



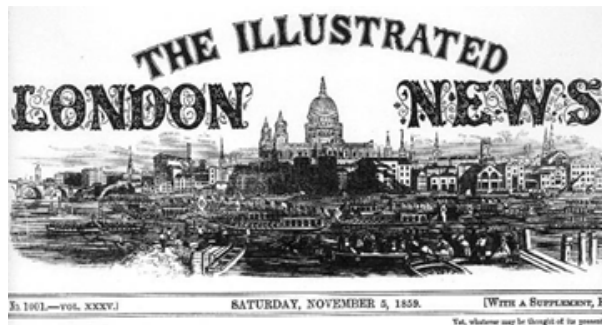
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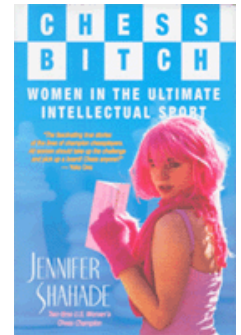
## Judy, a Forgotten Genius of the 1850s Part One

Rod Edwards

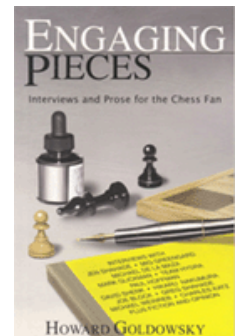
Women had few opportunities for over-the-board chess in the nineteenth century (and, one might add, well into the twentieth). This accounts, at least in part, for the fact that there were exceptional women correspondence players and problemists but not over-the-board players. For example, Ellen Gilbert is well known as a master-level correspondence player of the late 1870s and Edith Winter-Wood and Frideswide Rowland (née Beechey) as brilliant problemists at the end of the nineteenth century. There were other women of considerable talent even earlier in the century, however, who are now by-and-large forgotten. One such woman, known only as ‘Judy’ or ‘Stella,’ was considered by Staunton to be “the very first female chess genius of this or perhaps any former age,” and to play “with the spirit of true genius, which she assuredly possesses in no common degree.” Kling and Horwitz judged her as “first-rate.” (The term “first rate” may be meant in a technical sense here. In this era, a player was said to be of the “first rank” or “first rate” when too strong to be given odds of Pawn and Move even by the strongest players of the day.) Little information is available about her, not even her true name, but the information we have is tantalizing. Our knowledge of Judy comes from her correspondence with various chess magazines and columns in the early 1850s, including many problems and a few games she submitted for publication.



It was common, though not universal, at that time to correspond under a pseudonym or sobriquet, which was often just the correspondent’s initials, but sometimes a more fanciful name (this practice is entirely parallel to the modern use of ‘handles’ for Internet chat, blogs, etc., e.g. ‘Batgirl’). One of the most popular chess columns in the mid-nineteenth century was Staunton’s in the weekly *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*), in which answers were given to hundreds of correspondents over the years. Scanning the columns of the early 1850s, one sees a scattering of clearly female names, such as ‘Annabel’, ‘Bessie’, ‘Camilla’ and ‘A Lady.’ Of course, we can’t know in most cases whether these were their real names or even if they were really women, though there is no compelling reason to believe otherwise. ‘Agnes,’ for example, fairly frequently sent in correct solutions to problems in the early 1850s. But very few of these correspondents with clearly female names submitted problems themselves (which does not, of course, rule out the possibility that some problemists using their initials or other names were women). Staunton had two numbered series of problems going in the *ILN*. A series of ‘Enigmas’ was



[Chess Bitch: Women in the Ultimate Intellectual Sport](#)  
by Jennifer Shahade



[Engaging Pieces](#)  
by Howard Goldowsky

published frequently, though irregularly, often several in one column, with just a list of piece positions rather than a diagram, and each column (with only very occasional exceptions) had one 'Problem' singled out and printed with a diagram. A problem by 'Mary Jane' was reported as received by Staunton on August 17, 1850 but seems not to have been published (unless 'Mary Jane' was also 'A Lady'). A problem by 'A Lady' was printed as Enigma No. 599 on August 31, 1850, and 'Sophia' was the author of Enigmas No. 689, 779 and 783, printed in the October 25, 1851, December 18, 1852 and December 25, 1852 issues, respectively. These were the only problems in the *ILN* under clearly female names from 1850–1854, other than those by Judy (and I have checked carefully up to mid-1857).

