

The Monster Department

by Harrie Grondijs

100 Years Under the Sea

The results of the milestone tourney organized by the Rigaer Tageblatt in 1895 have been reprinted in Bondarenko's STANOVLENY SHAKHMATNOIE ETYUDA and elsewhere. Though tempting it may be to reprint all the award-winning entries, it is maybe better to just point to that booklet for a complete overview. What follows are a few further comments and the Monsters. There were 28 entries - so far we have retrieved 12 entries, there is no sign that Troitzky participated. Judges were A. Acharin, C. and J. Behting. Among the contestants were Berger, Feigl, Nemo, Erlin, and Jespersen all problem composers counted among the followers of the Old German School, a school that aimed at achieving exceedingly difficult to solve, with solutions like 'towering infernos'.

I quote from Weenink's *The Chess Problem* (published in 1926): '*The composers of the Old German School have not been confined to Germany. Bayer and Berger both count as Austrian; the greatest exponents of the school today are also Austrians, including the Viennese Konrad Erlin (b. 1856), Max Feigl (b. 1871) and Ottmar Nemo (b. 1861). The school has had great exponents in many countries, Rev. J. Jespersen (1848-1914) in Denmark, Emil Pradignat (1831 - 1912) (page 107).*', and, '*Today the principal stronghold of what survives of the Grand Manner of Klett and Bayer and Berger is in Vienna, where the members of the Viennese School, to which reference has already been made, carry out the traditions of the Masters in the greatly modified style which passing years have brought with them. Of this distinguished coterie, Max Feigl stands as the finest exemplar, dividing his popularity with his friends Konrad Erlin and Ottmar Nemo (page 116).*'

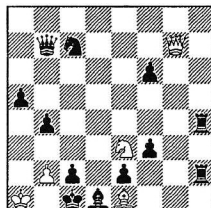
Let us briefly consider the outcome of the tourney and see what Monsters were bred and nurtured by the *Giants with the Hun heads*, (an epitaph Johann Kohtz first applied to Philipp Klett, leader of the German School).

The first Prize was taken by Konrad Erlin (just 10 chess men): domination of the black queen by the white knight: forks at work. A typical work set as an example for the great classic endgame composers to use when they momentarily lacked true inspiration.

The second Prize was for Cordes, with the classic 'cross-checks study with quiet moves (Zugzwang)' (11 men) that has been copied both over the board and (unknowingly) by the likes of Kasparian and Rinck (see NEVERENDING, page 29). Then the third Prize by Reverend J. Jespersen: a veritable monster (17 pieces) in which a stalemate is wrung from Black

in a most convincing way (but who would dare to show it to Selman?!).

MONSTER THE FORTYFIRST



J. Jespersen, Rigaer
Tageblatt, 1895, =, 4644.16

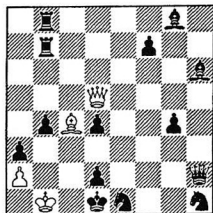
1. Qh6 Rxh6 2. Nc4 Qd5 3. Bd2+ Qxd2 4.

Nxa5 Qd3 5. Nb3+ Qxb3 =.

The first Honourable Mention is by F. Amelung with a genuine Ultra Modern study: after a forceful exchange of material the 14.00 ending (a field of special interest for Amelung) is brought to a good end. I wonder how Jan van Reek would have ranked it in his tourney of 100 years later.

This brings us to the second and third Honourable Mentions both by O. Nemo. One of them is a Monster (18 men) with logical effects, the other one (14 men) featured a quiet knight move followed by complete domination of the black queen.

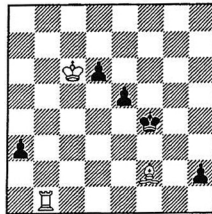
[MONSTER THE FORTYSECOND]



O. Nemo, Rigaer Tageblatt, 1895, =, 4676.16

1. Qe4, with a threat to mate in three starting with 2. Qxg4†, 1... d3 2. Bb3+ Nc2 2. Qxb4 Qg1 3. Qxg4†, after all, but the circumstances have changed drastically, 3. ... Ke1 4. Qxg1 Ke2 5. Qf2+ Kxf2 stalemate. Alas, this study has been cooked: 1. ... Nc2, and I fear it is beyond repair.

Nemo (whose real name was Ottmar Weiss, born 31 October 1861 at Brun, Moravia) was a gifted composer. Alas (?), he devoted most of his talents to problem composition. Like the Viennese Erlin (short for Erlinger, born in 1856) he is considered an exponent of the Old German School. The following composition was his masterpiece endgame study.



