

Carlsen,M **D38**
- Aronian,L **2862**
2797
 77th Tata Steel GpA (5.6) 15.01.2015
[A.J. Goldsby I]

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 Many thought that this was the game of the tournament ... Carlsen outplays Aronian, who was formerly the #2 player in the whole world.

1.d4 Nf6 ; 2.c4 e6 ;
3.Nf3 d5 ; 4.Nc3 Bb4!? ;
5.cxd5 , (1st avoidance)

Carlsen ducks the sharpest lines ... probably he was thinking his opponent might have had a TN tucked up his sleeve somewhere. (If he was not afraid of a novelty, maybe he had not reviewed this line recently, and was unsure of the correct continuation? While I admit that this does not seem likely, avoiding the line that has proven to give White a fairly substantial edge does not seem like good chess. Of course lately - Carlsen seems content to play quiet systems and rely on his supernatural endgame ability to bring home the full point, especially when he faces players over 2650.)

[The main line, (and the sharpest continuation - and also the one that seems to give White the most wins); is reached after: (>/=)
 RR5.Bg5! dxc4 ; 6.e4 c5 ;
 7.Bxc4 cxd4 ; 8.Nxd4 Bxc3+ ;
 9.bxc3 Qa5 ; 10.Bb5+ , etc.
 (Many incisive games have been played in this line.)

.
 A famous clash is:
 GM Jeroen Piket (2630) -
 GM Veselin Topalov (2745);
 FIDE-Wch k.o.
 Groningen, NED /
 (R#2.2) / 1997.
 {White won a brilliant game ...
 in under 30 total moves.}]

(Diagram)

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 This is the current position, to hold equality, Black should recapture with his KP here.

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 .
5...exd5 ; (Hold the center.)
 This move is virtually forced, according to all the books ...

X A B C D E F G H Y
 8 r n l w k + - t ({
 7 p p p - + p p p '
 6 - + - + p n - + &
 5 + - + P + - + - %
 4 - v - P - + - + \$
 3 + - N - + N + - #
 2 P P - + P P P P "
 1 R - v Q K L + R !
 x a b c d e f g h y

(and maybe one DVD) ...
 that I have, the alternative
 yields a clear advantage to
 White.

[Slightly inferior would be the
 following continuation: </=
 <5...Nxd5! ? ; 6.Qc2 0-0 ;
 7.e4 Nxc3 ; 8.bxc3² , "+/= "
 when White is just solidly
 better - all of those Pawns
 in the center means a good
 position for White.]

6.Bg5 h6 ; (Decision time.)
 By transposition, we reach a
 very old line ... which seems
 to have become popular
 again in recent years.
 (The Ragozin System.)

[It seems (to me) that
 masters, in a constant
 search to find something
 new ... (or at the very least,
 something different)
 ... continuously visit these
 older systems. Of course,
 a good chess engine might
 find some improvement -
 in just about any opening
 line.]

[6...P-KR3; is not the only
 move here, playing the
 Black Knight to d7 is a
 fully playable alternative:
 RR6...Nbd7 ; 7.e3 c5 ;
 8.Bd3 Qa5 ; 9.Qc2 c4 ;
 10.Bf5 0-0 ; 11.0-0 Re8÷ ;
 (Unclear - possibly equal?)
 when the engines indicate
 that Black is doing fine.

GM V. Kramnik - GM V. Grischuk;

ICT / Melody Amber (rpd)
 Monaco, 2010. (1-0)
 {Kramnik won in under 60
 total moves, but my analysis
 shows that there are several
 improvements that Black
 could play.}]

```
XABCDEFGHIY
8r n l w k + - t (
7p p p - + p p - '
6- + - + - n - p &
5+ - + p + - v - %
4- v - P - + - + $
3+ - N - + N + - #
2P P - + P P P P "
1R - + Q K L + R ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
```

[For more info on this old {and complicated!} opening, see MCO-15, page # 426; columns # 73-78, & all notes.]

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For the next series of moves, both sides continue to develop, in adherence with the four basic principles of the opening.

