

Compiled and edited by Jimmy Adams

Johannes Zukertort

Artist of the Chessboard

New In Chess 2014

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Introduction

It is now over 100 years since the death of Johannes Hermann Zukertort, one of the great players of chess history, who paradoxically is remembered today more for talents he did not possess than for his truly remarkable chess gifts.

After his defeat in the first official world championship match to Steinitz in 1886 and his untimely death two years later, the chess world failed to preserve the memory of Zukertort by publishing a collection of his chess masterpieces. A Swedish book, virtually unobtainable today, did appear in 1912 – but this did not do full justice to Zukertort's illustrious chess career.

Apart from that publication, only a handful of Zukertort's games have found their way into chess books and magazines since his death, while even fewer writers have drawn attention to his contributions to the art and science of chess.

The present volume is an attempt to bring to the notice of today's chess world these chess masterpieces and re-establish Zukertort to his rightful place in chess history as an important link between the old combinational style and modern positional tendencies. At heart, Zukertort remained an artist of the chessboard, following in the Romantic traditions of his teacher Adolf Anderssen and the legendary Paul Morphy. However, because of the increase in chess knowledge and refinement of technique, Zukertort was obliged to ally his enormous tactical ability to modern methods.

Zukertort was a most diligent, profound and accurate analyst, with a tremendous amount of opening theory stored in his astonishing memory. His dash and brilliance, combined with soundness in building up an attack and precision in calculating variations, made him a very dangerous opponent and resulted in the production of a great many elegant games. He was also an excellent endgame player.

Unfortunately Zukertort's breakdown in health and premature death not only prevented him from challenging Steinitz to a return match but also did not allow him to further develop several innovative closed and queen's pawn openings, with which he had engaged himself in the latter part of his career. Like Steinitz, he was a pioneer, and in the path of discovery at times he made errors of judgement or undertook mistaken plans; but once on the right track he would push an advantage home in the most forceful, direct and clear-cut fashion.

Personally, a very likeable and sociable man, he gave up the editorship of the *Neue Berliner Schachzeitung* in 1872 and left his home in Germany, in a state of poverty, to make a living as a chess professional in England. Here, he rapidly became accepted as an integral part of the London chess scene and was attached to the prestigious St. George's Chess Club. He also was elected an honorary member of the City of London Club, played chess for side-stakes at the famous Simpson's Divan, travelled far and wide giving blindfold and simultaneous displays, and of course competed in matches and tournaments. In addition he was very active as a chess journalist,

firstly as games editor for the *Westminster Papers*, then as a contributor to the *City of London Chess Magazine* and finally as co-editor of the *Chess Monthly* – which he founded in 1879 with Hoffer.

The present book contains a selection of Zukertort's best casual, odds, simultaneous, blindfold, consultation, match and tournament games. The notes are mainly by Zukertort himself from the above-mentioned periodicals, and his arch-rival Steinitz, who ran a magnificent chess column in *The Field*. Other commentators are indicated at the end of each game.

In the first part of the book have been assembled a collection of the best articles and extracts about Zukertort, most of which were written by his contemporaries, people who actually knew him. These give biographical details and pen-portraits of Zukertort, the man and his work.

The introductory comments under 'Zukertort' are taken from Harry Golombek's 'Chess: A History' and Fred Reinfeld's 'The Human Side of Chess.' The 'Zukertort in Germany' essay has been adapted from a long narrative in *Deutsches Wochenschatz* 1913. The eye-witness account of Zukertort and Anderssen has been translated from Von Gottschall's German book on Anderssen. The warm tribute 'The Chess Apostle' comes from the *Westminster Papers*, while the Rev. G.A.MacDonnell's witty, but wonderfully human portrait of Zukertort is in fact a chapter from his *Knights and Kings of Chess*. Hoffer gives us a first-hand report of his friend and co-worker's last hours in an obituary taken from *Chess Monthly*. The German appreciation by Von Gottschall, giving personal details not found elsewhere, is a contribution from the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, while the English appreciation by Cunningham, and the assessment by Steinitz, are extracted from the *International Chess Magazine*. A modern evaluation of Zukertort, particularly in relation to Steinitz, is provided by the eminent Soviet chess historian, Neishtadt, from his Russian book *The First World Champion*. Furthermore, Mises' reliable and objective 'Commemoration of J.H.Zukertort' which appeared in the *British Chess Magazine* in 1942 as a centenary memorial article of Zukertort's birth, is reproduced courtesy of former editor Bernard Cafferty. Finally, I wish to thank Brian Reilly and Ken Whyld for providing me with further reference material used in this book.

