



## Is There Such a Thing as "Chess Culture"?

Do chess players need “culture,” whatever that may be, or is it possible to become an effective player just by analysing positions with Fritz and knowing nothing of the theory and history of the game?

Or is this a silly question?

It might be in physical sports. A fast runner does not need to know anything about great names of the near or more distant past. Maybe the names of Carl Lewis or Sebastian Coe, Emil Zatopek or Jesse Owens could mean something from story books read as a child but they are not current role models. Learning how the champions of 30, 50, 70 years ago trained and competed is not likely to help today’s young men win an Olympic medal.

The same could go for soccer and other team games, and even more so in sports like tennis and golf where equipment has changed tremendously in the last few decades. However, chess is still played, with the same pieces and rules, now as it was a hundred years and more ago. The pieces may be made of plastic or metal instead of wood, but that does not change the game as the switch from wooden to iron clubs, and of course modern ball technology, has changed the game of golf.

The whole design of golf courses has had to change because of the greater distances it is possible for a good player to hit a ball with accuracy. The design of the chessboard has not changed and the pieces still move in the same way for us as they did for Morphy and even for Ruy Lopez. There have been some minor changes in the past 150 years, basically the elimination of some local variations like Italian “free castling,” but the game we play is essentially the same as that described in the first printed chess books of 500 years ago. After the new bishop and queen moves, the double pawn advance, castling and en passant were introduced, a major change from the Arabic and Indian forms of chess, our game has not changed in any radical way.

Half a millennium of tradition has developed; only a few games have a comparable history. For example, contract bridge is a 20<sup>th</sup> century

### COLUMNISTS

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phenomenon. Various older card games evolved into whist by the 19<sup>th</sup> century and then a dissatisfaction with whist led to the modern form of bridge through various attempts to take the random element out of the way the trump suit is selected. Contract bridge is an excellent and very popular game, which like chess has a considerable literature, but it can never equal chess as a game of pure thought and perfect information. So bridge can have a 'culture' but I doubt if it can be as rich as that of chess.

### **Negative Connotations**

For some people, the term "culture" has negative connotations. It makes them think of middle-class values, of traditions and values which they reject or think have no relevance to them in a modern society. Some chess players whose involvement with the game is largely or exclusively through the means of computers and the Internet perhaps think that way about 'chess culture.'

A line often misquoted, and as often misattributed to Hermann Goering, is: "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my revolver."

The actual quotation comes from a German play by Hanns Johst (1890-1978), entitled *Schlageter*, which was first performed for Adolf Hitler's birthday in April 1933. In the very first scene a character called Thiemann declaims "Wenn ich Kultur höre...entsichere ich meinen Browning!"

The *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* translates this as: "Whenever I hear the word culture... I release the safety-catch of my Browning!"

If there are any readers of Kibitzer who reach for their metaphorical revolvers when they hear the word "culture" in connection with chess, better disconnect now or call up a different website!

### **Grandmasters Worry about It**

In February 2002, I interviewed Josef Franzen from Slovakia, a strong "over-the-board" and postal player. He is an international master with FIDE, since 1983, and an ICCF grandmaster, whose best result was second in the 12<sup>th</sup> Correspondence World Championship in the late 1980s.

Dr. Franzen told me about national team sessions that they held occasionally in Bratislava. "We looked at some positions and my colleagues have no ideas; they do not understand the position. It is impossible to discuss with them whether it is better for Black to exchange a pair of rooks, or whether White's knight is better than Black's bishop, and other strategic ideas. They are only people of computers. They work only by calculation and have no chess culture."

"Chess culture" if there is such a thing, though, cannot just be a matter of

understanding positional theories; it must be connected with our knowledge of the past.

A similar view to that of Franzen was expressed recently by ICCF grandmaster Arno Nickel on the bulletin board at <http://www.correspondencechess.com/bbs/>. At present Mr. Nickel is playing an interesting correspondence match against six computers at <http://www.chessfriend.com/> — so far one game has ended as a draw with Black.

Mr. Nickel added: “I am always skeptical, when I hear people advised to learn chess mainly, or in large part, by using any software. I fear this leads to a loss of culture.”

