

2026-01-05

## The Final Months of Lionel Kieseritzky

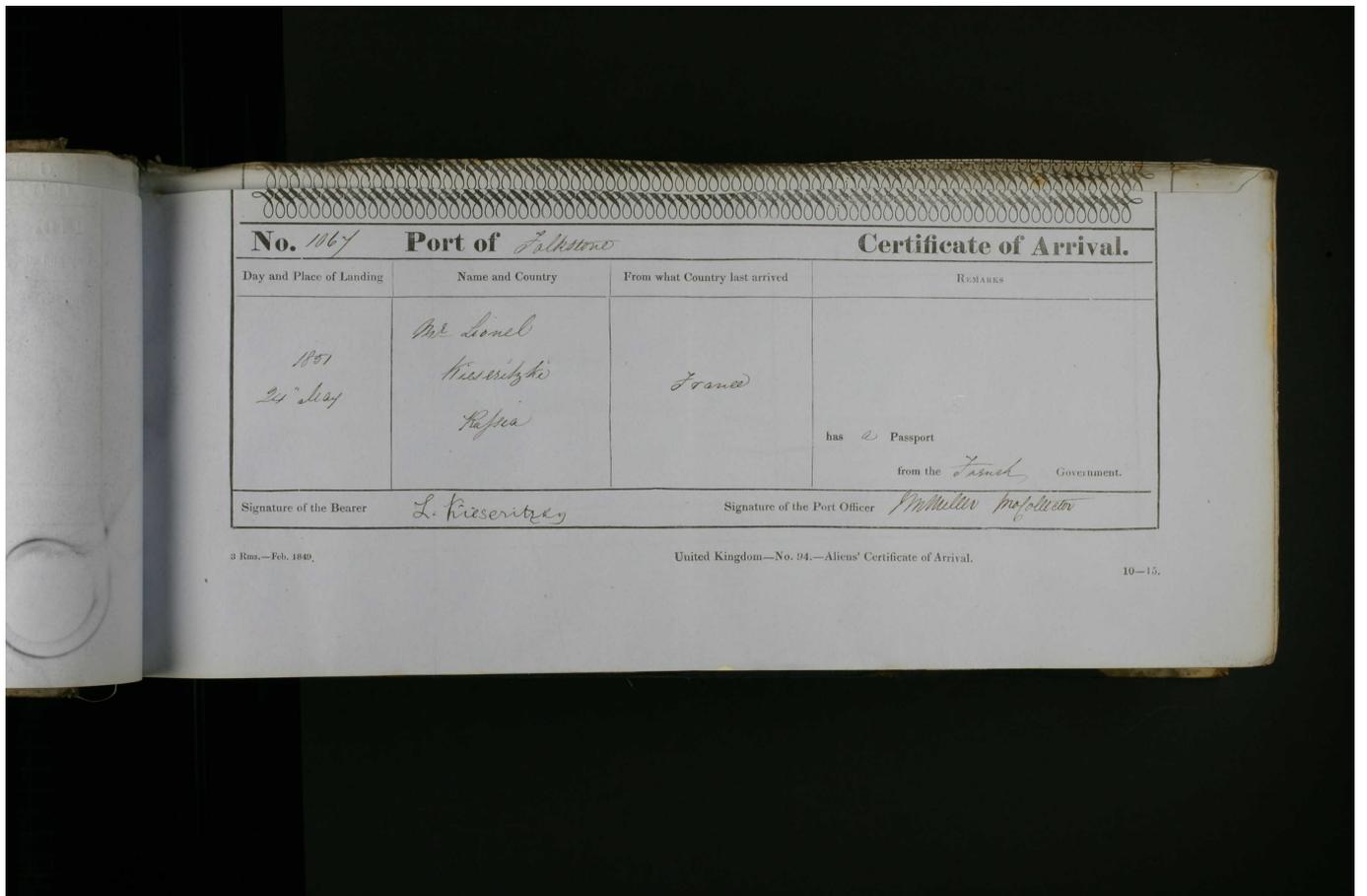


\_ Lionel Kieseritzky, 1806-1853

by Jean Olivier Leconte - <https://lecafedelaregence.blogspot.com/>

The end of Lionel Kieseritzky's life long remained unclear to me, until I discovered several documents that shed light on his final months. What follows is the result of my investigation.

