

Paul Morphy

**A Collection of His Games
with Detailed Notes**

Géza Maróczy

Foreword by Charles Hertan



2026

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Paul Morphy
A Collection of His Games with Detailed Notes
by Géza Maróczy

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Introduction

Paul Morphy! A name with a wondrous magical sound! It evokes the memory of the most outstanding master of all time and spurs the hearts of all chess devotees to beat faster, for every friend of the royal game admires and reveres him.

The beauty and depth of play of the noble-thinking, great master, the genius in inherent in his ideas and plans, are without peer in the annals of chess. In this lies the reason why interest in Paul Morphy the chess hero remains as alive in the widest circles of chess devotees today as it did fifty years ago. And with good reason!

Max Lange, the eminent German master, was the first to collect and put notes to Morphy's games. The third (1894) edition is out of print and very difficult to get hold of – naturally, once a copy of it has been acquired no one lets it go.

I am pleased to accede to the wish of the Veit & Company publishing house to bring out an edition of Morphy's games with fresh notes in accordance with the contemporary state of chess theory and practice, and truly I have not regretted this decision. The more I have immersed myself in the task, the more pleasure I have derived from it.

In putting together the text I have drawn on all available sources, and the happy result is that I am able to disclose 401 games, while Lange (1894) knew of only 372 (or 371). Of the over 50 games that Morphy played with Rousseau (the immigrant from France), of which 90% were won by Morphy, only one game (No. 5) unfortunately has come down to us. According to the testimony of his childhood friend, Charles A. Maurian, Morphy never accepted odds. Five years after his death, a game, also appearing in Lange's book, was published that was reportedly played in 1850 in Havana with Löwenthal giving odds; we can only see this as an attempt to deceive. I have therefore chosen not to include this game.

As regards suitable analysis for the games, I have striven for a correct and economical review of them that is not stingy with praise, but which also does not skip lightly over mistakes, a policy that sometimes, considering Morphy's congenial personality and the bewitching magic of his play, has been no easy task.

The games played fifty years ago by the greatest of all chess masters steadfastly hold up under modern critical analysis – a praise that cannot be superseded and which need not be surpassed.

Géza Maróczy
Budapest
August 1908

Foreword

Maróczy's *Paul Morphy* holds a unique place in Morphy scholarship. A legend in his native Hungary, Geza Maróczy is still the strongest player ever to author a book on the great American. Leading masters Johann Löwenthal and Max Lange released Morphy game collections within two years of his storied European tour; but they fall far short of Maróczy's tournament record. After bursting on the scene to win the Hastings "Minor" tournament in 1895 at age 25 (another dark horse, Harry Nelson Pillsbury, won the Premier Section), Maróczy won a string of strong master events over the next eleven years, and was nearly always among the leaders. This made him the consensus choice to battle Emanuel Lasker for the world championship, but intensive negotiations for a match unfortunately fell through. Late in 1908 he took a hiatus from international play, and did not return until San Sebastian, 1911, when a new guard led by the likes of Capablanca, Rubinstein and Nimzovich emerged. Several more years of infrequent play led into World War I, when international chess abruptly paused. Politics forced Maróczy into exile, where he reemerged after the war as a strong, if slightly diminished fixture in top-level play, drawing a match with future World Champion Max Euwe.

The fine and deeply researched 2024 Maróczy biography *Chess Warrior* by Jakobetz fails to shed any light on the circumstances surrounding the Morphy book; Maróczy's tournament hiatus is attributed to financial and family causes. But Maróczy's "chess brain" was thereby free to undertake the daunting task of writing an annotated volume of Morphy's complete games. A trove of Morphy books rode the wave of his 1858 championship run, but these fizzled out by the late 1860's, when the American was already long retired. Maróczy builds on these earlier works of Frenchmen Dufresne and Preti, in addition to Lange and Löwenthal, and the narrative account by Morphy's valet Frederick Edge. All these authors knew Morphy personally; but only Lange had attempted a complete games compilation, and no important new compendiums appeared in the interim.

