



C O L U M N I S T S

The Kibitzer
Tim Harding

The London-Vienna Correspondence Match (Part 1)

Last year, in Kibitzers 48 and 49, I gave a history of the *City of London Chess Magazine* which ran from 1874-76 but I deliberately omitted one major item which took up a lot of space in two of its issues. This was the correspondence match between the cities of London and Vienna, in which the magazine's editor William N. Potter was greatly involved.

I promised that I would eventually fill this gap and am now doing so. I will combine some comments of my own, in the light of modern theory and analysis, with the view of the match as seen by its contemporaries.

The match, played from 1872-74, was a great success for London, who might have won both games had they been played to a finish. They won the sum of one hundred pounds, which was a considerable amount for those days. The match can also be seen as the highlight of Wilhelm Steinitz's career as a correspondence player.

Intercity correspondence matches were fairly commonplace by this time. They usually involved more than one game: sometimes played consecutively, sometimes simultaneously. It was already almost half a century since the first matches of this kind, London v Edinburgh and Amsterdam v Rotterdam, began.

The Edinburgh-London match has been proved by historians to take precedence. Edinburgh moved first, in the first of five games, on April 23, 1824. On April 28, 1824 London made its first moves: replying in Game 1 and opening game 2. That game was the origin of the opening's name Scotch Game, although 3 d4 was in fact played by London, at the instigation of John Cochrane.

Another match, in the Netherlands, began almost simultaneously. Dr Eduard Dyckhoff, the famous German correspondence chess specialist and advocate, claimed priority for the Amsterdam-Rotterdam match (*Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1932, p162), however an article by Dr Bruno Bassi in *Mail Chess* (January 1949) settled the priority question. Documents seen and cited by Bassi prove that the Dutch match began April 27, 1824, i.e. four days after the start of the London-Edinburgh match.

I have not seen these documents for myself but, subject to anyone producing proof to the contrary (which is improbable), I accept the opinion of Professor Carlo Alberto Pagni of Turin, Italy, who is the acknowledged expert on the history of early intercity matches. His privately-published three-volume work

Correspondence Chess Matches Between Clubs 1823-1899) is the standard reference on these contents. (The reason for 1823 in the title is that a Paris club challenged London that year but Paris later withdrew and the match never took place.)

Prof. Pagni agrees with Dr Bassi but points out that Amsterdam were the first to WIN a correspondence chess match as the Edinburgh-London contest took much longer to decide. Rotterdam resigned both games on December 20, 1824.

London's previous matches

According to Potter in the *City of London Chess Magazine* (1874), London had been involved in two previous matches of this kind, prior to the match with Vienna. (Strangely, he does not mention the Edinburgh match but maybe he was thinking only of international contests.)

“First, there was the match with Paris, for £50 a side, commenced in February 1834, and concluded in October 1836; London was decisively defeated on that occasion, for Paris won both games. The French players were Messieurs Alexandre, St. Amant, Boncourt and Chamouillet, all doughty Chess knights. They had worthy opponents in MacDonnell, Lewis, Walker and others.”

Prof. Pagni documents this match in his first volume, pages 26-28. He reports that the stake was 5,000 Francs and that Alexander McDonnell quit the London team after a row with Lewis over who would get the stake money if London won. Later Deschappelles quit the Paris committee. The first game, in which Paris defended 1 e4 with 1...e6 led to that opening being universally called “The French Defence” — a great improvement, I think you will agree, on its old name “King’s Pawn One”.

Potter continued: “London, in her second trial of strength, was more fortunate. This was a match with Amsterdam, and it was arranged that three games should be played consecutively for a stake of 100 guineas upon each game. The reason for arranging the contest in that way was probably to enable each side to concentrate its strength upon a single game at a time, and the result of three such several encounters might be expected to afford a pretty clear test of superiority or equality, as the case might be.”

“The first of these games began in January 1848, and ended in January 1850. It was won by London, who had for her representatives Horwitz, Slous, G. Walker, Medley and Perigal...The second game was played in 1850-51, and terminated in a drawn battle. The third game commenced in July 1851, and after lasting about sixteen months, it ended in favour of London.”