(The engines like Qb3 or e3 - for White - on move eight. However, I should point out that the move that Carlsen played has a very high PR in the most recent PB.)
7.Bxf6 Qxf6 ; 8.Qa4+!? Nc6™ ; 9.e3 0-0 ; 10.Be2 Be6 ; 11.0-0 a6 ; 12.Rfc1 Bd6 ;

The consensus of several good chess engines is that Black is holding his own here ... if White

has any advantage at all, it is a very small one, indeed!

```
XABCDEFGHIY
8r + - + - t k + (
7+ p p - + p p - '
6p + n v l w - p &
5+ - + p + - + - %
4Q + - P - + - + $
3+ - N - P N + - #
2P P - + L P P P "
1R - R - + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
```

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The only problem that Black has is that ... in the long term ... his Knight on c6 is not on its very best square here.

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Now White decides that his Q is not on its best spot ... and returns it to the center.

(DF-14 likes 15.h3.)
13.Qd1 Ne7 ; 14.a3 Rfd8 ; 15.b4 Nc8 ; 16.Na4 b6 ; "="
 With moves like b4 and Na4, White restrains any attempt by the second party to liberate his position with ...c7-c5.

```

XABCDEFGHIY
8r + n t - + k + (
7+ - p - + p p - '
6p p - v l w - p &
5+ - + p + - + - %
4N P - P - + - + $
3P - + - P N + - #
2- + - + L P P P "
1R - R Q + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

All the engines agree that the current position is pretty much equal, although I think it is easier to play White's side of the chess-board.

Now Carlsen goes for an absolute lock on e5 (DF-14 likes h3 or Bd3 for White on move seventeen.); it isn't the top choice of most of the engines, but its an easy plan for White, and Black is the one who has to be careful here.

17.Nb2 Ne7 ; 18.Nd3 Ng6 ; 19.a4!? a5! ; 20.b5 Re8 ; "="

Once more ... a rather sterile equality has been reached.

```

XABCDEFGHIY
8r + - + r + k + (
7+ - p - + p p - '
6- p - v l w n p &
5p P + p + - + - %
4P + - P - + - + $
3+ - + N P N + - #
2- + - + L P P P "
1R - R Q + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

```

Carlsen has an easy position to play, however, and he does not have a weak (backward) Pawn, as Black does here. (I toyed with the following plan for Black, although I did not do a thorough analysis with any of the engines: Play the BR from e8-e7, run the Black King to b7, and then try an all-out Pawn storm on the King-side.)

(On move 23, Black might should have played 23...Nf8; or even 23...Qe6; or ...Qh4. And 25...Ne6; also looked a little better than what was played in the actual game.)

21.Rc3 Bf5 ; 22.Rac1 Rad8 ;
 23.Nd2 Rd7!? ; 24.g3!? Nf8 ;
 25.Bg4! Nh7!? ; 26.Bxf5 Qxf5÷ ;
 (unclear)

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + - + r + k + (
7 + - p r + p p n '
6 - p - v - + - p &
5 p P + p + q + - %
4 P + - P - + - + $
3 + - R N P - P - #
2 - + - N - P - P "
1 + - R Q + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

The position is no longer dead equal, Black has to work hard to keep his game together. (Most of the better engines award a tiny plus here - for White. However, it is a long way from being anything substantial.)

27.Qf3 Qg5 ; 28.h4!? Qe7 ;
 29.Rc6 Nf6 ; (Eyeing e4.)
 Black seems to be holding his own here ...

```

X A B C D E F G H Y
8 - + - + r + k + (
7 + - p r v p p - '
6 - p R v - n - p &
5 p P + p + - + - %
4 P + - P - + - P $
3 + - + N P Q P - #
2 - + - N - P - + "
1 + - R - + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

However, when looking at this position, (WITHOUT an engine!); I could not find an easy line of play for Black, in some lines, (if the 2nd player is not careful); he can quickly lose his QP.

(Now the engines like moves that prevent long-term play for Black, i.e., R/1-c2, etc.)
 30.Nf4!? , (Not bad ...)

Carlsen plays a "safe, but solid" move, as is his normal mode in such positions lately. (A similarity to Capablanca?)