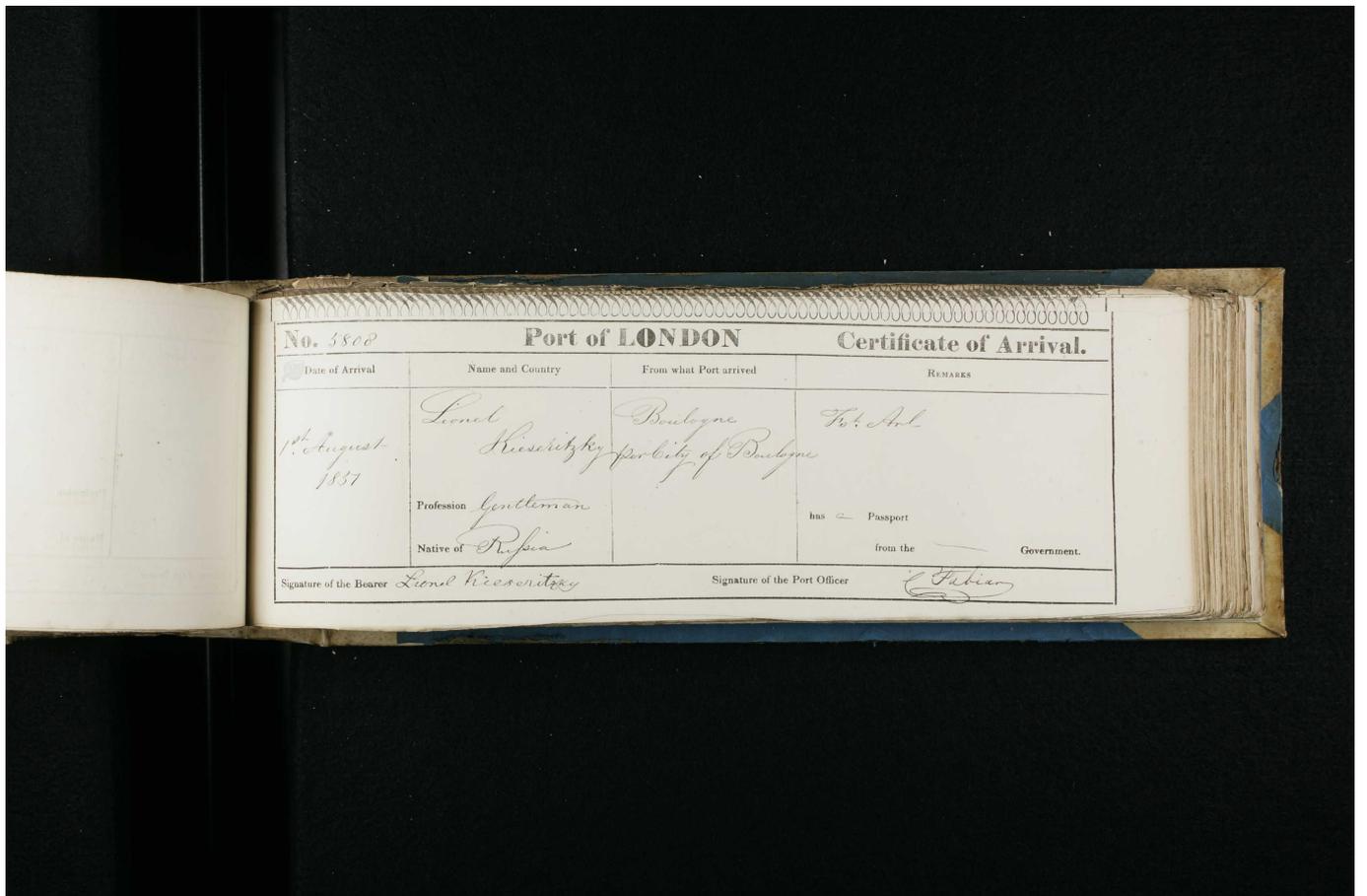
In 1851, Kieseritzky travelled to London for the first major international chess tournament, held during the Great Exhibition. He went there as the leading French player of the time. The event was not a great success for him, but his name would remain forever in the annals of chess thanks to the so-called "Immortal Game" played against Anderssen on the sidelines of the tournament.



