

## A Secret Chess Duel

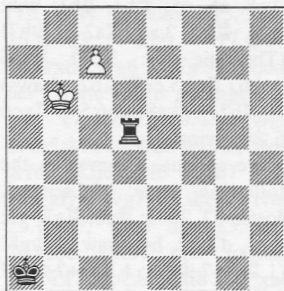
by Harrie Grondijs

On April 28<sup>th</sup> 1880, a Passionist Father, of Spanish descent, a man of God, educated and ordained at the Mount Argus Monastery in Dublin, Ireland, delivered a sermon so enthusiastically that it was considered worthy of publication. It is called *Panegirico en honor de San Paolo De la Criz, predicado en Deusto (Bilbao)* (Panegiric of our Holy Founder St. Paul of the Cross preached by Father Fernando C.P.), a booklet of just 20 pages. A copy (the only one?) is kept at the Mount Argus Monastery near Dublin. It contains a marginal correction in Saavedra's handwriting.

*Union, to strengthen it, to adapt it to all successive developments of progress."*

Perhaps the only meeting 'in the flesh' between these two men-in-opposition was when fate brought them together on the occasion of a simultaneous chess exhibition by the English Master F.J. Lee in Dublin on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1890. Saavedra sat shoulder to shoulder with lieutenant-Colonel Lynam, the president of the Clontarf Chess Club and lost a Vienna Opening. Rynd was a spectator at the event and followed the game that Mr. Fitzpatrick lost: "[...] *This game was followed by Mr.*

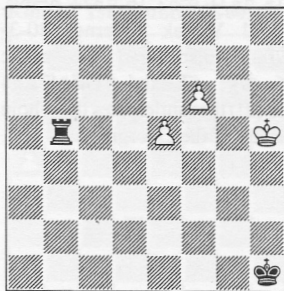
*Citizen on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1895: "But a member of the Glasgow Club, the reverend Saavedra, has pointed out a win for White. The position is a very remarkable one."*



1) Black to play, White wins

Solution: 1...♖d6+ 2.♖b5 ♜d5+ 3.♖b4 ♜d4+ 4.♖b3 ♜d3+ 5.♖c2 ♜d4 6.c8♜ ♜a4 7.♖b3 and wins.

J.A. Porterfield Rynd -  
W. Lynam  
Dublin 1890



2) White to Play

Solution: 1.f7 (or first 1.♖g6 ♜xe5 2.f7, the Saavedra position) 1...♜xe5+ 2.♖g4 etc.

Hasta aquí hemos visto evidentemente demostrado que San Pablo, copió bien y fielmente los ejemplos del Salvador. Mas aun queda un rasgo que contemplar para que sea más exacta la semejanza; y al mismo tiempo es el que principalmente brilla en el espíritu de Pablo, y en la órden que estableció... Es comun doctrina de los teólogos que el método de vida de Jesus durante los tres años de su público ministerio, ya predicando en el bullicio de las calles, ya orando en la soledad de los montes, ya enseñando en medio de la Sinagoga, ya retirado en el huerto de las Olivas, absorbio en contemplacion. Y así lo practicaba tambien San Pablo. Apenas concluidos los deberes de su fatigosa mision, aceleran-

*mas perfectio  
de la op. mendi  
retirado a la  
solitud. terna  
fue la vida*

More than 25 years later an Irishman, a man of the world, delivers a long speech that becomes a booklet: *Unionist Policy*, written in defence of the Commercial Federation between the United Kingdom and Ireland: "It is because British freedom is best we adhere to it, and Our Policy is to improve the

*D. Allingham, [Rynd] Porterfield and others."*

Then after Saavedra's move to Glasgow they drifted apart (although Saavedra, as Frank of Paris won a prize in a solving contest of Rynd's column in the *Dublin Evening Herald*) until Georges Barbier wrote in his column for the *Glasgow Weekly*

A week later, on Saturday 25th May 1895, not only Saavedra's find appeared in the *Glasgow Weekly Citizen*, but on that same day (diagram 2) appeared in the *Dublin Saturday Herald* with the following comment: "It is right to say that Bro. Barbier's latest version acknowledges the finishing touch to have come from the Rev. F. Saavedra, formerly a member of the Clontarf Club, and afterwards (as "Frank" of Paris) winner of a solution's prize for the Herald's Chess but now a valued member of the Glasgow Club. Now, as all the points of this instructive ending practically occurred three or four years ago at the Clontarf Club in one of a number of simultaneous games played there by your contributor, it can hardly fail to be of interest to note the Clontarf position and its concluding moves, as hereunder given."

Saavedra donated his collection of problem books to the GCC in 1895; later that year at the conclusion of his annual report for the Clontarf Chess Club, the honorary secretary Rynd "[...] then presented the club with two sets of loaded club-size Staunton chessmen." Saavedra became vice-president of the Glasgow Chess Club until he left for Australia in 1899. Rynd became vice-president or honorary secretary of a number of Chess Clubs in Dublin.

Let us go back in time again a few years from there ..

