

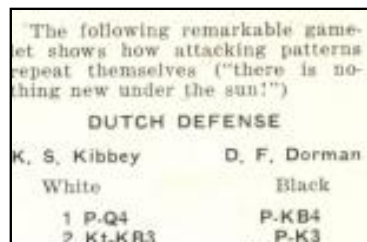
Chaos in a Miniature

Edward Winter



First, a quiz question which should defeat even the most knowledgeable chess enthusiast. Name the player who, in the above position, sacrificed his queen with 11 Qxh7+.

Edward Lasker is the obvious reply, since his brilliancy against George Thomas is one of the most celebrated games in chess literature, but the correct answer is K.S. Kibbey, against D.F. Dorman. Their encounter went 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 O-O 8 Bd3 Kh8 9 Ne5 b6 10 Qh5 Bb7 11 Qxh7+ Kxh7 12 Nxf6+ Kh6 13 Neg4+ Kg5 14 f4+ Kh4 15 g3+ Kh3 16 Bf1+ Bg2 17 Nf2 mate, according to page 176 of *Chess Review*, August-September 1942. Presenting the game, Fred Reinfeld remarked, 'there is nothing new under the sun', by which he was, of course, referring to the Lasker v Thomas precedent. That game, though, did not reach the position in the above diagram, since Thomas moved his queen to e7 and did not play his king to h8.



DUTCH DEFENSE

K. S. Kibbey D. F. Dorman

White	Black
1 P-Q4	P-KB4
2 Kt-KB3	P-K3
3 Kt-B3	Kt-KB3
4 B-Kt5

White's last two moves indicate his intention of playing P-K4 very quickly and thus opening up the game to his advantage.

4 B-K2?

Much too passive. Correct was the characteristic pin so often seen in this opening: 4 . . . B-Kt5! The indifferent text allows White to achieve his object.

5 BxKt	BxB
6 P-K4	PxP
7 KtxP	O-O
8 B-Q3	K-R1?

Black does not realize how full of danger his position has become even at this early stage. . . . P-Q3 should have been played, preventing the following sorties of the White Kk and Queen.

9 Kt-K5?

Premature, as Black could have demonstrated with 9 . . . BxKt; 10 PxB, R-B4.

9	P-Qk3?
10 Q-R5	B-Kt2

White's last move was absolutely decisive: if 10 . . . Q-K1; 11 KtxB wins. Or if 10 . . . BxKt; 11 Kt-B6, P-KR3; 12 Q-Kt6 and wins.

11 QxPch!?

White can hardly be blamed for playing for a pretty mate; yet 11 KtxB wins immediately (11 . . . P-KR3; 12 Kt-Kt6 mate!).

11	KxQ
12 KtxBch	K-R3
13 Kt(5)-Kt4ch	K-Kt4
14 P-B4ch	K-R5

If 14 . . . KxP; 15 P-Kt3ch, K-B6; 16 O-O mate!

15 P-Kt3ch	K-R6
16 B-B1ch	B-Kt7
17 Kt-B2 mate!	

Compare the famous game between Ed. Lasker and Sir George Thomas (London, 1912): 1 P-Q4, P-KB4; 2 Kt-KB3, P-K3; 3 Kt-B3, Kt-KB3; 4 B-Kt5, B-K2; 5 BxKt, BxB; 6 P-K4, PxP; 7 KtxP, P-Qk3; 8 B-Q3, B-Kt2; 9 Kt-K5, O-O; 10 Q-R5, Q-K2? 11 QxPch!! KxQ; 12 KtxBch, K-R3; 13 Kt(5)-Kt4ch, K-Kt4; 14 P-R4ch (P-B4ch is a move faster), K-B5; 15 P-Kt3 ch, K-B6; 16 B-K2ch, K-Kt7; 17 R-R2ch, K-Kt8; 18 K-Q2 mate!