Pagni’s first volume included the two decisive games, but not the drawn one. However, in volume 3 on page 2 he was able to publish the missing game at last, it having been discovered by Dutch chess historian L.Diepstraten.

Professor Pagni did discover one other match involving London that was apparently unknown to Potter. On pages 59-60 of Pagni’s first volume is a telegraph game London-Portsmouth, played at some date before 1846. However, arguably Potter is not wrong because this encounter could not be regarded as a true correspondence game, being played in one session of nine

hours with a time limit of five minutes per move. The game was drawn in 43 moves.

Pagni has researched various prior matches involving Vienna. "In 1865-66 two games were played simultaneously between the chess clubs of Insterburg and Wien by four players on each side. Wien won the match 2-0". (Pagni vol.2 pp.40-41.)

Then Vienna won 2-0 against Berlin, the games being played between September 1, 1867 and January 30, 1869. Bledow published these games in 1872 and they can be found also in Pagni's second volume (pages 41-42).

In 1871-72 Wolgast (Germany?) won 2-0 against the Wiedner Chess Club of Vienna, but presumably these were not the same Viennese players who played against Berlin or London?

Preparations for the match

The idea of playing the match was London's but it was the Viennese who proposed they play for financial stakes. To quote Potter:

"London sent their challenge to Vienna on the 1st of March 1872. In doing so, they desired to play for honour, or, at most, for some kind of trophy. After a preliminary acknowledgement, came an acceptance of this challenge by the Vienna Club, dated 27th March; but with the proposal appended, that it should be played for £100 a side. The question thus raised caused some stormy discussions in the Committee of the City of London Chess Club, there being some who opposed the idea of playing for a money stake; but, ultimately, the pecuniary addendum was agreed to. It was felt that London could not be held responsible for that invocation of Mammon, as to accept was a very different thing from making such a proposal.

"Let it not be supposed, however, that we censure the conduct of the Vienna Committee in this matter; on the contrary, we think that in a correspondence match, between two eminent clubs, something of the kind is required to induce a feeling of responsibility upon the part of the players, as, otherwise, a great reputation might be carelessly frittered away. Moreover, a pecuniary stake of some importance makes the affair much more interesting in the eyes of the public; for one thing, they have a guarantee that there will be a serious struggle, and that both sides will do their best."

As we have seen earlier, London had already played for a financial stake in the matches with Paris and Amsterdam so there was nothing strange in Vienna proposing a stake. Potter, in his article summing up the match, explained some other organisational details, which were arranged in preliminary correspondence between the clubs.

"Herr Hampe, Imperial Councillor, and founder of the Vienna Chess Club, was appointed their umpire, while Mr. Mongredien fulfilled the same honourable office for London. We are happy to add that these appointments proved to be merely honorary, for no occasion ever arose to require the services of the umpires."

"The first move in the match was made by Vienna, who, on the 10th April

1872, played P to K4, leading to the Scotch Gambit, and which game was thenceforth called the Vienna Game. This move was made conditionally, the correspondence at that time not having been completed. London replied on the 6th of June, and also on same date sent their first move of P to QB4 in the other game, thence-forward called the London Game. An adjournment, as had been agreed upon, then took place, until the 21st of July, on account of the meeting of the British Chess Association; and it is from the last-mentioned date that the match must be held to have really commenced.”

This accounts for the rather confusing references to the “Vienna Game” which was in fact a Scotch Game. (Potter’s use of the term “Scotch Gambit” misleads further, as that nomenclature would nowadays only be used if White, after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 played 4 Bc4, but Vienna played 4 Nxd4.)

Potter then remarks that attempts to obtain sponsorship from the Submarine Telegraph Company, requesting a reduction in the telegraphic tariff, were unsuccessful. “We must contrast the want of liberality thus shown with the conduct of telegraph companies in Australia and other places where, as we believe, in various instances, gratuitous use of the wires have been afforded for the carrying on of Chess contests.”

It appears that, nevertheless, telegrams rather than ordinary post were used to transmit the moves.

The Players

Initially there were to be five or six players on each side, jointly responsible for selecting the moves on behalf of their cities, but the numbers of active players gradually reduced as is often the case with such affairs.