Judy stands out as a very frequent correspondent to the *ILN*. She submitted correct solutions to about half the main Problems printed between the August 17, 1850 and March 26, 1853 issues and to the Enigmas more than once a month, on average, between the October 26, 1850 and December 25, 1852 issues. But she also became an accomplished problemist in her own right and, by my count, thirty-five of her problems in total were published (twenty-six as Enigmas, nine as Problems) in the *ILN* between the September 14, 1850 and January 21, 1854 issues (I checked back to the beginning of 1850 and to June 1857). Her chess problems also appeared in the *Chess Players' Chronicle (CPC)*, also edited by Staunton, eighteen of them from the February 1851 issue to the February 1853 issue, in *The Chess Player*, edited by Kling and Horwitz, six of them between the October 18, 1851 and November 1852 issues, in the chess column of the *Gateshead Observer*, at least three problems between February 1 and October 18, 1851 (I have not checked this source for 1850), and in the *Home Circle* magazine, whose chess column seems to have been run by Kling and Horwitz also, since they appear in the list of contributors to the magazine (two problems: in the August 23, 1851 and the April 17, 1852 issues). The two problems appearing in the *Home Circle* were reprinted from the *Gateshead Observer*, one from *The Chess Player* was a copy of one appearing about the same time in the *ILN*, and one in the *CPC* was reprinted in corrected form with a new number, so the list above represents a total of (35+17+5 +3 =) sixty problems by Judy.

Her problems were difficult and received considerable praise for beauty and ingenuity, though she was occasionally prone to error. Perhaps her most notable problem was the one she entitled 'Stella,' appearing first in the *CPC* of April 1852. It was afterwards discovered to be slightly flawed and was reprinted in corrected form in the October 1852 issue (the position was also given in the *ILN* the same month). Judy must have been enamoured of this problem herself, because she decided to change her own sobriquet thenceforth to 'Stella'. Six of her games were published in the *CPC* between May 1851 and April 1853, and these were also praised.

We get some sense of Judy and how she was perceived by reading the one-sided responses to her correspondence and from other comments in these magazines and columns. Here is a roughly chronological selection.

Judy first appears in August 1850:

Solutions of Problem No 342, by ...Judy...are correct  
*August 17, 1850 (ILN, p.135)*

She appears to have wasted no time at all in starting to compose, though not so successfully at first:

JUDY will, perhaps, oblige us by adopting another sobriquet, and sending us a correct version of the Problem. The one previously forwarded is palpably erroneous.  
*August 24, 1850 (ILN, p.174)*

We have no idea why Staunton didn't like her choice of sobriquet.

Problem No. 345 was a particularly difficult one “from the forthcoming work on End Games, by Messrs. Horwitz and Kling.” (*ILN*, p.191, August 31, 1850). The following week only two correct solutions are listed:

Solutions of No. 345 by Judy, St. Edmunds, are correct. All others are wrong.

*September 7, 1850 (ILN, p.207)*

Another correspondent noticed this and Staunton’s reply is interesting:

Mac M – Our correspondent ‘Judy’ is a lady; and, however incredible it may appear to ‘Mac M,’ the *first* party who furnished us with the true solution of the extremely difficult Problem No. 345.

*September 14, 1850 (ILN, p.231)*

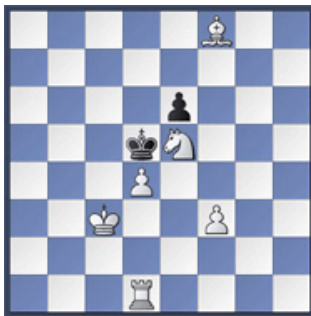
I find this interesting, first in what it reveals about Mac M’s view of women, but even more because of Staunton’s objectivity and willingness to acknowledge Judy’s obvious skill in problem-solving. Furthermore, it confirms that ‘Judy’ was a woman and apparently of the higher classes.

