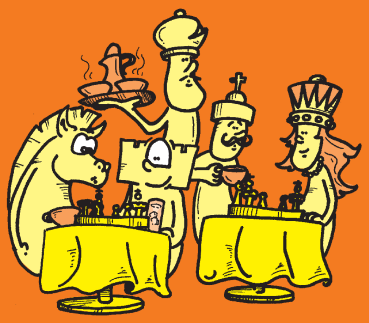


THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

A NEW YEAR'S RIDE TO THE NORMAL SIDE

number 57 December 28, 2013

For many players, the holiday season is associated with unusual chess problems. *The Puzzling Side of Chess* takes the opposite approach. To celebrate the end of each year, we cross over, for a brief moment in time, to "the normal side of chess".

As described in our first holiday column (21), *normal chess* means direct mates, endgame studies, and game positions.

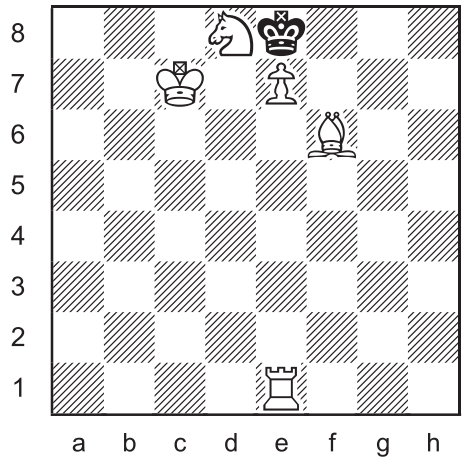
So here, for your New Year's entertainment, is a selection of twelve standard problems.

Cheers, everyone!

Happy New Year from the Chess Cafe!

Let's begin our journey into the world of chess normalcy with a simple *mate in two*. Then we'll gradually work our way up to the harder stuff.

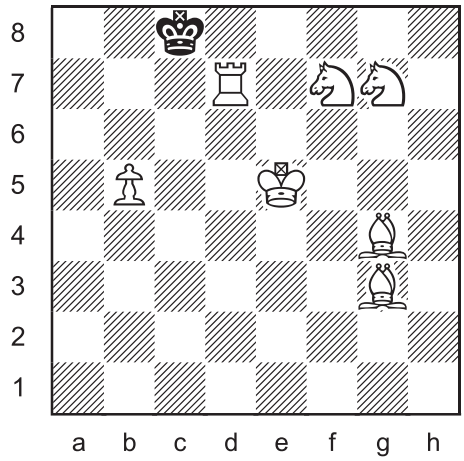
1



White to mate in 2

Miniature problems, with seven pieces or less, have always been a favourite of mine, especially *mates in two*. Positions with eight to twelve pieces, like the one below, are known as *merediths*. The name honours American composer William Meredith (1835-1903) of Philadelphia.

2



White to mate in 2

In the first two puzzles, the only black piece was the king. Samuel Loyd, in his book *Chess Strategy* (1878), called such positions "intimidated king problems".

The black king is not intimidated in the next *mate in two*. In fact, the black forces outnumber the white. Sam Loyd had these two things to say about his composition:

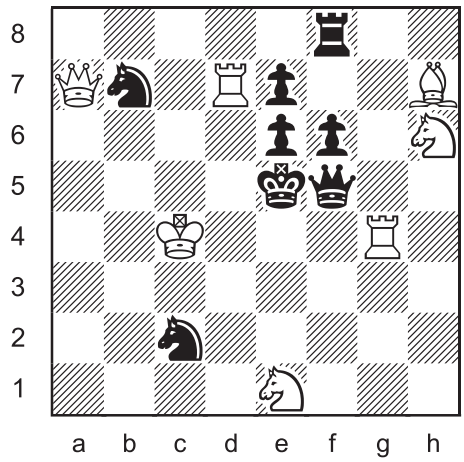
"*This problem is especially constructed to give a deceptive appearance to mislead the solver ...*"

"*To amateur solvers, ... a problem of this kind is practically unsolvable.*"

What do you think? It's only two moves deep. Is he right?