According to Potter: “On the 18th of June, the Vienna Committee transmitted the signatures of their six players, the same being as follows: Dr. Meitner, J. Kolisch, Dr. Max Fleissig, O. Gelbfuhs, Josef Berger and Adolf Csank.” Profesor Pagni describes the same gentlemen as “Dr. Meitner von Formand, Ignaz Kolisch, Dr. medicinae Fleissig, O. Gelbfuhs, J. Berger and A. Csank”. Note the distinction made between the medical doctor (Fleissig) and the academic doctor.

Of these players, the most celebrated was certainly Kolisch, winner of the double-round Parris 1867 tournament ahead of Winawer and Steinitz. Soon after this he was taken up by Baron Albert Rothschild and gave up professional chess-playing for the world of high finance at which he was very successful, himself becoming a Baron later. So Kolisch was the precursor of the many recent grandmasters who have been tempted away from the chequerboard by the prospect of fortunes to be made in the financial trading houses! By 1872 Kolisch was better known as a patron of chess events than a participant.

In view of the fact that by 1872-74 his business concerns were more probably to the fore in Kolisch’s life, one may have some reservations about Potter’s following comments:

“It has often been assumed — we know not why — that Herr Kolisch was not

one of the playing council who conducted the match on the Vienna side. Not only does his signature, as above, and which the London Committee have in their possession, negative any such idea, but we are in a position to state that Herr Kolisch subsequently signed some of the moves, the last time, we believe, being at a comparatively late date. We may observe that only two signatures were necessary in sending the moves; and, therefore, the absence of Herr Kolisch's name throughout would have been no proof that he did not take his part in the councils of the Vienna players; but the facts being as we have stated, we presume that there is no room for any doubt upon the matter, especially as Herr Kolisch, unlike Herr Csank and Dr. Meitner, never resigned his place on the Council."

Apparently the Berger involved in this match was not the same person as Johann N. Berger, later to be well known as an endgame analyst and problemist.

There may also be a slight doubt about the London team. Professor Pagni states (volume 1, p105) that "at the board were J.H.Blackburne, E.N. Frankenstein, Horwitz, J. Loewenthal, Potter and Steinitz. But, for various reasons, Potter and Steinitz were eventually left practically alone to sustain the match".

Potter's account differs slightly here. He doesn't mention Frankenstein and says that shortly after the start "Mr. J. Wisker's name was added, making six players also on that side. A diminution in the London Council afterwards took place, arising from various causes, viz., the illness of one, the prolonged absence from town of another, the occupation by other engagements of two more; but this elimination requires no further allusion to here, except so far as it gives us the opportunity of remarking that Messrs. Steinitz and Potter, to whom the conduct of the match thus fell, had at all times the sympathy, and, upon various occasions, the opportunity of submitting their variations to the judgement of the other strong members of the City of London Club. Of course, the aid thus afforded to the two players above-named did not diminish their responsibility, even when their views were considered sound, still less when, as was sometimes the case, the conclusions to which they came, and upon which they acted, were viewed with doubt by players whose judgement was entitled to the greatest respect, but who, necessarily, had not the advantage of the severe and exhaustive analysis which every step in both games for a long time demanded."

All these 19th century matches seem to have taken the form of consultation events in which, inevitably, a few stronger players dominated the discussions. It is easy to see other strong players who may have been involved at the start dropping out through business pressures, personality clashes or disagreements about what opening variations should be chosen. This appears to be "par for the course". In 20th and 21st century matches, multi-board matches have generally been preferred, each individual being matched with one opponent, although one can never rule out the possibility of consultation among team members.

Progress of the match

Although the first move was transmitted on April 10 the match did not really

get under way until June 6, when London sent their first moves. Moreover, there was immediately a six-week adjournment for the meeting of the Counties Chess Association (in England) according to Pagni.

Potter says that “From the 21st of July 1872, the match went on without interruption until the 21st of June 1873, when, in accordance with the stipulations made at the commencement, an adjournment took place in connection with the Vienna Chess Congress of that year. Steinitz was the winner of that event, but whether he took the opportunity to discuss the games with his rivals is not known to me.

Play was resumed on the 1st of October following, and continued without interruption to the end of the contest.”

