



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

*From the Archives*

Hosted by  
Mark Donlan



## From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

## The Kibitzer by Tim Harding

## The Lost Heroes of Chess

This month's *Kibitzer* looks back at a few of the lost heroes of chess: players who could have been world champion, or very strong grandmasters, but for some reason or other never made it, leaving just a legacy of a few fine games and the might-have-beens. The reason for the incomplete success (I would not call it failure) could be health or work or family reasons, or just the fact that chess was not so important to them; every grandmaster and master probably knows of a friend or rival from their early days who did not fulfil their early promise. Sometimes these people come back to chess (often correspondence chess) later in life.

Perhaps one of the biggest causes of dropping out of talented players from chess nowadays is the more social lure of bridge; I live in Ireland where we had a very strong natural player in the mid-1970s who made an excellent score on top board in the Haifa Olympiad. Soon afterwards, he married, took up the card game with his wife and was lost to chess.

*Kibitzer* likes to turn the clock back and so this column begins with an English player of the mid-19th century whom some have hailed as potentially the strongest player of that era.



*Henry Thomas Buckle*

Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), eminent historian who died of typhoid fever in Damascus. His last words were: “My book. My book. I shall never finish my book.” But the greater part of his incomplete *History of Civilisation* was published posthumously to considerable acclaim. In 1849 he won the first chess tournament of all time, the knockout at the Divan cafe in London and in match play he defeated Kieseritsky (in 1848) and Löwenthal in 1851. He also got the better of Anderssen in a series of friendly games played shortly after the latter had won the great London 1851 tournament.

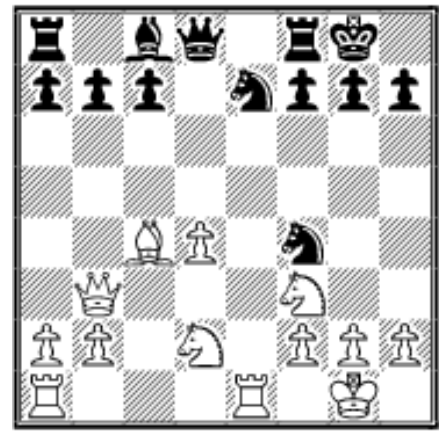
Buckle was in fact one of the Managing Committee of the 1851 tournament, subscribing five pounds to the cost. Taking into account the further five pounds entry fee he paid, this makes him the equal fifth highest individual sponsor of the event, according to the table in Staunton’s tournament book. Buckle in fact played in some of the associated side-events but chose not to compete in the main tournament.

In the “Uncrowned Champions” chapter of his recently-published *The Guinness Book of Chess Grandmasters*, William Hartston praises Buckle as “perhaps the one man in England in the 1840s who could have challenged Staunton for chess supremacy.” This was undoubtedly the contemporary opinion and the London journal *The Field*, on the occasion of Staunton’s obituary in 1874, argued that Buckle was superior to Staunton. Three things prevented Buckle achieving the heights in chess: his indifferent health, his historical work and his hatred of slow play. This was twenty or thirty years before the invention of the chess clock. Hartston quotes a famous remark made by Buckle: “The slowness of genius is hard to bear, but the slowness of mediocrity is intolerable.”

Undoubtedly he was a very intelligent man and a strong player. In 1851 he played about fifteen games with Anderssen, then at the height of his powers, and came out one ahead, but these were not formal match games “though no doubt both sides played with care, and desired to win” as the *City of London Chess Magazine* put it. The following episode, and another cited by Hartston but not reproduced here, shows that Buckle was as able as any tactician of his day.

***Buckle–Anderssen, London 1851***

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Nbx d2 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Qb3 Nce7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Rfe1 Nf4?!**



So far a modern treatment of this opening, but this knight move is premature and, by reopening the a2-g8 diagonal, it enlarges

the scope of White's Italian bishop. 12...c6, to reinforce the knight's blockade of the diagonal, is normally and rightly preferred nowadays.

