

Lessons from Paul Morphy

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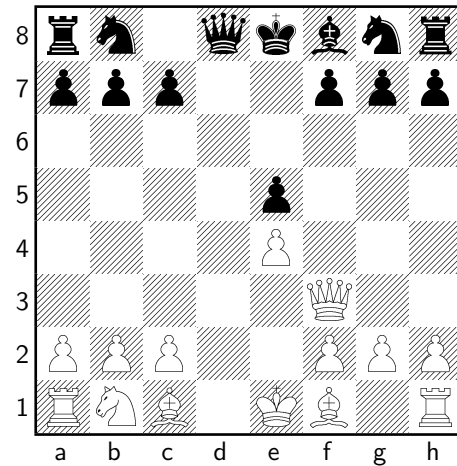
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Morphy is probably the best player for the beginning player to study. Alas there are precious few games to go on, for he lived before the growth in international tournaments and was denied a match by Staunton.

Morphy more or less perfected the art of winning in open games: smooth, fast development, opening up lines for the attack, dynamic piece play throughout the game, ruthless cashing in of advantages, wonderfully imaginative combination play. Even against inferior opposition he plays with great energy and balance.

1 Morphy - Duke/Count [C41] paris, 1858

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♗g4 4 dxe5 ♗xf3 5 ♖xf3 dxe5

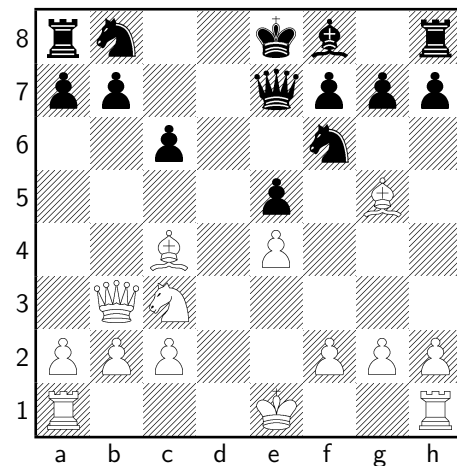


Morphy had many contemporaries who could attack as well as he, but more than anyone Morphy knew how to create an attack out of the opening through accurate play. Here he already has a development advantage and the two bishops.

6 ♗c4 ♘f6 7 ♖b3

keeping the initiative going

7... ♖e7 8 ♘c3 c6 9 ♗g5

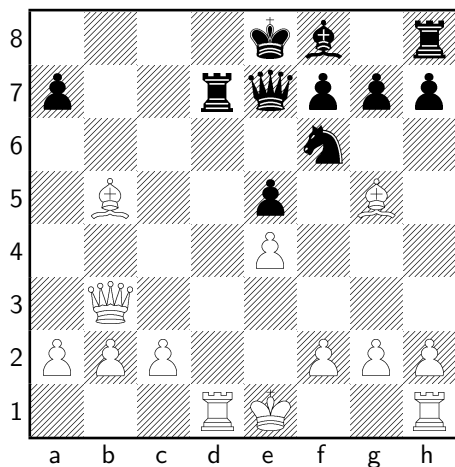


White needs only two more moves to complete his development - breathtakingly efficient work.

9... b5

just the wrong sort of move

10 ♖xb5 cxb5 11 ♗xb5+ ♜bd7 12 0-0-0
 Black's pieces are treading on each other's toes.
 12... ♜d8 13 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 14 ♜d1



a nicely-coordinated crossfire of pins

14... ♜e6 15 ♗xd7+ ♜xd7 16 ♜b8+

apparently dramatic...

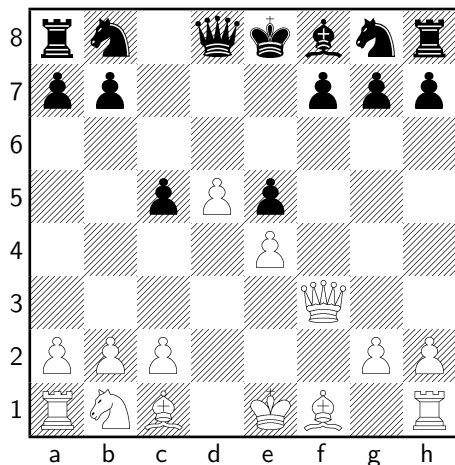
16... ♜xb8 17 ♜d8#

this masterpiece of economic development and slashing attack has become rightly famous; the final position is very neat