The match ended in March 1874 when London received a telegram “To the Committee of the City of London Chess Club” signed by “Weinbrenner, Hon. Sec.” together with Fleissig and Joseph Berger. Translated, it read:

“Gentlemen, - In consequence of your telegram of the 19th, we resign the London game, and offer you a draw in the Vienna game. If you agree to these conditions the match between us has come to a termination in your favour, and in that case we shall remit you the amount of £100 without delay.”

On April 1, the City of London Chess Club agreed to this package deal, saying:

“Gentlemen of the Managing Committee of the Vienna Chess Club, - In reply to your communication just received, we beg to say that we consent to your resignation of the match on the terms you propose; and, without prejudice to our own opinion upon the Vienna game, we agree to that game being considered as drawn.

“We certainly feel highly gratified at having had the good fortune to be so successful against undoubtedly the strongest Continental club. It is also a source of great satisfaction to us that the conduct of the match should have been free from all dispute, and characterised by the display of such thorough good feeling on both sides.

“We have the honour to remain, yours respectfully,

“W. N. Potter.

“W. Steinitz.

“City of London Chess Club, 34 Milk-street, London, 1st April 1874.

“H.F. Down, Hon. Sec.”

Let us now take a look at the games themselves.

The “Vienna” Game (Scotch)

I won’t give too much detail on this game because most of the notes by Potter and Steinitz have been republished elsewhere. The opening variation featured, 4...Qh4 in the Scotch, has been the subject of two fairly recent books: firstly a 102-page booklet by US Senior Master John Hall (published by Pickard & Son a few years ago) and in recent weeks a very detailed treatment of the variation by GM Lev Gutman (Batsford). However. I do give

the salient points of the annotations and highlight where modern theory differs.

White: Vienna Black: London Scotch Game (C45)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4

“The line of play initiated by this move is, in our opinion, at least as strong as the usual continuation of B to B4, and White thereby obtains a more enduring attack than in the other variations of the Scotch Gambit, which have all been demonstrated to be in favour of the second player.”

4...Qh4



This queen move virtually forces White to sacrifice his e-pawn.

Potter and Steinitz reviewed the theory of the time, saying “The merits of this move have been much discussed since its introduction into practice in 1846, and it has had a chequered career, during which it has experienced alternate phases of success and failure.” Modern advice to the average player would condemn 4...Qh4 and its sequel on several grounds, Black brings his queen out early into an exposed

position. He grabs a pawn and the black king then loses the right to castle. White has plenty of open lines to attack. Masters, however, look for exceptions to rules and while this variation is difficult for Black it is also no easy matter for White to conduct the attack that should justify his gambit. Grandmaster Lev Gutman’s new book shows that Black must tread a very fine line in some variations but can justify his fourth move if he knows where that line is.

5 Nb5 Bb4+

According to Steinitz and Potter, Horwitz’s move 5...Bc5 “was supposed by Horwitz himself to be a complete answer to the first player’s attack; but the following variation (which was first introduced by Staunton) will show this view to be erroneous: 5...Bc5 6 Qf3 Nd4 7 Nxc7+ Kd8 8 Qf4 Nxc2+ 9 Kd1 Qxf4 10 Bxf4 Nxa1 11 Nxa8 with the better game.” However, Black’s position may be viable. Gutman’s book gives 11...d6! 12 Nc3 Ne7 13 Kd2!? Be6 14 Bb5 Nc6 15 Rxa1 Kd7 16 Ke2 Rxa8 17 Na4 Rc8 18 Rd1 Ke8= 19 Nxc5 dxc5 20 a4 a6 21 Bxc6+ Rxc6 22 Rd6 1/2–1/2 Leisebein-Gutman, corr 1999. The move selected by London was first played by Louis Paulsen, against Dr. Wilson, in the Bristol Tournament of 1861.

