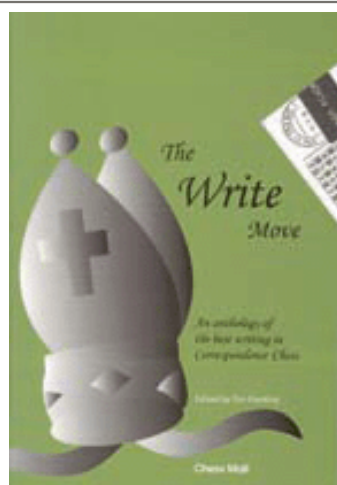




COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



[The Write Move](#)
by **Tim Harding**



Frank Marshall

In the Lodz match-tournament in September, where the American champion, Salwe and Rubinstein played each other eight times, the latter was the winner with Frank Marshall second on fifty percent. The American champion had an extended stay in Europe, with mixed results. He lost a match to Janowski at Suresne by 6½-3½ and Rubinstein beat him 4½-3½ in a shorter match in Warsaw. In November and early December, Marshall did defeat Jacques Mieses in Berlin in a ten-game match that included one draw and saw the lead change hands several times. The American's one major success on his European tour was winning the 16th German Congress tournament at Düsseldorf, unbeaten on 11½ out of 15, a point and a half clear of Salwe with Spielmann third and Mieses fifth, but this event was not of top strength, most of the competitors being what we would now call IM-standard.

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Oldrich Duras

The biggest tournament of the year was played in Prague, in May and June, involving twenty players. Oldrich Duras and Carl Schlechter shared first with $13\frac{1}{2}$ points ahead of Vidmar (13), Rubinstein (12) and most of the world top. Marshall could only finish in a tie for seventh to ninth places on 11 points.

There were no British players; it would have been interesting to see whether H. E. Atkins could have put up a good show against the professionals. At Tunbridge Wells in August, he retained his British Champion title with a round to spare. Schlechter, Duras and Maróczy shared first prize in another strong tournament for continental masters at Vienna that started at the end of March. Hoffer said in *The Field* that the Prague event was the stronger of the two. At the start of his career, Richard Réti finished a miserable last in Vienna, managing just three draws from nineteen games.

O. Duras-H. Süchting

Prague 1908

Ruy Lopez [C65]

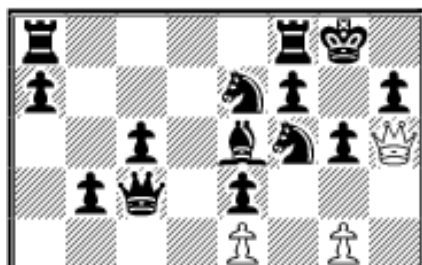
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 d3 d6 5 h3 g6 6 Be3

Duras varies from 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 Bg5 h6 8 Be3 0-0 9 Qd2 Kh7 10 g4 Ng8 11 0-0-0 Nd4, which he played in 1907 against O. Bernstein at Ostend (eventually losing).

6...Bg7 7 Qd2

This is the point: he will exchange the fianchettoed bishop unless Black plays 7...h6, in which case it will be hard for his opponent to arrange castling.

7...0-0 8 Bh6 Nh5 9 Nc3 Ne7 10 d4 c6 11 Be2 Qc7 12 g4 Nf6 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 Qg5 Bxh6 15 Qxh6 Qd6 16 Bd3 b5 17 0-0-0 Qc5 18 Rdg1 Be6



19 h4!

White starts a daring sacrificial attack.

19...Bxg4



19...b4 might have been better, pursuing his own counterplay.

20 Ng5 Kh8 21 Nxh7 Neg8!

Black still seems to have it all under control.

22 Qg5 Kxh7 23 h5 Bxh5?

23...Kg7 was necessary, as White has nothing clear after 24 hxg6 (24 Rxg4 Nxg4 25 Qxg4 Qxf2) 24...fxg6 25 f3 Rad8 (25...b4!?) 26 fxg4 (26 Kb1!?) 26...Rxd3 27 cxd3 b4.

24 Be2 Rfd8?!

24...Kg7 was better.

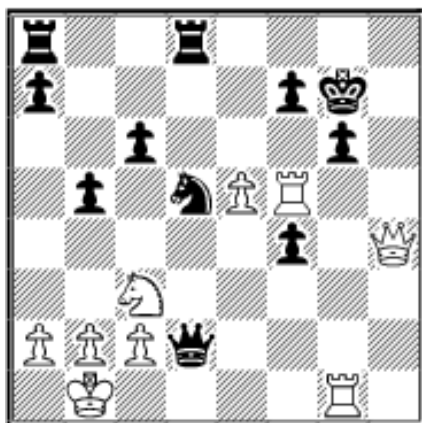
25 Bxh5 Nxh5 26 Rxh5+ Kg7 27 Qh4!? Nf6 28 Rf5 Qd6

28...Nd7 would have supported the key square e5.

