

A Chess Idealist

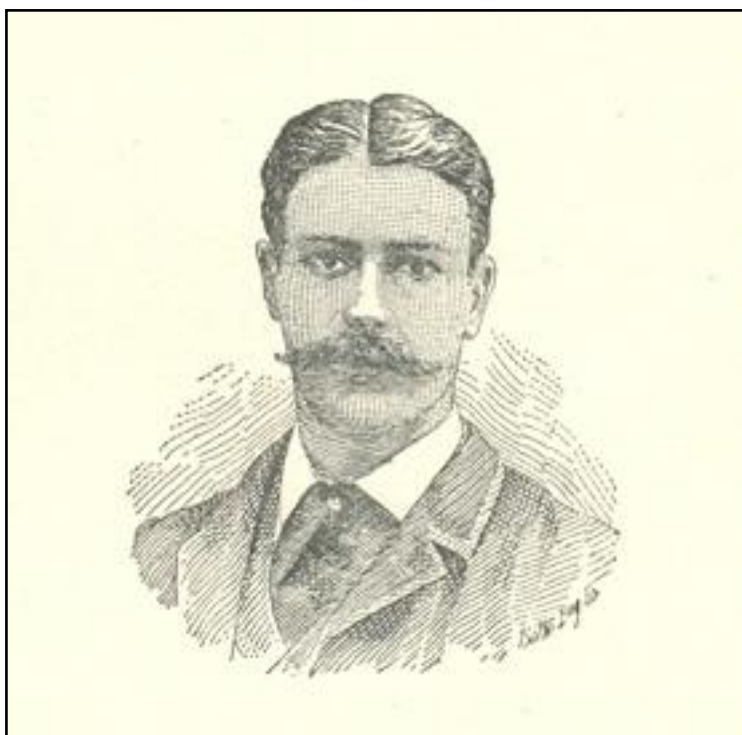
Edward Winter

(1998)

Black to play and gamble:



In this position the remarkable move played was 16...Rxb3, and the game continued: 17 cxb3 Nd3 18 Qg2 Nb4+ 19 Ka1 Nc2+ 20 Kb1 Bd3 21 Kc1 Ba3 22 Nb1 Qc5 23 Bxa3 Nxa3+ 24 Kb2 Nxb1 (Missing a quick mate with 24...Qc2+.) 25 Rxb1 Qc2+ 26 Ka3 Qxb1 27 Ne2 Qc2 28 Nd4 Qc5+ 29 Ka2 Rb8 30 Qg1 Qb4 31 Qc1 Bc4 (!) 32 Qc2 Qxa4+ and wins (S. Tinsley v W.H.K. Pollock, London, 18 October 1883).