6 Bd2

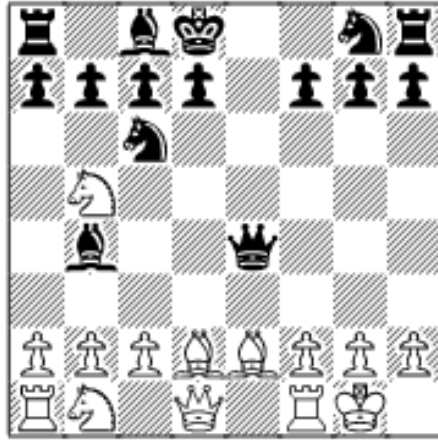
“The only correct reply... 6 Nd2 was frequently here adopted, but has been discarded since the Baden Congress where, in a game between Rosenthal (White) and Steinitz (Black) the following continuation arose: 6...Qxe4+ 7 Be2 Qxg2 8 Bf3 Qh3 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 Nf6 11 c3 Re8+ 12 Be2 Qg2 13

Rf1 Nd5 14 Nc4 Bxc3+ 15 bxc3 Nxc3 16 Ne3 Rxe3 17 Bxe3 Nxd1 18 Rxd1 Qxh2 and Black ought to win the game, as White's N cannot escape."

6...Qxe4+ 7 Be2 Kd8

7...Qe5 was rejected because of 8 0-0 Nf6 (Gutman considers 8...Bxd2 9 Nxd2 Kd8 10 Nf3.) 9 Re1 0-0 10 Bd3 and Black cannot save the c-pawn. Gutman also analyses 8 N1c3 without finding anything clear for White. London also decided against 7...Qxg2 which involves the sacrifice of a Rook after 8 Bf3 Qh3 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 Nf6 11 Bxb4 Re8+ 12 Kd2.

8 0-0



8...Bxd2

Paulsen had played 8...Nf6 but it was rejected by London for the wrong reason. They feared 9 N1c3 Qh4 10 g3 Qh3 11 Nxc7 Kxc7 12 Nd5+ Nxd5 13 Bg4 Qxg4 14 Qxg4 Bxd2 15 Rfd1d6 16 Qxg7 Be6 17 Rxd2 "with the superior game, as Black have only three minor pieces for the Queen and Pawn". About a century later, GM Alexander Tolush refuted this by 15...Bh6! 16 Rxd5 d6 when "the minor pieces will undoubtedly prove too strong

for the queen" commented IM George Botterill in our 1970s book *The Scotch*. White's 11th move is a mistake in that line. Probably 11 Bf4 d6 12 Nxc7 Kxc7 13 a3! is the correct line for White while 11 Nd5!? also comes into consideration.

9 Nxd2

On 9 Qxd2, Black would have answered with 9...a6 immediately, which would seem a sufficient reply; for if White then play 10 N1c3 Black could retire 10...Qe5 followed by ...b5. However, modern analysis takes a different view from Steinitz & Potter. Gutman now gives 11 Na3 b5 12 Bf3 Nge7 13 Rfe1! and Black has problems. Instead, he suggest Black tries 10...Qh4!?

9...Qf4

"Hitherto Q to K2, or Kt3, or K sq, had been the usual modes of defence, but had hardly been found satisfactory. To the best of our knowledge, the move in the text, which was adopted by the London players at the recommendation of Herr Steinitz, was played in the present game for the first time...This move has the merit of preventing the immediate development of the first player's attack, and compels the latter, sooner or later, to play g3, thereby weakening the Pawns on the King's side."

Incidentally, the Handuch later noted that 9...Qg6 had been played by French master Rosenthal against Fleissig, who was one of the players on the Vienna team.

10 c4



“This very good move kept Black’s position confined for a long time, as it effectually checked the advance of the d-pawn, by threatening c4-c5”. Nowadays the moves considered critical (following Gutman’s book) are 10 g3 and 10 a4.

10...Nf6

After the game, Potter and Steinitz criticized this choice, saying they should have developed the knight on h6 instead. “The move in the text opened the door to various complications which otherwise

could not arise.” Their recommendation 10...Nh6 11 Nc3 Re8 12 g3 Qf6 would give the same position as was actually reached in the game after Black’s 14th move. Steinitz later suggested 10...a6 11 Nc3 Nge7 12 g3 Qh6 in his *Modern Chess Instructor* but then 13 Nf3 (or maybe even 13 f4!?) is good for White according to Gutman.

11 Nf3

According to the notes from *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1874 p172, “White must play 11 Bf3 or 11 g3 here”.

11...Ng4

“The effect of this move had probably escaped the notice of the Vienna analysis. It enabled Black to rectify their last move, and to provide a retreat for the Queen at f6.”