29 f4! exf4?

Not 29...Re8 30 Rd1 Qe6 31 Rxe5; instead 29...Rh8 was perhaps the best try and 29...Nd7 was another possibility. After the text move Black is lost.

30 e5 Qd2+ 31 Kb1 Nd5



32 Rxf7+ Kxf7 33 Qh7+ Ke8 34 e6 Nxc3+ 35 bxc3 Rd4!

An ingenious but unavailing attempt to save himself.

36 Qf7+!

36 cxd4? allows perpetual check after 36...Qb4+. Also if 36 Qxg6+? Kd8, the king escapes, with good drawing chances: 37 Qg8+ Kc7 38 Qxa8 Rb4+, etc.

36...Kd8 37 e7+ Kc7 38 e8Q+ Kb6 39 Qxa8 1-0

Capablanca (still in the USA) seems to have had a virtually inactive year so far as chess was concerned, but Alexander Alekhine, still only a fifteen-year-old schoolboy, appeared outside Russia for the first time. He played in the second section (Hauptturnier) at Düsseldorf, sharing fourth and fifth places, and afterwards he easily won a five-game match with the elderly master Curt von Bardeleben, who had played in the top group. In his 1958 *British Chess Magazine* article on events in 1908, W. H. Cozens wrote that Alekhine made a big impression between rounds, for his 'phenomenal skittle play, at which he was too good even for Marshall'. Here is a game from the tournament.

A. Alekhine – H. Köhnlein

DSB Hauptturnier Congress, Düsseldorf, 1908

Queen's Pawn Game [D05]

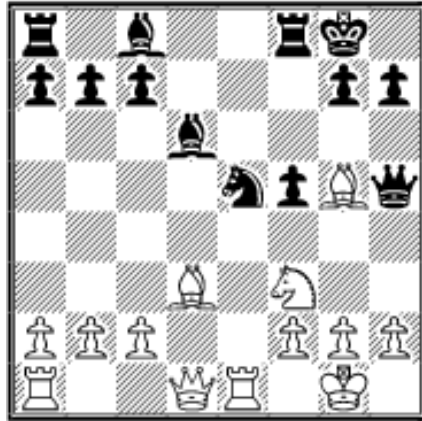
1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 e3 Nf6 4 Bd3 Nbd7 5 Nbd2 Bd6?

5...c5!.

6 e4! dxe4 7 Nxe4 Nxe4 8 Bxe4 0-0 9 Bg5 Qe8?

9...Be7!.

10 0-0 f5 11 Bd3 e5? 12 dxe5 Nxe5 13 Re1! Qh5?



13...Nxf3+ 14 Qxf3 Qf7 was the only way to fight on, albeit with a clear disadvantage.

14 Nxe5 Qxg5 15 Bc4+ Kh8 16 Qxd6 1-0

Black resigned as a piece is lost: 16...Qxg2+ (or 16...cxd6 17 Nf7+ Kg8 18 Nxg5+) 17 Kxg2 cxd6 18 Nf7+ Kg8 19 Nxd6+ Kh8 20 Nf7+ Kg8 21 Re7.

In the autumn, as Skinner and Verhoeven show in their classic compilation [*Alexander Alekhine's Chess Games, 1902-1946*](#) he challenged the Moscow champion

Nenarokov to a match for which he was unready, and resigned it after three losses, thereafter expunging it from his tournament record in good 'Soviet' rewriting of history style. However in competition against opponents below that level he was largely successful. It would be 1910 before he was ready for regular master competition. It is noteworthy that in 1908 Alekhine apparently played no postal chess, but in 1909 he once more played a Russian tournament in this form of the game that had done so much to develop his skills.

The world title match

Starting on 17th August, Lasker met Tarrasch in Munich in a match to be decided by the first to win eight games. This was the long-awaited clash of the two top men in German chess. The match should have been played a decade earlier, if Tarrasch was to have a realistic chance of winning. The winner of numerous tournaments, he was now forty-six years old, being six years and a few months the elder of the two.

Lasker returned to Europe for the first time in several years, beginning with a simultaneous tour of Britain, Germany and the Netherlands, but he did not play in any tournaments. He was mostly in Britain from late January to early May. I don't know who was in charge of running his magazine from New York; presumably the world champion did much of his editorial work by post, though that is rarely a satisfactory procedure.