1-0

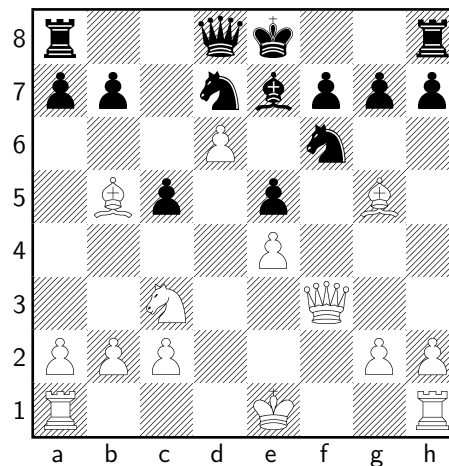
2 Morphy - Meek [A43] new orleans, 1857

1 e4 e6 2 d4 c5 3 d5 e5 4 f4 d6 5 ♜f3 ♗g4 6
 fxe5 ♗xf3 7 ♜xf3 dxe5



White has a development advantage and a passed d-pawn, all in seven moves!

8 ♗b5+ ♜d7 9 ♜c3 ♜gf6 10 ♗g5 ♗e7 11 d6



a decoy

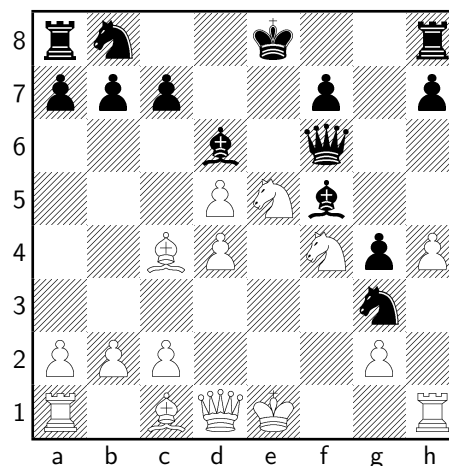
11... ♗xd6 12 0-0-0

1-0

Very deft.

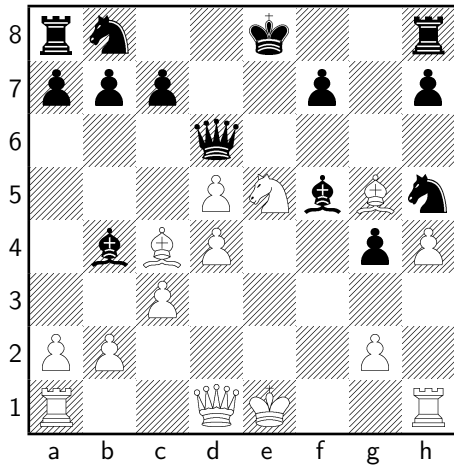
3 Morphy - Medley [C39] london, 1858

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 ♜f3 g5 4 h4 g4 5 ♜e5 ♜f6
 6 ♗c4 d5 7 exd5 ♗d6 8 d4 ♜h5 9 ♜c3 ♗f5 10
 ♜e2 ♜f6 11 ♜xf4 ♜g3



a confused picture, where White's central hold is perhaps more secure

12 ♜h5 ♜xh5 13 ♗g5 ♗b4+[13... ♜g7] 14 c3
 ♜d6

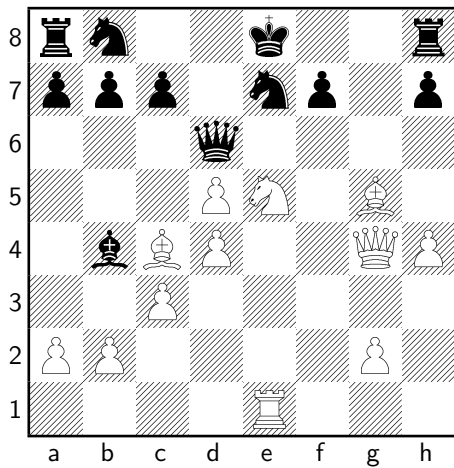


White is offered material...

15 0-0

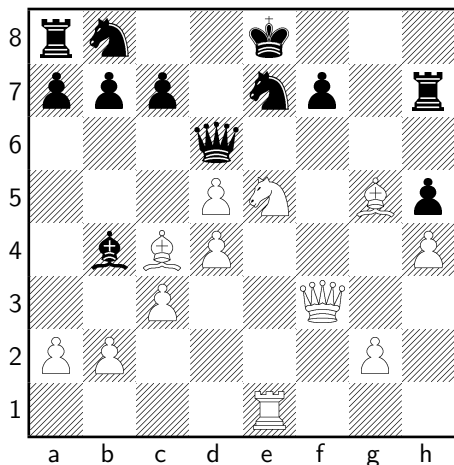
...but completing development is more important