3

Sam Loyd 1876



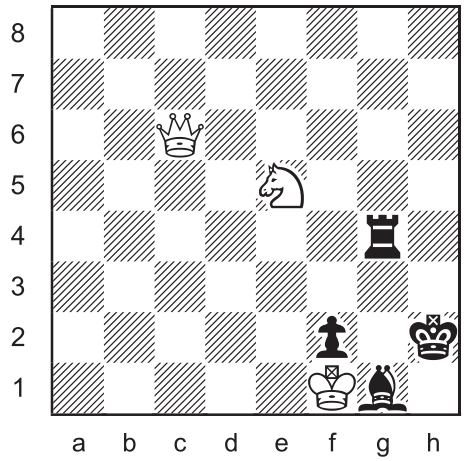
White to mate in 2

Let's step up to *mates in three* now, starting with another Sam Loyd creation. He refers to it as an "old style problem".

The position has a game-like appearance. But if it were a game, White could just play the obvious 1.Nxg4+ and Black would probably resign. However, it wouldn't be mate in three.

4

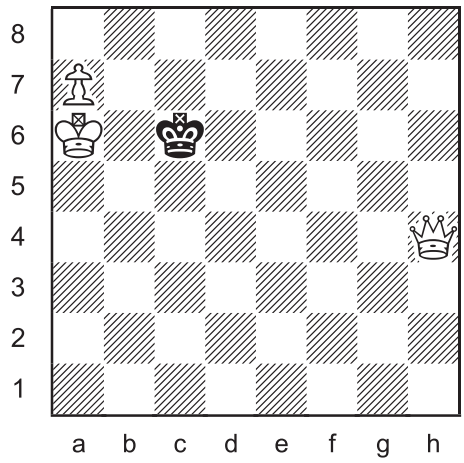
Sam Loyd 1858



White to mate in 3

Somebody once told me that “All miniatures are anticipated.” Perhaps that will be the fate of this little puzzle!?

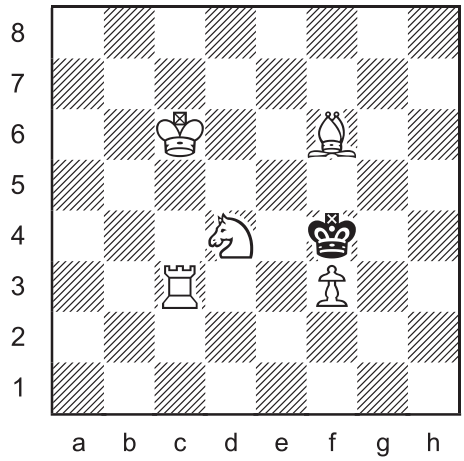
5



White to mate in 3

The next *mate in three* is the first problem of mine to be published. It appeared in the *Toronto Star* (1990) in the excellent weekly chess column written by Canadian IM Lawrence Day.

6

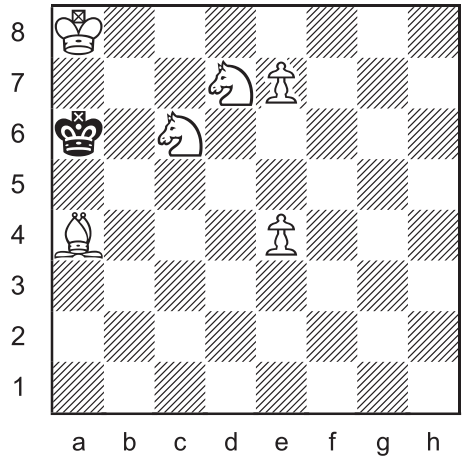


White to mate in 3

Lawrence also published the following twin-like problem later the same year.

By the way, for an interesting read, I recommend *Nick’s Best* (2007) by Lawrence Day. The book is much more than just the selected games of IM Bryon Nickoloff. It is full of insights into opening theory, endgame strategy, and clock management. There’s plenty of Canadian chess history as well!?

7

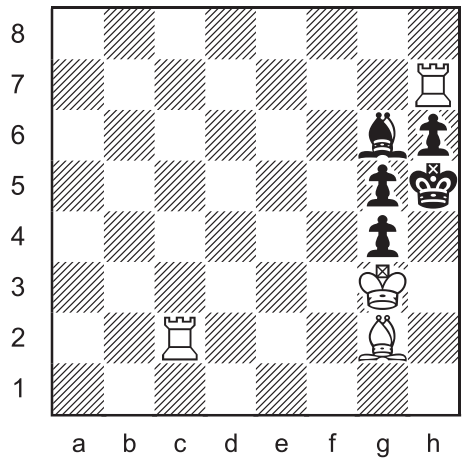


White to mate in 3

Are you ready for a speedy *mate in four*?

I composed the next problem about thirty years ago while living in Belgium. During the 1986 Ostend International, my friend Kevan Seynaeve showed the position to English GM Anthony Miles. He solved it in eight seconds! Truly astounding.