Despite this interlude, the Morphy legend had only grown since he annihilated the immensely talented German Romantic Adolf Anderssen around Christmas, 1858. We must remember that when Maróczy picked up his pen, only two new champions had emerged since Anderssen and Morphy, Wilhelm Steinitz and Emanuel Lasker. Aside from the recalcitrant Steinitz and his adherents, just about everyone (including Lasker) still regarded Morphy as the greatest chessplayer who ever lived; the great Capablanca followed suit when he ascended the throne in 1921. Given these facts, Maróczy could reasonably hope that his first book would have commercial as well as artistic merit; but in this regard he was probably disappointed. The first English translation took over a century to appear.

Why read Maróczy's *magnum opus* today? There are of course several good reasons, but like everything these days, they are complicated by the computer revolution. For Morphy devotees – who still come out of the woodwork from around the globe once you throw your hat in as I did – the answer is self-evident;

from a historical standpoint the book is a must-read. Maróczy was of course much closer than we are to Morphy's time; in order to win his first international event, he had to defeat the same Reverend Owen who, in 1858, scoffed at Morphy's claim that he could give him pawn-and-move, only to be steamrolled +5 -0 -2 in their ensuing match. He was likely privy to sources which have receded into dusty shelves, as seen for instance when he claims that Morphy's father Alonzo withdrew from his legal practice in 1846 and "until his death in 1856, devoted his life to the education of his children," a fact you will find nowhere on the internet, despite his father being a noted historic figure.

From a chess perspective, a complete collection of Morphy's games makes a very deep impression – and Maróczy's was easily the most complete to date. While a high percentage of Paul's games were played at odds or against weaker opponents, this hardly diminishes the impact of studying the full breadth of Morphy's gargantuan talent in action. Botvinnik advised that we "return again and again to the games of the American genius," on the grounds that his elucidation of the principles of Open Games (beginning with 1.e4 e5) remained unsurpassed. Maróczy – himself a great believer that Morphy's influence on chess thought transcended all others – succinctly states, "He brought to chess the general principle that the best is always the most beautiful." This objective mindset, valuing correctness above all else, was a revelation in 1858, anticipating Bobby Fischer's statement "I believe in good moves," and Kasparov's characterization of Morphy as "the prototype of the (modern) grandmaster."

Masters have long debated the role of intuition versus calculation in Morphy's success. A positional maestro himself, Maróczy tips the scales slightly toward intuition. Weighing Morphy's influence is an ongoing debate, but I cannot endorse the Hungarian's claim that "It was perhaps in the endgame phase that there was the least difference between him and his contemporaries; in cold calculation he was not nearly so much in his element as he was in combination play." My *Real Paul Morphy* concluded quite the opposite: Morphy dominated all his match opponents in endgame play, by dint of his superior calculation. Morphy's indomitable match strength lay in his novel ability to smash opponents brilliantly one day and grind them down in a nuanced ending the next. This was a logical extension of favoring accuracy over flashiness. Nonetheless, Maróczy's subtle, often poetic insights regarding Morphy's greatness provide an indispensable perspective.

In the realm of analysis, Maróczy suffers the fate of all human annotators under the searing gaze of the engine-gods. Some of these gaffes now provide tongue-in-cheek entertainment, such as his claim that in Thompson-Morphy, ACC first match game, "From the ninth move on, White has played weakly; his last six moves in their totality form one collective error, of which the fourteenth move is the crowning mistake." – all well and good, but Stockfish shows White clearly better after 14.♖×e4!. Before we bowed to a higher power, a universal human tendency was to annotate GM victories as the logical outcome of superior strategy, but we now know that tournament chess is a much messier affair.

