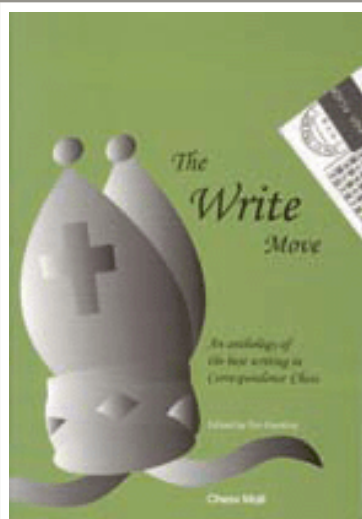




COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



The Write Move
by Tim Harding

The First Oxford-Cambridge University Match

On Friday 28 March, 1873, the City of London Chess Club played host for the chess event that attracted the largest crowd of spectators hitherto known for any chess contest. The match was contested over seven boards between teams representing Oxford and Cambridge universities. This crowd was out of all proportion to the strength of the players or the quality of the play, but the curiosity value of seeing the young men of England's ancient universities do battle on the eve of the annual Boat Race was irresistible. Indeed the next year's event was almost as popular. Traditionally the match has always been held ever since on neutral ground, in London, around the time of Easter.



The *Illustrated London News*, from which our picture is taken, quoted an estimate that the number of persons present at the chess match “was little short of 400,” but others put the figure much higher. In his column in *The Field*, Steinitz claimed that “upwards of 700 persons” attended the club premises at 34 Milk-street, Cheapside, during the course of the evening. Both papers reported the event on Saturday 5 April since the papers of 29 March would have been on the presses while the games were in progress. *The Field*

lists: “Herren Löwenthal, Horwitz, Steinitz, Hoffer, Zukertort, Messrs. Medley, Boden, Macdonnell, Potter, Blackburne, Campbell, Healey, Bird, Wisker, Duffy, Abbott, and other distinguished amateurs.” Nobody mentions Howard Staunton (who died the following year) as one of the celebrated persons present, so he got his report second-hand; apparently his last public appearance was at the 1874 match.

Play started at 6 PM according to some reports, or 6:30 PM according to the *Westminster Papers* and *Land and Water*. Löwenthal’s column in the latter describes the scene in “the fine and handsome dining saloon” of the City club’s restaurant: “beautifully decorated for the occasion with hangings of dark and light blue trimmed with silver.” As the picture shows, “the table at which the champions were seated was ornamented with choice flower-vases, fountains with lots of rosewater, and silver candelabra, etc.”

With the exception of board seven, where only one game was played, each player contested two games with his opponent during the evening, one with each colour. This was the normal arrangement in club matches of the day, and remained so in the Oxford-Cambridge fixture for several more years, so neither side gained an advantage through the odd number of boards. It is slightly surprising that when the second game was eventually abandoned, the universities did not change the traditional number of boards to six or eight; instead they presumably take the advantage of four whites in alternate years.

Previous matches between Oxford and Cambridge universities had been played by correspondence, although the teams may not have been fully representative. The first two correspondence matches were played on the consulting-committee basis, in 1847 and 1856, between the Hermes Club of Oxford and Trinity College Cambridge. The more recent ones were played as individual board matches in 1871-2 and 1872-3, and negotiations following these led directly to the starting of the over-the-board series.

P. W. Sergeant, in *A Century of British Chess*, credits Staunton with having suggested an over-the-board match between the universities about twenty years previously, but conditions apparently were not ripe before 1873 to hold such an event, one university or the other being insufficiently organised. The initiative that led to the founding of the first true Oxford University Chess Club came in the late 1860s, and it is generally recognised that the Rev. Charles E. Ranken was the key man for getting things moving. Ranken, later an important figure in Victorian chess, had been an undergraduate at Oxford from 1847-51 and was now on the teaching staff at Wadham College. The latter half of his life was spent as a clergyman in Malvern, Worcestershire.