Certificate of arrival in England

Kieseritzky arrived in Folkestone on 24 May 1851. His nationality is recorded as Russian, but he was in possession of a passport issued by the French government.

[The London tournament](#) took place from 27 May 1851 to 15 June 1851.



Certificate of arrival in England

On 1 August 1851, Kieseritzky returned to London, arriving from Boulogne.

It is amusing to note that his occupation is listed as gentleman.

The journal La Régence, of which he was the editor, ceased publication in December 1851.

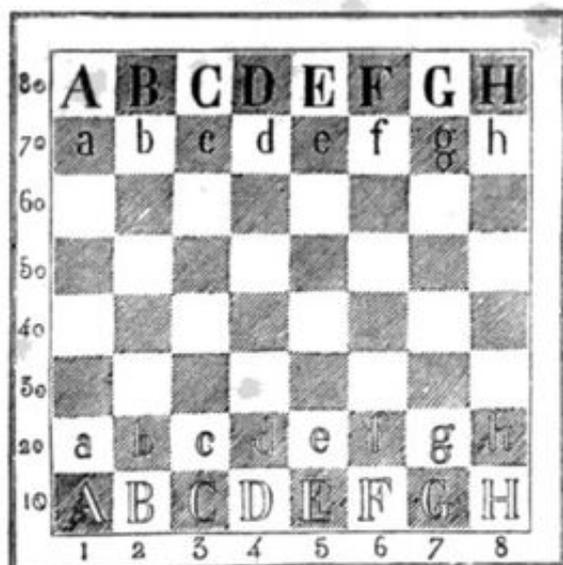
# LA RÉGENCE

JOURNAL DES ÉCHECS

Rédigé par une Société d'Amateurs.



NOIRS.



BLANCS.

Troisième Année.

PARIS.

AU CAFÉ DE LA RÉGENCE, PLACE DU PALAIS-ROYAL.

1851

= Paris 21.5.22

La Régence

The very unusual system of chess notation that he had devised was one of the reasons for the closure of the journal, which proved to be financially unviable.

I then find his name again in an English newspaper, the Western Courier and West of England Conservative, dated 26 May 1852. Still energetic, Kieseritzky was attempting to organise a correspondence match between London and Paris, nearly twenty years after the famous encounter of 1834–1836 initiated by La Bourdonnais.

## Our Chess Corner.

### THE CONTEST BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND BY CORRESPONDENCE, AND THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

In a short time, a contest in Chess will take place between the Club of Paris and the St. George's Club, of London, the match to consist of two games by the Electric Telegraph, and two games by correspondence in the usual way.

Mr. Staunton has addressed himself to Mr. Kieseritzky, and proposes that himself, Mr. Wyvill, and Captain Kennedy shall conduct the match on the part of the St. George's Club, and wishes Mr. K., to arrange with Mr. Laroche and the other French amateurs; the prize of the contest to be fifty guineas, the surplus remaining of the subscription for the Grand Tournament.

Deprived of the co-operation of Mr. Laroche, through his private affairs at Bayonne, and believing the contest would prove highly interesting, Mr. Kieseritzky proposed it to the Cercle of *La Régence*, which has accepted the proposal, and named a Committee of the following gentlemen:—Messrs. Devink (President), Crampell (Secretary), Chamouillet, Delannoy, Garcin, Journauz, Kieseritzky and Seguin, to settle the conditions of the match.