[The best of the metal monsters seem to

prefer the play of: >/=
 1 30.Kg2!² , "+/=" (edge)
 - Houdini & Deep Fritz 14.]

```

XABCDEFGHIY
8- + - + r + k + ( {
7+ - p r w p p - '
6- p R v - n - p &
5p P + p + - + - %
4P + - P - N - P $
3+ - + - P Q P - #
2- + - N - P - + "
1+ - R - + - K - !
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

For one thing, White can (now) play Nb1 and then Nc3, and put more pressure on Black's QP, it is up to Aronian to prove that he can hold this position - (or not).

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I do not know if time pressure was a factor at this stage of the game, or if Aronian simply faltered under the continuous pressure that his opponent had been placing on him.

30...g6? ; (A blunder?)
 Black self-destructs ... it seems no one can "hang" with the young World Champion in these kind of positions.

.
 There are many reasons why 30...g6?; is bad, probably the two most important would have to be:
 #1.) Black greatly loosens his position, and especially {greatly} undermines the safety of his own King.
 #2.) Black drops the d-Pawn with almost no real "comp" that I can see.

.
 [It seems that all Black had to play here was: >/=
 1 30...Ba3! ; 31.R1c2 Bb4!= ; (To prevent Nb1 & Nc3.) when Black could then double his Rooks behind the d-Pawn, if need be.
 [White might have a tiny edge, but DAYS of analysis (with various engines) failed to turn up any real way of making anything out of this particular position.]]

.
 Notice that (against Carlsen) if you open the door, he

rarely fails to walk through it and capitalize on the opportunity given to him. (Yet another similarity to Capa? Note that many people called the Cuban a lucky player, especially in his early days.)

31.h5! Kg7TM ; ("Box.")

It would seem that this play was forced for Black. (Black had no really decent alternative move.)

[Even worse would have been:
< 31...g5! ? ; (Maybe - '!?' or '?')
32.Nxd5 Nxd5TM ; 33.Qxd5 Bxg3

; All the engines seem to indicate that this was Black's only decent try.

(Black loses horribly after:
< 33...Ba3?! ; 34.Qf5! Bxc1? ;
35.Rxh6! , "+/-" winning. (This is a cute tactical motif, which is repeated in several different lines.)).

34.Qf5 Bd6 ; (Only play?)
To me, this looks like the only way to continue, the alternative is to be a piece down ... against Carlsen.

(RR34...Bxf2+! ? ; 35.Qxf2 Qxe3

; 36.Qxe3 Rxe3 ; 37.Nc4!+-).

35.Nc4 Ba3! ? ; (Best?)
Again, everything else looks completely hopeless to me, if White is allowed to chop on d6, Black's game quickly falls apart!

(The endgame - that is eventually reached - after the following continuation: </= < 35...Rb8! ? ; 36.Ne5 Rdd8! ? ; 37.Ng4 Qe6TM ; 38.e4+- , is completely hopeless here for Black. ;

*** **

A lost ending is reached after the continuation of: RR35...Kg7! ? ; 36.Nxd6 Rxd6 ; (Taking with the Pawn, quickly drops the other button on b6.) 37.Rxc7 Qf6 ; 38.Qxf6+ Kxf6 ; 39.R1c6+- , winning for W.).