Cozens said that Tarrasch and Lasker had only met in two tournament games before this match, which is surprising until you realise how inactive Lasker was for many years after winning his rematch with Steinitz. Tarrasch won at Hastings 1895, but Lasker got revenge in 1896; each game was won by White. In 1892, when Tarrasch was clearly one of the world top four (along with Chigorin and Gunsberg, after Steinitz) he declined a challenge from Lasker to a match. Within a few years Lasker had leapfrogged him to the title and it perhaps became difficult for Tarrasch to arrange the match that really should have been played by 1900. Cozens wrote: 'Tarrasch was quite sure he could beat Lasker, but the idea of having to challenge the young upstart whom he had rebuffed in 1892 was hard to swallow.'

In 1892 what had Tarrasch to gain by playing Lasker? There would have been no title at stake, and it would have made more sense for him to challenge Steinitz. After 1896 it was perhaps already too late, but a match then would surely have been much closer. However to see why no match was

played before 1908, what we really need are thoroughly researched modern biographies of the two grandmasters, which do not exist in English. In the meantime, if we can believe the usual accounts, the two men were not on speaking terms before the match and Tarrasch refused attempts at reconciliation. If this is true, one feels ‘he had it coming’.



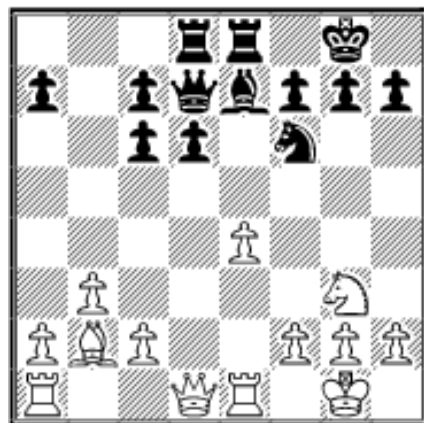
Lasker won the match 8-3 with five draws; this was a comfortable margin, but Tarrasch did significantly better than Marshall had done in 1907. In his [Chess Highlights of the 20th Century](#), Graham Burgess called the second game ‘perhaps the most significant game of the match’ as Lasker challenged Tarrasch to attack him and got away with it, thus taking a 2-0 lead. However, since Tarrasch bounced back and won the third game with black, it is hard to see how this can really be said to be a turning point.

S. Tarrasch – Em. Lasker

2nd match game, Munich 1908

Ruy Lopez [C66]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0-0 d6 5 d4 Bd7 6 Nc3 Be7 7 Re1 exd4 8 Nxd4 0-0 9 Nxc6 Bxc6 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 Ne2 Qd7 12 Ng3 Rfe8 13 b3 Rad8 14 Bb2



14...Ng4!?

In order to escape his difficulties with ...Bf6 if White does not take up the gauntlet.

15 Bxg7!

With correct play, White should win after this.

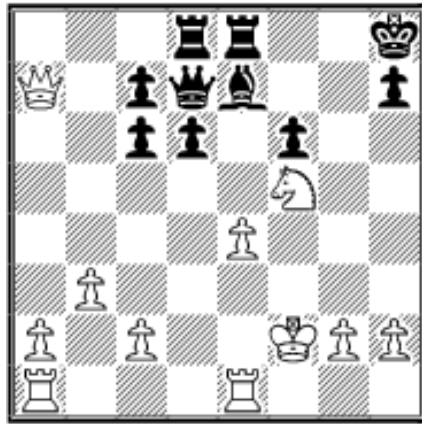
15...Nxf2!

The point; not 15...Kxg7 16 Nf5+.

16 Kxf2

This move is often criticised but objectively it may be at least as good as the alternative. 16 Qd4 Ng4 17 Nf5 ‘gives Black more problems’ wrote Burgess. 17...Qe6 18 Re3 would win according to V. Zak’s book on Lasker, but Black can reach an endgame by 18...Bf6 19 Bxf6 Qxf6 20 Qxf6 Nxf6 21 Rael Re5!?

16...Kxg7 17 Nf5+ Kh8 18 Qd4+ f6 19 Qxa7?



Pawn-grabbing. Lasker now demonstrates that the blockading square e5 is a valuable fulcrum for counter-attack. Better moves were 19 Kg1 and 19 Rad1.

19...Bf8!

This maneuver would of course not have been possible had Tarrasch maintained his queen on d4.