The Cercle, having arranged with the Electric Telegraph Company, proposes to the English players that two games shall be played through that medium, so that each party may have the first move, and at the same time offers an additional prize of 1,250 francs to the winners.

British Newspaper Archive.

Western Courier West of England Conservative newspaper of 26 May 1852

### transcription of the article

Our Chess Column.

### THE CONTEST BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND BY CORRESPONDENCE, AND THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

In a short time, a contest in Chess will take place between the Club of Paris and the St. George's Club, of London, the match to consist of two games by the Electric Telegraph, and two games by correspondence in the usual way.

Mr. Staunton has addressed himself to Mr. Kieseritzky, and proposed that himself, Mr. Wyvill, and Captain Kennedy shall conduct the match on the part of the St. George's Club, and wishes Mr. K. to arrange with Mr. Laroche and the other French amateurs; the prize of the contest to be fifty guineas, the surplus remaining of the subscription for the Grand Tournament.

Deprived of the co-operation of Mr. Laroche, through his private affairs at Bayonne, and believing the contest would prove highly interesting, Mr. Kieseritzky proposed it to the Cercle of La Régence, which has accepted the proposal, and named a Committee of the following gentlemen:—Messrs. Devink (President), Crampell (Secretary), Chamouillet, Delannoy, Garcia, Journaux, Kieseritzky and Séguin, to settle the conditions of the match.

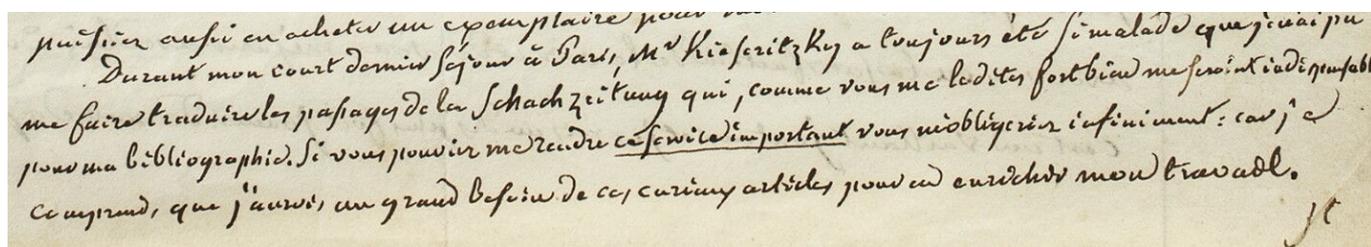
The Cercle, having arranged with the Electric Telegraph Company, proposes to the English players

that two games shall be played through that medium, so that each party may have the first move, and at the same time offers an additional prize of 1,250 francs to the winners.

However, I have not found any further information relating to this match.  
I doubt that it actually took place.

Did Kieseritzky experience health problems around June 1852?  
This is quite possible.

A letter dated a few months later, from the collector Camille Théodore Frédéric Alliey to Tassilo von Heydebrand und der Lasa, indicates that ...



... j'ai aussi acheté un exemplaire pour  
Durant mon court dernier séjour à Paris, M<sup>r</sup> Kieseritzky a toujours été si malade que j'ai pu  
me faire traduire les passages de la Schachzeitung qui, comme vous me l'avez dit, sont indispensables  
pour ma bibliographie. Si vous pouvez me rendre ce service important, vous m'obligeriez infiniment: car j'ai  
compris, que j'ai un grand besoin de ces curieux articles pour en enrichir mon travail.

\_ Letter preserved at the Kórnik Library in Poland, dated 4 February 1853

During my short recent stay in Paris, Mr. Kieseritzky was always so ill that I was unable to have the passages from the Schachzeitung translated for me which, as you quite rightly say, would be indispensable for my bibliography.

And it is here that we enter the final months of Lionel Kieseritzky's life.

The archives of the [AP-HP](#) (Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris) make it possible, with a little patience (and the consultation of dozens of pages), to uncover essential information.

I eventually came across a register mentioning Lionel Kieseritzky at the [Hôpital de la Charité](#) in Paris, a hospital that no longer exists today.