**13 Re4 Neg6 14 Rae1 Qf6**

Steinitz later tried 14...Bf5 here (against Valentine Green, London 1862).

**15 Ne5 Qg5?**

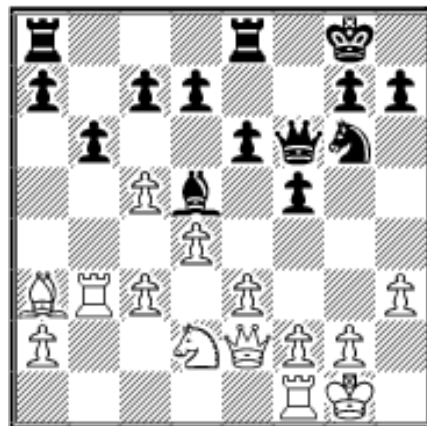
An attempt at counter-attack that is efficiently refuted by Buckle.

**16 Bxf7+ Kh8 17 Nxc6+ hxc6 18 Qg3 Qxg3 19 hxc3 Rxf7 20 Rxf4 Rxf4 21 Re8+ Kh7 22 gxf4** and White won.

More impressive in many ways, however, is the following game (not so flashy and not published by Hartston) from the match with Löwenthal. The modern Nimzo-Indian style opening is followed by a long manoeuvring phase in which White (a strong player who was one of the first to cross swords with Morphy) is unable to match his opponent's positional sophistication, which undoubtedly only Staunton of the pre-Steinitz era was able to match. I particularly enjoyed such details like 16 Bd5, giving up a tempo to provoke c3-c4 and so create a target on the c-file. Buckle's subsequent taking of the initiative on the c-file was the logical consequence of this earlier play.

*Löwenthal–Buckle*, London 1851

**1 d4 e6 2 c4 Bb4+ 3 Nc3 Bxc3+ 4 bxc3 f5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Nf6 7 Bd3 b6 8 0-0 Bb7 9 h3 0-0 10 Ba3 Ne7 11 Rb1 Re8 12 c5 Ng6 13 Qe2 Ne4 14 Bxe4 Bxe4 15 Rb3 Qf6 16 Nd2 Bd5**

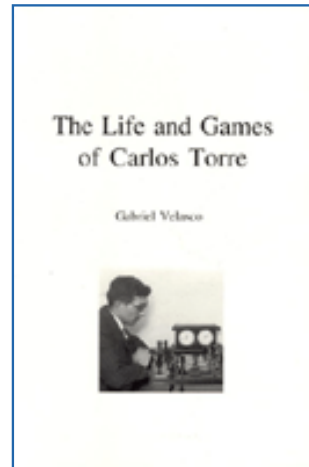


**17 c4 Bb7 18 Bb2 Qg5 19 f4 Qe7 20 Qf2 Bc6 21 Ba3 d6 22 cxd6 cxd6 23 Nf3 Qc7 24 Rc1 Qd7 25 Rbc3 Rac8 26 Nd2 Bb7 27 Nf3 Rc7 28 Nd2 Rec8 29 Bb2 Ne7 30 Kh2 b5 31 cxb5 Rxc3 32 Bxc3 Nd5 33 Bb2 Rxc1 34 Bxc1 Qxb5 35 Nf3 Nc3 36 Ng5 Qd5 37 a3 h6 38 Nf3 a5 39 Qc2 Ne4 40 h4 Bc6 41 Bd2 a4 42 Bb4 Nf6 43 Bd2 Qb5 44 Bc1 Bxf3 45 gxf3 Qf1 46 d5 Qxf3 47 dxe6 Ne4 48 Qg2 Qh5 49 Kh3 g5 50 fxg5 hxg5 51 Kh2 g4 52 Qc2 Qxh4+ 53 Kg2 Qg3+ 54 Kf1 Qf3+ 55 Ke1 Qh1+ 56 Ke2 Qg2+ 57 Kd3 Qxc2+ 58 Kxc2 g3 0-1**