He went on to write of two famous masters he had met in his youth, Rellstab and Sämisch, and added: “I feel, every chess player older than about 35 or 40, and of course much more, when even older (as I, 52), should also see some responsibility towards younger players, that is to show them parts of this cultural values, and I am sure most of us do so. The topic of computer chess is connected with these cultural questions...”

### **A Funny Word**

“Culture” is a funny word, really, and it has all kinds of uses. My copy of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1976 edition) shows that the primary meaning of the word, in English, is related to the tillage of the soil and rearing living things. Thus the word “culture” is closely connected to “cultivate” and, of course, “agriculture” — and more distantly to “cult.”

In bacteriology, a culture is a quantity of a microbe thus produced, so that sense of the word is actually closer to the original meaning than the one which has become its primary usage in the last 25 years. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein taught his pupils, when considering the topic of meaning, to “look for the use” and it seems to me that what the dictionary classes as the secondary, or derived, meaning of the word “culture” is really the sense in which it is most used nowadays.

The second meaning of the English word “culture” in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is what principally concerns us in this article: “Improvement by (mental or physical) training; intellectual development; particular form, stage or type of intellectual development or civilization.”

“Chess culture” then could mean something like: “training the mind through chess” or “intellectual development in the game of chess.” Or a stage in the understanding of what chess is about and where it fits into other aspects of our civilisation, or the entire body of knowledge and tradition and sporting ethos that has grown up around the game of chess. Principally though it must

be to do with the aspects of chess that are not primarily about raw competition.

The composition and solving of chess problems and endgame studies, where aesthetic considerations are important, are much closer to the heart of chess culture than internet blitz sessions. The faster a game is played, the less thought is a factor and facility with the computer mouse can become the decisive factor.

A person who plays the game of chess, but who “reaches for his revolver” when he hears the word “culture” mentioned in connection with it, might be something like a person who believes the highest form of music is karaoke, or who treats a blitz game on the Internet, or against Fritz on his home computer, much as he would a shooting game in an amusement arcade.

Any strong player who has tried playing blitz on Internet servers has probably experienced the following scenario. You get a completely drawn endgame against some punk who has 20 seconds more in hand than you have. You offer a draw and it is scornfully declined in the race to run you out of time, whereas two human players playing lightning chess across the board would almost always agree a draw if the position on the board is clearly not winnable by any means other than the clock.

The behaviour of blitz punks has nothing to do with chess culture. It is the complete antithesis of it. It is the behaviour of Goering or the character from ‘Schlageter’.

Even more painful for a real chess player, or even a traditional “chess tourist,” is the kind of scenario painted by columnist Steve Lopez in an article on computer chess at the ChessBase website:

<http://www.chessbase.com/newsdetail.asp?newsid=1511>.

Lopez says that a couple of years ago the queries he mostly received, as a technical support worker for a chess computer company, were from players wanting to know how to optimise their computers to help them improve their chess game. Now the majority of queries come from “geeks” who are looking for a hardware/software edge so that their version of Fritz8 can beat up on somebody else’s Fritz8 on an online server. They are not using their brains at all; they just want to throw money at the problem in the most effective way. Computer chess has become “hot-rodging” for them.

Lopez rightly doesn’t see the point; it’s not as if they know anything about chess, they didn’t write the program, and they didn’t even build the hardware they are using.

I have to agree with him. When I read about people like that, I want to reach

for my revolver too — only I don't have one.

### **What Does 'Culture' Mean?**

If you ask the man or woman in the street here in Dublin what they understand by the word "culture," they will probably say "something to do with the arts." Indeed "Culture" is the name of the magazine section of the British newspaper *The Sunday Times*, which circulates widely in Ireland, too. This magazine includes reviews of books, arts & entertainment matters and the television listings. This "artistic" sense of the word culture is primary now, I think.

If the person in the street were a science fiction fan, he might mention the popular series of books by Scottish writer Iain M. Banks that deal with a galactic civilization that calls itself "the Culture." If you haven't read these yet, the most appropriate place for a Kibitzer reader to start is with the book entitled *The Player of Games*, followed by the best volumes in the series: *Consider Phlebas*, *Excession* and *Use of Weapons*.

I found a web page where Banks supplied "a few notes on the Culture" for lovers of SF at Rutgers University. I won't quote from it, commercial use is only by permission, but the URL is:

<http://www.cs.bris.ac.uk/~stefan/culture.html>.