Hôpital				REGISTRE				DES ENTRÉES.											
NUMÉROS D'ADMISSION		NOM.	PRÉNOMS.	AGE.	PROFESSION.	DOMICILE.			LIEU DE NAISSANCE.		ÉTAT CIVIL. MARIÉ ou VEUVE.	NATURE DE LA MALADIE.	INDICATION de la SALLE.	NATURE DE LA MALADIE ou de L'ÉTAT CIVIL.	DATES			DURÉE de SÉJOUR.	OBSERVATIONS.
de l'Année 1892.	de l'Ordre.					SEE ou CANTON.	N° de RUE.	ARRONDISSEMENT ou DÉPARTEMENT.	COMMUNE.	DÉPARTEMENT.					de L'ENTRÉE.	de LA SORTIE.	de DÉCÈS.		
2001	3236	Mable	Jeanne	34	Coiffeuse	Paris	17	11	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	2		
2002	3177	Bernard	Armand	21	Tailleur	Charente	14	5	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	17		
2003	3172	Lacédémus	Leon	33	Opérateur	19 <sup>e</sup> Loue	17	8	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2004	3175	Léon	Armand	41	Voiturier	Paris	16	11	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2005	3182	Blanc	Léon	23	Journalier	Paris	17	7	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2006	3183	Deniel	Armand	61	Professeur	Paris	10	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2007	3184	Bick	Armand	42	Comptable	Paris	10	7	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2008	3185	Guillemin	Armand	36	Comptable	Paris	9	9	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2009	3186	Kerick	Armand	35	Comptable	Paris	10	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2010	3187	Brunet	Armand	38	Comptable	Paris	10	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2011	3188	Lagot	Armand	37	Comptable	Paris	10	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2012	3189	Bille	Armand	30	Comptable	Paris	11	11	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2013	3190	Bonnet	Armand	21	Tailleur	Paris	20	6	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2014	3191	Berthelot	Armand	17	Comptable	Paris	4	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2015	3192	Bouquet	Armand	28	Comptable	Paris	11	11	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2016	3193	Bulot	Armand	35	Comptable	Paris	10	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2017	3194	Kieseritzky	Lionel	47	Professeur mathématiques	Paris	18	10 <sup>e</sup>	Paris	Lyvonie	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2018	3195	Kiesel	Richard	43	Comptable	Paris	5	12 <sup>e</sup>	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2019	3196	Aubert	Armand	20	Comptable	Paris	5	3 <sup>e</sup>	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		
2020	3197	Cresset	Armand	41	Comptable	Paris	12	8 <sup>e</sup>	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1		

The page on which the record of Lionel Kieseritzky's stay at the Hôpital de la Charité appears. [Population registers](#). A hospital for the indigent, the marginalized, foreigners, and others.

2016	3193	Bulot	Armand	35	Comptable	Paris	10	10	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1	
2017	3194	Kieseritzky	Lionel	47	Professeur mathématiques	Paris	18	10 <sup>e</sup>	Paris	Lyvonie	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1	
2018	3195	Kiesel	Richard	43	Comptable	Paris	5	12 <sup>e</sup>	Paris	France	Marité	31	Brusset	3	17	14	1	

on the left

Kieseritzky is listed as a mathematics teacher, with an address on rue Dauphine in the 10<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris (according to the former numbering of the Paris arrondissements). Moreover, the number 18 is incorrect: Kieseritzky lived at number 24, rue Dauphine.

His place of birth is then given as Dorbath (Dorpat) in Lyvonie (sic), today the city of Tartu in Estonia.

filles fins et amielles Pierre Vincent S.	Pierre	13. avril	9.
Garçon	hémiplegie Michel 14.	19. mai 1853	
in a Garçon Albert fils typhus Morvan 14.	Pseudo typhus	7. mai	32 2 Enfants malades

— on the right

The page on the right provides much more information. The mention “Garçon” indicates that he was unmarried. We then learn that he was suffering from hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body) and that he occupied bed no. 14 in the (Saint) Michel ward. One must imagine a large ward with around forty beds and very little privacy.