The following sharp move, (the Rook capture on h6); is thematic for how White wins in this particular game.

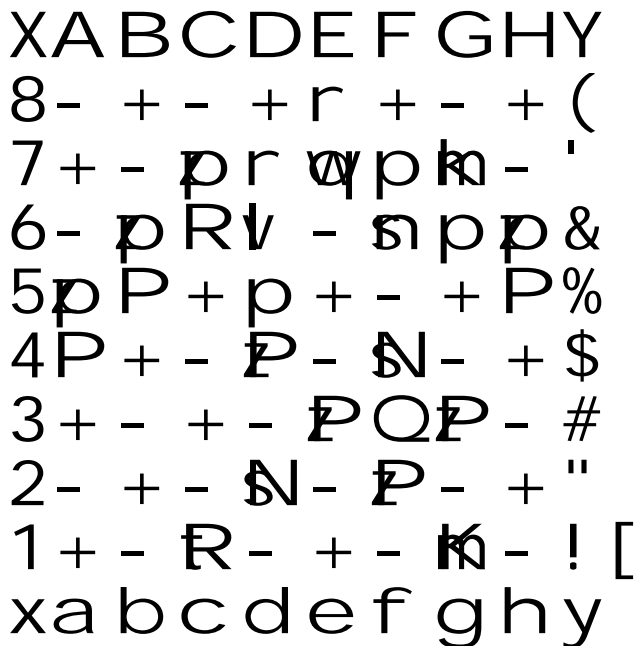
Now - after RxP/h6! - White threatens Qh7+ and then Qh8 mate, so Black's reply is 100% forced.

36.Rxh6! f6™ ; 37.Qg6+ Qg7™ ;
(Forced!)

The alternative was for
Black to get mated.

(< 37...Kf8? ; 38.Rh8#).

38.Qxe8+ Bf8 ; 39.Rg6 , '+-'
Black has lost his Queen
and would not continue
from here.]



Now White racks up the
win in impressive fashion.

Obviously, Aronian was counting
on a discovery on the WQ, (when

his DSB on d6 moves); to win
back the Pawn and get back
into the game. (Only Aronian
can say - for sure - what is
was that he missed or what
he must have under-estimated.)

**32.hxg6 fxg6 ; 33.Nxd5 Nxd5 ;
34.Qxd5 Bxg3™ ;** (Forced.)

And here, Black had no
choice at all.

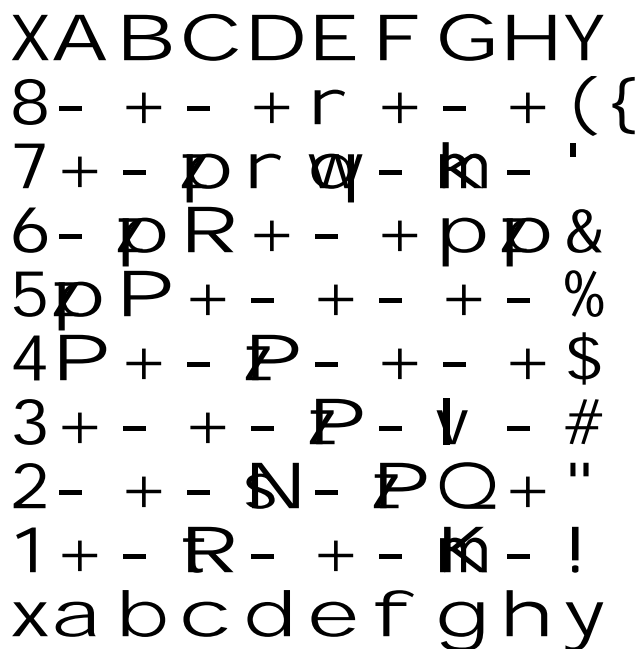
[Of course not: </=
< 34...Ba3? ; 35.Qxd7! Qxd7 ;
36.Rxc7+- , & W is winning.
(Nearly +7, according to
all of the engines.)]

35.Qg2! , (Correct!)
Another thing that is
impressive, at least to me,
is that Carlsen rarely
falters in difficult positions.
(Another similarity to Capa?)

[RR35.Qf3!? Bd6 ; 36.Qg4²]

(Diagram)

I'm thinking that this was
the move that Aronian



(perhaps in time pressure!?)

might have missed.

(The g6-square will be an eventual target for White.)

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35...Bd6 ; 36.Nc4± , {Diag.}

Take a look here ...

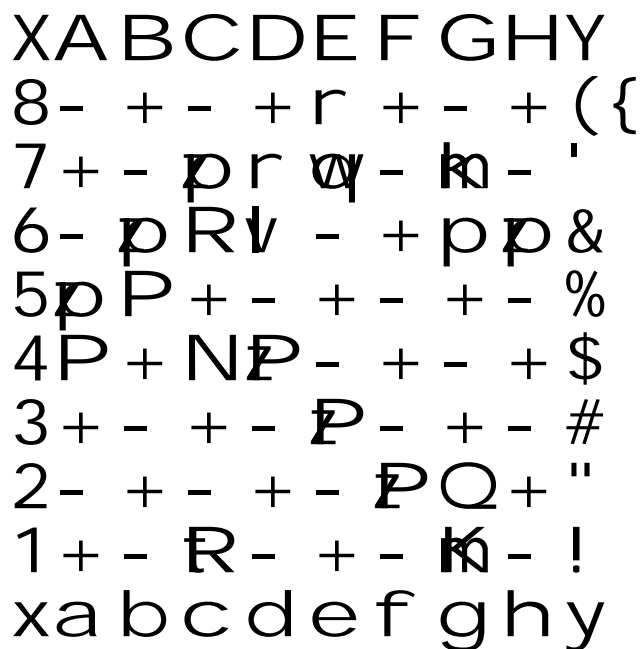
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[RR36.R1c2 , (DIH)]

(Diagram)

White is clearly MUCH better ...
but is this position really a
forced win for GM M. Carlsen?

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36...Rf8?! , (Maybe - '?')

And yet another miscue.

.

[Black had to play: >/=

1 36...Qd8™ ; ("Box.")

This looks forced to me ...
and ALL the engines seem
to agree on this point,
the only move for Black
was to play the BQ to d8.

37.f4!? Qf6 ; 38.Qh3 Rde7 ;

39.Rc3± , ('+')

... and White is clearly
much better, but where
is the forced win?]

(Diagram)

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```

XABCDEFGHIY
8- + - + - t - + (
7+ - p r w - k - '
6- p R v - + p p &
5p P + - + - + - %
4P + N P - + - + $
3+ - + - P - + - #
2- + - + - P Q + "
1+ - R - + - k - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

Did Aronian have a chance for a type of endgame that has proven extremely difficult for human players to win?

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37.Ne5! , (Outpost.)

The WN is an absolute monster on the critical e5-square ...

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[After the following var: (</=)

RR37.Nxd6?! cxd6! ;

38.Rxb6 Qf7! ;

39.Rbc6 , Proly best.

(< 39.Rcc6? Qb3! ;

40.Kh2 Qd1÷ , (unclr)).

39...Qb3 ; 40.Rc7 Rdf7 ;

41.Qg3 Qxa4 ; 42.b6±

, ('+')

the engine still shows that

White is (probably) still

winning, but the complications are enormous and Black's counterplay was NOT to be under-estimated!]