The *City of London Magazine* (1876, p.166) gives Buckle due credit for his successes against these

two masters but sums up its comparison of Buckle and Staunton thus:

“These two spurts, though they may perhaps form the plausible basis of a possibility never destined to be realised, seem scarcely sufficient reasons for reclaiming the laurels won by Staunton in a series of hard-fought battles. Moreover, there is something in attenuation of the claim made on behalf of Buckle; for the latter, not long after the above-mentioned occasions, played three games with Heydebrandt [von der Lasa], all of which were scored by the German master. It is stated that Buckle was in delicate health when this took place, but we believe that such was his normal condition.”



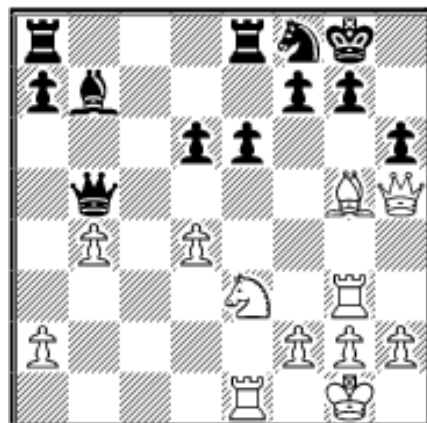
Moving to the 20th century, one can think of the brief career of Carlos Torre of Mexico (born 1904) who devised the Torre Attack (1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Bg5) with which he won a famous game against Emanuel Lasker, featuring the “Windmill” combination. (Moscow 1925). He retired from chess because of ill health shortly after taking joint second place in the 1926 USA Championship. FIDE awarded him the IM title in 1963 on the basis of his achievements in the period 1925-26. Torre was of course lucky to win the Lasker game, in which he may have stood worse at one stage, but his exploitation of the former World Champion’s mistake on move twenty-three was magnificent. This kind of opportunism is the mark of a champion, as Lasker himself acknowledged.

*Torre–Lasker*, Moscow 1925

**1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Bg5 c5 4 e3 cxd4 5 exd4 Be7 6 Nbd2 d6 7 c3 Nbd7 8 Bd3 b6 9 Nc4 Bb7 10 Qe2 Qc7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Rfe1 Rfe8 13 Rad1 Nf8 14 Bc1 Nd5 15 Ng5 b5 16 Na3 b4 17 cxb4 Nxb4 18 Qh5 Bxg5 19 Bxg5 Nxd3?! 20 Rxd3 Qa5 21 b4 Qf5 22 Rg3 h6 23 Nc4 Qd5?**

23...hxg5! 24 Nxd6 Qg6 25 Qxg6 Nxg6 26 Nxb7 Reb8 27 Nc5 Rxb4 28 Rxg5 Nf4 is reckoned to be equal.

**24 Ne3 Qb5**



24...Qxd4 would have robbed the world of the famous windmill without changing the result after 25 Rd1! Qe4 (25...Qxb4 26 Bf6! Ng6 27 Rxg6 fxg6 28 Qxg6) 26 Bxh6 Ng6 27 Bg5, threatening Rh3.

**25 Bf6 Qxh5 26 Rxg7+ Kh8 27 Rxf7+ Kg8 28 Rg7+ Kh8 29 Rxb7+ Kg8 30 Rg7+ Kh8 31 Rg5+ Kh7 32 Rxh5 Kg6 33 Rh3 Kxf6 34 Rxh6+ Kg5 35 Rh3 Reb8 36 Rg3+ Kf6 37 Rf3+ Kg6 38 a3 a5 39 bxa5 Rxa5 40 Nc4 Rd5 41 Rf4 Nd7 42 Rxe6+**



**Kg5 43 g3 1-0**

Readers may like to suggest their own lost heroes. For example, there is the Dutchman Daniel Noteboom, already mentioned in an earlier [Kibitzer column](#) about the Slav Defence variation that bears his name, and Gordon Thomas Crown (1929-47), a brilliant English prospect of the early 1940s, who died of peritonitis just two months after the Britain-USSR match in which he defeated grandmaster Alexander Kotov.