Less generally recognised is the role of Lord Randolph Churchill in this matter. Churchill was not only a junior member of the university at the time but also a local man by birth, being the younger son of the Duke of

Marlborough, living at Blenheim Palace in Woodstock, only a few miles from Oxford. In Sir Winston Churchill's biography of his father, he wrote (page 36) that: "In conjunction with several friends he founded the University Chess Club." Given that it is well-known Winston tried to put the best gloss on his father's erratic career, one might be tempted to dismiss this as hyperbole. Although the Oxford University club history booklet, compiled later in the nineteenth century, and Sergeant both mention that Lord Randolph was an early member of the club, neither gives him credit for any special role. It turns out that, in this case, there was no exaggeration.

Ranken usually gets the credit for reviving Oxford chess in the late 1860s, but he is the very man who provides independent confirmation of the above claim. Early in an obituary notice to *The Field* on 19 December 1891 (p. 946) about the Rev W. Grundy, who was another early Oxford player, Ranken says: "It was about the year 1868, when Lord R. Churchill (then an undergraduate at Merton College) suggested to me, as I was at that time residing in Oxford, the re-establishment of the University Chess Club." This is, I think, the clincher.

Unfortunately, Randolph Churchill was not a strong enough player to be included on the team against Cambridge, neither in the correspondence matches, nor in the first or any other year of the over-the-board matches. However, a game he lost to Steinitz, possibly on 17 May 1870, in the latter's simultaneous displays at the university is included in the Churchill biography; it was first published in the *Chess Player's Quarterly Chronicle* for August 1870. Randolph Churchill retained a keen interest in chess, as Steinitz recalled later, and the two men seemed to have remained in contact (*International Chess Magazine* 1891, page 4).

Of the fourteen players involved, De Soyres and Simon had played for Cambridge and Nicholson for Oxford in both the correspondence matches between the universities. Schomberg had played in the first postal match; Anthony and Neville in the second. Here is the full result list of the first over-the-board varsity match. I note that Anthony's college was given incorrectly as Brasenose in the Oxford history.

Bd.	Oxford	Score	Cambridge	Score
1.	Walter Parratt (Magdalen Coll.)	2	John de Soyres (Caius)	0
2.	R. B. Schomberg (New College)	2	C. B. Ogden (Magdalene)	0
3.	Edwyn Anthony (Christ Church)	2	R. M. Simon (Caius)	0
4.	Falconer Madan (Brasenose)	1	F. H. Neville (Sidney)	1
5.	S. R. Meredith (Brasenose)	1	J. N. Keynes (Pembroke)	1

6.	E. W. B. Nicholson (Trinity)	1	W. W. R. Ball (Trinity)	1
7.	B. Whitefoord (New College)	1	Hayes	0

The final score therefore was Oxford 9, Cambridge 2, with two draws (on board 5). The second games on boards one and two were not completed by 11 PM and Steinitz was called upon to adjudicate. One of these was very clear; the other required some justification and his report was carried in *The Field* (see below). Surprisingly, although *The Times* reported not only the Boat Race (won by Cambridge) but also various other athletic contests between the universities (billiards, racquets etc.) around the same time, chess does not appear to have been worthy of a headline in *The Thunderer*. If there is a small paragraph about the match somewhere in its columns, it is not indexed for searching and I have not found it.

The Players: Oxford

Oxford was considered the favourites to win the match and the outcome easily justified this prediction. Staunton said that among the Dark Blue team were Parratt, “long known to be one of the strongest players in Yorkshire” and Anthony (“one of the best pupils of Steinitz”), while he described Madan, Meredith and Schomberg as “strong club players.” The Cambridge men, he explained, “besides being much younger men, were, as a rule, very ignorant of chess theory, and their defeat was never a matter of doubt.” The roots of the situation were that Cambridge was divided between senior and junior clubs (as an article in the September 1917 *British Chess Magazine* shows) and only the junior club (formerly called the Staunton Club) participated in the match. The “light blues” were all undergraduates. The era when half the England team would be composed of Cambridge undergraduates or recent graduates was still a century away. In the 1870s, chess was an adults’ game. Young men did not come up to university as already of master strength after spending their teen years honing their skills.

It is hard to know whether the large crowd of spectators expected a high standard of play, or just came along to support their “alma maters” or because they hoped to catch a glimpse of the nation’s leaders of the future. If the latter, they would have been disappointed as no great statesmen, military men, inventors, business magnates of the late Victorian era were playing on 28 March 1873. Nevertheless, even without Churchill (doubtless one of those spectating), the line-up for the first match included some men of minor future celebrity who made important contributions to their fields of endeavour.