```

XABCDEFGHIY
8- + - + - t - + ( {
7+ - p r w - k - '
6- p R v - + p p &
5p P + - N - + - %
4P + - P - + - + $
3+ - + - P - + - #
2- + - + - P Q + "
1+ - R - + - k - !
x a b c d e f g h y
    
```

.

... & the only way to get rid of it is to swap of the Black Bishop on d6. (Exchanging off the DSB leaves Black hard-pressed to defend his backward c-Pawn.)

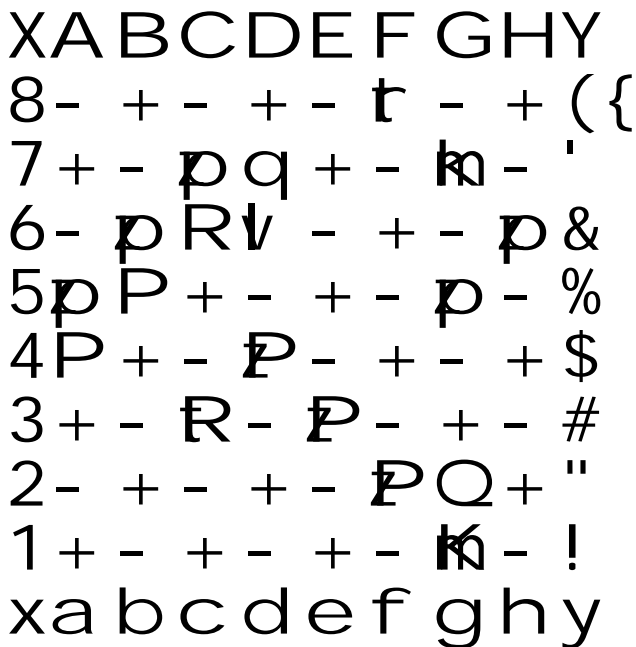
.
.

37...Bxe5!? ; (Urgh.)

With this move, Aronian basically abandons any real hope of defense and looks to wild counterplay to hold the game. [Aronian had to sacrifice the Exchange.

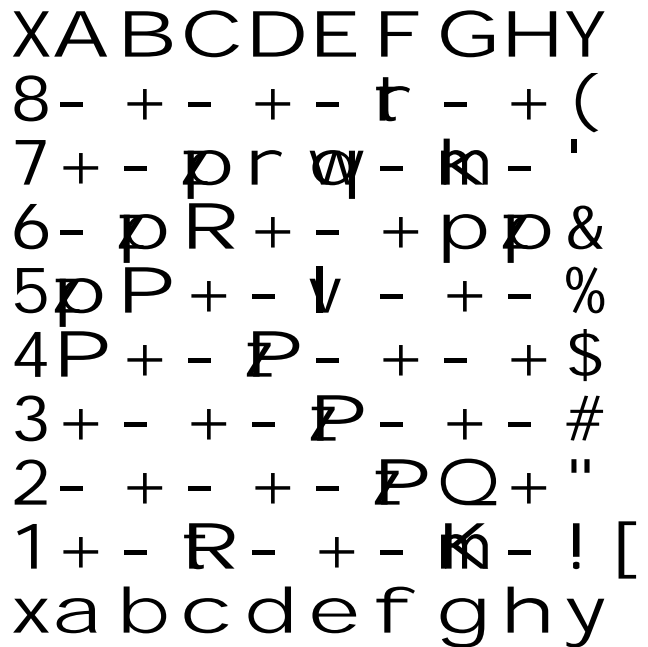
... it was the ONLY chance for Black to put up any meaningful resistance! (White should still win, in the long run - with correct play. However, according to my research, it takes extremely precise play for the first player to bring home the full point.) BTW, all the engines give the exchange sack as Black's best line of defense.]

[The ONLY chance was: >/=
 1 37...g5!! ; 38.Nxd7 Qxd7 ;
 39.R1c3± , {Analysis diagram.}]



Black's DSB - anchored on

the d6 square - is a powerful defensive unit. (The game remains very complicated, and there are many places where the first player could go astray.)]



It is time to take a long, hard look at the current situation in this game.

Now Black's King is left to fend for itself, not surprisingly, Aronian is unable to hold his side of the game. (The next few moves look to be forced/best ... for both parties, here.)

**38.Qxg6+ Kh8 ; 39.Qxh6+ Kg8 ;
40.dxe5 Qxe5 ; 41.Rg6+ Kf7 ;**
(Technically - an error.)

.
Now the naked BK goes
for a walk ... on an open
field where 2 Rooks AND
the WQ can all take shots
at him

[Black apparently had to
play the following line:
>/= 1 41...Rg7™ ; ("Box.")

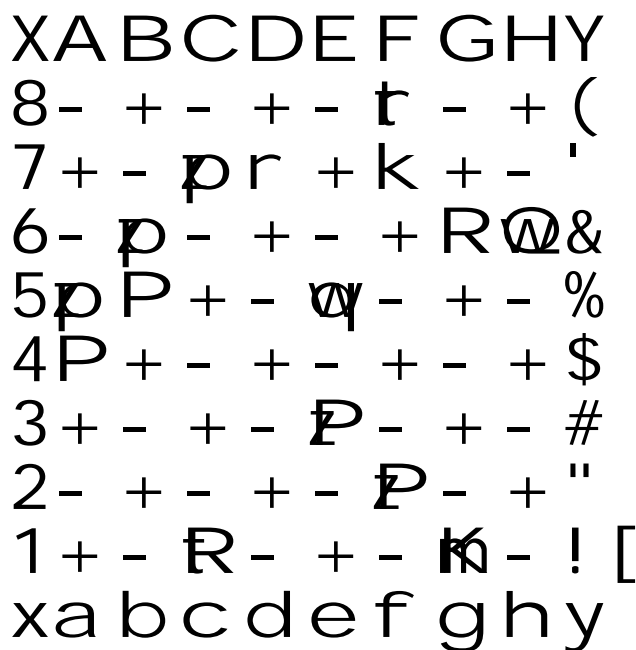
42.Rxg7+ Qxg7+ ;
43.Qxg7+ Kxg7 ;
44.Rxc7+ Kh8™ ;
(Forced.)

.
To step up to the second
rank is to invite Rc6+. Black
will have to swap off the
Rooks ... or lose another
button.

.