As a postscript, it gives me great pleasure to express my appreciation of the spirited English grandmaster Stuart Conquest, who in 2011 took the initiative to rediscover and unearth Zukertort's sunken and overgrown grave at Brompton cemetery, West London. His subsequent cooperation with Dr Marek Stella-Sawicki, Chairman of the Polish Heritage Society, then led to the erection of an elegant new headstone, which was rededicated with full religious rites at a well-attended ceremony held on 26 June 2012. You can see a picture of the high point of this ceremony on page 529.

Jimmy Adams
London 2014

Zukertort's Breakdown

'In the London International Tournament of 1883, Zukertort performed the amazing and unparalleled feat of winning 22 games to one defeat, receiving the first prize from the committee no less than two weeks before the close of the tournament. The account of this magnificent struggle will still be fresh in the minds of most Chess-players. Zukertort's play throughout was characterised not only by extreme daring, but by soundness and brilliancy, these qualities culminating in his game in the first round with Blackburne, "one of the most brilliant", says Steinitz, "on record". His score against Steinitz was even, each player winning one game.

So severe a contest was not as may be supposed, without its effect upon the winner. Zukertort, who from an early stage had been compelled to sustain himself by terrible doses of aconite, almost broke down at last, and his health, never robust, began to give his friends grave anxiety.'

Indeed, as the above extract from the *British Chess Magazine* makes clear, Zukertort was at the peak of his powers and had achieved a tournament result which, even today, ranks as one of the greatest of all time. Thus the fact that he lost his last three games, two of which against players at the foot of the tournament table, must surely be attributed to his physical collapse. It is known that Zukertort not only partook of 'virulent poison' to overcome pain, but was also partial to opium.

Nevertheless, up to a point, Zukertort played just as splendidly in these last three games as in the rest of the tournament. Only lapses of mental application at critical moments spoiled what was otherwise an almost perfect performance in London.

Spanish Game

Mackenzie

Zukertort

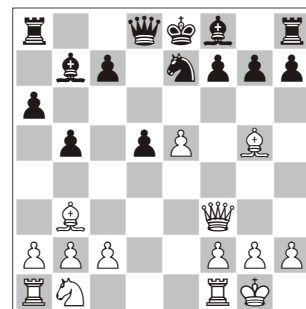
London tournament, 13 June 1883

Notes by Zukertort

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6
4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗xe4 6.d4 b5
7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♘e7**

Introduced by Anderssen, and invariably played by myself. The move, I think, is superior to the book continuation 8...♙e6.

**9.♘g5 ♗xg5 10.♙xg5 ♙b7
11.♙f3**



11...♙d7

If 11...c5, White would reply 12.c4! dxc4 13.♙xb7 cxb3 14.axb3 ♙c8 (best) 15.♙xc8+ ♗xc8 16.♗xa6 etc.

12.♘d2

If now 12.c4, then 12...bxc4 13.♙xc4 c5 – 12.♘c3 would be, however, better, I think, than the text move.

12...h6 13.♙h4 ♘f5 14.♖h3 ♘xh4

Of course, if 14...g5 (intending to proceed after 15.♙g3? with 15...h5), then 15.♙xg5.

15.♖xh4 ♙e7 16.♖g3 0-0 17.c3 d4 18.♗fe1

Threatening 19.e6.

18...♙h8 19.♙xf7?

Overlooking the opponent's counter scheme.

19...dxc3! 20.♘f3

If 20.♖xc3, then 20...♗xf7 21.e6 ♗d5!, remaining a piece ahead.

20...cxb2 21.♗ab1

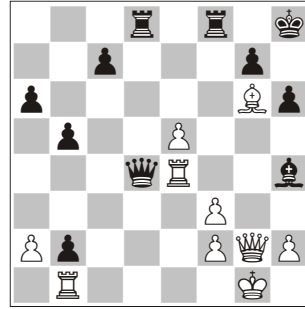


21...♙xf3

21...♗xf7 would probably lead to a draw by the following line of play: 22.e6 ♗xf3 23.exd7 ♗xg3 24.♗xe7 (best) 24...♗xg2+ 25.♙f1 ♗xh2 26.♗e8+ ♙h7 27.♙e2 (if 27.♗xa8, Black draws at least with 27...♗h1+ 28.♙e2 ♗xb1 29.♗h8+ (29.d8♗? ♗e1+ 30.♙d2 (or 30.♙xe1 b1♗+) 30...♗d1+ 31.♙xd1 b1♗+ 32.♙e2 (32.♙d2) ♙xa8 33.♗xa8 ♗xa2+ and wins) 29...♙g6 30.d8♗ ♗e1+ 31.♙xe1 (best) 31...b1♗+ etc. – If 27.♗xb2, Black wins with 27...♙f3

28.♙e1 ♗h1+ 29.♙d2 ♗d1+ and 30...♗xd7) 27...♙c6 28.♗xa8 ♙xd7 29.♗xa6 ♗h4 30.♗xb2 etc. The text move leads to bishops of different colour, but it enabled me to defend the far-advanced b-pawn.

