

Castling into history

"THE WEARY WAYFARER, crossing the Strand on one of the sloppy days of early spring, cannot but admit to himself that he has a 'bad game'. The position is somewhat complicated. He has stepped up to his ankles in mud, and placed himself *en prise* to an omnibus. With the true instinct of a chess player he at once recognises the peril of his situation. Nothing but a master-stroke can avail him. He therefore makes a combination to dash across the roadway, and after a narrow escape of being taken *en passant* by a hansom, he castles safely into the Divan." Thus wrote the *British Chess Magazine* in 1891.

Nowadays, of course, things are somewhat different. The mud has given way to exhaust fumes, the omnibus and hansom to faster and even more aggressive buses, taxis and cars. But, if the English national club final held recently at Simpson's-in-the-Strand is anything to go by, castling into that historic chess divan might soon be possible once more.

Simpson's restaurant first opened in 1828 as the "home of chess", later to be renamed "The Grand Cigar Divan". Chess players would lounge on sofas and divans to play their games, smoke cigars, drink coffee and read the newspapers. During the 19th century it established a reputation as one of the leading chess houses in the world, with many famous names of that era visiting at one time or another. An original chess board in the lobby has been played upon by Staunton, Zukertort, Blackburne, Tarrasch, Tinsley, Lasker, Morphy, Gunsberg, Winawer, Tchigorin, Steinitz, Bird, Mason and Janowski!

Unfortunately, although Simpson's survived the widening of the Strand about 1900, its chess tradition died out.

That is until 1980, when interest was rekindled by the huge success of the London Grandmaster tournament. It was decided to hold the final of the English national club championship, between Islington and the King's Head (would you believe it — a pub side!), at Simpson's as a trial run. Naturally all were feasted first, and then the weary players from both sides had to sit down and try to play chess, chock-full of boiled syrup roll as traditional as the venue itself.

During the match fascinating new facts about Simpson's began to emerge. It now appears that the "immortal game" between Anderssen and Kieseritsky was a casual game played there, which is confirmed in Staunton's book *Horae Divanianaie*, a collection of 150 games played principally at the Divan. And even more remarkable, London 1851 was not the first "real" tournament (with prizes and all that) ever held, as is commonly believed — it was London 1849 at, where else, Simpson's.

This week's game has a touch of

that old nostalgia; it's that "immortal game".

KING'S GAMBIT

ANDERSSSEN	KIESERITSKY
1. e4	e5
2. f4	e×f4
3. Bc4	...

Nowadays 3.Nf3 is considered to give better prospects.

3. ...	Qh4 ch
4. Kf1	b5?

Since that time 4...c6 5.d4 g5 or 4...d6 have been found to be the best defences.

5. B×b5	Nf6
6. Nf3	Qh6
7. d3	Nh5
8. Nh4	...

Preventing the threatened 8...Ng5 ch — 8.Kg1 (or 8.Kf2) is not possible because of 8...Qb6 ch winning the bishop.

8. ...	Qg5?!
9. Nf5	c6
10. Rg1	...

A profound sacrifice.

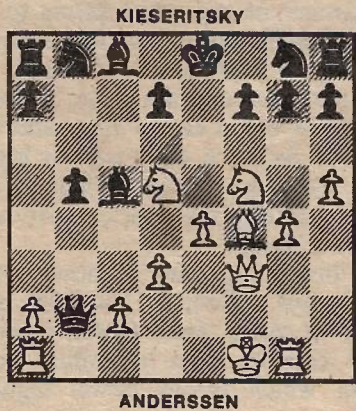
10. ...	c×b5
11. g4	Nf6
12. h4	Qg6
13. h5	Qg5
14. Qf3	...

Threatening to snare the Black queen with B×f4.

14. ...	Ng8
15. B×f4	Qf6
16. Nc3	Bc5

More resilient is 16...Bb7 to discourage White's next move. Now Anderssen begins his "immortal" conception, involving the further sacrifice of two rooks and his queen.

17. Nd5	Q×b2
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18. Bd6!!	Q×a1 ch
19. Ke2	B×g1

On 19...Q×g1 White mates in two moves by 20.N×g7 ch Kd8 21.Bc7. Instead 19...Qb2 offers slight hopes of resistance.

20. e5	Na6?!
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After the best defence, 20...Ba6, a long analysis has demonstrated that White should emerge a pawn up, which would ultimately win. The text allows a fitting conclusion to one of the most brilliant games of all time.

21. N×g7 ch	Kd8
22. Qf6 chl	N×f6
23. Be7 mate.	

Anderssen delivers mate with only three minor pieces left against Black's entire army.

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