Unfortunately one thing these "notes" do not supply is any explanation of why Banks hit on the vague yet so-appropriate name "Culture" for his books.

### **Two Cultures?**

My dictionary made a passing reference to novelist C.P. Snow's theory of "two cultures:" literature and science. I used to hear a lot about this in my school days in the early 1960s. Snow was an English novelist whose books are mostly set in academic or civil service worlds. I think there was a worry at this time that the schools and universities over-emphasised the classical-literary-humanist tradition and that the mathematical-science-technology strand was equally valid, and of considerably more practical importance for the creation of wealth and better living conditions.

Chess somehow stands as a bridge across this divide. I know several masters and grandmasters that had a strong mathematical bent, Max Euwe and John Nunn being obvious examples, but there are others who majored in philosophy and other "arts" side subjects. There are different ways of becoming good at chess as long as the end result is points at the board. The "arts" players do not necessarily play more beautiful games; the "science" players do not necessarily win more tournaments, although they probably do calculate more variations.

The oriental game of Go probably has similar appeal to people of both types

of academic background. If you have seen the Oscar-winning movie *A Beautiful Mind*, you may have noticed the leading characters, who are mathematics professors and students, playing games of Go on the campus at Princeton University. I suspect that Go favours people with maths/science aptitude, but the game involves calculation of forcing variations less than chess does, except at certain “life and death” phases. This will keep it relatively safe from the computer geeks for longer, though they are trying.

One of the great things about chess is that games are recorded. You can look back on your own games and see where you went wrong. You can study games played years, decades, even a century or more ago and learn something from them. Of course you can also watch old tennis matches on video but the high-speed shots today’s players execute with their fibre rackets lead to a different type of game from the classic Borg-McEnroe wooden racket duels.

I was quite surprised when a friend who plays both chess and Go, to a high standard, told me that in Go tournaments the moves normally are not recorded. Maybe that is something to do with the nature of the game, or maybe just the cultural Chinese/Japanese tradition from which it originated many centuries before chess took its modern form in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Although the fact that Go players usually don’t write down their games seems strange, if fact it is, that doesn’t mean that they are “uncultured.” You can get a great sense of the place of the game in oriental society for example by reading *The Master of Go* by Nobel Prize winning writer Kawabata Yasunari, which is one level a novel somewhat reminiscent of ‘The Defence’ by Nabokov, or even of Kafka, but on another is a journalistic record of an actual championship contest, involving several adjournments, that was played in Japan in the 1930s. You can read an interesting article about *The Master of Go* at the website: <http://senseis.xmp.net/>.

### **Shared Tradition of Literature**

Chess players do have a great advantage over players of most other indoor games in the, perhaps, unparalleled literature of chess available in numerous languages, but especially in English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian. The Germans and Russians probably have the best of it, which is why so many of us, especially before the 1970s when the English chess publishing market exploded, felt we had to learn enough of these languages to at least benefit to some extent from what was available.

Chess notation being so universal, I have even found over the years that I had accumulated some books and magazines in languages such as Romanian, Polish, Czech, Dutch, Latvian and Swedish — of which I really know next to nothing, but can at least make some sense of the games and notes.

There is a shared global tradition in chess. The names of Morphy, Capablanca, Lasker, Alekhine, Nimzowitsch, Botvinnik, Tal, Fischer, and Kasparov are universally recognisable and their games are enjoyed around the world. At least a raw outline of the ideas of Steinitz and Nimzowitsch probably lodges in the skulls of most players over the age of forty. For younger players, it may well be different.

Databases and electronic aids, including analysis engines like Fritz, are taking over the chess world. Teenagers are becoming masters and grandmasters at younger and younger ages; practical results are becoming all-important. Forty or more years ago it was inconceivable, barring a genius like Fischer, that a player under the age of 16 could become a grandmaster. There was too much to study, too much to learn, before you could hope to compete with the top players of the day.

Undoubtedly chess “prodigies” are becoming more plentiful and younger because of computer-based training methods. Games can be studied faster; openings learned more rapidly, basic endgames practised more efficiently with silicon aids than with paper. However, do the players who have reached these heights so rapidly have the depth of knowledge and understanding of the game that an even a regular master had in the 1950s, when the title International Master or Master of Sport of the Soviet Union really meant something?