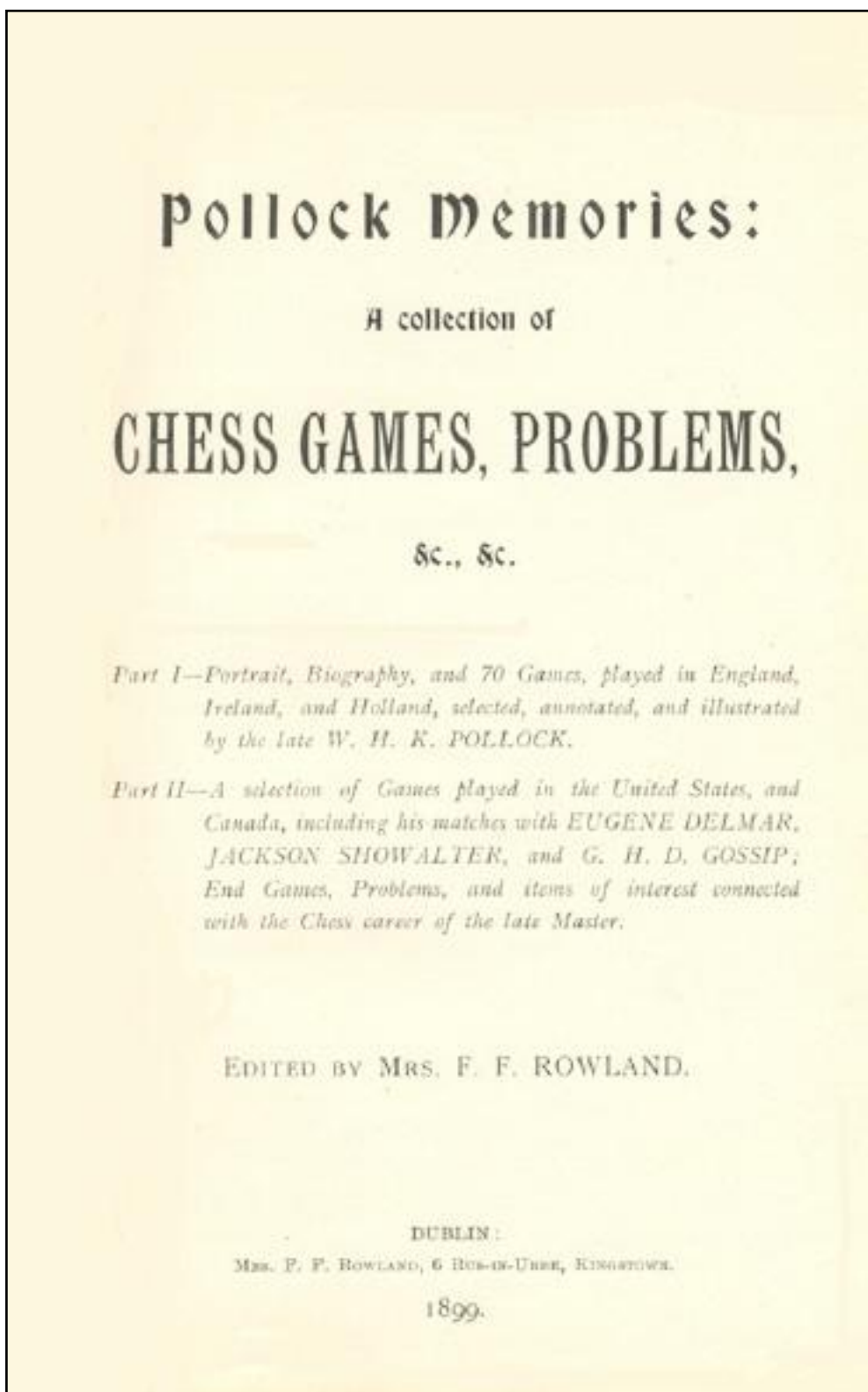


William Henry Krause Pollock

Few chessplayers today seem to know much about W.H.K. Pollock (1859-1896), yet in his time he was celebrated for his spectacular combinations and original style of play. He seldom came first in events, an exception being the Belfast, 1886 tournament, which he won with a clean score of 8/8, ahead of Blackburne and Burn. On the other hand, many of his individual games received high plaudits from the most demanding critics, as is shown by a brief compilation of comments by the then world champion, Steinitz:

- Pollock v Blackburne, London, 1886: 'Mr Pollock's attack in this game is quite worthy of any aspirant for the highest mastership.' *International Chess Magazine*, August 1886, page 245.
- Weiss v Pollock, New York, 1889: 'This sacrifice of the queen for no more than two pieces is based on a most profound and brilliant idea, such as has very rarely occurred in actual play.' 'Mr Pollock's play from the 17th move renders this game one of the finest monuments of chess ingenuity, and altogether it belongs to the most brilliant gems in the annals of practical play.' New York, 1889 tournament book, page 3.
- Mason v Pollock, New York, 1889: 'A regular gem of a game on Mr Pollock's part. The termination is charming.' New York, 1889 tournament book, page 319.
- Haller v Pollock, St Louis, 1890: 'A charming termination to a beautifully played game.' *International Chess Magazine*, February 1890, page 57.