45.Kg2+- , (W's winning.)
When White, with two,
healthy extra Pawns
and the BK nailed to
first row - has an easy
win in this endgame.

.
I tend to think that Aronian
saw all of this - but simply
chose to avoid this line, as
White has two heathy extra

Pawns ... and Black has no
chance for any active play.]



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This move is a mistake ...
according to the chess
engines ... but I suspect
that Aronian played this
way (on purpose) because
the alternative was just
clearly losing.
(In a fairly simple endgame.)

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. .
Now Black may have
thought that White was
unable to move his R@c1,
due to the threats of
...Rd1+; and then ...Qe4+.
42.Rc4! , (Nice.)
Once more, in a complicated

position, (where others might falter); Carlsen finds the way to win with accurate tactics.

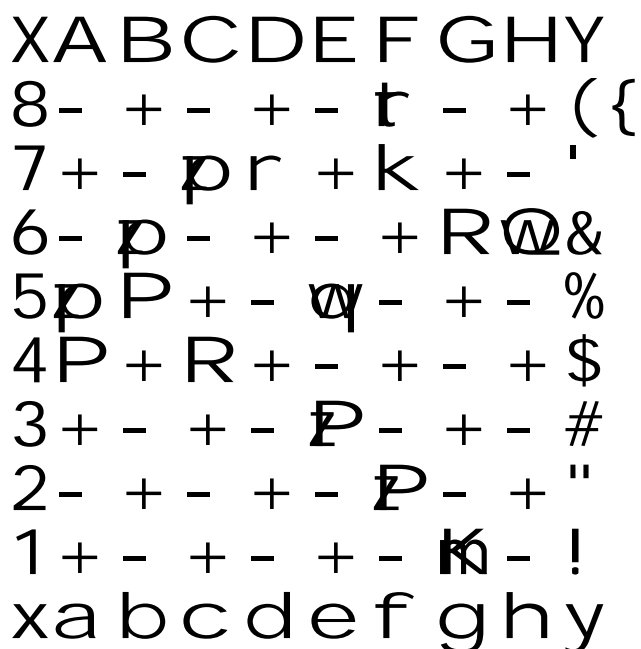
[After the following cont:

RR42.Rg5 Qf6 ;

43.Qh7+ , etc.

('+-' or '+/' ?)

White is winning, but it is MUCH weaker than the way that Carlsen played in the actual game.]



White's Rook luft threatens Rf4+ winning, and ... (as the analysis will show); Aronian has no adequate defense to Carlsen's threats.

42...Qa1+!? ; (hmmm)
"Bonzai!" (Might as well.)

[The engines show that Black's best defense was: RR42...Ke7™ ; 43.Rg7+ Rf7 ; 44.Rxf7+ Kxf7 ; 45.Rf4+ Qxf4™ ;

According to all of the better chess engines, this is forced for Black.

(Black loses badly after the following line: </= RR45...Ke7!?!? ; 46.Qf8+ Ke6 ; 47.Qg8+ Kd6 ; 48.Qg6+ Ke7!?!? ;

Resignation was really the only alternative here.

(Again, as in the main line here, Black can lose {or give up} his Queen for a Rook, but it makes no difference in the outcome.)

49.Rf7+ Kd8 ; 50.Rf8+ Ke7 ; 51.Re8# . Mate.).

46.Qxf4+ , "+/-" and White should win ...

although Black can struggle on for quite a few more moves.

(As long as White has even the smallest amount of good technique, he will win ... without any real problems.)]