Lasker v Thomas is also one of the most confusing games in chess literature. Firstly, there is the question of when it was played. Although often misdated as 1911 or 1913 (other years have been seen too), it was played in 1912, and page 26 of the January 1913 issue of *La Stratégie* gave a precise date: 29 October 1912. The French magazine did not present the opening moves; that is the phase where so many discrepancies are to be found, as is shown by the following list:

- 1) 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Bd3 Bb7 9 Ne5 O-O (*Chess for Fun & Chess for Blood* by Edward Lasker, pages 117-123)
- 2) 1 d4 f5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Nf3 e6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7 (*The World's Great Chess Games* by R. Fine, page 147 or pages 147-148 – editions vary)
- 3) 1 d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 e6 5 Nxe4 Be7 6 Bxf6 Bxf6 7 Nf3 O-O 8 Bd3 b6 9 Ne5 Bb7 (*1000 Best Short Games of Chess* by I. Chernev, page 272)
- 4) 1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7 (*Schachjahrbuch für 1912* by L. Bachmann, pages 229-230)
- 5) 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bg5 e6 4 Nc3 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7 (*American Chess Bulletin*, February 1918, page 28 – a feature by Edward Lasker)
- 6) 1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Bd3 Bb7 9 Ne5 O-O (*Chess Life*, June 1981, page 17)
- 7) 1 d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 e6 5 Nxe4 Be7 6 Bxf6 Bxf6 7 Nf3 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7 (*Europe Echecs*, February 1965, page 20)
- 8) 1 d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 e6 5 Nxe4 Be7 6 Bxf6 Bxf6 7 Nf3 b6 8 Bd3 Bb7 9 Ne5 O-O (*Brilliance in Chess* by G. Abrahams, pages 36-37). [For a ninth version, see the Afterword below.]

In addition, version 4 appeared not only in *Deutsches Wochenschach*, 8 December 1912, page 440, and the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, January 1913, pages 6-7, but also in R. Loman's column in *De Amsterdammer*, 17 November 1912.

Two of the sources listed above mention Edward Lasker himself, and we are aware of five occasions when he wrote about the game [for a sixth occasion, see the Afterword below]:

- 1) *American Chess Bulletin*, February 1918, page 28:

'In 1912 I went to England in order to learn the English language, and my first visit, of course, was to the City of London Chess Club. I was lucky enough to win the following game against the club champion, G.A. Thomas, which gave me the best possible introduction: 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bg5 e6 4 Nc3 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 Qh5 Qe7 11 Qxh7 +!! and mate in seven moves.'



Lasker v Thomas. Position before 11 Qxh7+

- 2) *Chess Pie*, 1922, page 13:

'The following game I consider the most beautiful I ever played ... though it was not a tournament game and can, therefore, hardly be classed among the best games'. The score which Lasker then annotated had a different move-order up to move nine, the complete game being presented as follows: 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Bd3 Bb7 9 Ne5 O-O 10 Qh5 Qe7 11 Qxh7+ Kxh7 12 Nxf6+ Kh6 13 Neg4+ Kg5 14 h4+ Kf4 15 g3+ Kf3 16 Be2+ Kg2 17 Rh2+ Kg1



18 Kd2 mate.

Lasker's concluding remark was:

'This game was played in the City of London Chess Club in 1912. A year later, Alekhine called my attention to the fact, discovered in Moscow, where he went over the game with Bernstein, that I could have mated in seven instead of eight moves by playing 16 Kf1 or O-O, as then Black would have been unable to prevent mate by 17 Nh2.'



After 15...Kf3

- 3) *Chess for Fun & Chess for Blood*

Edward Lasker (Philadelphia, 1942), pages 116-126:

by

Lasker gave the date as 1911 and described the encounter as 'a so-called "five-minute" game, i.e. a game played with clocks as fast or as slowly as the players like, but with the condition that neither player must exceed the total time of the other by more than five minutes at any stage'.