By this time, Judy had presumably corrected her own problem, since it appeared the same week as

Enigma No. 606 – By ‘Judy’

White: K at Q B 3d, R at Q sq, B at K B 8th, Kt at K 5th, Ps at K B 3d and Q 4th.

Black: K at Q 4th, P at K 3d.



White to play, and mate in three moves.

*September 14, 1850 (ILN, p.231)*

She was soon pointing out flaws in other people’s problems:

Judy, J E C, and others – The Enigma of G O C, No. 604, can undoubtedly be solved in four moves, by first playing the B to K 5th.

*September 21, 1850 (ILN, p.252)*

This Enigma had been given two weeks earlier as a mate in five.

We learn that Judy took a wider interest in chess affairs. Recall that the first international congress was being planned at this time:

Judy – 1. The arrangements for the projected assemblage next year are not yet matured; when they are completed, full particulars will be published. In the meanwhile, all parties (our friend ‘Judy’ included) wishing for information on the subject, should put themselves in communication with the Editor of the ‘Chess Magazine.’ ...2. The Game and Problems shall be reported next week. 3. Examine Enigma 607 once more.

*September 21, 1850 (ILN, p.252)*

At this stage, Judy seemed to be churning out problems enthusiastically, but had not yet mastered the art, and caused Staunton some confusion with her submissions and corrections:

JUDY – Your No 4 is neat, but far from difficult. Of the previous ones, No. 1 is incorrect, and No. 2 solvable in seven, instead of eight moves.

*September 28, 1850 (ILN, p.263)*

JUDY – Always acceptable. The best shall have early insertion.

*October 5, 1850 (ILN, p.279)*

JUDY – We have got so perplexed, we are ashamed to say, with the alterations and exchanges of our fair friend's pretty diagrams, that we hardly know 'which is which.' Perhaps she will be good enough to compassionate us, and single out those she has thoroughly examined, and we will then report on them seriatim.

*October 19, 1850 (ILN, p.311)*

JUDY – To what book of diagrams do you refer? We have received none. Pray favour us with an address: corrections such as you suggest can then be made with readiness and facility.

*October 26, 1850 (ILN, p.335)*

She clearly did send her address, and now some of Staunton's correspondence to Judy remains hidden from our view:

E H C, JUDY – Many thanks. A private acknowledgement has been forwarded.

*November 16, 1850 (ILN, p.383)*

The confusion was sorted out, as additional problems by Judy began to appear, her second in the October 19 issue (Enigma No. 613), followed by Enigma Nos. 621, 630 and 632 in the November 16, December 21, and December 28 issues, respectively, and they continued to appear regularly from here on.

Judy and Staunton were now on friendly enough terms that we see:

JUDY – Accept our best wishes in return.

*December 28, 1850 (ILN, p.503)*

Other readers had begun to be enamoured of Judy by this time:

Enigma No. 636 "A New Year's Gift to 'Judy'" by Boldonia.

*January 18, 1851 (ILN, p.43)*

In February 1851, we find her first problem in the *CPC* (Problem No. 11, p.64) and in the *Gateshead Observer* (Problem No.89, February 1, 1851, p.7, though I did not check the *Gateshead Observer* for 1850). In the April 12 issue of the *ILN*, for the first time one of her problems was distinguished as a 'Problem,' with a diagram (Problem No. 377).

Meanwhile, Staunton would occasionally acknowledge her contributions:

JUDY – Always most welcome. 'La Favorite' shall have an early place.

*April 19, 1851 (ILN, p.313)*

JUDY – Under examination.

*May 3, 1851 (ILN, p.353)*

JUDY – Where is the solution? We have no time to solve Problems, you may well suppose.

*May 24, 1851 (ILN, p.449)*

JUDY – Many thanks for many obliging communications.

*June 14, 1851 (ILN, p.553)*

JUDY – Very acceptable, as the communications of our fair correspondent have always proved.

Judy's problems were well known by the time her first game appeared in print in May 1851:

Evans Gambit. Spirited little contest between two ladies.

