

## LASKER AND STEINITZ COMPARED.

## An English Opinion of the Relative Merits of the Two Chess Masters.

*London Chess Monthly*: Having promised to give our opinion about the match, we are reluctantly compelled to do so; we would rather have abstained altogether. Lasker is the victor, and he is entitled to the championship thus acquired. "Nothing succeeds like success." But he has not risen in our estimation as a player in spite of his victory. On the contrary, we come to the conclusion that with such a repertory—viz.: the Ruy Lopez and the P to Q 4 opening—to set out to conquer the champion of the world, is simply Quixotic. Has he shown any originality in any of the games? All he has done is that he has played the book variations correctly (in some cases not even that—namely: In the defense of the first Giuoco Piano and the attack of the same opening in the seventeenth game). Assuming, therefore, that his opponent would have confined himself to a similar policy, is it conceivable that he would have lost the match? Is there a single instance in any of the games where it could be said that Lasker defeated Steinitz by superior combinations? Not one! It is always Steinitz himself who caused his defeat by the adoption of unsound openings, and, in some instances, even by the disregard of elementary principles. If Mr. Steinitz is reckless enough to jeopardize his lifelong reputation it is his own concern; but we take it that it was his duty to safeguard the interests of his supporters and to justify their confidence otherwise than by indulging fads and fancies on such an important occasion. Handicapped as he was with age and physical infirmities at starting, he need not have played into the hands of his astute opponent by giving him the additional advantage of his idiotic Ruy Lopez defense, and the compromising variations in the Queen's Pawn openings. It is a matter of congratulation that he did not try his hand at his famous defense of the Evans, his Two Knights' defense, and the Steinitz Gambit. It was Mr. Steinitz's duty to start with the Queen's Pawn openings, to play them correctly, and then, if the score justified it, he might have indulged his pranks, just as he did with Zukertort, when he had him quite at his mercy, by finishing the match with a Steinitz Gambit.

Our candid opinion is that Lasker could not have stood up, as yet, against the victor of Anderssen and Zukertort. There is no doubt that Steinitz has fallen off, and we make bold to say that his play of today brings him down to the level of mediocrity, and that Steinitz was defeated by Lasker, but not "the" Steinitz. It cannot be said that we did not fully recognize Lasker's talent. We spotted him when, a mere youth, he gained his mastership at Breslau in 1880. Only a few months later, in April, 1880, we published his portrait, biography, and a selection of his games in the *Chess Monthly*, a distinction which we felt was beyond his then merit, and we concluded his biography with the following apology: "Herr Lasker's record of success, creditable as it is, would not entitle him to figure in 'Our Portrait Gallery' yet, but we honor him with a place amongst our eminent men, not for what he has achieved hitherto, but for what we expect him to do in future." But in spite of all Lasker is not our ideal of a first-class player. Formerly he would have disappeared in the crowd. Is it possible to imagine that with his repertory he could have successfully met Morphy, Kolisch, Anderssen, or Zukertort? The great masters have gone, others have grown old, and our time is anything but prolific in men hors ligne. If it were not for Tarrasch and Tschigorin, and perhaps Walbrodt, Lasker would stand isolated.

Our strictures will probably be considered severe in some quarters, but we feel confident that those who know Steinitz's games of former years, Zukertort's games of the London tournament of 1883, will indorse the justice of our remarks. Some of the columns of the London press conveyed the erroneous impression that the games were of high order. As a case in point Lasker's brilliancy in the fourth game—brilliancy engendered by a blunder—was not even understood to have been a desperate effort on the part of Lasker to save the game until it was pointed out by us.