The move-order was as in *Chess Pie*

. Lasker related that some years after the game was played he received a letter from a chess club in Australia pointing out that, instead of 14 h4+, 14 f4+ mates one move faster (14 f4+ Kh4 15 g3+ Kh3 16 Bf1+ (or 16 O-O) Bg2 17 Nf2 mate), whereas 14...Kxf4 allows 15 g3+ Kf3 16 O-O mate or 15...Kg5 16 h4 mate.



After 13...Kg5

- 4) *Chess Secrets I Learned from the Masters*

by Edward Lasker (New York, 1951), pages 148-150:

Lasker showed the play from 11 Qxh7+ onwards and praised Thomas' magnanimity in defeat. A footnote on page 149 referred readers to *Chess for Fun & Chess for Blood* for the detailed score.

- 5) *Chess Life*, June 1962, pages 126-127:

In article entitled 'Fifty Years Ago...' Lasker gave the game-score (with the same move-order as in *Chess Pie* and *Chess for Fun & Chess for Blood*) and stated that at move 14 he 'had only about a minute to spare'. He mentioned the above quicker mates and commented as follows on his choice of 18 Kd2 rather than 18 O-O-O:

'Instead of checkmating with Kd2 I could have done it by castling, which would perhaps have been more spectacular, as no player has ever been mated that way before, as far as I know. I actually considered castling, but the efficiency-minded engineer got the better of it and I played Kd2 which required moving only one piece.'

Mate by castling had, in fact, already been seen at that time, as noted in our [Factfinder](#) under 'Castling, Mate by'.

Lasker continued in *Chess Life*:

'Emanuel Lasker published this game in his chess column in the Berlin daily paper *B.Z. am Mittag* under the heading "The tragi-comic journey of the black king". Apparently he did not see the shorter version 14 f4+ either. It was not called to my notice until seven years later, at the end of World War I, when I received a letter from Australia, where master Purdy had discovered the variation.'

This reference to 'master Purdy' is also strange, given that in 1919 (seven years after the game was played) C.J.S. Purdy was barely a teenager.

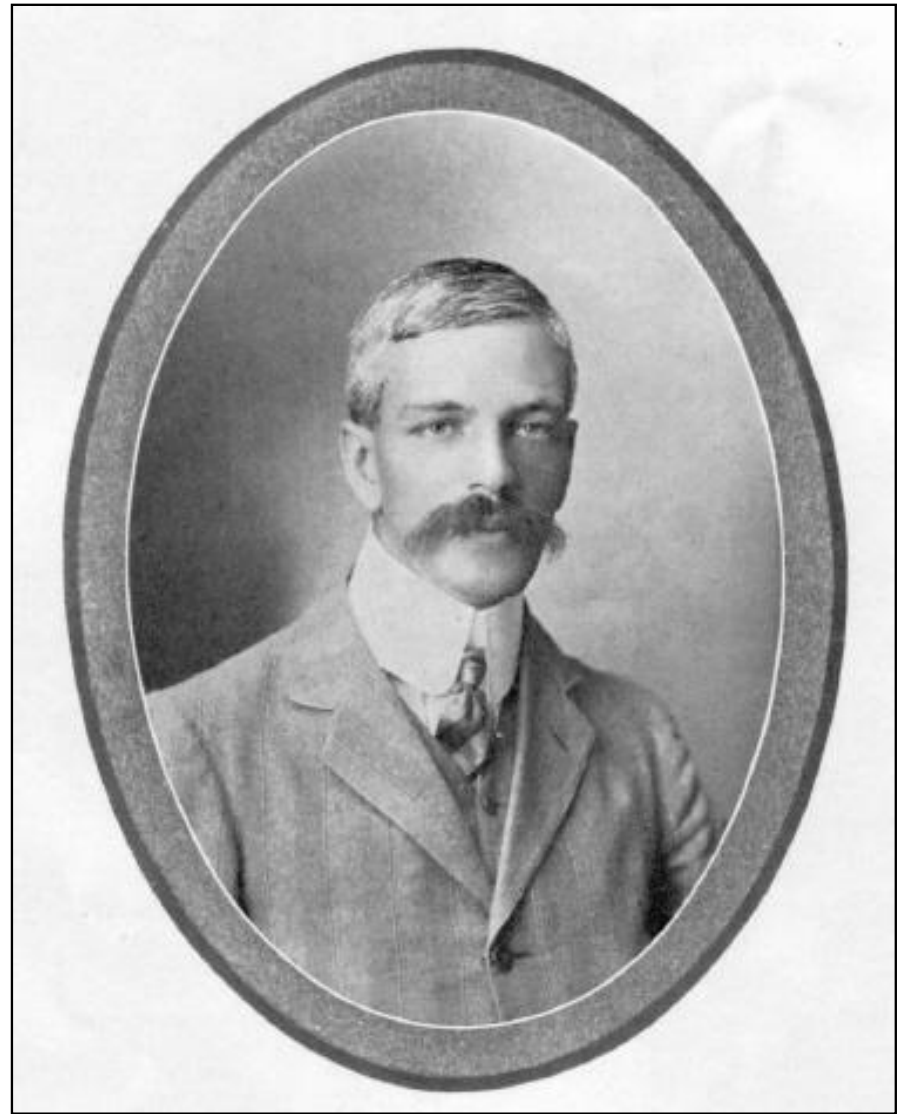
In *Chess Life* Edward Lasker then gave a different version of the 'old man' anecdote which had appeared on page 124 of *Chess for Fun & Chess for Blood* and supplied details of his arrival in the United States in late 1914 which are at variance with reports in that year's *American Chess Bulletin* (e.g. the November 1914 issue, page 233).