Yet, I am not sure how far this analogy can be taken. Can we compare the people who use chess books to the “literature” culture in this model and the people who use computers to the “science” culture? Of course the kids who learn chess through computers and the Internet often then want to start reading books about the game, and even request reading lists on Internet bulletin boards. At least they are not just playing chess but are also trying to improve their understanding of it and realising that computers may not hold all the answers.

I don’t think the “hot-rodders” described by Lopez represent any kind of chess culture. Chess is incidental to them; the game could be backgammon, checkers, or even snakes & ladders if those games provided an effective battle-zone for their ego wars.

### **Knowledge of the Past**

What is our knowledge of the chess past and how reliable are our sources? There is certainly a problem here. On the one hand, our records of the games played in the past are quite good and getting better all the time. On the other hand, our knowledge of the main people and events in chess history is often flawed, chiefly by the repetition of apocryphal stories.

Since the introduction of chess databases in the mid-1980s, the documenting



of games actually played by masters and even strong amateur players around the world has been excellent. Various websites, free services like 'The Week In Chess' and commercial companies, principally ChessBase and New In Chess, soon make all important games available in a readily accessible way and they are checked for accuracy.

The process of getting the getting the important games of the pre-computer era into databases is also well under way, much of it by numerous volunteers concerned about the important games played in their countries. John Saunders, now *British Chess Magazine* editor, set an excellent example with his 'Britbase' project. My efforts in this area are mostly involved with recovering old correspondence games.

In the first decade of databases and the Internet (up to the late 1990s), there was a lot of casualness about the way games were input and distributed by enthusiasts. For example, thousands of players downloaded databases from the University of Pittsburgh archive, which in one way was a great resource, but there were also a tremendous number of errors in these databases: variant spellings of names, truncated games, wrong results, moves from analysis entered as if those moves were actually played, etc.

Much of this incorrect data is still in circulation in the cheap commercial databases, which you would be better off not buying. Even the major expensive databases are not flawless. Chessbase's Megabase has my games from the 1984 Olympiad attributed to some other Harding, for example, but they are far, far superior to anything you will buy cheap or get free.

So the problem of documenting old games is in the process of being solved, although it is never-ending as the search through old printed literature for good forgotten games is slow, and the actual physical process of inputting them is slow as well.

Our knowledge of other aspects of chess tradition is shakier. For example, here on the **ChessCafe** website, Edward Winter, in his *Chess Notes* column; recurrently raises queries about issues from chess history. He frequently points out that "well-known facts" about chess players and events of the past may not be facts at all. The 'Quotes and Queries' column in *British Chess Magazine*, which the late Ken Whyld used to edit, performs this function also, although perhaps in a less aggressive way.

Very little chess history or biography has been written that would meet the standards of scholarship expected by a university. Many stories about the great players of the past have a sort of 'Lives of the Saints' quality. They were written romantically with no great regard for checking sources. Names, dates, the whole course of events can be wrong in some cases.



Hannak's biography of Lasker is notorious in this respect. The first volume of Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors* is not immune from it either, which is extremely regrettable. His perpetuation of the rumour that Schlechter needed a two-game margin of victory to take the world title from Lasker is especially sad as this revives a ghost that that was originally laid to rest 30-40 years ago.

Last year the Ken Whyld Association (KWA) was founded by a group of people in Europe who care about accuracy in chess research and about the conservation and recovery of chess history and culture. Apparently the idea had been gestating for some time, but the untimely death of Ken Whyld, co-editor of *The Oxford Companion to Chess*, indirectly brought the idea to fruition to honour his memory. Unfortunately I never met Ken or had any dealings with him, but I was happy to become one of the first members of the KWA.

You can find out more about its aims from its website: [www.kwabc.com](http://www.kwabc.com) which is managed in both English and German by Ralf Binnewirtz, who is doing great work! Among their aims is a huge chess bibliographic project, which I am sure is very worthwhile, but will take some years work and a lot of international co-operation to bring to reality. These days it is not sufficient in a bibliography just to list what was published; it is also important to know what is actually available and where, in printed or electronic forms.