In the *Dublin Evening Mail* of 1890 appeared (diagram 3) with

the text: "*The above problem was recently the subject of a solution competition at the Manchester Chess Club and was solved by the first prize winner in 8 minutes, by the second in 16 minutes, by the third in 25 minutes, and by the fourth in 29 minutes. We gave it so that our solvers may time themselves and compare results.*"

In fact the problem had already been awarded a number of years before when it won the first Prize for best two-mover by a lady. Two weeks later appeared the result of the informal contest: "Key 1. ♖xf4. Nine variations. Correct solutions received from J. Dobson, Fr. Fernando, A.T. Bassant, 6 minutes, J. Manning 10 minutes, E. Bennett, 12 minutes; T. Johnson; 15 minutes, Max J. Meyer, 20 minutes; R. Ennis, 39 minutes; and G.H. Hamilton, 'all the evening.'"

**Mrs. F.F. Rowland-Beechey**  
*Mirror of American Sports*  
1886  
Motto 'Abu Klea'



3) Mate in 2

Solution: 1. ♖xf4.

Almost two years later *The British Chess Magazine* (February 1892) devoted space to the newly founded "Hibernian Chess Association" that had held its first Congress at the XL Café, Grafton Street, Dublin from January 1<sup>st</sup> until January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1892. The Championship Tournament had been won by its founder P. Rynd with 7,5 out of a possible 9. One of the items on the program was a solving contest of two three-movers (diagrams 4 and 5)



4) Mate in 3

(5 solutions?)



5) Mate in 3

(solution: 1. ♖h5)

Results: 1st Prize, Porterfield Rynd - time, 17 minutes, 2nd Prize, S. Fitzpatrick - time, 23 minutes; 3rd Prize, C.P. Macaulay 25 minutes.

I don't know who composed these positions (diagram 4 has 5 solutions).

Shortly before his death Saavedra celebrated his sacerdotal golden jubilee, and received a personal letter from the Pope on that occasion. The Passionist father C. Aylward later wrote to J. Selman: "*The autograph letter from Pope Benedict XV on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood cannot be found. It is very likely that Fr. Fernando destroyed it as he was neat in all things and would not allow papers to accumulate in his room*".

Saavedra was so modest that he destroyed a letter from the Pope and shared his grave with Father Laurence Kieran. Rynd in his time was renowned for his accomplishments at billiards, tennis, and as an oarsman, piano player and composer of original musical melodies. As regards chess: he excelled over the board, at blindfold play, at problem composition, as a journalist, and as an organizer and club

manager. Furthermore, he proclaimed himself inventor of Helpmate, Diamond Chess, held a patent at a '*vertical board for Living Chess exhibitions*', and gave a series of lectures under the title: "*The charm and use of Chess. Its mysteries solved, its power gained and its craft applied*".

Saavedra's study has since become a kind of relic and his name a household word for all chess players.

Rynd finally lost his title as champion of Ireland to O'Hanlon in 1913 ("*he played very fast and distracted*"). He died - already forgotten man - in a nursing home at Dublin a few years later.

In the story *A Secret Duel* by Jorge Luis Borges a duel is fought between two dear lady friends, amateur painters, in early 20th Century Buenos Aires. The story, that reminded me of the chance encounters between two Irish chess rivals, ends thus: "*In that delicate duel, only suspected by a few close friends, there were neither defeats nor victories nor even an open encounter.[...] Only God (of whose aesthetical preferences we are unaware) can*

*grant the final palm. The story that made its way in darkness ends in darkness.*"

Perhaps it is different for men and in chess. There is no room for friendship or even so much as magnanimity in duels between men. Wars are fought over mere trifles. The immediate cause of the battle of Clontarf in the year 1014, when 30.000 soldiers fought on each side, was a sarcastic word addressed by Morrogh, King Brian's son, to a malcontent Irish kingling, Mailmordha, King of Leinster, on the occasion of his advising a bad move at chess in Kincora place.

All the same, on the scale of one-by-one, the fates of two men from different worlds of lifestyle, persuasion and moral conviction, who hardly knew each other at all, were brought together like spheres encircling each other, sometimes touching, obeying to the same gravitational force. It is so many years sine the death of the opponents and we slowly discern a certain parallelism, or opposition, of such lives and speculate about the outcome of the duel they fought, and fight, without knowing - without end.

## 10th ARVES solving Foto's

Foto linksboven: Winnaar Axel Ornstein uit Zweden legt de laatste hand aan zijn oplossingen.

Foto rechtsboven: De jarige organisator en wedstrijdleider René Olthof met het cadeau (een sculptuur van een paard) dat hij van John Roycroft kreeg.

Foto linksonder: v.l.n.r. Igance Vandecasteele (België), ere-gast John Roycroft (Engeland) en Jarl Ulrichsen (Noorwegen)

Foto rechtsonder: o.m. Jonathan Mestel (Engeland), Oleg Pervakov (Rusland), Willem Muhren (Nederland) en Peter Boll (Nederland).