8



White to mate in 4

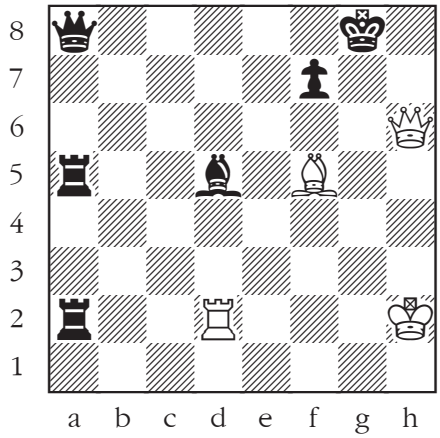
Tony Miles (1955-2001) was a very colourful character, on and off the board. His many chess achievements included the title of *1974 World Junior Champion*. He must have been in good form in Ostend. He won the tournament.

Tony Miles

One of my favourite *long mates* is the composition below by grandmaster Aron Nimzowitsch (1886-1935). The position was given in his famous book *My System*.

9

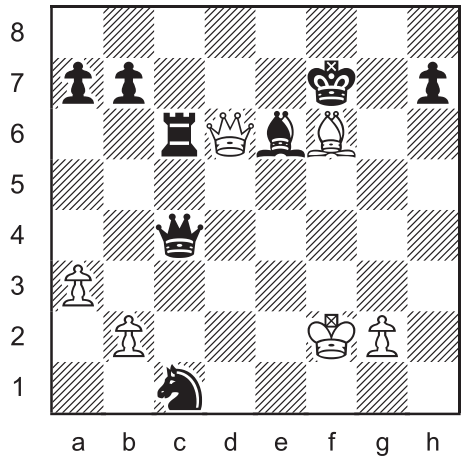
Aron Nimzowitsch



White to mate in 7

That mate required some tactical finesse, but there's no need for fancy moves in the following problem. It's a straightforward runaround.

10

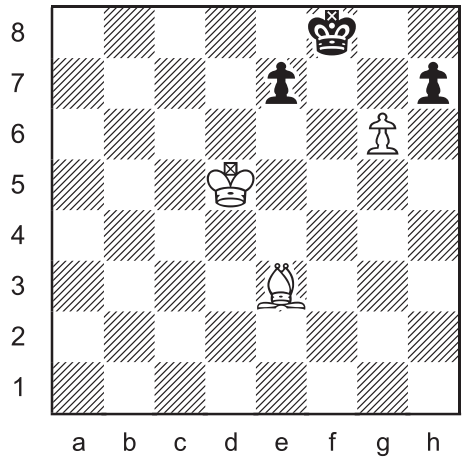


White to play and force mate

Ten mates should be enough for any holiday. Our final two positions are endgame studies. The first is by the renowned Russian composer Alexey Troitzky (1866-1942).

11

A. A. Troitzky 1895

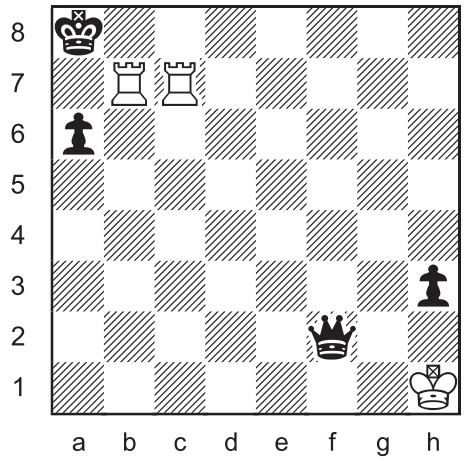


White to play and win

One more problem to go. This time we're looking to hold a draw. As the Dutch like to say, "Half an egg is better than an empty shell."

Beter een half ei dan een lege dop.