Maróczy illuminates the state of chess theory – and his take on it – in 1909. These opinions are very enlightening from the perspective of understanding the evolution of chess ideas – both from 1858 to 1909, and from then until

now. On the Sicilian Defense, Maróczy writes “the move 1...c5 was popular for many years and even in recent tournaments has often been adopted. It prevents the immediate and strong occupation of the central squares by the white central pawns [the hypermoderns would soon dispute this “strength”] and grants the second player the safety inherent in a closed game. But ultimately, theory has established that with a powerful attack or correct positional play white almost always gets the upper hand.”

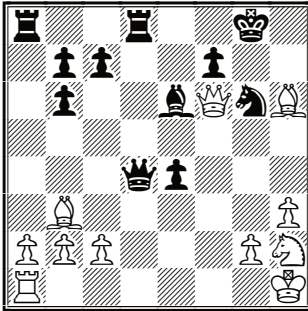
This statement is fascinating on several fronts: Maróczy proudly carries the torch of the Open Sicilian revolution begun by Paul Morphy; counteracting the influence of Howard Staunton, who indeed sought the “inherent safety of a closed game” to thwart the intentions of his romantic peers. Looking forward, it reminds us that the modern Sicilian Defense did not become the vanguard of theory until the Soviet School juggernaut of Geller, Boleslavsky, Kotov *et al.* arrived in the 1950s, along with Argentinian firebrand Miguel Najdorf. Ironically, the *other* American champion, Fischer, would be the first since Staunton to ride the Sicilian to the chess summit. Maróczy also confirms Faulkner’s maxim that “the past isn’t really past,” for instance when he advocates the move 5.♖c3! after 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟f6 3.♟xe5 d6 4.♟f3 ♟xe4, a Petroff antidote which barely existed during my playing career. I remember my wonderment upon seeing Magnus Carlsen adopt it and instantly demonstrate its considerable dynamic potential.

You can question variations, and turn on your engine if you must, but don’t discard the baby with the bath water. Another Hungarian legend, Lajos Portisch, in his Introduction to *Chess Warrior*, advises students to read the old books, and not try to play like a computer. While engines greatly broaden our tactical horizons, Portisch makes a critical point; humans must play as humans. Computers gladly wallow in the vast universe of variations, but humans need a “north star” to guide us in our search. Under the constraints of tournament play, that guiding force is positional judgement. While calculating variations is the single most important chess skill, positional judgment must steer these calculations; without it, no player unlocks his or her chess potential. Maróczy uses a light hand when explaining the logic of positions, but the cumulative wisdom of having a world-class GM explain positional concepts is very great. For instance, Maróczy comments on a Morphy-Boden encounter: “Black has won a pawn, but White is better developed, has control of the open f-file, and has strong center pawns; these may offset the pawn minus.” In short, there are a host of good reasons for chess lovers to celebrate Maróczy’s classic *Paul Morphy*, not the least of which is the sheer enjoyment of watching the incomparable maestro at play.

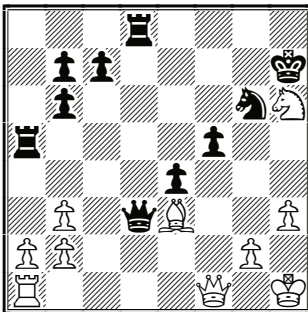
Charles Hertan*
Northampton, Massachusetts

* Massachusetts Senior Master Charles Hertan has authored some half-dozen chess books, including the critically acclaimed *The Real Paul Morphy: His Life and Chess Games* (New in Chess 2024).