20 Qd4 Re5 21 Rad1 Rde8 22 Qc3 Qf7 23 Ng3? Bh6 24 Qf3 d5 25 exd5 Be3+ 26 Kf1 cxd5 27 Rd3? Qe6 28 Re2 f5

White’s material advantage, represented by the a2-pawn, is now clearly outweighed by Black’s control of the e-file and kingside initiative.

29 Rd1 f4 30 Nh1 d4 31 Nf2 Qa6 32 Nd3 Rg5 33 Ra1 Qh6 34 Ke1 Qxh2 35 Kd1 Qg1+ 36 Ne1 Rge5 37 Qc6 R5e6 38 Qxc7 R8e7 39 Qd8+ Kg7 40 a4 f3 41 gxf3 Bg5 0–1

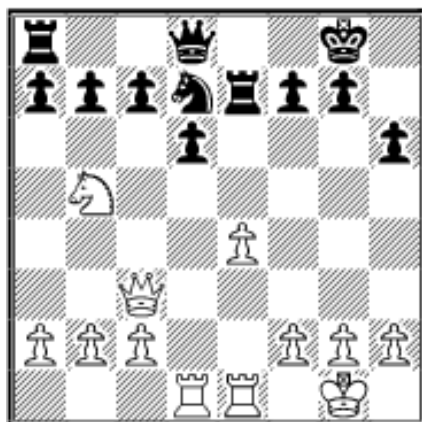
What is perhaps significant is that it showed Lasker that a policy of seeking complications was preferable, if he got into positional difficulties, than submitting himself to a positional struggle. He repeated the risk-taking strategy in Game Four, which Kasparov, in the first volume of his [My Great Predecessors](#), more plausibly identifies as the turning point. This is the game where Lasker played his ‘impudent’ rook manoeuvre commencing 15...Re5!?. Coming on top of his weak response to Lasker’s provocation in game two, Tarrasch’s failure to refute this idea, culminating in a blunderful ‘combination’ that cost him the full point, shook the old dogmatist’s confidence. The game is too well known to annotate here in any detail.

S. Tarrasch – Em. Lasker

4th match game, Munich 1908

Ruy Lopez [C66]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0–0 d6 5 d4 Bd7 6 Nc3 Be7 7 Re1 exd4 8 Nxd4 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 Bxb5 10 Nxb5 0–0 11 Bg5 h6 12 Bh4 Re8 13 Rad1 Nd7 14 Bxe7 Rxe7 15 Qc3



15...Re5?! 16 Nd4 Rc5 17 Qb3 Nb6 18 f4 Qf6 19 Qf3 Re8 20 c3 a5 21 b3 a4 22 b4?!

Kasparov indicates 22 c4! as the correct way, e.g. 22...axb3 23 axb3 c6 24 Nf5 d5 25 Qf2 Nd7 26 g4!.

22...Rc4 23 g3 Rd8 24 Re3 c5 25 Nb5? cxb4 26 Rxd6 Rxd6 27 e5 Rxf4! 28 gxf4 Qg6+ 29 Kh1 Qb1+ 30 Kg2 Rd2+ and Black soon won. Thus Lasker re-established a two point lead.

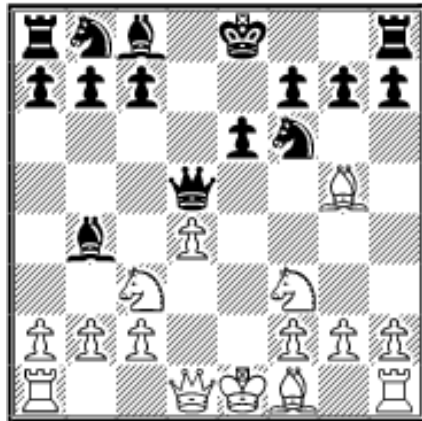
Here is the game that extended Lasker’s lead to 6-2.

Em. Lasker – S. Tarrasch
 11th match game, 1908
 MacCutcheon French [C12]

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4 5 exd5

Given the state of the match, Lasker avoids the tense lines with 5 e5.

5...Qxd5 6 Nf3



In this position Lasker had previously always played 6 Bxf6 gxf6 7 Qd2, so this simple move was probably designed to take Tarrasch out of his preparation.