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XABCDEFGHIY
8- + - + - t - + (
7+ - p r + k + - '
6- p - + - + R Q &
5p P + - + - + - %
4P + R + - + - + $
3+ - + - P - + - #
2- + - + - P - + "
1Q - + - + - K - ! [
x a b c d e f g h y

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I think Aronian knew he was busted here, but chose the only variation that might give his opponent any chance to commit an error. (The only thing I don't know is exactly how much time both players had on their chess clocks at this point.)

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The following moves are all forced (for Black) ... and probably best for White.
43.Kg2 Rh8 ; 44.Rf4+ Ke8 ; 45.Re6+ Re7 ; 46.Rxe7+ Kxe7 ; 47.Re4+ , "+/-" Black Resigns.

.
Aronian throws in the towel

here, there is no point in playing any longer.

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Some things of note - about this game - are:
#1.) Carlsen did not always play the best/engine move. (This should forever silence the little group on the 'net who claim that Carlsen is using a chess engine while the game is being played.)
#2.) Carlsen always had some pressure on Black's position.
#3.) Carlsen's game was ... for the most part, anyway ... free of any major defects.
#4.) Whenever an opponent gives him a chance, Carlsen responds with play of nearly machine-like accuracy.

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My version of this game differs from the CB version mainly in the fact that I wanted to explain the latter half of the game in greater detail, as I try to cater to the players who are mostly below 1600 on the FIDE/USCF rating scale. (I also think that most of the on-line commentators did a poor job, in this regard.)

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[After the following moves:

47.Re4+ Kd8™ ; (Forced.)

(< 47...Kf7? ; 48.Qe6+ Kg7 ;

49.Qe7+ Kg6 ; 50.Rg4+ Kf5 ;

51.Rg5#).

48.Rd4+ Qxd4™ ; 49.Qg5+ Kc8

;

50.exd4 , '+-'

it is an easy win for White.]

1-0