A curiosity, not mentioned by Sergeant, is that two men on the Oxford team later held the important office of Bodley’s Librarian (chief librarian of Oxford University) and this evidently led to them falling out. Nicholson, librarian from 1882, was the older of the two men; Madan (1851-1935), originally from Gloucester, succeeded him in 1912, at the age of 61. Madan’s

entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* says that his relations with Nicholson “were at first friendly, but deteriorated to a point where librarian and sub-librarian only communicated in writing. Madan not only compiled a series of detailed notes in criticism of the librarian, but from time to time supplied this criticism to curators, to other members of the university, and, anonymously, to the press.”

Edward Williams Byron Nicholson (1849-1912) only played in the match, according to the Oxford club history, because S. N. Fox (New College) “was unable to play at the last moment.” By 1871, Nicholson had taken his degree and in 1872 he had become school librarian at Tonbridge (in Kent) and librarian of the Oxford Union (requiring some travelling). Then he had done some teaching until, in January 1873, he was appointed librarian of the London Institution (says ODNB), so technically he was not in residence in Oxford at the end of March. (The rules allowed any man who was a resident member of either university to participate, so long as he had not been more than 27 terms there, so not all the players need be undergraduates.) Presumably Nicholson had either gone to the match to spectate, or was contacted at the last minute, and Cambridge did not object to him playing as a substitute.

Nicholson, originally from St. Helier on the island of Jersey, was an innovative professional librarian and this led to his surprise appointment to the top Bodleian job in 1881. (Madan was already sub-librarian there and possibly was an unsuccessful applicant for the job.) Nicholson proved to be the great moderniser of the Bodleian Library, but evidently was reluctant to delegate. Then, staying too long in the saddle, his health broke down and he died very soon after being forced to retire. You will hear a little more of Madan later in this article. If you are interested in more information on these men, read *History of the Bodleian Library 1845-1945* by Madan’s successor, H. H. E. Craster.

The third member of the Oxford team to make it into *ODNB* is the club captain and musician, Walter Parratt (1841-1924), who was regarded as the greatest exponent and teacher of organ-playing of his day. Parratt, later knighted, was already in his thirties and established in his musical career. He had come to Oxford in 1872, from Wigan, as organist of Magdalen College, and was involved in many other aspects of the university’s musical life. He also took a degree, Bachelor of Music, on 15 May 1873. Parratt seems to have been the strongest player at Oxford in the early years of the Oxford-Cambridge matches. In 1874, he opted not to play (or maybe the eligibility rules were changed), and Cambridge got their revenge. A draw by Parratt with Steinitz from an 1875 simultaneous has been preserved. In later years, he was known for such feats as conducting chess games blindfold while simultaneously playing the organ.

Of the other four Oxford players, rather less is known. Edwyn Anthony, from

Hereford, matriculated on 13 June 1867 at the age of 23. He became a barrister, but remained active in the chess world and in 1892 he published a little book on *Chess Telegraphic Codes*. From about 1887-1892 he conducted a chess column in the *Hereford Times*. The other three I could only find in the *Alumni Oxoniensis* reference books, edited in 1888 by Joseph Foster. These give minimal information. Here is what I found:

Reginald Brodrick Schomberg matriculated in October 1867 at the age of 18 and had already taken his B.A. degree in 1871. He went on to become an attorney, studying at Lincoln's Inn in London and being called to the bar in 1875.

Samuel Redhead Meredith, the son of a Yorkshire clergyman, was Oxford's youngest player. He matriculated in October 1870 at the age of 20 and graduated in 1874.

The Oxford club president, Benjamin Whitefoord (the double 'o' is correct), came up to Oxford in 1869 at the age of 20 and also took his degree in 1874. He was later ordained and became Principal of Sarum Theological College in 1883.

Stephen Newcome Fox (the man who missed the match) came from Bristol. He matriculated in 1868 at the age of 18, took his B.A. in 1872 and then continued his legal studies. By 1888 he was Perry Professor of Jurisprudence in Bombay, India.