12

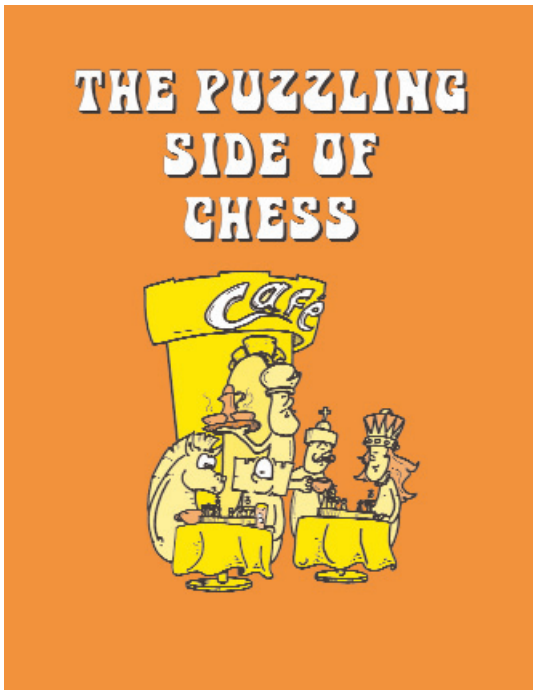


White to play and draw

Well, friends, that concludes this year's visit to the normal side. I hope you enjoyed the ride. As we head back towards the other side, here's a little something to ease the transition.

12b

Against best play by White, what is the maximum number of moves that Black can make before conceding the draw?



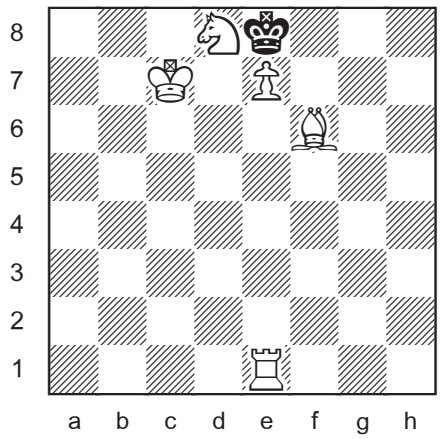
SOLUTIONS

PDF hyperlinks. You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

1

J. Coakley 2010

Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids Volume 2



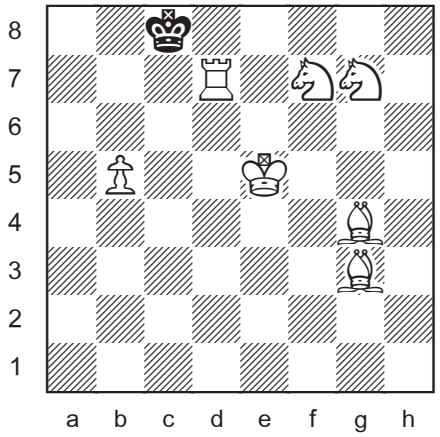
1.Be5 Kxe7 2.Bg7#

Were you expecting a promotion?

2

J. Coakley 2010

Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids Volume 2

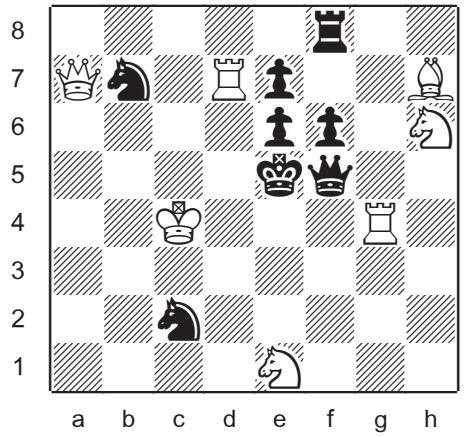


1.Kf5 Kxd7 2.Kf6#

The rare and ever popular double kingmover.

3

Sam Loyd 1876
Cleveland Leader



1.Kb3

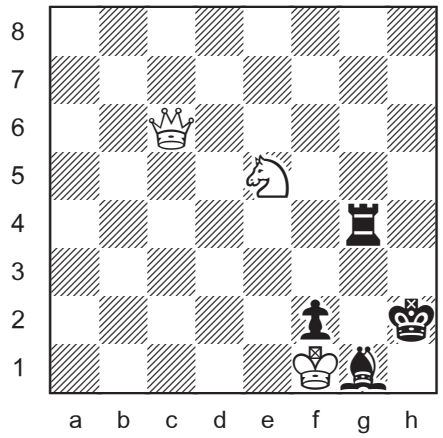
The key move is certainly deceptive. No mate is threatened, but Black is now in *zugzwang*. All black moves, including several checks, allow an immediate mate.

1...Na1+ 2.Qxa1#
1...Na5+ 2.Qxa5#
1...Nc5+ 2.Qxc5#
1...Nd4+ 2.Qxd4#
1...Qd3+ 2.Nxd3#
1...Qf3+ 2.Nxf3#
1...Qe4 2.Rxe4#
1...Qxg4 2.Nd3#
1...Qxh7 2.Nf3#
1...Rc8 2.Nf7#

The black pawn on e7 is necessary to stop 1.Qb8+ Nd6 2.Qxd6#.