In short, Lasker himself was responsible for so many mistakes and self-contradictions in his accounts of the game that it is hardly surprising that numerous other writers have misreported it too. Pages 163-164 of *How to Win in the Middle Game of Chess* by I.A. Horowitz (New York, 1955) stated that the game was played in 1915, claimed that the opening moves were 1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 Nc3 Nf6, did not mention the faster mates and had as the mating move not 18 Kd2 but 18 O-O-O. Mate by castling was also given in the score (which began 1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7) presented on page 234 of the *Chess Amateur*, May 1913, courtesy of *Magyar Sakkvilág*. On page 25 of *The Daily Telegraph Chess Puzzles* (London, 1995) David Norwood offered a wrong date (1910) and the wrong circumstances (it was not a 'blitz game'), and on page 33 he did not mention the faster mates that Lasker missed. It was also described as a 'blitz game' on pages 88-89 of

Queen Sacrifice by I. Neishtadt (Oxford, 1991), which dated it 1911. In contrast, 1913/1914 was the information on page 89 of *Șah Cartea de Aur* by Constantin Ștefaniu (Bucharest, 1982). Page 28 of *666 Kurzpartien* by Kurt Richter (Berlin-Frohnau, 1966) dated the game 1921 and called Black 'Sir Thomas'. On page 115 (printed as page 11) of *Der Weg zur Meisterschaft* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1919) Franz Gutmayer gave the conclusion as 11 Qxh7+ Kxh7 12 Nxf6+ Kh8 13 Ng6 mate.

Below is an attempt to summarize what may reliably be said about the game:

- It was played by Ed. Lasker and George Thomas at the City of London Chess Club in late 1912.
- It was an informal game in which neither player could at any point exceed his opponent's time by more than five minutes.
- Lasker's mating move was 18 Kd2 and not 18 O-O-O.
- The most likely order of the opening moves is version 4 (the earliest sources) in the list above, which would give this complete game-score: 1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 Qh5 Qe7 11 Qxh7 + Kxh7 12 Nxf6+ Kh6 13 Neg4+ Kg5 14 h4+ Kf4 15 g3+ Kf3 16 Be2+ Kg2 17 Rh2+ Kg1 18 Kd2 mate.