The Players: Cambridge

On the Cambridge side, it is easier to find out details of lives because the *Alumni Cantabrigienses* volumes, compiled by Venn in the twentieth century, often contain a full summary life history, sometimes including quirky details. They usually say when a man was born, married and died. The name that probably leaps to the eye of most reader is John Neville Keynes, who was the father of the great economist (Lord) John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946); his life and career are very well-documented. The long-lived J. N. Keynes (1852-1949), also became an economist as well as a logician, and had a long and distinguished career in Cambridge. He was only a freshman in the 1872-3 academic year, and was to compete in several more Oxford-Cambridge matches where his doughty opponent was usually the Irishman Horace Plunkett.

One other player on the Cambridge team has made it into *ODNB*. That was the board six player, Walter William Rouse Ball (1850-1925), apparently known normally as Rouse Ball. Apparently he qualified as a barrister (attorney) after taking his degree in mathematics, but soon returned to Cambridge where he was active in university teaching and administration. In later life, his main interest (apart from chess and rowing) was history. He

wrote histories of Trinity College and its boat club, but primarily histories of mathematics and popular works on mathematical puzzles.

Although not in *ODNB*, very much is known from various sources about the Cambridge captain, John de Soyres (1849-1905), originally from Exeter. He was the son of a clergyman and (according to his obituary in *The Times* on 6 February 1905) a nephew of Edward Fitzgerald, famous for his version of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. The *Illustrated London News* of 29 July 1871 has a letter from De Soyres about the activities of the Staunton Club. Indeed he seems to have been the main driving force of the Staunton Club, centred originally on Caius College, which evolved into the junior university club, played chess all his life and had a varied career. Venn says that he studied in Munich and Berlin universities as well as Cambridge. Curiously, although he passed his Cambridge examinations in law in 1872, he did not go through the formality of taking the degree until 1876. He next trained as an attorney, was called to the bar in 1874 and practised for a time on the Western Circuit (i.e. near his home city).

Maybe the law did not suit him, or he had a late vocation, because De Soyres entered the Church of England, becoming ordained deacon in 1876 and priest in 1877. After a curacy in London for two years, he was chaplain in St. Petersburg (presumably Russia) 1880-1 according to Venn, but *The Times* does not mention this episode. It would be interesting to see if any reader in Russia may be able to find evidence of him playing chess there that winter. In 1880, De Soyres played in the Counties Chess Association tournament in England (in which he beat Skipworth in a miniature with a Bxh7+ sacrifice), so that was presumably before he went abroad.

Then it was back to London, where he was Professor of Modern History at Queen's College, 1881-6, apparently on the strength of his interest in church history. At some point between 1886 and 1888, he emigrated to Canada, where he was Rector of St. John's, New Brunswick, from 1888 until his death. The University of New Brunswick conferred the degree of Doctor of Letters on him in 1900. An article about him by Larry Fyffe, published in Jean Hébert's magazine *Au Nom du Roi* (volume 2, no. 13; Dec. 2005) says that De Soyres's church work sometimes brought him to towns like Montreal where he could meet chess players, and that he was a friend of William H. K. Pollock. The article includes a game De Soyres played in Montreal in 1894 and another from 1905, the year of his death.

I believe too that it must have been the veteran John de Soyres who played a big tournament in Hilversum, in The Netherlands, 1903, won by Leonhardt from Duras. This was a sixteen-player all-player-all event from which one player withdrew after seven rounds. De Soyres did not play him but scored two wins and twelve losses. Maybe some reader in the Netherlands can explain how a Canadian club player came to be invited to this event? So it seems De Soyres must have returned home for a final trip, but died in

Halifax, Nova Scotia, two years later, while undergoing an operation in hospital. His obituary says that De Soyres was “a man of considerable gifts and of extensive reading who by reason of a retiring and sensitive nature failed to reach the mark which at one time he seemed likely to attain.”

The other four Cambridge players were harder to trace, partly because initials for two of them are lacking. Fortunately, Venn came to the rescue again. Here is what I found:

Charles Burdett Ogden (1849-1923) came from Leeds. After taking his mathematics degree in 1872, he became a schoolmaster. He died in Birmingham on 10 December 1923 “suddenly whilst playing a game of chess.”