A posthumous distinction for Pollock was being one of the very few players to be the subject of a biographical games collection in the nineteenth century. In 1899 Mrs F.F. Rowland of Kingstown, Ireland brought out *Pollock Memories: A collection of Chess Games, Problems, etc. etc.*



A copy lies open before us now, inscribed by her in 1903, and from it we cull some

specimens of Pollock's ingenious play. The focus here is on brilliancies, many from offhand games, which are seldom seen nowadays.

First, an attacking game peculiar in that, until the end, no white piece goes beyond the third rank:

William Henry Krause Pollock – James Mortimer

London, 1885

Three Knights' Game

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 Bc5 4 Nxe5 Nxe5 5 d4 Bd6 6 dxe5 Bxe5 7 Bd3 Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 d6 9 O-O h6 10 e5 d5 11 Ba3 Ne7 12 f4 g6 13 Qf3 c6 14 Rae1 Be6 15 g4 h5 16 h3 hxg4 17 hxg4 Ng8 18 f5 gxf5 19 gxf5 Qh4 20 Rf2 Bc8 21 e6 f6 22 Re2 Ne7 23 Rh2 Rg8+ 24 Reg2 Qe1+



25 Bf1 Bxe6 26 Rxc8+ Bxc8 27 Re2 Qh4 28 Rxe7+ Kd8 29 Qe2 Qg5+ 30 Bg2 Qxf5 31 Bd6 Qg6 and 'White mates in four moves' (though it is actually mate in three, with 32 Rd7+).

Anton Hvistendahl – William Henry Krause Pollock

London, October 1885

Evans Gambit Accepted

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4 Nxb4 5 c3 Nc6 6 d4 exd4 7 O-O d6 8 cxd4 Bb6 d5 Na5 10 Bb2 Nxc4 (Pollock: 'This looks almost like a blunder, but it is not. The usual move is 10...Ne7. The idea of the text move is shown in the following variation: [10...Nxc4] 11 Bxc7 f6 12 Qa4+? Qd7 13 Qxd7+ Bxd7 14 Bxc8 Kf7. I

have adopted it several times with success.’) 11 Qa4+ Bd7 12 Qxc4 f6 13 a4 Ne7 14 a5 Bc5 15 e5 fxe5 16 Nxe5 O-O 17 Nd3 b6 18 Nxc5 bxc5 19 Nc3 Rb8 20 Rab1 Rb4 21 Qe2 Ng6 22 Ba1 Rg4 23 g3 Nf4 24 Qd2 Qh4 25 Ne2 Nh3+ 26 Kh1 Bf5 27 f3



27...Bxb1 (Here Pollock wrote with understandable pride, ‘It is rare indeed that we meet with a case where one party, in a winning combination, sacrifices queen, rook and knight in three successive moves.’) 28 gxh4 Rxf3 29 Rxf3 Nf2+ 30 Rxf2 Be4+ 31 Rg2 Rgx2 32 Nc3 Rxd2+ 33 White resigns.

The configuration of a black bishop on e4, black rook on g2 and white king on h1 also arose in the game P. Rynd v W.H.K. Pollock, Nottingham tournament, 1886:



26...Be4 27 Qxf8+ Qg7 (Seldom has the only legal move been so attractive.) 28 Rf3 Bxf3 29 Bxg7+ Rxxg7 mate.

A highly complex mating net:

A.C. Pearson – William Henry Krause Pollock

London, January 1888

Danish Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 Bc4 Nf6 5 Nxc3 Nc6 6 Nge2 Bc5 7 Bg5 Bxf2+ 8 Kf1 Bb6 9 Nd5 Ng4 (It is recorded that Black had originally intended to play 9...Nxd5, realizing just after touching the knight that it would be fatal.) 10 Bxd8 Kxd8 11 Qd2 d6 12 Nxb6 axb6 13 Qg5+ Ne7 14 Qxg7 Rg8 15 Qd4 Nc6 16 Qd2 Nce5 17 Bd5 c6 18 Bxc6 Nc4 19 Qb4 Nge3+ 20 Kf2 Rxxg2+ 21 Kf3 Bg4+ 22 Kf4 Bxe2 23 Rhg1 Rf2 + 24 Kg5 Ke7 25 Kh6 25 Rxh2+ 26 Kg7 bxc6 27 Qc3 Rf2 28 b3



28...f6 29 e5 Nf5+ 30 Kxh7 Nxe5 31 Qh3 Bd3 32 Rae1 Nh6+ and wins.

