

# The Amiable Magician Of the Chess Board

**ADVENTURES OF A CHESS MASTER.** By George Koltanowski. New York: David McKay Co., Inc.; 194 pp.; diagrams; \$3.50.

Reviewed by  
James Benet

**G**EORGE KOLTANOWSKI, well-known to Chronicle readers as this newspaper's chess columnist, combines masterful chess skill with a showmanship unique among the professionals. He has the air of a stage magician, who, while producing rabbits from every pocket and silken flags from mid-air, insists that his tricks are not going very well and that a clever man would do far better. Just so in these excellently annotated games Koltanowski tends to stress his own errors, and the good fortune that enabled him, he says, to win at last.

Let nobody be deceived. The amateur who meets this master over the board quickly finds that the amiable conjurer has been transformed into a mercilessly powerful enemy, whose accurate sledgehammers destroy the most hopefully erected defenses.

Yet it is not likely that one who has carefully played through a few of the many, many games Koltanowski has printed here will be deceived. It is hard to choose favorites, but surely the remarkable game against Hans Berliner on Page 160 deserves mention for its brilliant sacrifice. And then—but if one cites more, one may never stop.

And besides the games there is interspersed through this book a fascinating collection of Koltanowski's myriad anecdotes.

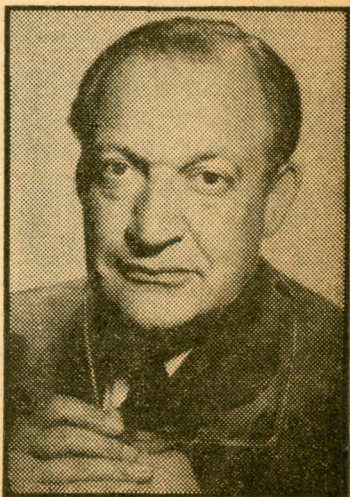
Koltanowski's chess feats—he is blindfold champion of the world—are of course legendary. But here he recounts one that

may leave even his long-time admirers with mouths gaping. In 1934 he played in partnership with the late Dr. Alexander Alekhine, then the world's champion, in an exhibition on six boards. Four strong amateurs were in consultation on each of these boards. Against them, Koltanowski and Alekhine played alternate moves, without consulting each other, blindfolded.

One can only gasp, like a baseball broadcaster, "How about that?"

Look up the outcome yourself in the book. If you are a chess player you will have to have it anyway. If you have any interest in chess at all you will find it fascinating reading. And if you have no interest in chess, maybe this is the book that will start you off.

On May 22 in Los Angeles Koltanowski set a world record for the greatest number of games ever conducted simultaneously by a single player, and he won 89, drew 17 and lost only four of the 110. He is a notable figure in chess history, and his book is the record of a notable career.



**GEORGE KOLTANOWSKI**  
The sledgehammers destroy