♖×e5 13. ♗a4 Also very good is
 13... ♗e7. 14. ♗×b6 a×b6 15. d4
 ♗c6 Better than 15... ♗g6.
 16. ♖×f6 This sacrifice is interesting
 but unsound; but White has nothing
 better. 16... g×f6 17. ♗×h6 ♖fd8
 18. ♖e1 ♗e7 19. ♖h4 ♗g6
 20. ♖×f6 ♖×d4

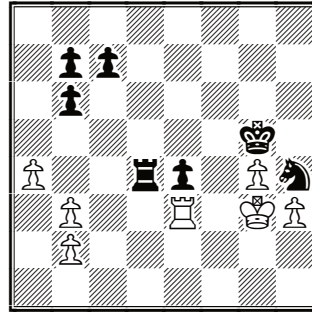


Morphy wards off the attack very
 finely and powerfully, giving his
 opponent not the slightest chance.
 21. ♖f1 ♗×b3 22. c×b3 No better
 is 22. a×b3, since Black would play
 22... ♖×a1 23. ♖×a1 ♖d1+.
 22... ♖a5! 23. ♗g4 f5 24. ♗e3
 ♖d3 25. ♗h6+ ♖h7



26. ♖c1 On 26. ♗×f5, there follows
 26... ♖×f5 27. ♖×f5 ♖×e3 28. ♖f7+
 ♖h6. 26... ♖d7 27. ♗g5 ♖g3
 28. ♖e3 The exchange of queens
 cannot be avoided, and with that the

issue is settled. 28... ♖×e3 29. ♗×e3
 f4 30. ♗g4 f×e3 31. ♗f6+ ♖g7
 32. ♗×d7 ♖d5 33. ♖e1 ♖×d7
 34. ♖×e3 ♖d4 35. ♖h2 ♗h4 36. g4
 ♖f6 37. a4 ♖g5 38. ♖g3



White fails to notice the threat and
 as it were runs directly into the
 mate. The game could not have
 been held in any case. 38... ♖d2
 and mate in two moves.

Match with Adolf Anderssen

The contest between Morphy and
 Anderssen, these two champions of
 chess history, can be likened to a
 duel of noble heroes from the age of
 chivalry. With an ardent lust for
 battle they stepped into the arena, to
 vie exclusively for the laurel wreath.

The most renowned, the two greatest
 masters of the New and Old Worlds
 crossed swords, and the young hero,
 who started for the Old World with a
 view to conquest, carried off his
 finest, most brilliant victory.

There was no longer any opposition;
 the last parapet had been
 overthrown, and Morphy, the invinc-
 ible hero, assumed the absolute rule
 of the realm of the noble art of chess.

The uninterrupted succession and brilliance of his victories, the unanimity of his opponents, bestowed upon him this majesty. His chivalric mind, his unselfishness and altruism, the enchantment of his being, compelled the vanquished to pay court to him; the beauty and depth of his play enchanted and bewitched his contemporaries.

It is truly impossible to imagine a more harmonious and more profound blend of outstanding mental power and genuine humility. This raises him far above the other masters of the age and secures him for all time the admiration of posterity.

Anderssen, the feared tournament player and *de facto* world champion, could resist the mighty strength of the young pretender to the throne for only a short time. The struggle lasted barely a week. The result was two draws and seven won games in favor of Morphy, against only two lost games.

The victory of the new world champion was fully merited and definitive – and no one could have asked for a more brilliant one. It evinces the noble and genteel disposition of the dethroned, great master Anderssen that he did not seek the reasons for his defeat in external circumstances, but, recognizing the superiority of his opponent, unquestioningly subordinated himself to the victor's God-given strength and proficiency. No single chess master in similar circumstances has shown such a noble self-abnegation. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis.* [The times change, and we change with them.]