If 33 Qxd3 Black wins with 33...Rh2. Even so, the conclusion is strange, and an inaccuracy in the final part of the game-score cannot be ruled out.



William Henry Krause Pollock

An insidious trap comes next. No sooner has Black fallen into it than he is exposed to a fierce and unexpected attack:

William Henry Krause Pollock – Francis Joseph Lee
London, February 1889
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 dxc5 Bxc5 7 Qg4 g6 8 Nf3 Nc6 9 a3
Nb6 10 Bd3 Bd7 11 Bd2 a6 12 b4 Be7 13 O-O Na7 13 Rae1 Rc8 15 Nd4 Nc4



16 Bc1 Nxa3 17 Nxd5 exd5 18 e6 fxe6 19 Bxg6+ hxg6 20 Qxg6+ Kf8 21 f5 exf5 22 Re6 Resigns.

William Henry Krause Pollock – Alfred Rumboll

Bath (date?)

(Remove White's queen's knight.)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Bc4 Bc5 5 Ng5 Nh6 6 Qh5 Ne5



7 Ne6 Bb4+ 8 c3 Nd3+ 9 Bxd3 dxc3 10 Nxg7+ Kf8 11 Bxh6 cxb2+ 12 Ke2 bxa1(Q) 13 Rxa1 Qf6 14 Ne6+ Kg8 15 e5 Qxe6 and White mated in three moves.

The following game is an excellent illustration of pins.

N.N. – William Henry Krause Pollock

London, April 1887

(Remove Black's f-pawn.)

1 e4 Nc6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 Be3 e5 5 c4 Bb4+ 6 Nd2 Qe4 7 d5 Bg4 8 Nf3 O-O-O 9 a3



9...Nd4 10 Be2 Bxd2+ 11 Nxd2 Nc2+ 12 Kf1 Qf5 13 Bxg4 Nxe3+ 14 Kg1 Nxg4 15 f3 Qd3 16 fxg4 Qe3+ 17 Kf1 Rf8+ 18 Nf3 e4 19 Qe2 Qxe2+ 20 Kxe2 exf3+ 21 gxf3 Nf6 22 Rhd1 Re8+ 23 Kf2 Rhf8 24 Kg3 Re3 25 Rd4 Nd7 26 Rf4 Rxf4 27 Kxf4 Re2 28 h4 Rxb2 29 Re1 Kd8 30 Re3 Rc2 31 White resigns.

Another brisk execution:

John Morphy – William Henry Krause Pollock

Dublin, 14 December 1887

Two Knights' Defence

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 Nxe4 5 Nxf7 Qh4 6 O-O Bc5 7 Nxh8 Nxf2 8 Rxf2 Qxf2+ 9 Kh1 d5 10 Bxd5 Bg4 11 Bf3 Bxf3 12 gxf3 Nd4 13 Qg1 Qxf3+ 13 Qg2 Qd1+ 15 Qg1 Qxg1+ 16 Kxg1 Nxc2+ 17 Kf1 Nxa1 18 White resigns.

Throughout his short career Pollock played an unusually high number of brilliant miniatures. Here are two more:

William Henry Krause Pollock – D. Kemper
Baltimore (date?)
(Remove White's queen's rook.)

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Bc4 g5 4 Nf3 h6 5 Ne5 Rh7 6 O-O Nf6 7 Bxf7+ Rxf7 8 Nxf7
Kxf7 9 e5 Ng8 10 Qh5+ Kg7 11 b4 Be7 12 Bb2 Nc6 13 h4 Nxb4 14 hxg5 Bxg5



15 Rxf4 Bxf4 and White mated in eight moves.

At move 20 in the game below, Steinitz referred to the continuation as an 'intellectual treat'.