The mission statement of the KWA, given on its website, reads:

*"It is our association's concern to bring together the information scattered worldwide from collectors of chess literature and extensive chess libraries, and thus give the public access to it. Our aim, the comprehensive bibliographical recording of the entirety of chess literature in a database, is certainly a very ambitious undertaking, which can only be realized to a large extent and in a reasonable time by means of a worldwide network. Chess friends of all countries and continents are asked to contribute to the success of this project by giving their assistance."*

The initiator of this idea is the Dutch collector Dr. Jurgen Stigter, whose appeal led to the formation of the "Amsterdam Group" in November 2002. After one year of preparation, the official foundation of the Association took place in November 2003. A board meeting was held in January 2004 and a member's meeting is planned for a weekend in Germany in September. Even if you are unable to help actively with the association, you can support its aims by joining; the annual membership fee is 50 Euro. There is more information on the KWA website.

## **Just One Game**

I know readers expect to find at least one game in every Kibitzer column. That presents a problem with an “essay” column of this type, which does not really call for illustration of this type, but I will show one game.

During the winter, I had the opportunity of doing some research in the British Library in London and the library of Trinity College, Dublin, mostly looking at chess magazines from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in search of information about correspondence chess. A little of what I gleaned is finding its way into my next CC game anthology, *50 Golden Chess Games*, due out in May or June, but the research is mostly geared to a history I hope to write on correspondence chess in Britain and Ireland.

The following was probably the earliest game of chess to be played by telegraph, certainly the first in Great Britain; if there was an earlier one anywhere I should like to hear about it. This is the game referred to in passing on page 83 of *A Short History of Chess* by H.J.R. Murray. Referring to the animosity between Howard Staunton and George Walker, Murray wrote:

*“The chess world was divided into a Staunton and an anti-Staunton camp, and the feud was waged with complete disregard of all the rules of honourable controversy. Even so slight an occasion as the first game played by telegraph in April 1845 raised its own polemic.”*

My impression is that Murray exaggerates here. For example, Staunton certainly gave Walker’s historic game collection book *Chess Studies* a very warm and detailed reception in his magazine.

Anyway, let us look at the game it refers to, which was the predecessor of all the telegraphic, cable, radio and telephone matches that would be played in succeeding decades, and the grandfather of Internet chess!

The game and Staunton’s side of the story appeared in *The Chess Player’s Chronicle*, Volume 6 (1845), starting at page 154, where the history and functioning of the equipment is described. Professor Wheatstone had invented his first electro-magnetic telegraph apparatus in 1837 but had recently, with a Mr. Cooke, developed a new one on a different principle by means of which thirty telegraphic signals could be sent in a minute.

It seems that the idea of a chess contest by this means, between parties situated at opposite ends of a railway 90 miles long, “occurred to Mr. Staunton while conversing with Professor Wheatstone on the influence which this extraordinary mode of intercourse is likely to have upon our social relations; and in a very few days, through the polite facilities offered by the authorities connected both with telegraph and railway, his suggestion was carried into effect with a success that must have exceeded the anticipations

of the most sanguine.”

The original idea was that Staunton would play at one end of the line against a single opponent at the other end, and he invited the well-known chess writer William Lewis “to take either extremity against him.” As Lewis was no longer an active player and not the strongest possible opponent for Staunton, I think it is reasonable to take the view that he thought Lewis might have liked to be involved in this historic occasion and that his participation would have given it extra publicity value.

Lewis being unavailable and nobody else being willing to play Staunton single-handed, it was decided that “more than one should be concerned at each terminus in conducting the moves,” i.e. it would be a consultation game. Staunton himself agreed to travel with Captain Kennedy to Portsmouth, while various players would decide the moves at the London end.

Captain Kennedy was presumably Hugh Alexander Kennedy, who later played in the first chess tournament in London 1851, and who lost what was possibly the first international telegraphic game, against Serafino Dubois in 1862.

The day before the match, Staunton and Kennedy travelled to the Portsmouth suburb of Gosport, where the railway line then terminated, with a view to exchanging some trial moves with the London party, for the purposes, according to Staunton, of familiarising the telegraph operators with the chess codes that they would be using for the proper game next day. Technical assistance was provided by Mr. Hoffmeister, a Portsmouth amateur. This trial game was left unfinished because Staunton and Kennedy had to send moves by messenger from their hotel room to the telegraph room, which left no time for deliberation.