White ("JUDY.") Black (Lady B.)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Bc5 6.0-0 d6 7.d4 Bb6 8.d5. Judy would have done better by taking P. with Pawn [dxe5]. 8...Nce7 9.h3 h6 10.Nh2 Nf6 11.Qe2 0-0 12.Kh1 Nh7 13.f4 exf4 14.Bxf4 Ng6 15.Bc1. Kt. to Q. second [Nd2] seems stronger chess. 15...Qe7 16.Bd3 Qe5 17.Bb2 Nf4 18.Qf3 Nxd3 19.Qxd3 f5 20.Nd2 Ng5 21.Rae1 f4 22.Nhf3 Nxf3 23.Nxf3 Qh5 24.Nd4 g5 25. e5 g4 26.e6. From this move to the end, White's play is capital. 26... gxf3 27.gxf3 Qxd5+ 28.Rf3 Bxd4.



29.Rg1+. Very clever all this. 29... Kh8 30.c4. Again, an excellent move. 30...Qxf3+. There appears no better play. 31.Qxf3 Bxb2 32. e7 Re8 33.Qh5 Rxe7 [Note: Black could have hung on with Bf5 – RE] 34.Qxh6+. And mates next move.

May, 1851 (CPC, p.147-148)

Judy's reputation was by this time spreading. Another of her problems appeared in the *Gateshead Observer* on May 3, 1851 (p.7), and was reprinted in the *Home Circle* of August 23, 1851. Kling and Horwitz (who were themselves two of the most renowned problemists in the world) respond to a correspondent in their magazine, *The Chess Player*, with a high commendation:

OMICION [*sic* - Omicron].– We believe Judy is a lady. If her chess play is as good as her problems, she may be classed as first-rate. The problem lately in the "Home Circle" is a gem.  
August 30, 1851 (*The Chess Player*, p.56)

It would appear that Kling and Horwitz had not yet seen her game in the *CPC*. Later, after four of her games had appeared there, Kling and Horwitz followed up on their above evaluation:

G.H.– The games in the "Chess Players' Chronicle" played by Judy show quite as much talent for play as for making problems.  
December 6, 1851 (*The Chess Player*, p.168)

Three of Judy's games appeared in quick succession in the *CPC*, one in the September issue and two in the November issue.

Evans Gambit. The following smart little game was recently won of an Amateur by our fair correspondent "Judy."

White. (Amateur) Black. (JUDY)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Bc5 6.0-0 d5. 'Judy' disdains to follow in the beaten track and with the true spirit of genius, which she assuredly possesses in no common degree, will make a pathway of her own. 7.exd5 e4 8.Re1 Nce7 9.d4 exd3 10. Qxd3 h6 11.Bb2 Nf6 12.Bb3. With the intention of playing forward the Q.B.P. and thus opening the Q.B. upon the adverse King's quarters. 12...0-0 13.c4 Ng6 14.h3 Nf4 15.Qc3 Bf5 16.Nbd2 Nd3 17.Re2 Nxb2 18.Qxb2 Re8 19.Ne5 Qd6 20.Ndf3 Ne4 21.Rae1 Ng3 22.Rd2 f6 23.Nd3 Bxd3 24.Rxe8+ Rxe8 25.Rxd3 Ne4 26. Rd1.



26...Nxf2 27.Kf1 Nxd1 28.Bxd1



**Qg3 29.a3.** An accommodating move. **29...Re3 30.Be2 Rb3.** With the pleasant alternative of winning the Q or giving mate next move. And white surrenders.  
*Sept, 1851 (CPC, p.262–263)*

Scotch Gambit. The following amusing little game was recently played by our ‘fair warrior’ JUDY,

and a Metropolitan Amateur.