William Henry Krause Pollock – Charles A. Moehle
Cincinnati, 1890
Vienna Game

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 f4 d5 4 fxe5 Nxe4 5 Nf3 Bc5 6 Qe2 Nxc3 7 bxc3 O-O 8 d4 Be7
9 g3 c5 10 Bg2 cxd4 11 cxd4 Bb4+ 12 Bd2 Bxd2+ 13 Qxd2 Be6 14 O-O Nc6 15
Rf2 Rc8 16 Bf1 Na5 17 Bd3 Nc4 18 Qf4 h6 19 Raf1 f6



20 Nh4 Bh3 21 Nf5 Bxf1 22 Qg4 Kf7 23 Qxg7+ Ke6 24 Rxf1 Rc7 25 Ne7 f5 26 Rxf5 Rxe7 27 Qxf8 Qxf8 28 Rxf8 and wins.

Pollock defeated Steinitz in their only individual encounter (Hastings, 1895), a game which the victor annotated on pages 396-397 of the September 1895 *BCM*. Apart from their intrinsic interest, the notes are significant for being the source of Pollock's most famous quote, 'It is no easy matter to reply correctly to Lasker's bad moves.'

Wilhelm Steinitz – William Henry Krause Pollock

Hastings, 12 August 1895

Giuoco Piano

(Notes by Pollock)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 ('A favourite opening with Mr Steinitz in this tournament, in which he has beautifully demonstrated the efficiency of some new ideas contained in the last section of the *Modern Chess Instructor*.') **4...Qe7** ('Strangely enough, this valid old defence of the days of the Berlin 'Pleiades' has escaped all notice in the work referred to. A little story comes in here: Previous to the championship match between Steinitz and Lasker, at the request of the latter I played the defence to the Giuoco in a few off-hand games with him at the Manhattan Chess Club. I adopted this old defence without success, although Lasker admitted it was new to him. But I told him that Steinitz would play it against him and beat him if he did not play the attack differently. (It is no easy matter to reply correctly to Lasker's bad moves.) Lasker good humouredly suggested that we submit the theoretical question to Showalter. However, he did *not* adopt this attack against Steinitz. The points of the defence are well shown in the present game.') **5 d4 Bb6 6 a4 a5 7 O-O d6 8 d5** ('This is, as usual, a questionable advance.') **8...Nd8 9 Bd3**