“On the day appointed for play,” reports *The Chess Player’s Chronicle*, Messrs. Staunton and Kennedy took their station at the chess board in the telegraph apartment at Gosport, while Messrs. Buckle, Walker, Tuckett, Perigal, and Capt. Evans were similarly engaged at the Vauxhall terminus, and at about half past eleven, A.M., the *partie* began by the players in London forwarding their first move of ‘K.P.two squares’.”

Apparently the players wrote down their moves in English descriptive notation and what they wrote was then handed to a telegraphic clerk who transmitted what was written to his opposite number at the other railway terminus.

“We must premise that, beyond the fact of its having been played under circumstances so remarkable, the game presents in itself few features of interest. The party at the London end had their attention too frequently

diverted by the assembled spectators, and the players by Gosport were too anxious to terminate the game in time to escape by the last (half past five o'clock) train, for them to go very profoundly into the intricacies which chess positions present."

However, it seems from the notes to the game that it did not end until "a few minutes after seven o'clock, having lasted rather more than seven hours and a half." So evidently Staunton and Captain Kennedy had to spend a second night in their Portsmouth hotel.

This account contradicts that given by Professor Carlo Pagni of Turin, on pages 59-60 in the first volume of his *Correspondence Chess Matches between Clubs, 1823-1899*. It seems he was misled by his source, the *Schachalmanach* of J.K.S. Portius (Leipzig 1846); Staunton was also to complain later that an incorrect account of the match circumstances was published by St. Amant in the French chess magazine *La Palamede*.

Firstly, Pagni's statement that the game lasted 9 hours appears from the above to be wrong; can we therefore be sure that his statement "it was not allowed to think more than five minutes a move" is correct?

Pagni is certainly wrong to represent this as a correspondence match between chess clubs in London and Portsmouth with Staunton and Kennedy as "the assistants of the Portsmouth committee." The involvement of Portsmouth, and one player from there, was entirely incidental.

### ***Amateurs in London – Messrs. Kennedy & Staunton***

Telegraph game, April 1845

*Notes from The Chess Player's Chronicle*

**1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Bc5 3 c3 Qg5 4 Qf3 Qg6 5 d3 Nc6 6 Be3 Bb6**

The bishop should have been taken off at once.

**7 Bxb6 axb6 8 Na3 Na7 9 Qg3 Qxg3**

Had there been any time for deliberation, Mr. Staunton remarked, he should have hesitated to change queens without examining the effect of moving 9...Nge7.

**10 hxg3 d6 11 f4 Nh6 12 Nf3 f6**

About this period, considerable delay occurred at Gosport in consequence of intimation from Southampton that a number of chess players had congregated there and required to have the moves telegraphed to them. Those already played were forwarded and every subsequent move was sent at the moment

of its being played. This double duty, however, seriously retarded the progress of the game, which would otherwise have terminated, we believe, in time for the players at Gosport to have reached London that night.

**13 Kd2 Bg4 14 d4 0–0–0**



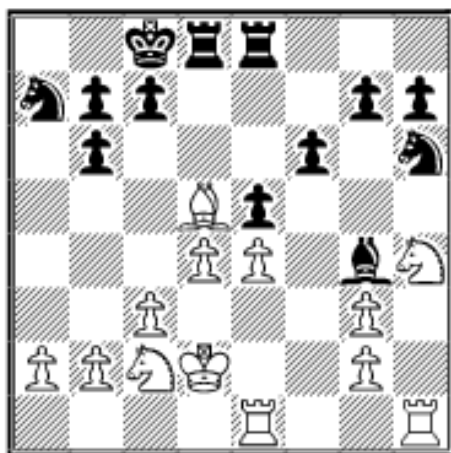
**15 f5?**

This was evidently played without due consideration of the consequences of Black's rejoinder.

**15...d5**

From this point the game is decidedly in favour of Black, who with ordinary time for circumspection would not have had much difficulty in winning.

**16 Bxd5 Bxf5 17 Nh4 Bg4 18 Nc2 Rhe8 19 Rae1**



**19...Nc6?!**

The wishes of both Mr. Staunton and Capt. Kennedy now pointed to 19...f5, which they conceived to be the best move, but they hoped by bringing out the Kt. to induce a change of pieces, and thus to simplify and shorten the game. Subsequent analysis shows that, by playing on the pawn at this juncture, they would have won a pawn and have still farther improved their present

advantageous position.