15... ♖g7 16 ♜xf5 ♘xf5 17 ♚xg4 ♘e7 18 ♜e1



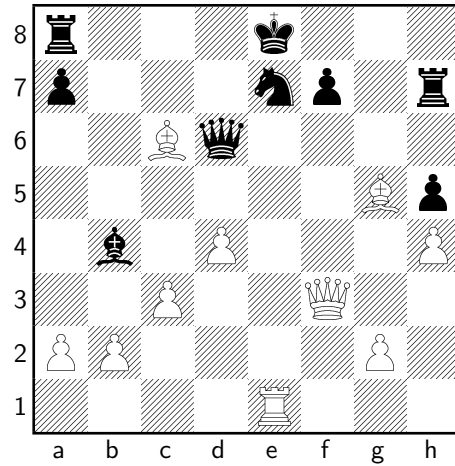
the last White piece enters the fight, and Black faces early defeat

18... h5 19 ♜f3 ♜h7



Well, White's pieces are well-placed, but how to push Black over the edge?

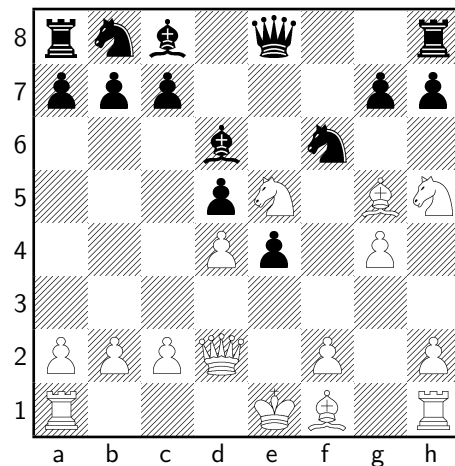
20 ♙b5+ c6 21 dxc6 bxc6 22 ♘xc6 ♘bxc6 23 ♙xc6+



the White force is perfectly coordinated and Black is helpless to defend all his pieces 1-0

4 Bird - Morphy [C41] london, 1858

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5 4 ♘c3 fxe4 5 ♘xe4
d5 6 ♘g3 e4 7 ♘e5 ♘f6 8 ♙g5 ♙d6 9 ♘h5
0-0 10 ♜d2 ♜e8 11 g4

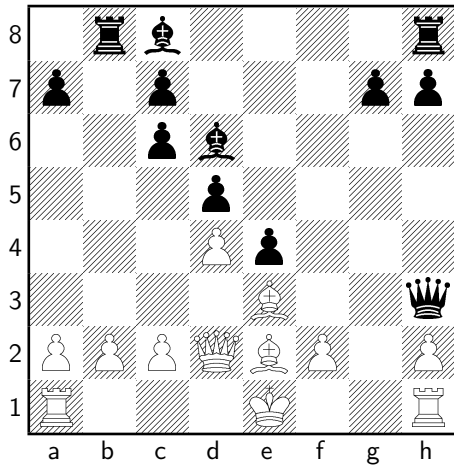


White is pushing his luck

11... ♘xc6 12 ♘xc6 ♜xh5 13 ♘e5 ♘c6

Black is achieving his usual brisk development

14 ♙e2 ♜h3 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♙e3 ♜b8 17
0-0-0



not an easy decision

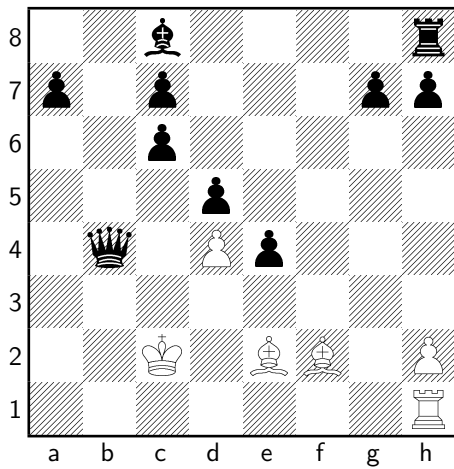
17... ♖xf2

bold but probably too optimistic

18 ♔xf2 ♖a3

the point

19 c3 ♖xa2 20 b4 ♖a1+ 21 ♔c2 ♖a4+ 22 ♔b2 ♔xb4 23 cxb4 ♖xb4+ 24 ♖xb4 ♖xb4+ 25 ♔c2



Black has some material back, and his initiative persists

25... e3

a clearance sacrifice

26 ♔xe3 ♔f5+ 27 ♖d3 ♖c4+ 28 ♔d2 ♖a2+ 29 ♔d1 ♖b1+

White is in an insoluble muddle 0-1