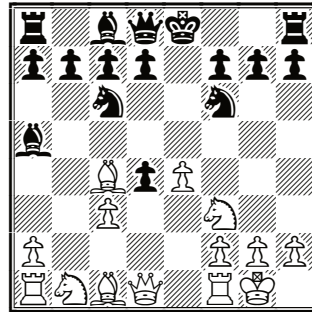
(204) Morphy – Anderssen

Game One

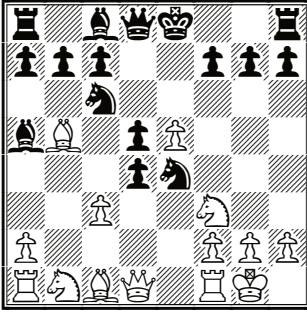
December 20, 1858

Evans Gambit

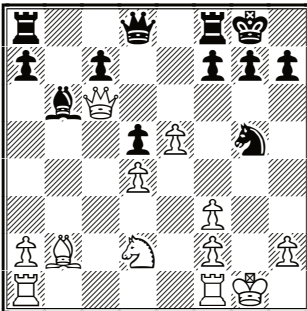
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5
4.b4 ♙×b4 5.c3 ♙a5 6.d4 e×d4
7.0-0 ♚f6



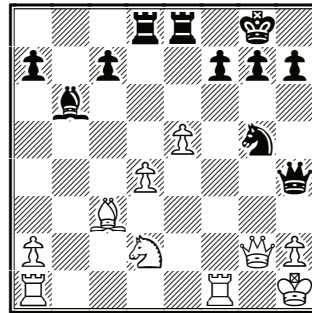
This response of the king's knight to White's castling, after the previous advance of the white d-pawn, was a line generally recognized in Morphy's time. Today it is considered inadequate because of the attack (formerly regarded as unsatisfactory at this juncture) with 8.♙a3. In contrast, the so-called "compromised" variation 7...d×c3 (game 105) would appear to be the best play. **8.e5** Much stronger here is 8.♙a3!, as Morphy, too, tried in one of his later games (game 245). **8...d5** **9.♙b5** There is nothing better; on 9.e×f6 there follows 9...d×c4 10.f×g7 ♖g8 11.♙g5 ♜d5 12.♖e1+ (12.♘d2 ♙f5 13.♜a4 b5 14.♜a3 ♙×c3) ♙e6 13.♘bd2 ♖×g7 14.♘e4 ♜f8 15.♙h6 d×c3 16.♜c1 ♜h5 17.♘f6 ♜g6 18.♘g5 ♜e7, and White does not have a sufficient attack to outweigh the sacrificed pawns. **9...♘e4**



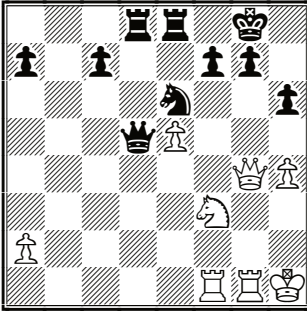
10.cxd4 On 10. dxd4, there might follow 10... d7 11. dxc6 bxc6 12. a3 c5 13. b3 a4. Or 10. a3 d7 11. b3 (11. dxc6 dxc6 12. cxd4 d7 is better for Black) 11... dxc3 12. dxc3 dxc3 13. dxc6 bxc6 14. dxd4. The best play here is 10. a4 0-0 11. dxc6 dxc3 12. dxc3 dxc3 13. c2 bxc6 14. dxd4 c5, and White has very good chances to draw. **10...0-0** Safer is 10... d7. Black offers to return the pawn so that he can wrest the attack from his opponent. **11. dxc6 bxc6 12. a4** With this maneuver White does win a pawn, but he soon finds himself in an unfavorable position, as the queen is diverted far from the game. **12... b6 13. bxc6 d4 14. b2** White already has to contend with difficulties – the pawn on d4 is weak. On 14. e3, 14... f6 could follow, with a strong game. **14... dxf3 15. gxf3 d5 16. d2**



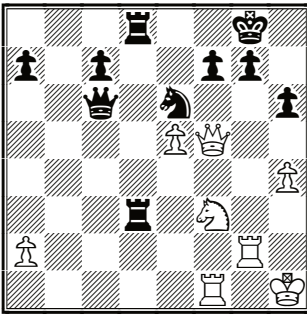
16... e8 Much more energetic is 16... h3+ 17. h1 (17. g2 h4 18. ad1 ae8, with ... e6 next) 17... h4 18. xd5 dxf2+ 19. g2 g5+, winning a piece. **17. h1 d3 18. f4!** Morphy defends himself as best he can. **18... h4 19. xd5 dxf2+ 20. g1** On 20. g2, 20... d3 would be even more decisive. **20... d3 21. d3 dxf4 22. f3 d3+ 23. h1 d5 24. g2 ad8 24... h6 25. f3 e4** can be considered.



