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## Morphy's *NY Ledger* Column

Edited by Hanon W. Russell

Many chessplayers are unaware that Paul Morphy wrote a chess column. From August 6, 1859 until August 4, 1860, Morphy "conducted the Chess Department" in the *New York Ledger*. There were 52 columns, and we have decided that it is time to share the writings of the nineteenth-century American genius with our readers.

Please note that the original column used the antiquated form of English descriptive notation. Thus, the eighth move of the game below was rendered by Morphy as:

8 K. Kt. to Kt, fifth; 8 K. Kt. to R. third

We have taken the liberty of converting all the moves to algebraic notation. In addition, Morphy's annotations were given at the very end of the game, referenced by letter. We have merged them into the game. We hope you enjoy the first installment of *Morphy's Ledger Column*...

*The New York Ledger*

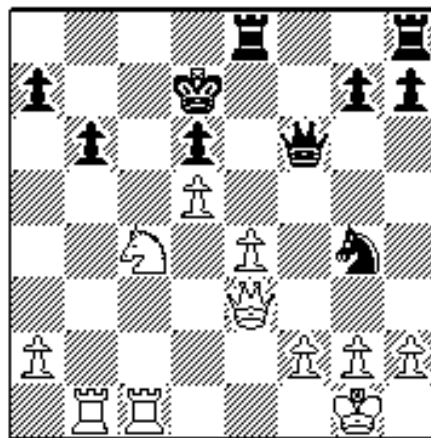
New York, Saturday, August 6, 1859 [Column #1]



Chess Department  
Conducted by Paul Morphy

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### Problem I



The above position occurred in a game between Mr. Löwenthal and Mr. Morphy. White having to play, can now force the game.

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Concerning the game of chess little can now be said that would not be a thrice told tale to the great majority of our readers. We do not therefore, in the present brief introduction, propose to offer any remarks on the history, antiquity, or fascination of that truly royal pastime, but simply to map out, without preface or preamble, the course it has seemed to us most proper to pursue in this new accession to chess periodical literature.

It will be our endeavor, in the first place, to render this column not only interesting but instructive to the chess student - to make it, not an object of passing curiosity, but a feature possessing a deep and permanent value in the eyes of all who, in the few hurried moments of leisure snatched from the engrossing, and, to some extent, necessarily selfish pursuits of life, delight to turn to a pleasanter field of strife, and fight battles from which cupidity can expect no golden prize. How best to attain such a consummation was the problem presented for our solution. It has occurred to us that an *eminently practical chess column* was a desideratum in American chess literature; and that an attempt to fill up the void might be received with some little degree of favor. Our attention, then in the conduct of this department of the Ledger will be steadily directed to the plan here indicated. Excluding mere speculation we shall aim at laying before our readers none but purely practical matter. A good problem, remarkable for the ingenuity or nice accuracy which unravels its mazy intricacies - one or two standard games, contested by the acknowledged masters of the chequered field, and accompanied by elaborate notes, critical and analytical, will form the staple of our weekly contribution.

Our readers will not be surprised by the announcement that we *positively decline any correspondence in connection with this department*. The reason is obvious. We *could* not undertake such a task. From the number of letters that we daily receive, *in our private*

*character*, on the subject of chess, we can well imagine what an increased quantity we would receive in our character of *chess editor*. To answer every epistle would be an impossibility. Besides, "correspondents" must allow us to suggest that any leading treatise on the game contains all the information

generally sought by them.

We present our readers in the present number with the first of the long series of games contested between Labourdonnais and McDonnell. True, they have been published before; but no satisfactory analysis has, to our knowledge, ever been appended to them. We purpose giving one or two a week, in the order in which they were played, with careful annotations. It is hoped that this attempt to furnish the American public with a clue to the intelligence of these beautiful models of chess strategy, will not prove unacceptable.

At the request of numerous friends, we will occasionally publish some of the games played by us in Europe and in this country.

**Game First**  
**Between Labourdonnais and McDonnell**  
**(Centre Game)**  
**White (Labourdonnais) Black (McDonnell)**

**1 e4 e5 2 d4**

This move constitutes the opening, known as the "Centre Gambit." Although not as powerful as the classical move of 2 Nf3, it may occasionally be adopted for variety's sake.

**2...exd4 3 Nf3 c5**

3...Bb4+ is here recommended by most authors as the best play at Black's command. Without being disposed to combat this opinion, we think that they have unjustly condemned the move in the text, which, with the best after play on both sides, leads to a game where the first player's advantage is by no means as marked as would be inferred from their criticisms.

**4 Bc4**

White may also move here 4 c3. In that case Black's reply would be 4...d5, a move strangely enough overlooked by the leading authorities, who make the second player commit the obvious error of capturing pawn with pawn.

**4...Nc6 5 c3 Qf6**

McDonnell manifested great partiality for this sortie of the queen in the Scotch gambit. In the above position, it is probably the best play on the board.

**6 0-0 d6 7 cxd4 cxd4 8 Ng5**

The objection to this course is that it enables Black to retain his pawn, whereas by 8 Bb5 White would immediately have regained it, and remained with a somewhat superior position.

**8...Nh6 9 f4 Be7 10 e5 Qg6 11 exd6 Qxd6 12 Na3 0-0 13 Bd3 Bf5 14 Nc4 Qg6 15 Nf3 Bxd3 16 Nce5 Bc2**

Black, relying upon his surplus pawn, plays thus in order to compel an exchange of queens; but, as the progress of the game sufficiently proves, the result is an amelioration of his adversary's position, and, ultimately, a drawn battle. Had he instead first captured knight with knight and then played his

queen to f5, his superiority in force and position would, we think, have enabled him to score the game.

**17 Nxb6 Bxd1 18 Nxe7+ Nxe7 19 Rxd1 Nhf5 20 g4 Ne3 21 Bxe3 dxe3 22 Rd7 Rfe8 23 Re1 Ng6 24 f5 Nf4 25 Rd4 Nh3+ 26 Kg2 Nf2 27 Rc4 Rad8 28 h3 h6 29 Re2 b5 30 Rd4 Rxd4 31 Nxd4 a6 32 Kf3 Nxb3 33 Rxe3 Ng5+ 34 Kf4 Rxe3 35 Kxe3 g6 36 fxe6 fxe6 37 Nc6 Ne6 38 Ke4 Kf7 39 Ke5 h5 40 gxe5 gxe5 41 Kf5 Nc7 42 b3 Ke8 43 a4 bxa4 44 bxa4 Nd5 45 Kg5 Ne7 46 Nb8**

White, as an examination of the position will satisfy the student, might equally have drawn by exchanging knights.

**46...a5 47 Na6 Ng6 48 Kxh5**

Here again a different course would have brought about the same result. The knight have been captured and "a draw" secured.

**48...Nf4+ 49 Kg5 Ne6+ 50 Kf5 Kd7 51 Ke5 Nd8** Drawn Game.



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