4

Sam Loyd 1858
New York Albion



1.Qh1+

Loyd has a knack for queen moves to a corner.

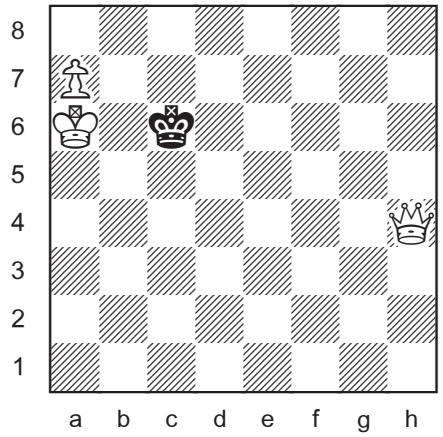
1...Kxh1 2.Nxg4 Bh2 3.Nxf2#
1...Kg3 2.Qf3+
2...Kh4 3.Qxg4#
2...Kh2 3.Nxg4#

The first line is a classic N vs. B mate.

The obvious 1.Nxg4+ mates in six. 1...Kg3 2.Qe4! Kh4 3.Qf5! Kg3 4.Ne5 Kh2 5.Qg4! Kh1 6.Qg2#

5

J. Coakley 2013
Scholar's Mate 119



1.Qd4 Kc7 2.a8=R Kc6 3.Rc8#

We had to have an underpromotion sooner or later, right?

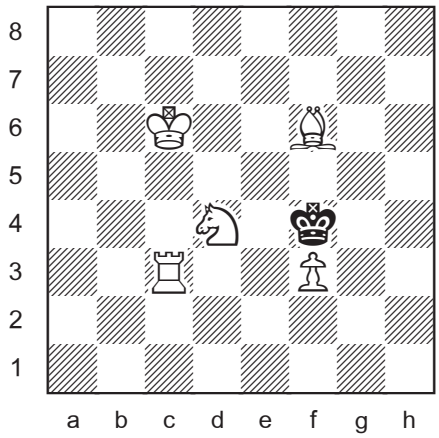
Scholar's Mate, Canada's chess magazine for kids, is available for free online in a printable pdf format.

6

J. Coakley 1990

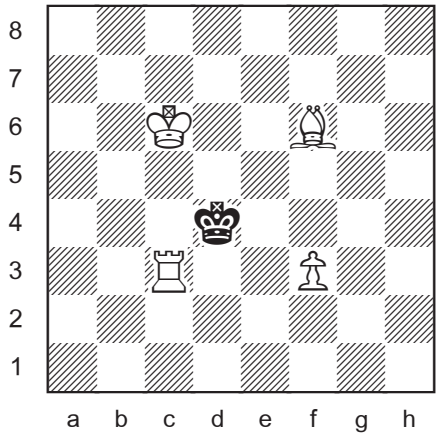
Toronto Star

"The Box"



1.Bh4 Ke5 2.Bg5 Kxd4 3.Bf6#

A switchback of the white bishop leads to the desired *box mate*.



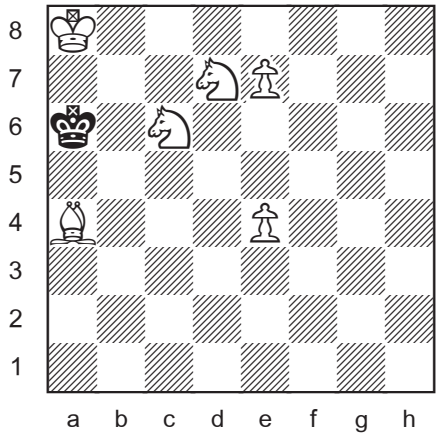
The date of problem 6 is given incorrectly in some databases (as 1992 or 198?).

7

J. Coakley 1990

Toronto Star

"The Bigger Box"



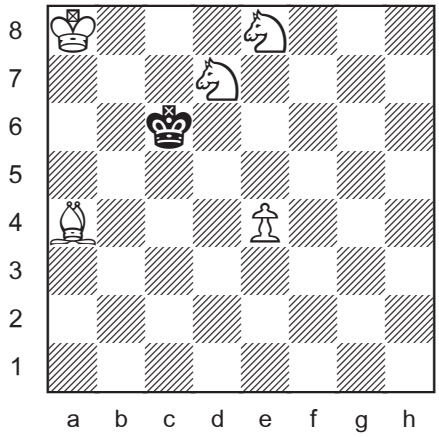
1.Bb3 Kb5 2.e8=N

2...Kxc6 3.Ba4#

2...Ka6 3.Nc7# or 3.Bc4#

Did anyone not expect a knight promotion? Sorry for being so predictable.