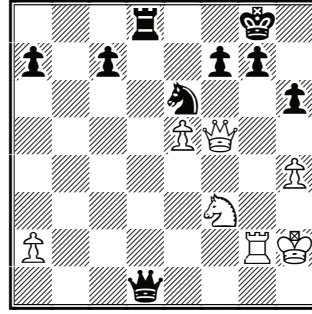
25. g1 Here Morphy misses the possibility of a draw with 25. f3 dxf3 26. xf3 d7 27. ad1, or 26... d4 27. xf7+ (better is 27. d4 d4 28. xf7+ h8 29. ad1) 27... h8 28. f4 xf4 29. xf4 dxc3 30. b1 dxe5 31. c4 d4 32. d1 b6 33. d8. Black stands rather better. **25... h6 26. af1** 26. f3 is inadequate because of 26... h3 27. d5 g5 xg2+ 28. g2 (28. xg2 hxg5 29. d1 xe5, or 29. d2 f6 30. exf6 gxf6 31. f1 f8 32. d5 g7 33. h4 e3) 28... hxg5 29. ad1 d5. **26... h3 27. c6 d7 28. g2** After the exchange of queens it would be easier for Black to convert his material advantage. **28... d4 29. d4 d4 30. f3 d5 31. h4 d6 32. g4**



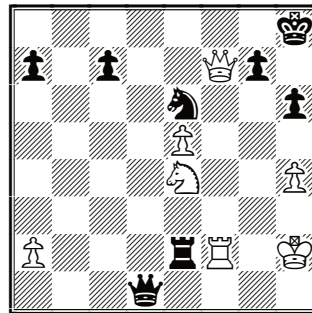
32...♖c6 Black prudently chooses not to take the a-pawn at this point, as he prefers not to expose his queen and king to any sort of attack or discomfort, e.g., 32...♖xa2 33.♞a1 ♖f2 34.♞g2 ♖e3 35.♞e1 ♖c5 36.♞eg1 a5 37.♖f5 or 37.h5. **33.♞g2 ♞d3 34.♖f5 ♞ed8**



35.♖f6 The interesting combination 35.♖xf7+ also does not save White in view of 35...♖xf7 36.♔d4+ ♞f3! 37.♞xf3+ ♖xf3 38.♔xf3 ♞d1+ 39.♖h2 ♔d4. **35...♖d5** White threatened 36.♞xg7+ ♔xg7 37.♖xc6. **36.♖f5 ♞d1 37.♞xd1 ♖xd1+ 38.♖h2**

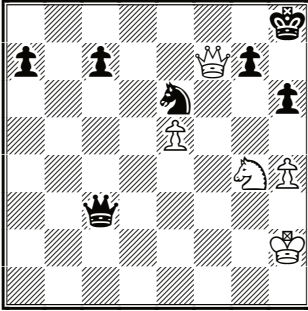


38...♞d3 Leading to the goal more quickly is 38...♖d3 39.♖g4 (if 39.♖f6, 39...♖f8 follows) 39...h5 40.♖g3 ♖e3 41.♖f2! (Black was threatening a wholesale exchange with 41...♞d3) 41...♖xf2 42.♞xf2 ♞d3. On the other hand, 38...♔d4? would be an error leading to an immediate draw, e.g., 39.♞xg7+ ♖g7+ 40.♖f6+ ♖h7 41.♖xf7+ ♖h8 42.♖f6+ ♖h7. **39.♞f2 ♞e3 40.♔d2 ♞e2** Black has to strive for chances to exchange if he is to make something of his pawn superiority. The ensuing exchanging variation has to be calculated precisely, as the black position opens up. **41.♖xf7+ ♖h8 42.♔e4**