6...c5

6...Ne4! was correct, and after 7 Bd2 Bxc3 8 bxc3 (not 8 Bxc3? Nxc3 9 bxc3 Nc6 10 Be2 0-0 11 Qd2 b6 12 0-0 Bb7 – Schwarz 1967) 8...Nxd2 (8...c5!?) 9 Qxd2 Black could choose between:

a) 9...Nd7 10 Bd3 c5 11 c4 Qc6 12 c3 b6 13 0-0 Bb7 14 Qe3 0-0 15 Rad1 Rad8 16 Rfe1 Qc7 17 Bf1 Bxf3 (17... a6?! Lasker vs. Znosko-Borovsky, St. Petersburg 1909) 18 Qxf3 e5 19 Qg3 f5 (Lasker).

b) 9...0-0 10 Bd3 c5 (10...Nc6?! 11 0-0) 11 c4 Qh5 12 c3 Nc6 13 0-0 (Schlechter-Marshall Ostend 1907) 13...e5 14 dxc5 f5 (Tarrasch).

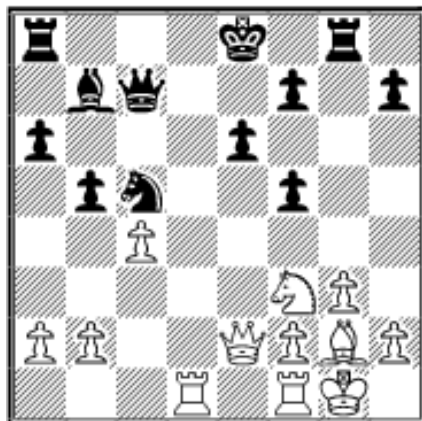
7 Bxf6

7 Bd2 Bxc3 8 Bxc3 Ne4 9 Qd3 Nd7 10 Be2= was played in Malaniuk-Gurevich, USSR 1987.

7...gxf6 8 Qd2! Bxc3 9 Qxc3 Nd7 10 Rd1 Rg8 11 dxc5

White now has a nagging positional advantage.

11...Qxc5 12 Qd2 Qb6 13 c3 a6 14 Qc2 f5 15 g3 Nc5 16 Bg2 Qc7 17 Qe2 b5 18 0-0 Bb7 19 c4



19...b4?

19...bxc4 was necessary.

20 Qd2 Rb8 21 Qh6 Bxf3 22 Bxf3 Qe5 23 Rfe1 Qxb2 24 Qf4 Rc8 25 Qd6 f6 26 Bh5+ Rg6 27 Bxg6+ hxg6 28 Rxe6+ 1-0

In correspondence chess, a match was in progress between the British Correspondence Chess Association and the Pillsbury NCCA of America. There is very little information available about this from British sources; can anyone help with authenticated reports from the U.S. side?

In Britain, the *British Chess Magazine* began a tournament of ninety-eight players in fourteen preliminary sections. Competitors included F. D. Yates (future British champion) and J. J. O'Hanlon (future Irish champion), J. du Mont (future *British Chess Magazine* editor) and many

strong amateurs. An article about this event, written by me, appeared in *Quarterly for Chess History* #12. Also in 1908 the first tournament began to contest the Irish Correspondence Chess Championship.

Future chess masters born in 1908 included two Russians who both gave their names to modern opening variations: Viacheslav Ragozin (also the second correspondence chess world champion) and Vsevolod Rauzer. Among the deceased in 1908 was Numa Prédi, editor of the French chess magazine *La Stratégie*, which his father had begun in the 1860s. The magazine was taken over by Henri Delaire.

Two famous masters of the nineteenth century died in 1908. The great Russian M. I. Chigorin, one of the half dozen greatest players of his era and world number two at his peak, has so often been mentioned in this column that no more need be said.



Henry Bird

The other was the somewhat controversial English master Henry Bird, amateur and author of some rather bad books. In the late 1840s he was one of the leading players at Rie's Divan in London, where he often crossed swords with the historian Henry Buckle. An accountant by profession, Bird played in the first 1851 international tournament and also in the London 1899 event, so his career spanned half a century. In his obituary in *The Field* (18 April 1908) Leopold Hoffer wrote: 'His vivacious style was little suited to the onerous conditions of a prolonged contest... It was in occasional play that Mr Bird especially shone... As an annotator his characteristic was raciness rather than profundity.' Even today Bird is remembered for the opening (1 f4) and defence (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4!?) that bear his name, to which I may return in future columns.

To conclude, 1908 was a year that rather ended an era, and confirmed a hierarchy among the world elite than began something new. Two great figures of the old days had passed away and Lasker's supremacy over his old rival had been definitively established. The next man to challenge him, Dawid Janowski, would be, like Marshall, not a serious threat. The next wave of more dangerous candidates (Maróczy, Rubinstein and Schlechter) were still jockeying for position and gaining experience, while the new generation (Capablanca, Alekhine and co.) would only rise to the top a few years on. In 1907-9 Lasker was at the zenith of his career.



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