Sir Robert Michael Simon (1850?-1914) was the son of a Nottingham merchant and was born in Hamburg. No date is given, but he was twenty when admitted to Caius College, Cambridge. He took his degree in 1874 and then qualified as a doctor, working in hospitals and becoming a professor at Birmingham University. He was knighted, presumably for his medical work, in 1910. Presumably on the outbreak of war, he was commissioned Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps and died on 22 December 1914. More research in the National Archives in Kew would be needed to find out exactly what happened to him. Surely a man of his age would not have been ordered to the Western Front, but maybe he insisted on going.

Francis Henry Neville (1847-1915), also from Exeter, was another who had an academic career in Cambridge. After taking his degree in 1871, he became a Fellow of his college and a lecturer in chemistry and physics.

The hardest player to identify is the Cambridge bottom board, who is variously listed as “Hayes” or “Heyes” with no forenames, initial or even college affiliation. Resorting to that invaluable work of reference, Venn’s book has nobody called “Heyes” in the appropriate volume, but there are several people with the surname Hayes. Assuming that the chess-player must have been somebody who matriculated (joined the university) in the late 1860s or early 1870s, the following are the three candidates. Alfred Robert Hayes, son of a former Indian Civil Service man, matriculated at Trinity Hall in December 1866, but took his B.A. in 1870, so had probably left Oxford. James Akerman Hayes, from Cambridge, was at Peterhouse from October 1867, but there is no record of him taking a degree. Perhaps the most plausible candidate is James Thomas Hayes (1847-1904), who had a distinguished career in the Church, and was Bishop of Trinidad from 1889. He collapsed and died in Liverpool at the end of a furlough, when he was about to embark for his return to the Caribbean.

The Games

I have concentrated on the people in this article because the chess itself is not of great interest. In view of what I have said above, it is hardly surprising that the games that survive were not of high quality by today's standards, or even by the standards of the leading players of 1873. The first game between the captains began normally enough, but De Soyres missed some opportunities to justify his gambit and then played a totally unsound sacrifice and had to resign. This game appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, volume 52 (5 April 1873) p. 330, and later in the *Huddersfield College Magazine* and in the short report of the event in the *Chess Player's Chronicle* for June 1873 (pp. 279-80).

John De Soyres (Cambridge) – **Walter Parratt** (Oxford)

Oxford-Cambridge (1.1), 28.03.1873

Two Knights Defence [C56]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 0-0 Nxe4 6 Re1 d5 7 Bxd5 Qxd5 8 Nc3 Qd8

Nowadays 8...Qa5 is usually played although Jan Pinski likes 8...Qh5. The text move is riskier.

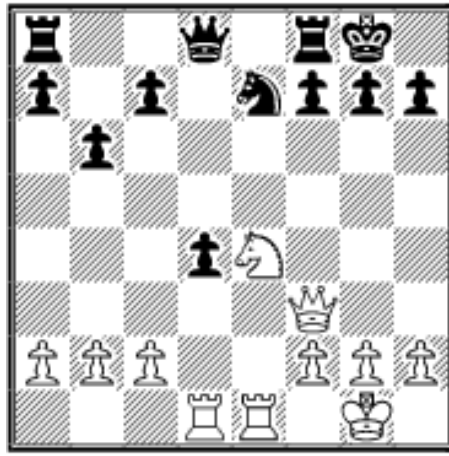
9 Nxe4?!

9 Rxe4+ is correct, leading to very complicated positions after 9...Be7 10 Nxd4 f5 11 Bh6! (Zavanelli-Canibal, Reg Gillman Memorial E, corr. 1999), as analysed in my book [64 Great Chess Games](#). White's 11th move was unknown to nineteenth century theory.

9...Be7 10 Bg5 Bg4

10...f6 gives Black some advantage according to Palkövi's book on the Two Knights.

11 Bxe7 Nxe7 12 Qd3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 0-0 14 Rad1 b6



15 Rd3?!

15 c3 c5 16 cxd4 cxd4 17 Ng5 looks better. White has some kingside threats and the extra black pawn, being isolated, is a target.

15...Ng6 16 Qf5 c5 17 Rh3 h6 18 g4 Qc8 19 Nd6 Qc6 20 Re6??

“An unaccountable act of *felo-de-se*” wrote Staunton; of course Black has by

now consolidated his extra pawn.