22.gxf3 ♖d4 23.♙g6 ♙h4 24.♖g2 ♗ad8 25.♗e4



25...♖d2?

A mental aberration; Black had an easily won game: 25...♖d1+ 26.♗e1 (or 26.♖f1 ♙xf2+! 27.♙xf2 (27.♙h1 ♖xf3+ 28.♖g2 ♗d1+ etc.) 27...♖xf3+ 28.♙g1 ♖xf1+ 29.♗xf1 ♗xf1+ 30.♙xf1 b1♗+ etc.) 26...♖d2 27.♙e4 (if 27.e6, then 27...♗d5) 27...♗d4 28.♖g6 ♙xf2+ 29.♙h1 ♗xe4 30.♖xe4 (if 30.♗xe4, then 30...♖c1+) 30...♙xe1 31.♖xe1 (if 31.♗xe1 ♗xf3 32.e6 ♗h3 and wins) 31...♖xe1+ 32.♗xe1 ♗xf3 and 33...♗e3.

26.♗xh4 ♖c1+ 27.♖f1 ♗d1 28.♖xd1

Black resigns.

Sicilian Defence

Sellman

Zukertort

London tournament, 14 June 1883

Notes by Zukertort

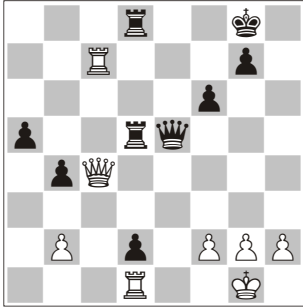
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4

If 3.♘c3, which is considered to be the best continuation, I intended to reply

27.♖c5 b4 28.♔c4 ♘e5 29.♗xe5
♔xe5 30.♖c7 d3 31.♔h4+ ♔g8
32.♔c4

32.♔g3 would lead to the exchange of queens, and thus prolong the contest.

32...d2



33.b3

Rather tame, but White has no saving move, e.g. 33.♗f1 (or 33.♖f1 ♔xc7 34.♔xc7 d1♔) 33...♔xh2 34.♖xd2 ♔h1+ 35.♗e2 ♖e8+ 36.♗f3 ♔h5+ 37.♗g3 (if 37.g4, Black mates in two moves) 37...♔g5+ winning the rook.

33...♔e1+ 34.♔f1 ♖e8

White resigns.

242 Queen's Indian Defence

Zukertort

Blackburne

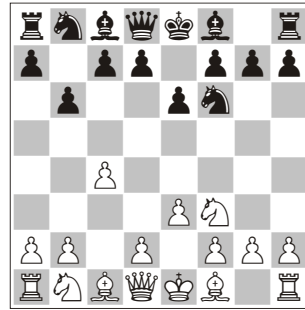
London tournament, 5 May 1883

Notes by Zukertort, Steinitz and Minchin

1.c4

Minchin: I have elsewhere stated my opinion that this is not only by far the finest game played in this tournament, but probably within the memory of the existing generation of chess-players. It may be fairly classed with the great game won by Anderssen of Kieseritsky more than thirty years ago.

1...e6 2.e3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 b6



4.♗e2

Zukertort: The development of the king's bishop has been discussed by various analysts on every possible occasion. Here again I cannot propose a hard and fast rule, but I may state that whenever the queen's fianchetto is adopted before playing the d-pawn two squares, the opponent's king's bishop ought to be posted at e2; if, on the other hand, both players have advanced the d-pawn, the bishop may then be played at once to d3.

Steinitz: We believe that when the queen's fianchetto has been played by the opponent it is generally better to post the king's bishop as in the text, for in some contingencies the bishop can be well placed at f3 after castling and removing the knight. When the king's bishop is posted at d3 the opponent often gains time and ground by attacking it with the queen's knight as is done by White in the present game.

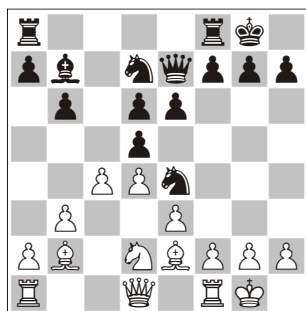
4...♗b7 5.0-0 d5 6.d4 ♗d6
7.♘c3 0-0 8.b3 ♘bd7 9.♗b2
♔e7?