Continuing to the right in this grim record, one can read “softening of the brain” and the date of death, 19 May (1853), after 45 days spent at the Hôpital de la Charité, which places his admission on 4 April 1853.

(18.)

**DÉCÈS.**

ANNÉE 1853 Arrondis<sup>s</sup> anciens. 10

Noms Kieseritzki

Prénoms Lionel

Date du décès 19 mai 1853

2/41

— death certificate

The fact that he remained there for 45 days means that:

- he was bedridden (hemiplegia),
- he had no one to care for him at home,
- he became a chronic case and then a terminal one.

Hemiplegia, together with the contemporary medical term “softening of the brain,” clearly indicates the pathology from which Lionel Kieseritzky suffered: most probably an ischaemic stroke.

A grim detail: in most cases, if the patient was not claimed, an autopsy was carried out. This was very probably the case for Lionel Kieseritzky.

The Archives of Paris make it possible to locate the reconstructed death certificate.

It is difficult to find information about his death in French newspapers of the period. So far, I have not found any mention of his death on Retronews. However, I did find a reference to it in a British newspaper.

their wearing apparel, &c.

**DEATH OF KIESERITZKY, THE GREAT CHESS-PLAYER.**  
—With profound regret we have to record the death of the celebrated Herr Kieseritzki, so long the ornament and pet of the Paris Chess Club, and one of the most brilliant players of the day. From various distressing causes he had for many months previously been obliged to abandon all attendance at the club, his intellect having become affected, till at length his friends deemed it advisable to place him in that receptacle of the afflicted, the Hotel de Dieu, in which he breathed his last on the 18th ult.

A clerk in one of the Lisbon shops has been stabbed,

British Newspaper Archive

11 June 1853 - Farmer's Friend and Freeman's Journal

**DEATH OF KIESERITZKY, THE GREAT CHESS-PLAYER.**

— With profound regret we have to record the death of the celebrated Herr Kieseritzki, so long the ornament and pet of the Paris Chess Club, and one of the most brilliant players of the day. From various distressing causes he had for many months previously been obliged to abandon all attendance at the club, his intellect having become affected, till at length his friends deemed it advisable to place him in that receptacle of the afflicted, the Hotel de Dieu, in which he breathed his last on the 18<sup>th</sup> ult.

The article contains two errors (the Hôtel-Dieu instead of the Hôpital de la Charité, and 18 May instead of 19 May). However, it tells us that he had abandoned all activity for many months — probably since the proposal of the correspondence match in May 1852.

One possible scenario would therefore be a first stroke in June 1852, followed by a deterioration (a second stroke?) at the beginning of 1853.

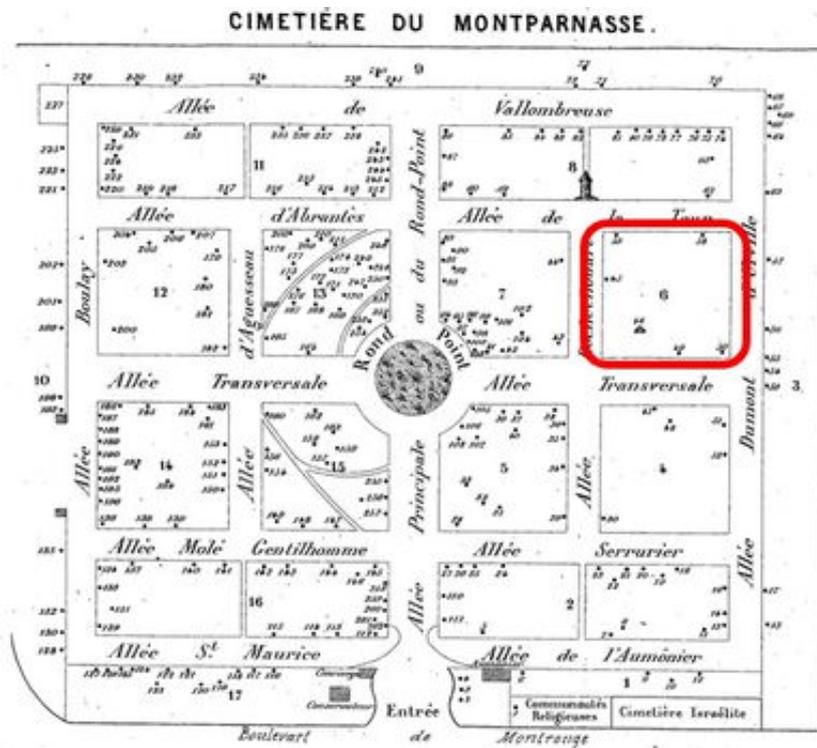
The question of the place of his burial still remained. Once again, it required somewhat painstaking online research. But in the end, it was possible to reach a conclusion thanks to the increasingly extensive digitisation of historical documents. This time, it was the cemetery registers of Paris that enabled me to discover his place of burial.

