to give you the credit you mentioned it once before) his public declaration that at least during one very trying season I had “acted from first to last in a perfectly fair and honorable manner” to use his own words (compare our Vol. II., August, 1887, p. 225. The late Mr. Zukertort's speech at the City of London Chess Club). This evidence of one of your own witnesses and one of my former

public enemies might perhaps have shown to you had you been in your senses, that I am capable of being on my good behavior for a little while at least and that I might perhaps be trusted to become penitent for my past misdeeds and to write a proper book of the forthcoming Congress without being tied hand and foot and delivered to your tender mercies as you wished to be done.

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