White (AMATEUR) Black (“JUDY”)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Bc4 Bc5 5.Ng5 d5.** This move though apparently precipitate and reckless, requires great care in answering, as the following variation which occurred in a game between the Editor [Staunton] and an Amateur, will prove. White (Amateur), Black (Editor), 5...d5 6.Bxd5 Ne5 7.f4 Bg4 8.Bxf7+ Ke7 9.Ne6 (This seems to be his best move, for if Q. to her second [Qd2], Black gains a piece immediately.) 9...Qc8 10.Qd2 Nc4 11. Qd3 Bxe6 12.Bxe6 Qxe6 and Black has gained a piece for a Pawn. **6.Nxf7 Kxf7 7.Bxd5+ Kf8** (best) **8.Qf3+ Nf6.** Having a piece superiority, the natural move was Q. to K.B. third [Qf6]. **9.Bxc6 bxc6 10.e5 Qe7 11.0-0 Qxe5 12.Qxc6 Bd6 13.f4 Qd5 14.Qa4 Bb7 15.Rf3 Qe4**



**16.Nd2.** Upon this move, “Judy” observes, “at the conclusion of the game, Mr. Amateur, who frequently makes a blunder just when he ought to be doubly careful, remembered that for his sixteenth move, he ought to have played B. to Q. second [Bd2], instead of the Kt., we therefore resumed the game from that point, and proceeded as follows.” **16.Bd2**

**Kf7 17.Na3 Rhe8 18.Qb3+ Bd5 19.Nc4 Kf8 20.Re1 Qg6 21.Rg3 Rxe1+ 22.Bxe1 Qe4 23.Bd2 Qe2 24.Qd3 Bxc4 25.Qxe2 Bxe2.** And White resigned. **16...Qe1+ 17. Rf1 Qe3+ 18.Rf2 Ng4 19.Ne4 Qe1+ 20.Rf1 Qxe4 21.Rf3 Qe1+ 22. Rf1 Qe2 23.Rf3 Bxf3 24.gxf3 Qf2+ 25.K moves Q mates.**

*November 1851 (CPC, p.333–334)*

Scotch Gambit. Another interesting game, between “Judy” and Lady B.

White (Lady B.) Black (“Judy”)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Bc4 h6 5.e5 Bc5 6.0-0 Nge7 7.c3 d5 8.Bb3 dxc3 9.Nxc3 Be6 10.Nb5 a6 11.Nbd4 0-0 12.Nxe6 fxe6 13. Qd3 Nf5 14.Bc2 Qe7 15.g4 Nb4 16.Qc3 d4 17.Qc4 b5 18.Qe2 Nh4 19.Be4 Rad8 20.Nxh4 Qxh4 21.Kh1.**



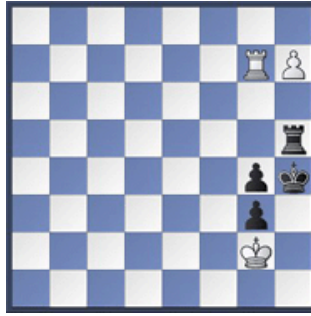
**21...d3 22.Qd1 Rxf2 23.Bf4 Re2 24.Bf3 Rxb2 25.Rc1 Bf2 26.a3 g5 27.Rb1 Rxb1 28.Qxb1 Nc2 29. Qa2 gxf4 30.Qxe6+ Kh8 31.Rxf2 Nd4.** If Q. takes R., White gives Mate in a few moves, thus: – 31... Qxf2 32.Qf6+ Kg8 33.Qxd8+ Kg7 34.Qf6+ K. moves B. checks and wins. **32.Qg6 Nxf3 33.Rxf3 d2.** And wins.

*November 1851 (CPC, p.334–335)*

game she had played, though this was doubted by one correspondent:

Enigma No. 681 – The following occurred in play to our fair communicant, JUDY.

*September 27, 1851 (ILN, p.394)*



White had to play, and won the game.

BETA – Judy *did* play the end game given as Enigma No. 681.

*October 11, 1851 (ILN, p.451)*

Staunton presumably had access to more information – perhaps the full game.

As a challenge to readers (without using a computer, of course!), we give a more difficult problem of Judy's, which will figure in Part II of this article, and whose solution will be given there. This problem stumped most of Staunton's readership. After five weeks he reported receiving only two fully correct solutions. A full solution must include not only the key move, of course, but all the main variations (i.e., it must show how white can win in the required number of moves whatever black plays).

“Une difficulté”



White to play, and mate in six moves