My last lost hero is Vladimir Petrov (1907-45), the strong Latvian master who died in one of Stalin's prison camps after his country was annexed by the Soviet Union. Petrov shared first place at Kemer 1937 with Flohr and Reshevsky ahead of such luminaries as Keres and Alekhine, although perhaps he should be ranked as a strong IM rather than GM, since he had been active throughout the 1930s and made this breakthrough relatively late. Towards the end of his career his play seemed to have moved to a higher plane as the following game shows.

**Petrov–Grau, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1939**

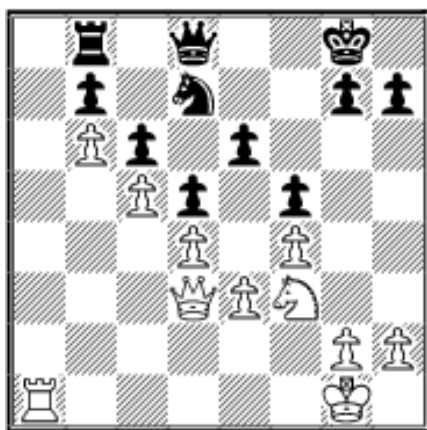
**1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Bf5 3 c4 e6 4 Qb3 Nc6 5 Bd2 Rb8 6 e3 a6 7 Bd3 Bxd3 8 Qxd3 Nb4 9 Bxb4 Bxb4+ 10 Nbd2 Nf6 11 0-0 0-0 12 c5 Bxd2 13 Nxd2 c6 14 f4**

Preparing for queenside action.

**14...Nd7 15 b4 f5 16 a4 Qc7 17 Rfc1 Ra8 18 b5 Rfb8 19 Nf3 axb5**

According to Alekhine, 19...Qd8 (with the idea 20...axb5 21 axb5 Ra5) was necessary. Now Black has no counterplay and Petrov devises a systematic winning plan that Nimzovitch would have been proud of.

**20 axb5 Qd8 21 b6! Rxa1 22 Rxa1**



White's winning stroke will be a sacrifice on b7 at the appropriate time; for example, 22...Nf8 23 Ra7 Ng6 24 Nd2 Nh8 25 Nb3 Nf7 26 Na5 Qc8 (26... Qe7 27 Nxc6 or 26...Qd7 27 Nxb7! Rxb7 28 Qa6 Nd8 29 Ra8+–) 27 Nxb7 Rxb7 28 Qa6 Rb8 29 Qxc8+ Rxc8 30 b7.

**22...h6 23 Ra7! Kf7 24 Qe2 g6 25 Nd2 Nf6 26 Nb3 Ke8 27 Na5 Qc8 28 Qa2**

With the threat 29 Nxb7! Rxb7 30 Rxb7 Qxb7 31 Qa7 etc.

**28...Nd7 29 Qf2! Nf6**

Or 29...Kf7 30 Qh4 h5 31 g4! (31 Qg5 Nf6 32 Qh6) 31...fxg4 32 Qg5 Nf6 33 Qe5 Nd7 34 Qd6, threatening Nxc6.

**30 Qh4 Ng8 31 g4! Kf7 32 g5 h5 33 Qf2 Ke8 34 Qa2 Ne7 35 Nxb7! Rxb7 36 Rxb7 1-0**

“A game of undoubted didactic value,” wrote Alekhine.



[TOP OF PAGE](#)



[HOME](#)



[COLUMNS](#)



[LINKS](#)



[ARCHIVES](#)



[ABOUT THE  
CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)  
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)  
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

© 2007 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**ChessCafe.com**®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.