12 g3 Qf6 13 Nc3

“Our abstention from making the tempting move of ...a6 at previous stages of the game is now fully justified, as this Kt was comparatively inactive at b5, and its ultimate retreat therefore was certain. Moreover, ...a6 would have made it exceedingly unsafe for us afterwards to advance ...b6 a move absolutely necessary, as otherwise the QB could not have been got into play, for our analysis showed that at no subsequent part of the game could ...d6 be played with safety; and it is a suggestive fact, confirmatory of this observation, that our Queen’s Pawn remained unmoved at the termination of the game.”

13...Re8 14 Nd2 Nh6



Both sides have lost two moves: London, by ...Nf6-g4 and Vienna by Nd2-f3-d2.

15 Nde4

Gutman's book quotes a line 15 Nf3 d6! from Steinitz/Potter critically here, but in the City of London Magazine there is no note at this point. Perhaps they revised the notes earlier published in *The Field* and Gutman saw the earlier version only?

15...Qg6 16 Bh5

"The object of this move was to drive the hostile Q away from the support of Black's g-pawn. 16 Qd2 instead, would have given us the option of drawing the game at once...but, no doubt, White were reluctant to give us the opportunity of doing so, as they would henceforth have had to stake the match upon the result of the London game alone, and they probably supposed that their attack in the present game would be successful." The drawing line goes 16 Qd2 Rxe4 17 Nxe4 Qxe4 18 Qg5+ Ke8 (only move) 19 Qxg7 Qg6 20 Qh8+ Qg8 21 Qf6 Qg6 "for unless White repeat the previous move, Black would gain time to play the K to f8 with a safe position and two minor pieces for the rook." Here the London players also give the line 19 Rfe1 Kf8 20 Bh5 Qf5 21 Qe3 Qe6 22 Qa3+ Qd6 23 Qe3 Ne7 24 Rad1 Nhf5 "and Black are quite safe". White could exchange queens at move 23 but even if the d6-pawn falls Black has two knights for a rook.

16...Qf5 17 Bf3 b6!?

"17...Ne5 would not have been so good, e.g. 18 Bg2 Nxc4 19 Qd4 Ne5 20 Nc5 and Black can only now avoid losing a pawn by 20...c6 in which case White play 21 N5e4 with a far better game."

18 Bg2 Bb7 19 Qd2 f6

London prepares a new home for the king's knight to bring it nearer the centre.

"We had determined manoeuvring with our minor pieces before making any efforts to liberate our Queen's Rook. A most searching analysis convinced us that any attempt to bring this Rook into play would not only have been futile and dangerous, but that there was even no necessity for running any risk on that account, as our forces were sufficient to meet any hostile attack. We came to the conclusion that if we persistently directed our aims to exchanging the minor pieces, the enemy would be compelled to raise the siege without our hazarding a sortie."

One of the variations given here by Steinitz and Potter is unconvincing. After 19...Ke7 they gave 20 Nd5+ Kf8 21 Nxc7 Rxe4 22 Qd6+ Re7 23 Nxa8 Bxa8 24 b4 Bb7 25 b5 Nd8 26 Bxb7 Nxb7 27 Qb8+ "and wins". However, Black's 25th in this line is a crude blunder. 25...Qe6 is obviously a better defence and if 26 Qxe6 Rxe6 27 bxc6 Bxc6.

20 Rad1

Threatening Nxf6.

20...Nf7 21 Rfe1**21...Rb8**

“The key move of the defence; for by its adoption we were subsequently enabled to exchange the B for the Kt without danger, and, as will be found from the variations below, the Rook was necessary on this square for the protection of the B when the c6-Knight moved, and in order to prevent the effectual advance of the hostile c-pawn.”

22 f4

At this point contemporary and current opinion diverge widely. The German notes say that this move weakens the white position while Potter/Steinitz wrote “White’s object was evidently to prevent the hostile Kt going to K4; but we consider that by this advance their position was materially weakened during the remainder of the game.”

On the other hand, in view of Gutman’s subsequent improvement, which we shall see in a minute, it seems there is actually little wrong with this move. Black’s reply is probably a mistake for the same reason.

22...Na5

“This marks another step towards freeing our game, as it brought our B into active operation, and ultimately forced the exchange of pieces so long desired on our part.”