NUMÉRO GÉNÉRAL.	NUMÉRO D'ORDRE.	NUMÉROS des MANUSCRITS de LA MÈRE.	DATES ou INSCRIPTIONS.	NOMS DES DÉCÉDÉS.	PRÉNOMS.	ÂGE.	SÉPULTURE.	ÉTENDUE DES TERRAINS CONCÉDÉS		INDICATION DE LA SITUATION LOCALE DES SÉPULTURES.		TEMPORAIRE.		OBSERVATIONS.
								A PERPETUITÉ.	TEMPORAIREMENT.	LIÈNE.	FOIÈRE.	LIÈNE.	FOIÈRE.	
1183	3274		22 Mai	Rulon	Jean Baptiste	47	12							
1184	3275			Poussin	Luigi		12							
1185	3276			Poussin	Constant		12							
1186	3277			Kieutschki	Raim		10							
1187	3278			Jovan	Jules		10							
1188	3279			Benoit	Marie Elisabeth		10							

[Archives of Paris](#), cemetery registers

I was therefore able to locate him at the Montparnasse Cemetery. On the left-hand page, it can be read that he was buried on 22 May 1853, at the age of 47. On the right-hand page, it is stated that he was buried in the common grave of the 6<sup>th</sup> section of the Montparnasse Cemetery. Once again, this is a marker of his extreme poverty and of the tragic nature of his social condition at the end of his life.

I therefore went to the Montparnasse Cemetery. In 1853, the Montparnasse Cemetery was smaller than it is today. A brief investigation showed that the 6<sup>th</sup> section of the period corresponds to the present-day 8<sup>th</sup> section. This can be seen by comparing the current plan with an 1865 plan (Astriè – Guide des cimetières).



[Map 1865](#)



Plan du Cimetière du Montparnasse  
Sépultures des personnalités les plus demandées

Riche en œuvres d'art anciennes et modernes, le « cimetière du Sud » accueille, parmi ses 36 000 sépultures, d'illustres défunts du monde des arts et des lettres. C'est un espace vert important (1200 arbres: sophoras, érables, tilleuls...).