Zukertort: The routine move 9...c5 would be preferable,

10.♘b5

Steinitz: Promptly gaining the advantage of the two bishops.

10...♘e4 11.♘xd6 cxd6 12.♘d2



12...d6?

Zukertort: The loss of time occasioned by this continuation gives to the opponent the first opportunity to prepare the following attack.

Steinitz: Very weak, for he might have foreseen the coming attack of the centre pawns, which could have been easily avoided by 12...f5. The weakness of his e-pawn did not much matter, as White could not easily get at it, and in case of emergency Black could manoeuvre one of his knights to f8 after removing the king's rook, and thus give ample protection to his centre and king's wing, or else he could play ...d6 in order to stop the advance of White's centre pawns.

13.f3 dxd2 14.xd2 dxc4
15.xc4 d5 16.d3 f8

Zukertort: Mr. Blackburne underrated, I think, the power of the coming attack. It would have been more prudent to leave the king's rook on the king's side, and to occupy the open file with the queen's rook.

17.e1!

Steinitz: An excellent move, which shows fine judgement. White has nothing to fear on the queen's wing, and proceeds with the centre attack.

17...c7

Steinitz: Black misapprehends the strength of the advance in the centre.

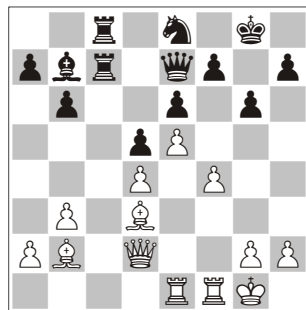
He had still time to equalize the game fully by 17...a5 with a view of exchanging one of the two powerful bishops by ...a6, or else to make a counter demonstration on the queen's side by ...a4, in case White stopped the exchange by e2.

18.e4 ac8 19.e5 e8

Steinitz: 19...d7, with the view of playing ...f8 and then protecting Black's weakest point on the king's side, was by far better.

20.f4 g6

Zukertort: Of course Black had to stop the further advance of the f-pawn. Considering, however, that the text move weakens his king's position – especially the h-pawn – without gaining any equivalent, I would suggest instead of it 20...f5 at once.



21.e3

Minchin: When Zukertort made this move, he had in his mind's eye the whole combination that follows, down to Black's 28th move. It may seem singular that his opponent should have played the next seven moves exactly as anticipated, but it must be remembered that Mr. Blackburne doubled his rooks, with the intention of playing to c2 as soon as he had got rid of the white king's bishop, and played for that purpose,

expecting to win a piece. The real beauty of Zukertort's play is that he led his opponent into this trap, correctly calculating its real results.

Steinitz: A very strong move under any circumstances. It threatens, for instance, ♖g3 or ♖h3 followed by f5 and ♗h6. It has, however, been suggested that Zukertort had already at this point in his mind's eye the whole combination as it occurred up to White's 28th move, including the subsequent offer of the sacrifice of the queen and the mating combination six moves deep which would have followed if

the sacrifice had been accepted; or, in fact, that Zukertort laid a most ingenious trap 13 moves deep to his opponent at this juncture. To this assertion we have to remark in the first place, that there is not the least internal evidence in the progress of the game for the necessity of such a lone calculation, and it would have been simply the height of folly for any experienced, first-class master when playing under time limit to waste one moment on such a combination, considering all the possibilities of the defence that were at Black's disposal, such as the combinations arising from ...♘g7, or ...♙f8, or from 22...♗xf6. There is nothing so very extraordinary in reckoning so far ahead,

and positions do sometimes occur, especially in the ending where it is absolutely necessary to look forward to as many moves as is alleged that Zukertort had in his mind. Moreover, such a process of reasoning is often more easy, especially when the

moves on one or both sides are forced, than to look clear in all directions only three moves deep when there are many complications and sub-variations. But it is anyhow more meritorious to adopt such a move as the one in the text, which is a powerful one, no matter what Black may answer, as a result of intuitive position judgement,

than to lay a trap for one particular line of play which was very improbable to occur and moreover was quite faulty, for more than one reason, as will be seen. It is in reality a depreciation of this fine game to assume that its chief feature was a mere trap.

21...f5

Zukertort: 21...♘g7 would be slightly better; White would then continue with 22.g4.

22.exf6 ♘xf6

Zukertort: He should retake with the queen, although he would have even then a difficult game, e.g. 22...♗xf6 23.♗e1 ♘g7 24.g4 and White would have unlimited time to force a probably irresistible attack.



Joseph Blackburne

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