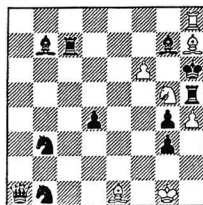
O. Nemo, Wiener Schachzeitung, 1904, +, 110.04

1. Rh1 a2 2. Bg1 hxg1Q 3. Rxg1 e4 4. Kd5 e3 5. Kd4 Kf3 6. Kd3 d5 7. Ra1 e2 8. Kd2 Kf2 9. Rc1 d4 10. Ra1 d3 11. Rc1 Kf3 12. Kxd3 Kf2 13. Kd2 wins.

A puzzler set for ponderous New-Germans! Composed in the year of DAS INDISCHE PROBLEM by Kohtz and Kockelkorn. The move 1. Rh1 is it critical or anti-critical (check out some of the arguments in favour for either proposition in NEVERENDING)?

Another Monster was entered by A. Mackenzie (18 men):

MONSTER THE FORTYTHIRD

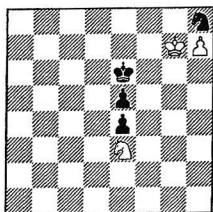


A. Mackenzie, Rigaer Tageblatt, 1895, -, 3787.23

1. Nf7+ Rxf7 2. Bd2+ Nxd2+ 3. Bb1+ Bxh8 stalemate.

The best entry by a long way was a flawed entry by Max Feigl (9 men). Many years later Chéron added a pawn on d6 to make it work.

Finally, Frankenstein's contribution was not a monster but a fascinating miniature.



J. Frankenstein, Rigaer Tageblatt, 1895, +, 4.12

1. Ng4 Nf7 Or the technical win 1. .. Ke7
2. Nf6 Ke6 3. Nxe4 Ke7 4. Nd6 e4 5. Nxe4.
2. Nxe5 Nh8 3. Kxh8 e3 4. Kg7 e2 5. h8Q e1Q 6. Qe8+

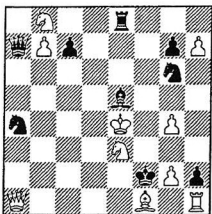
A. 6. .. Kd5 7. Qc6+ Kd4 8. Nf3+ wins.

B. 6. .. Kf5 7. Qg6+ Kf4 8. Nd3+ wins.

And a 1000 Years at the Wheel

Noam D. Elkies wrote to the editor about 'many things' and included the following Monster.

MONSTER THE FORTYFOURTH



N. Elkies, Chess Life, 1987, =, 4448.43

1. Qe1+ Kxe1 2. Bc4+ Kf2 (or 2. ... Kd2 3. Rd1+ etc.) 3. Rf1+ Kg3 4. Rf3+ Kh4 5. Rh3+ Kg5 6. Rh5+ Kf6 7. Rf5+ Ke7 8. Rf7+ Kd6 9. Rd7+ Kc5 10. Rd5+ Kb4 11. Rb5+ Kc3 12. Rb3+ Kd2 13. Rd3+ Ke1 (or 13. ... Ke1 14. Rd1+ Kf2 15. Rf1+ =) 14. Rd1+ Kb2 15. Rd2+ Ka3 16. Nc2+ Kb2 17. Ne3+ Kc3 18. Rd3+ Kb4 19. Rb3+ Kc5 20. Rb5+ Kd6 21. Rd5+ Ke7 22. Rd7+ Kf6 23. Rf7+ Kg5 24. Rf5+ Kh4 25. Rh5+ Kg3 26. Rh3+ Kf2 27. Rf3+ Ke1 28. Rf1+ Kd2 29. Rd1+ Kc3 30. Rd3+ =.

'Later, on first opening the Hooper-Whyld Oxford Companion to Chess I found on the first page (under AD-DULABIYA [in my copy it is under ABU 'L FATH AHMAD. HHG]) that this 'waterwheel' theme dates back about a thousand years! (that entry was omitted from the second edition; I looked for AD-DULABIYA also under D, where it belongs since 'AD' is Arabic 'the', but did not find it there either). I still like my setting, which has the king going both counterclockwise and clockwise in the same variation, and is reasonably economical considering the theme and the unavailability of Alfils and Ferse (Noam Elkies in his letter).'

Waterwheel or no waterwheel: this study is a fantastic accomplishment and a great work of art, if only for the way the knight lends a helping hand in the middle part to swing the wheel around the other way. The ship must face the storm. It's Watermusic.