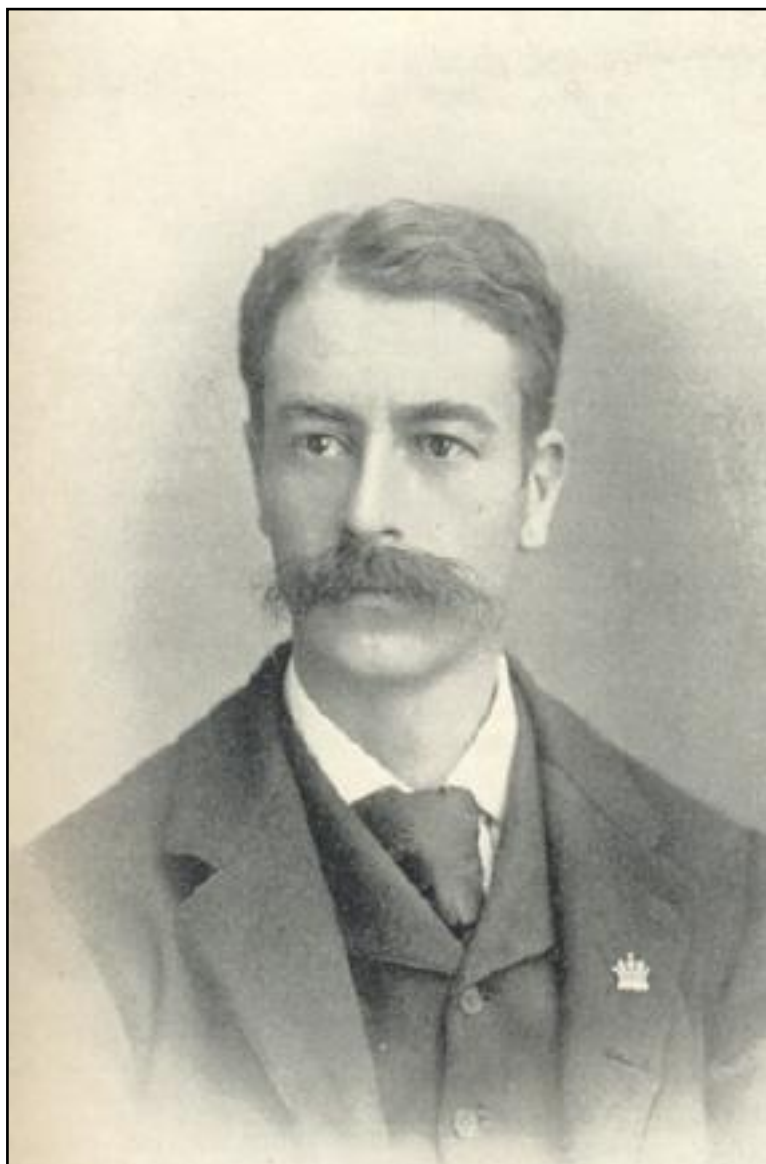
Nf6 ('White's ninth move was in order to prevent ...f5. Without doubt Black should now have played for the advance by 9...g6.') **10 Na3 c6 11 Nc4 Bc7 12 Ne3 Nh5** ('If 12...cxd5 13 Bb5+, followed by 14 Nxd5. Nor can Black well castle, on account of 13 Nh4, threatening to establish a knight at f5.') **13 g3 g6 14 b4** ('Intending no doubt 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 b5, when it would be difficult to prevent the posting of the white knight at d5.') **14...f5** ('It is necessary for Black to attack, but the situation is a critical one.') **15 Ng2** ('15 dxc6 might have been tried as an alternative to prevent 15...f4, for if then 15...f4 16 cxb7, followed by Bb5+ and Nd5.') **15...cxd5 16 exd5** ('Preferable certainly seems 16 Bb5+ and if 16...Bd7 17 exf5, with the threat of Nxe5 or Bg5 presently.') **16...Nf7** ('In order to keep the queen's bishop out.') **17 Re1 O-O** ('Black has now an excellent position.') **18 Nd4 Qf6 19 Nb5 Bb6 20 bxa5 Bxa5 21 Be2 Ng7 22 Bd2 Bd7 23 Rf1 Rac8 24 c4 Bb6 25 Be3 Bxe3 26 fxe3 Ng5** ('Of course an attack by ...g5 might be on the cards, but Black prefers the safer plan of ...Ne4 and ...Nc5, thus first securing the queen's side.') **27 Nc3** ('Bad, as yielding the opponent a splendid opportunity for a king's side assault.') **27...f4 28 Qc2** ('If 28 gxf4 exf4, attacking the knight.') **28...f3 29 Nh4** ('If the bishop moves, 29...Nh3+, followed by 30...fxg2+') **29...Nf5**



30 Rxf3 ('If 30 Nxf5 Bxf5 31 Bd3 f2+, etc.') **30...Nxf3+ 31 Nxf3 Nxe3 32 Qb1 Nxc4 33 Ne4 Qd8 34 Qxb7 Na5 35 Qb4 Bg4 36 Rf1 Bh3 37 Re1 Rb8 38 Qxd6 Qxd6 39 Nxd6 Rb2 40 Bd1 Rg2+ 41 Kh1 Rf2 42 Ne4 R2xf3 43 Bxf3 Rxf3 44 d6 Rf1+ 45 Rxf1 Bxf1 46 Kg1 Bd3** ('Not 46...Bh3 on account of 47 g4.') **47 Nf6+ Kf7 48 Nxh7 Ke6 49 Kf2 Kxd6 50 Ke3 Bc2 51 h4 Nc4+ 52 Ke2 Kd5 53 g4 Kd4** ('The ending is a good one for the 'gallery'; either the king or pawn must advance with immediate effect.') **54 Nf8 Bd3+ 55 Ke1 Ke3 56 h5 gxh5** ('Unnecessary; Black has a mate in four moves here.') **57 gxh5 Be2 58 Nd7 Na3 59 White resigns.**

It is instructive to compare the above notes with those by Pillsbury in the Hastings,

1895 tournament book (edited by Horace F. Cheshire) and, for a modern view, with the annotations of Colin Crouch in the 1995 monograph on the tournament which he co-wrote with Kean Haines. Pillsbury's final note read, 'Rather an amusing finish to a very interesting game'.