Ed. Lasker and George Thomas

Although the game is familiarly referred to as 'Edward Lasker v Sir George Thomas', such a heading would be impossible in a contemporary source, since Eduard Lasker had yet to become Edward, and George Thomas was not yet a baronet.

Lasker's victory with 11 Qxh7+ is not his only recorded game against Thomas in London in 1912. Here is another contest played under the same conditions (i.e. with a maximum gap of five minutes permissible between their clock times):

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 d5 4 exd5 Qxd5 5 cxd4 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bg4 7 Be3 Nf6 8 Nc3 Qh5 9 Be2 Bd6 10 h3 O-O 11 Rc1 Rfe8 12 a3 Rad8
 13 Nb5 Bxf3 14 gxf3



14...Bf4 15 Qd3 Ne5 16 Qb3 Nxf3+ 17 Kd1 Nxd4 18 Nxd4 Rxd4+ 19 Ke1 Rxe3 20 White resigns.

Source: *Deutsches Wochenschach*

, 8 December 1912, page 440.

440 Deutsches Wochenschach und Berliner Schachzeitung.

Partie 4744.

Diese und die nächste Partie wurden im City of London-Klub gespielt. Es sind sog. Fünf-Minuten-Spiele. Es wird nach der Uhr gespielt, ohne die Züge zu zählen und ohne Beschränkung der Bedenkfrist, nur darf keine Uhr je die andere um 5 Minuten überschreiten.

Mittelgambit.

G. A. Thomas. Ed. Lasker.

1. e2—e4 e7—e5 2. d2—d4 e5—d4: 3. c2—c3 d7—d5! 4. e4—d5: Dd8—d6: 5. c3—d4: Sb8—c6 6. Sg1—f3 Lc8—g4

7. Lc1 — e3 Sg8 — f6
 8. Sb1 — c3 Dd5 — h5

Nicht Lb4, denn Schwarz hat kein

16. Dd3 — b3 Se5 — f3†
 17. Ke1 — d1 Sf3 — d4:
 18. Sb5 — d4: Td8 — d4†
 19. Kd1 — e1 Te8 — e3:
 Aufgegeben.

Partie 4745.

Holländisch.

Ed. Lasker. G. A. Thomas.

1. d2—d4 e7—e6 2. Sg1—f3 f7—f5 3. Sb1—c3 Sg8—f6 4. Lc1—g5 Lf8—e7 5. Lg5—f6: Le7—f8: 6. e2—e4 f5—e4:
 7. Sc3 — e4: b7 — b6

e2-c3 d7-d5! 4. e4-d5: Dd8-d5: 5. c3-d4: Sb8-e6 6. Sg1-f3 Lc8-g4

7. Lc1-e3 Sg8-f6
8. Sb1-c3 Dd5-h5

Nicht Lb4, denn Schwarz hat kein Interesse daran, durch Abtausch seines L dem Bd4 eine natürliche Deckung zu verschaffen.

9. Lf1-e2 Lf8-d6
10. h2-h3

Ein Hindernis für die Rochade. Besser erscheint Sd2.

10. . . . 0-0

Schwarz bringt das Übergewicht seiner Entwicklung jetzt rasch zur Geltung.

11. Ta1-c1 Tf8-e8
12. a2-a3 Ta8-d8
13. Sc3-b5

Immer noch erscheint Sd2 am besten. Der Textzug ist der Anfang vom Ende.



13. . . . Lg4-f3:
14. g2-f3: Ld6-f4!

Um natürlich auf Lf4: mit Df3: fortzuführen.

15. Dd1-d3

Oder 15. Db3 a7-a6 usw. mit gleichem Ausgang.

15. . . . Sc6-e5

Ed. Lasker. G. A. Thomas.