20...fxe6 21 Qxe6+ Kh7 22 g5 Rae8 0-1

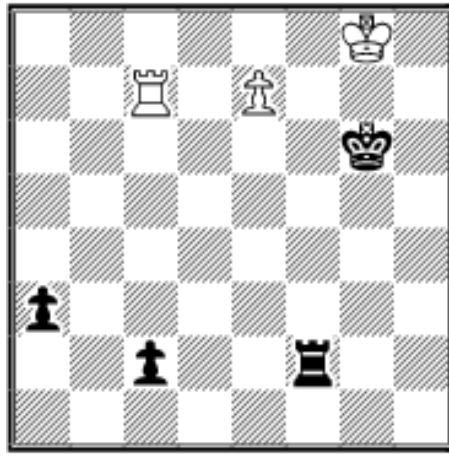
A misprint in *I.L.N.* says “and Black resigned,” but of course it was White who surrendered.

The second game on top board was more closely contested, but I have not found the early moves. Steinitz now takes up the story.

When I had the honour to be selected umpire in the last Inter-University Chess Match, I volunteered to the Presidents of the Oxford and Cambridge University Chess Clubs to publish an analysis of the positions in case I should be called upon to adjudicate on any of the games; for I thought it undesirable, in what I believe to be a novel manner of concluding a chess match, to establish the precedent of an umpire giving his decisions absolutely, without being prepared to submit his opinions to the critical eye of the public. I shall therefore feel obliged if you will grant me space to publish the reasons for my decisions in the two cases left for my judgment. Fortunately, the positions which I had to adjudicate do not require much demonstration, and players of even moderate strength will, I believe, find no difficulty in agreeing with my judgment, even if they may not agree with the grounds upon which I rest it.

It is interesting that Steinitz called adjudication “a novel manner of concluding a chess match.” He was called upon to do this again in future years

J. De Soyres (Cambridge) – **W. Parratt** (Oxford)
Oxford-Cambridge (1.2), 28.03.1873
Adjudicated by W. Steinitz



The diagram shows the position of the game between Mr. Parratt (Oxford) and Mr. De Soyres (Cambridge) at the time when my opinion was called for. I decided in favour of the former. Black (Mr. Parratt) had to move, and it is quite obvious that he must play R to K7 in order to stop the opponent's pawn from queening.

1...Re2

White (Mr. De Soyres) had only three plausible moves at his disposal (Rc6+, Kf8, or Rxc2 at once), but he must have lost by best play, no matter whatever he did.

Let us suppose first:

2 Rc6+ Kf5 3 Rc5+ Kf6

This last move is much better than attempting to get out of check by advancing towards the R. Such an attempt would be only waste of time, as it will be seen that he can never cross the e-file, and as soon as he arrives anywhere out of check, either at the K B, K Kt, or KR7, White could take off the c-pawn with the R, and would even win.

4 Kf8 Rxe7 0–1, for if 5 Rc6+ Black interposes the R, and if 5 Rxc2, Black plays Ra7 (See variation 3.)

Secondly, **2 Kf8 a2**

Black can also win by taking off the P with R before advancing P to R7. And if, at the second move, instead of R taking P at once, White gives a series of checks, driving his opponent's K to the seventh file, and finally taking the P, Black would first take off the R, and then queen the P, coming out a clear rook ahead.

3 Rxc2 a1Q 4 Rxe2 Qf1+ and wins.

Thirdly **2 Rxc2 Rxe7** and wins. For if White give a series of checks, commencing with 3 Rg2+, Black has only to take care not to cross over on the K file too soon — viz. not before he can reach the e3 or f3, so as not to lose the R; and if at any time, after having checked the K away, White plays Ra2, attacking the P, Black replies with ...Ra7, confining the opponent's king all the time, while he brings over his own K over to the b3 to support the P, winning easily.

In the other game that was unfinished, White (Ogden) was a rook down and should have resigned. There is no need to quote Steinitz's adjudication in detail.

No game from board three seems to have survived in print, though possibly the unpublished games could be in the archives of one of the clubs concerned. Here is one of the board four games, published by Staunton in his second column about the event.