23 Qd3

“Threatening b4, followed, if the Kt retired to c6, by the brilliant move of Ng5, by which Vienna must have won our Queen. We believe, however, that the simple reply of 23 b3 although not so showy, would have been sounder play;

but even in that case we should have remained with at least an equal game. We were also prepared for other replies, which, if not properly met, would have given our opponents the satisfaction of winning in a most brilliant style. However, it is precisely here that Vienna missed their chance to convert their middle game initiative to a favourable ending, though possibly it would not have been enough to win. After 23 c5 bxc5 (Best according to Steinitz and Potter) 24 Nb5 Nc6 they gave the line 25 g4 Qxg4 26 Nxc5 Rxe1+ 27 Qxe1 Ba8 28 Ne6+ Kc8 29 Nexc7 a6 and wins for if 30 Nxa8 axb5 and the other N

cannot escape.

They overlooked the liquidation combination 25 Qxd7+!? Qxd7 26 Rxd7+ Kxd7 27 Nxc5+ Kd8 28 Nxb7+ Rxb7 29 Rxe8+ Kd7 (29...Kxe8?? loses a piece to 30 Bxc6+ and 31 Bxb7) 30 Rf8 Nd6 31 Nxd6 Kxd6 32 b3 and “the endgame is better for White thanks to his active rook” (analysis by GM Gutman).

23...Nd6

“On examination this was considered to be better than 23...Bxe4 and if 24 Nxe4 c6. The latter line of play was found to lead to dubious positions, and over which we did not appear to have any control. The favourable position which at that time had been obtained in the London game caused us not to fear the possibility of a draw arising in this game from the move in the text.”

24 b3

“The utmost that White could have obtained by taking the Kt would have been to recover the Pawn lost, in which case we thought our position for the endgame preferable, e.g. 24 Nxd6 Qc5+ 25 Kh1 Rxe1+ 26 Rxe1 Bxg2+ 27 Kxg2 Qxd6 28 Qxh7 Qf8 29 b3 c6 followed byKc7 with the better game.” However, Gutman continues the variation 30 Qd3 Kc7 31 Rd1 Rd8 saying that in his opinion the position is equal.

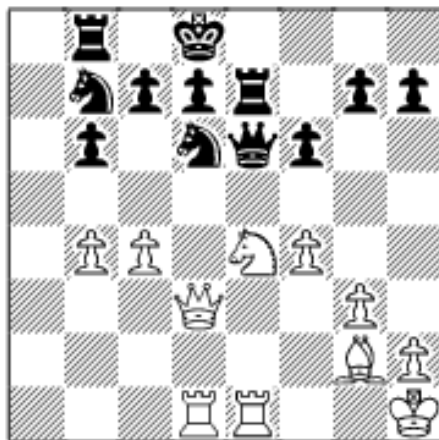
24...Bxe4 25 Nxe4 Re7

“With the view of playing first QKt to b7, and then seizing a favourable opportunity of retreating the King to the K side, and thus make room for the other Rook. The text move at the same time afforded additional support to the d-pawn, and would have enabled Black much more safely to take the Kt with Kt, followed by Qc5+”.

26 Kh1 Nab7 27 b4 a5 28 a3

“In answer to 28 b5 London would not play 28...Ke8 on account of the following continuation:- 29 c5 bxc5 30 b6 Kf8 31 bxc7 Rbe8 (or 31...Rc8 32 Re3) 32 Re3 with a fine game. But we intended to play 28...Qe6 and thereby to offer the exchange of Queen for two Rooks, when the game might have proceeded thus: 29 Nxd6 (or 29 Nd2 Qxe1+ 30 Rxe1 Rxe1+ and....f5 with a fine game) 29...Qxe1+ 30 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 31 Bf1 cxd6 32 Kg2 Ra1 with a superior game.”

28...axb4 29 axb4 Qe6



By this move we at last were enabled to assume the offensive. It is a rather curious coincidence that, widely different as the two games of the match were in other respects, positions should nevertheless have arisen in both games, and almost simultaneously, where we could offer the exchange of the Queen for two Rooks with advantage, which may be inferred from the fact of our opponents declining that offer in each case.