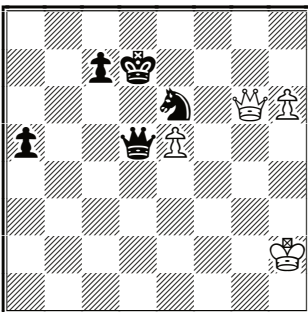


42...♞xf2+ Black can secure the win more comfortably with 42...♞xe4 43.♖xe6 (if 43.♖e8+ ♖h7 44.♖xe6 ♖h5) 43...♖d8!

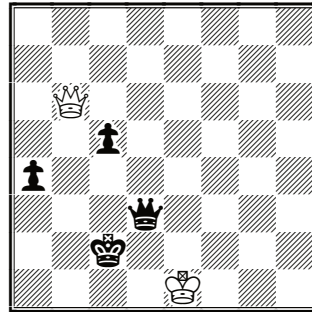
44.♔g2 ♖a8 45.♕h2 ♜xh4+
 46.♕g3 ♜h5. 43.♜xf2 ♜d5
 44.♜g4 ♜xa2+ 45.♕g3 ♜b3+
 46.♕h2 ♜c2+ 47.♕g3 On
 47.♕h3, 47...♕g6! could follow.
 47...♜c3+ 48.♕h2



48...♜c6 Essential! If 48...♜d4,
 then 49.♕e8+ ♔h7 50.♜f6+ gxf6
 51.♕f7+ and White holds the draw
 with a perpetual check. 49.h5 a5
 Simpler is 49...♜c2+ 50.♕g3 ♜c3+
 51.♕g2 ♜h3+ 52.♕xh3 ♜g5+
 53.♕g3 ♜xf7 54.e6 ♜d6. In a
 practical game, however, it is quite
 arduous to calculate all the possible
 risks involved with the advance of the
 e-pawn. 50.♜f6 This pleasing turn
 constitutes the final attempt to salvage
 a draw. 50...gxf6 51.♕xf6+ ♕g8
 52.♕g6+ ♕f8 53.♕xh6+ ♕e8
 54.♕g6+ ♕d7 55.h6 ♜d5



56.h7 Other moves would not
 have seen a good outcome either,
 e.g., 56.♕h5 ♜d2+ 57.♕h1 (if
 57.♕g1, 57...♕g5+) 57...♜c1+
 58.♕h2 (58.♕g2 ♕g5+) ♜f4+
 59.♕h1 ♜g5. 56...♜xe5+ 57.♕g1
 ♜g5 58.h8♜ ♜xh8 59.♕xg5
 ♜d4+ 60.♕f1 a4 61.♕f5+ ♕c6
 62.♜c8 ♕b5! Black gained
 material superiority in the opening
 and with admirable tenacity has
 held it all the way to the end of the
 game. The c7-pawn cannot be taken
 because of 63...♜c4+ followed by
 the trade of the queens. 63.♕e1 c5
 64.♕b7+ ♕c4 65.♕f7+ ♕c3
 66.♕f3+ ♜d3 67.♕f6+ ♕b3
 68.♕b6+ ♕c2



69.♕a7 On 69.♕xc5+, the exchange
 of queens would follow. 69...♜c3+
 70.♕e2 a3 71.♕a4+ ♕b2
 72.♕b5+ ♕b3 White resigns. This
 game took place in the Hotel Breteuil
 and lasted seven hours.

(205) Anderssen – Morphy

Game Two

December 21, 1858

Ruy Lopez

1.e4 e5 2.♜f3 ♜c6 3.♞b5 a6
 4.♞a4 ♜f6 5.d3 This sophisticated
 preference of Anderssen in the
 Spanish exerts a weaker force. 5...♜c3
 or 5...0-0 are the moves here that are