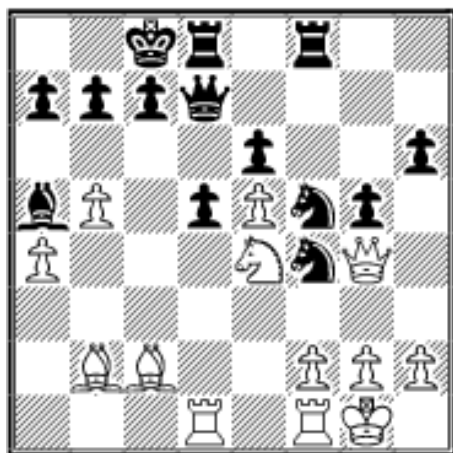
F. Neville (Cambridge) – **F. Madan** (Oxford)

Oxford-Cambridge bd. 4, 1873

Scotch Gambit [C44]

Notes by Howard Staunton

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Bc4 Bb4+ 5 c3 dxc3 6 0–0 c2 7 Qxc2 d6 8 a3 Ba5 9 b4 Bb6 10 Bb2 Nf6 11 Nbd2 h6 12 b5 Ne7 13 e5 Nh5 14 Rae1 d5 15 Bd3 Be6 16 Qa4 g5 17 Nd4 Rf8 18 Nxe6 fxe6 19 Qg4 Nf4 20 Bc2 Qd7 21 a4 Ba5 22 Rd1 0–0–0 23 Ne4 Nf5



24 Nf6

24 Ba3 looks very tempting here; but, in reality, it is not a good move. For suppose: 24...h5 25 Qf3 (25 Qxg5 Nh3+ 26 gxh3 Rg8 and Black ought to win easily.) 25...dxe4 and, play as White can, he must be at a disadvantage.

24...Qe7 25 Bxf5 exf5 26 Qxf5+ Kb8 27 Qc2 Qe6 28 Rb1? d4 29 Bxd4?

The last two moves of White are beyond our fathom. His game, however, was irrecoverable, so they mattered not much.

29...Rxd4 30 Qc5 Rfd8 0–1

The last game published by Staunton was a missed opportunity for Cambridge.

J. N. Keynes (Cambridge) – **S. Meredith** (Oxford)

Oxford-Cambridge first university match London (5), 1873

Ruy Lopez/Spanish [C77]

Notes by Staunton, ILN 16/4/1873

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 Qe2 Bc5 6 0–0 h6 7 c3 0–0 8 Bxc6

**bxc6 9 Nxe5 Qe7 10 d4 Ba7 11 Bf4 Bb7 12 Nd2 d6 13 Nd3 c5 14 dxc5
dxc5 15 e5 Nd5**



At this point, the Cambridge player has an unquestionable advantage. He has won a pawn, and his position is in no respect inferior to his opponent's.

16 Bg3 Rae8 17 Kh1

17 Qf3, threatening to win a piece by playing P to QB4th next move, would, perhaps have been better.

17...Qd7 18 Nc4 Bb6 19 Rad1 Qc6 20 f3

A very necessary precaution.

20...f5 21 Nf4 Nxf4 22 Bxf4 a5

With the view to playing the bishop to QR3rd anon.

23 h4 Qg6 24 Qf2 Qh5 25 Kg1 Ba6 26 Nxb6 cxb6 27 Rfe1 g5

This advance appears to us premature.

28 hxg5

Mr. Keynes must have improved the advantage he had already acquired by playing 28 Qg3 either now or on the next move. We cannot see how, in that case, his opponent would have averted the loss of another pawn at the least.

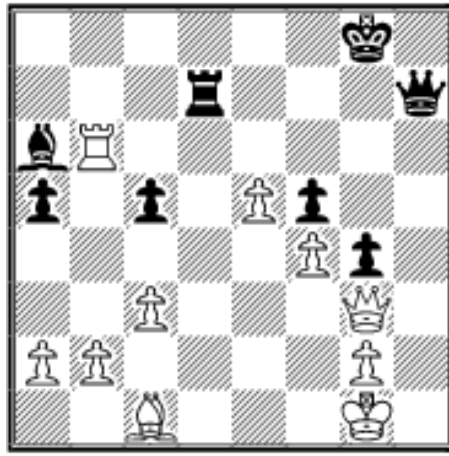
28...hxg5 29 Bc1 Rf7 30 Qg3 g4 31 f4?!

31 Rd6 would have been more embarrassing to his adversary. The move in the text loses time and excludes the bishop from the field.