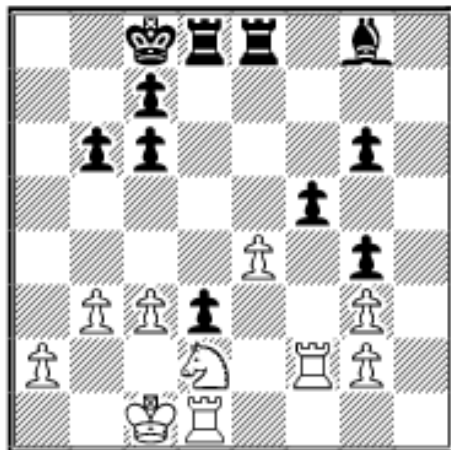
**20 Bxc6 bxc6 21 Kc1 Be6 22 Nf3 Bg8**

This is far better than taking the a-pawn.

**23 b3 Ng4 24 Re2 g6 25 Ne3 h5 26 Rd1 exd4 27 Nxg4 d3 28 Rf2!**

We look upon this as the best move made by White throughout the game; indeed we see no other which would have relieved them from the embarrassment they laboured under. The merit of this excellent move is due to Captain Evans, the well-known inventor of the Evans Gambit.

**28...hxf4 29 Nd2 f5!?**



But for their anxiety to terminate the *partie*, Black would now have thought it prudent to protect the pawn they had won.

30 exf5 gxf5 31 Rxf5 Re3 32 Rf2

The return of this R to f2 is well conceived. Mr. Perigal, we believe, is entitled to the credit of having suggested it.

**32...b5**

32...Rxf5 33 Nf1 d2+ “would not have been a prudent continuation” says CPC, but I think 32...Re2 might have been superior.

**33 Nf1 Re2 34 Rd2 Rde8 35 Nh2 R2e3**

35...Re1+ would have been answered by 36 Kb2 not Rd1, according to CPC.

**36 Nxf4 Rxf3 37 Nf6 Re3 38 Nxf8 Rxf8 39 Rf3 Rg3 40 Rdf2 Re2 41 Rxd3 Rxf2 42 Rxe2 Rxe2 43 Rd2 Re5 ½-½**

In reply to this move, White proposed a draw, which was immediately accepted.

It seems that subsequently, probably in a chess column that I have not yet seen, George Walker gave a misleading account of this event, implying that it was intended as a proper two-game match. Whereas Staunton always asserted that the preliminary game was just intended as a rehearsal that could be abandoned as a draw at any time. It seems that Walker conducted the London end of the rehearsal game and insisted on it continuing until the evening and then claimed he had won it. Mr. Hoffmeister of Portsmouth (CPC volume 6, page 192) supports Staunton’s account against Walker.

Of course it is to be expected that *Chess Player’s Chronicle* supported Staunton; the magazine was edited by him at this time! It also included (vol. 6, pages 214-5) a letter from ‘Vindex’ saying: “Mr. St. Amant knows, no one better, that the merit of suggesting and carrying out this experiment was solely due to Mr. Staunton; that with the arrangements Mr. Walker had nothing whatever to do; and that even with regard to the playing of the game, which Mr. Staunton had injudiciously permitted him to take a part, his doings were chiefly confined to the recording of moves determined on by Messrs.

Buckle, Evans, Perigal, Tuckett &c., &c...”

To sum up, what seems to have happened is that Staunton & Captain Kennedy made arrangements for a game to test the telegraphic apparatus' suitability for long-distance chess, and there were some hitches. Walker then wrote an article that suggested the games were intended as a serious test of skill and it also got reported as such by St. Amant in La Palamède. As the unpreserved Wednesday game was only a technical rehearsal and the Thursday game (above) was a draw of relatively low quality, Staunton was annoyed that what was only intended as an experiment was represented as a serious contest. However, I should be interested to receive copies of the alternative accounts of this event from the Walker camp.

### Summing Up

The term “chess culture” does not have a clear agreed meaning, but I think I understand what people who use the term mean by it. To speak of “chess culture” means to care about chess as something more than a meaningless game in which winning and losing is all-important.

“Chess culture” refers to the history and theory of chess, to the body of literature and tradition that has grown up around it over centuries, to the educational and intellectual benefits of the game. Caring about chess culture does not mean you cannot use computers as an aid but they should not become the principal reason for a person's involvement with chess. If you take human thought out of chess, you are left with nothing worth having.

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