Superficie : 18,72 ha | Création : 1824



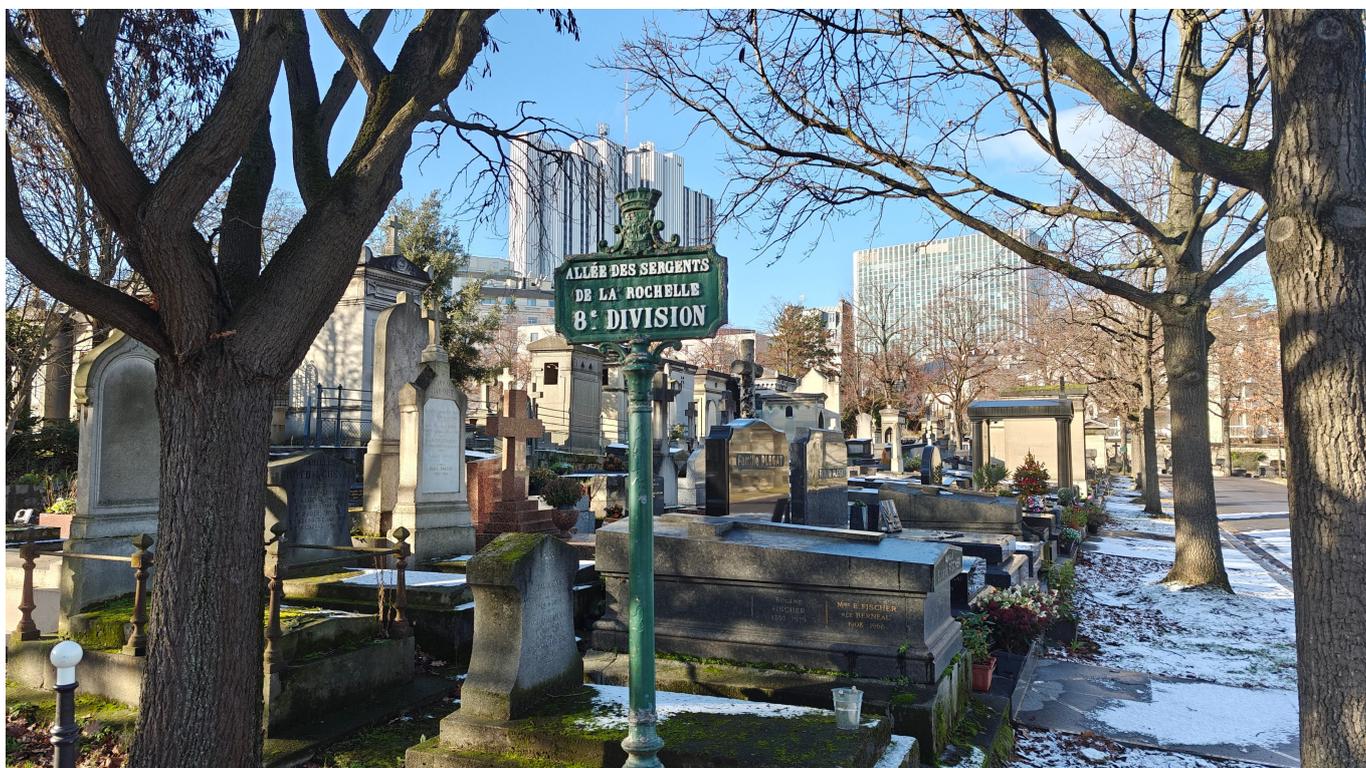
— nowadays

However, there is no longer any common grave in the present-day 8<sup>th</sup> section. Indeed, these gradually disappeared as the available space was taken up by new graves. The contents of the common graves were then transferred to the various ossuaries of the cemetery (galleries located beneath the cemetery; [see here](#) an excellent article in French on the subject).



\_ Photograph of an ossuary at the Montparnasse Cemetery. Photograph taken from the website [Neverends.net](http://Neverends.net)

In short, there is no longer any trace of a possible burial site for Lionel Kieseritzky at the Montparnasse Cemetery.



\_ 8<sup>th</sup> section

As a small historical aside, in the 8th section (formerly the 6<sup>th</sup> section) lies the grave of the World chess champion: Alexander Alekhine.



АЛЕКСАНДР АЛЕХИН  
ALEXANDRE ALEKHINE  
GÉNIE DES ÉCHECS DE RUSSIE ET DE FRANCE  
1<sup>ER</sup> NOVEMBRE 1892  
25 MARS 1946



CHAMPION DU MONDE DES ÉCHECS  
DE 1927 À 1935 ET DE 1937 À SA MORT  
GRACE ALEKHINE  
NÉE WISHAR  
1876 - 1956



CE MONUMENT A ÉTÉ ÉRIGÉ LE 25 MARS 1956  
FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ÉCHECS

of Alexander Alekhine

[\\_ The grave](#)