William Henry Krause Pollock

Who, then, was this man who gathered many scalps yet seemed primarily concerned with playing exquisite chess and regularly switched to what today would be called 'hacking mode'? William Henry Krause Pollock was born in Cheltenham, England on 21 February 1859, the son of the Rev. William J. Pollock, and was educated at Clifton College and Somersetshire College, Bath. He studied for the medical profession and in 1882 qualified as a licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. The same year his first published game and problem appeared in the unlikely setting of the Irish publication *The Practical Farmer*. As his chess strength developed he became a regular participant in British tournaments, attracting more

attention for individual games than for his final standing. In 1889 he went to North America, settling in Baltimore, Maryland. He returned to England in 1895, and the October issue of that year's *BCM* (page 414) described him as 'a tallish good-looking fellow, courteous and pleasant, with poetic fancies both in chess and words, and who sits far back with arms resting on his knees and face almost touching the board, so that it seemed hardly possible for him to view the whole'. He was indeed an accomplished writer, although he left only one book, on the St Petersburg, 1895-96 tournament, jointly written with James Mason.

By then his health was already in grave decline, and as the obituary in the November 1896 *BCM* (pages 441-446) was later to report, 'his friends were, however, much pained with his altered appearance, for signs were evident that the fell disease consumption was sapping his constitution'. Despite their appeals, he travelled to Montreal in early 1896, but stayed in North America for only a few months. In his final column for the *Baltimore News*, dated 8 August 1896, he bade farewell:

'With very great regret, I have to announce that I am obliged to abdicate the chair of chess editor of this column. Serious and prolonged trouble of (at least) a bronchial nature has compelled my severance from my many delightful chess associations in this country, and I am due to sail for my paternal home in Bristol on this day, if perchance complete rest and home treatment may effect a restoration.'

Pollock died at 5 Berkeley Square, Clifton, Bristol on 5 October 1896. He was 37.

Never was his career better summarized than in the *BCM* obituary:

'In the early days of Mr Pollock's chess career, many people thought that in him a future English champion would be forthcoming, and the glories of Staunton and Blackburne be revived if not eclipsed. But this expectation was not fulfilled, and Pollock's chess career must be regarded as a fragment rather than a whole. Yet it is a fragment no British lover of chess would willingly part with, for it is full of beautiful promise and adorned with many chess gems of rare brilliancy. With great gifts for the game he never attained the highest rank among the Masters, though it may be doubted whether any one of them excelled him in actual and potential genius for the game. In chess, however, he was an idealist. He worshipped at the shrine of the beautiful. He was not content to do what he could do easily and well, but strove after the absolute – his own perception of the perfect. He was above all an artist at the chessboard. It was not merely "the mate" that he pursued, but the beauty of the mate; he did not merely want to

win, he always wanted to win in the most artistic manner. And in this pursuit of the ideal, the practical often suffered. Had he been more self-seeking, the chess world would have heard more of him personally. Neither nature nor art had fitted him to be his own trumpeter; he loved chess for its own sake, and not for the gain it might bring him, or the reputation he might attain by its means.'

As a concluding *bonne bouche*, there follows a very difficult problem composed by Pollock:



Mate in two

The position is illegal but provides a stiff challenge. Mrs Rowland's book (page 158) reported that 'this very peculiar and highly original problem was composed by Mr Pollock on the occasion of giving a lesson on the art of composing at the Baltimore Chess Association'.

Afterword: This article first appeared at the Chess Café in 1998 and was included in *A Chess Omnibus* (pages 227-233). In the latter source we mentioned that *Pollock Memories* was reprinted by Moravian Chess, circa 2001.

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