30 c5

This, in combination with the next move, is highly ingenious, and for a time warded off the attack meditated by us. White could not have allowed the exchange of Queens for two Rooks without disadvantage.

30...bxc5 31 Qb1 Qc4

The only good reply to the well conceived combination of Vienna. If 31...Qf7 our opponents would no doubt have replied 32 bxc5 Nxe4 33 Rxe4 best 33...Rxe4 Best as White threatens Rb4 with a fine game 34 Bxe4 Kc8 35 Qb5 and we prefer White's game.

32 bxc5

A very nice finish could have occurred if Vienna had played 32 Nxd6 because London had prepared 32...Rxe1+ 33 Rxe1 Nxd6 34 Qxh7 c6 35 bxc5 Qxc5 36 Qxg7 f5 37 h4 Qc2 38 h5 Rb2 39 Rg1 Ne4 40 h6 Qe2 41 Qg6 Qg4 and if 42 h7 (42 Qxg4? Nf2+ 43 Kh2 Nxe4+ and....Nxe6) 42...Nf2+ 43 Kh2 Qh3+ 44 Bxe3 Ng4+ 45 Kh1 Rh2 mate.

32...Nxe4 33 Rxe4

Here if 33 Bxe4 Qxc5 34 Bxb7 Rxe1+ 35 Rxe1 Qa7 36 Qxh7 Qxb7+ 37 Kg1 Qb6+ 38 Kg2 c5 39 Qxg7 Qc6+ "with some edge to Black" – Gutman.

33...Rxe4 34 Bxe4 Kc8

"After a severe examination we considered this a more prudent and safe mode of play than....Qxc5, in which case Vienna would have obtained a fine attack by 35 Bf5."

35 Bd5 Qxc5 36 Qxh7 Qf8 37 Qd3 Qe8 38 Qc3 Nd6 39 Bf3

"39 Re1 appears more plausible but would have been successfully met by 39...Qh5 and if 40 Bf3 Qf7".

39...Qe6 40 Rc1 Nb5 41 Qd2 c6

At this point, Gutman stops saying correctly that Black has the advantage.

42 Re1 Qf7 43 Qb4 Qa2

"By this move, we resume our attack, previously delayed by the correct play

of our opponents.”

44 Bg2

“The B was withdrawn, in order to prevent our forcing the exchange of queens by....Qa3, and also for the purpose of breaking the force of our playing....Qf2. White might here have won three pawns for the piece, but their position would have remained not less unfavourable for them. Thus:- 44 Bxc6 dxc6 45 Re8+ Kc7 46 Rxb8 Kxb8 47 Qf8+ Kb7 48 Qxg7+ Kb6 49 Qxf6 Qf2 and Black must win.”

44...Kc7 45 Rb1 Ra8

“By this move we consider we obtained a clear winning position.”

46 Rc1 Qe2 47 Bf1 Qf3+ 48 Bg2 Qe3 49 Re1 Qf2 ½-½!?



“At this point Vienna resigned the London game and proffered a draw in this game, a proposal tantamount, according to the conditions, to a resignation of the match. Their offer was accepted on our part, with the view of at once terminating the contest. Nevertheless, it must be apparent that the position of the present game, as it remains, shows a most striking advantage in favour of London, and that the game, if continued, could have had no other result than a victory for London.”

Here is one sample variation given by the London team: 50 Rf1 Qc2 51 Be4 Qe2 52 Re1 Qf2. “If now White retreat the B to g2, followed by R to g1, or vice versa, Black can bring about a similar position as in the line of play indicated above; and if White now play Bb1 in order to prevent ...Ra2 Black wins at once by ...Rh8. The above will give an idea of how we should win if the Queens be not exchanged, and we may observe, for the guidance of the student, that in the various other variations, where the hostile Queen or Rook plays to different squares, we generally win by ...Ra2, supporting our Queen on the 7th line, and afterwards bringing the Kt into play at d4...”

Thus, and with considerably more detail than I have quoted here, Steinitz and Potter made a convincing case that they would have won this game for London had it been played to a finish.

This was in many ways a typical 19th century master game with a sharp 1 e4 e5 opening. The London Game, which we shall consider in next month's column, is a less celebrated affair but in many ways a much more interesting encounter which was certainly ahead of its time.

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