31...Qg6

[TH: Maybe 31...Rh7!? is better here? Now White obtains a winning position again, only to swindle himself at move 36.]

32 Rd6 Re6 33 Red1 Rxd6 34 Rxd6 Qh7 35 Rxb6 Rd7



36 Rxa6?

By this capture Light Blue throws away his last opportunity of winning. Had he played 36 Qe1 he could have won the game easily.

36...Rd1+ 37 Kf2 Qh1 38 Ra8+ Kg7
1/2–1/2

The Field noted that: “At the conclusion of the match the players and their friends

were entertained by the club to a cold collation, which was served up in a manner that does infinite credit to Mr. Gordon, the proprietor. Great praise is due to the committee of the City of London Club for the able manner in which all the arrangements were carried out.”

The celebrations were reported more fully in Löwenthal’s column in *Land and Water* (also on 5 April), which seems to have been Sergeant’s source for his account of the supper. H. F. Gastineau, President of the City of London Club, was in the chair and “upwards of seventy gentlemen were present.” Everybody seems to have considered the event to be a great success and it was resolved to repeat it annually.

Remembering the Match

On 20 March 1926, a dinner was held at the Trocadero restaurant in London to celebrate the holding of the fiftieth Oxford-Cambridge chess match (some had been missed because of World War One). Although a few veterans of the event were still alive, including Keynes, apparently Madan was the only one present. His manuscript notes for the speech he made on that occasion survive in one of his scrapbooks which he donated to the Bodleian Library (MS Eng. Misc. d.259).

Madan had evidently expected to be asked to speak, and he had done some research, jotting down notes in advance to which he could refer. Apparently he had written about the match in the *Oxford Undergraduates’ Journal* of 24 April 1873, which unfortunately I have not been able to see yet. H. E. Atkins was among those present.

In this speech, Madan commented that the *Illustrated London News* picture of the scene was not a photograph. “The faces are not portraits, being conventionalised with Dundreary whiskers and so on.” It is true the individuals were not identified by any caption in the paper, yet the man on the right in the foreground, with a cup of tea beside him, is possibly Parratt, playing black in the second game. There is a definite resemblance between this figure and the *ODNB* portrait of Parratt that shows a triangular face with

a high forehead, the shape of his face being exaggerated by a pointy beard. Indeed one would expect the paper's artist to feature the top players of each team prominently.

Madan's notes say that the saloon at the City club held about two hundred comfortably "but 400 found their way in, while 300 more were outside, determined to get in and see the sport." On the overcrowding, he also noted that an official, anxious to get people to move on and circulate, was heard saying "Permeate yourselves, gentlemen, if you please, permeate yourselves."

So many people unexpectedly came to see the match that the room could not accommodate so many spectators. The *Westminster Papers* (1 April) spoke of the crowds pressing on the players: "a truly tropical atmosphere." Arrangements were made to provide alternative diversions. Madan notes some of these, but the details are in *The Field*.

In the course of the evening Mr. Blackburne, in order to draw off the crowd from one room, volunteered to play thirteen games simultaneously, and Herr Zukertort at the same time conducted six games blindfold against members of the club. The results were, that the first-named gentleman won eleven, lost one, and drew one; the latter, playing in his usual brilliant manner, won tree, lost one, and drew two. Considerable amusement was caused by one of the simultaneous games, in which Mr. Blackburne's opponent played on a large board, 4 ft. square, lent for the occasion by Mr. Howard, the treasurer; so large was the board that Mr. Blackburne — who evidently thought he was playing billiards, and could not reach across the table — repeatedly called for the rest and half butt.

After a few years, the general interest in these matches died down to a more normal level. Writing in *Land and Water* of the fifth, 1877, event, P. T. Duffy observed that the university match played to reduced numbers, but still excites genuine interest among players: "When the match was first played in 1873, its attraction, so far as the general public was concerned, was largely due to the novelty of the affair, and possibly also to a blissful inexperience of the meaningless character of a chess battle to persons ignorant of the game." And W. N. Potter, who took over that column from Duffy, wrote on the occasion of the 1878 event that the second match (1874) was "likewise a great success, 600-700 spectators at each." In 1875, City of London were again hosts, at the Guildhall Tavern, again with a large attendance, but 1876, hosted by the West End Club, was a flop and the last time the match was played in public.



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