1. d2-d4 e7-e6 2. Sg1-f3 f7-f5 3. Sb1-c3 Sg8-f6 4. Lc1-g5 Lf8-e7 5. Lg5-f6: Lc7-f6: 6. e2-e4 f5-e4:

7. Sc3-e4: b7-b6
8. Sf3-e5 0-0
9. Lf1-d3 Lc8-b7
10. Dd1-h5 Dd8-e7

Richtig war Lf6-e5: 11. Sf5+ Tf6: 12. Dh7+ Kf7 13. Dh5+ mit Remisschluß (13. . . . Ke7+ 14. Dg7+ Tf7 15. De5: mit guten Aussichten). Der Textzug ermöglicht einen eleganten Schluß.



Weiß kündigte Matt in 7 Zügen an:
(1. Dh7+ 2. Sg5+ 3. Sg5-f6 4. Lf6-e5 5. Lf6-g6 6. Lf6-g7 7. Lf6-h8 8. Lf6-g7 9. Lf6-h8 10. Lf6-g7 11. Lf6-h8 12. Lf6-g7 13. Lf6-h8 14. Lf6-g7 15. Lf6-h8)

Partie 4716.

3. Partie des Wettkampfes, Hamburger Schachheim, 25. November 1911 (*Hamb. Fremdenbl.*)

Spanisch.

H. Süchting. P. S. Leonhardt.

1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. Sg1-f3 Sb8-c6 3. Lf1-b5 a7-a6 4. Lb5-a4 Sg8-f6 5. 0-0 Lf8-e7 6. Tf1-e1 b7-b5 7. La4-b3 d7-d6 8. e2-c3 Sc6-a5 9. Lb3-c2 e7-e5 10. h2-h3 Sa5-c6

Reverting to the queen-sacrifice game, published on the same page, we add a further discrepancy: after 10...Qe7 Lasker is said by the German magazine to have announced mate in seven (although the line comprised eight moves). Page 100 of *Schnell Matt* by Claudius Hüther (Munich, 1913), the first book in which we have found the brilliancy, stated that after 10...Qe7 White announced mate in eight moves.

Later, the game was even attributed to *Emanuel* of *Emanuel Lasker Volume 3* game (11 Qxh7+ Resigns) was taken from *Els Escacs a Catalunya* this connection, one final complication arises from a paragraph on page 239 of the September 1941 *BCM*

Lasker (versus an unnamed opponent). See, for instance, page 85 by K. Whyld (Nottingham, 1976); the

. In

Our esteemed contemporary, the *South African Chess Magazine*, usually a model of accuracy, states that the Dutch Defence, won by Edward Lasker in an off-hand encounter against Sir George Thomas at the City of London Chess Club in 1913 (not 1912 as the S.A.C.M. states), is wrongly attributed to Dr. Emanuel Lasker. It is, in fact, one of the few known cases of the same game being played twice and, as can be seen from Dr. Lasker's *Manual*, his version was played many years before his namesake brought off the same *coup*. But there was a difference. Dr. Lasker's last move was Castles mate, whilst Edward Lasker's last move was K—Q 2 mate. It is an open question which version is the more artistic.

On page 261 of its October 1941 issue the *BCM* corrected itself regarding the date of the Ed. Lasker game (1912, not 1913), but on a far more important point the magazine remained oblivious: no such game-score appeared in Lasker's *Manual*. A similar remark about Emanuel Lasker having previously played the game was made by the *BCM* editor, Julius du Mont, on page 240 of his book *200 Miniature Games of Chess* (London, 1941), but we are aware of no dependable evidence that Emanuel Lasker ever played a game identical or similar to the Ed. Lasker v G. Thomas one.

Note: This article is a digest, slightly expanded, of various C.N. items about the Lasker v Thomas miniature, as listed in our [Factfinder](#).

Afterword: C.N. 5172 reported that Lasker also published the game on pages 216-217 of the second edition of his book *Schachstrategie* (Leipzig, 1914). Remarkably, that yields a ninth version of the first nine moves: 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Bxf6 Bxf6 6 e4 fxe4 7 Nxe4 b6 8 Ne5 O-O 9 Bd3 Bb7.

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