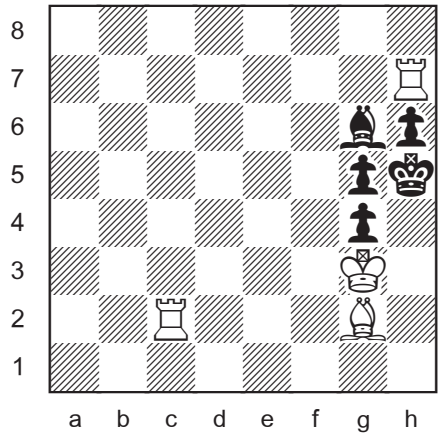
The *bigger box mate* arises from the first line.



8

J. Coakley 1986

Winning Chess Puzzles For Kids (2006)



1.Bc6

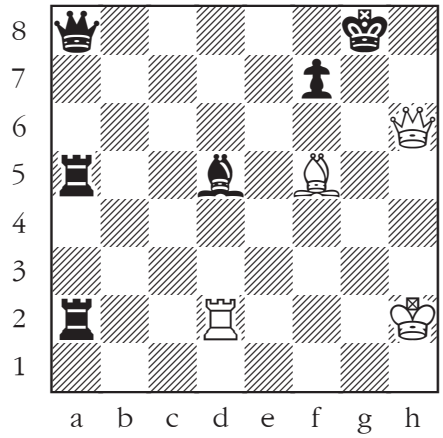
1...Bxh7 (or 1...Bf5) 2.Be8+ Bg6 3.Rh2#
1...Bf7 2.Be4 (or 2.Rg7) 2...any 3.Rh2#
1...Bxc2 2.Be8+ Bg6 3.Rf7!
3...Bxf7 4.Bxf7#
3...Be4 4.Rf5#
3...Bh7 4.Rxh7#

Were you as speedy as Tony Miles?

9

Aron Nimzowitsch 1925

My System



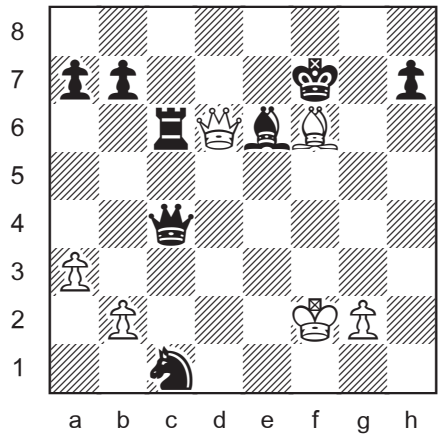
1.Bh7+ Kh8 2.Bc2+ Kg8 3.Rg2+ Bxg2 4.Bh7+ Kh8
5.Bg6+ Kg8 6.Qh7+ Kf8 7.Qxf7#

The two Bs take turns obstructing the 2nd rank, first the white bishop on c2, then the black bishop on g2.

10

J. Coakley 2004

Winning Chess Exercises For Kids



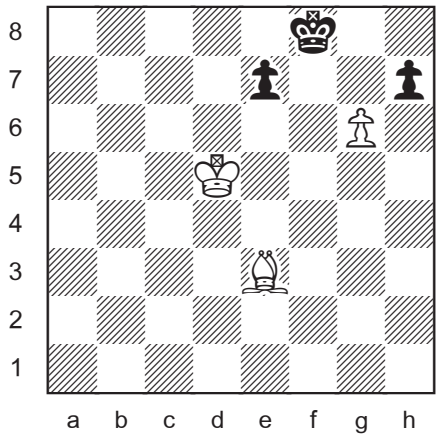
1.Qe7+ Kg6	1...Kg8 2.Qg7#
2.Qg7+ Kf5	2...Kh5 3.Qg5#
3.Qg5+ Ke4	
4.Qe3+!	Black wins after 4.Qe5+? Kd3.
4. ... Kf5	4...Kd5 5.Qe5#
5.Qe5+ Kg6	5...Kg4 6.Qg5#
6.Qg5+ Kf7	
7.Qg7+ Ke8	
8.Qe7#	

A long chase by the persistent white queen.

11

Alexey Troitzky 1895

Novoe Vremya



1.Bh6+	1.gxh7? Kg7 =
1...Kg8	1...Ke8 2.gxh7
2.g7	

Now Black has three choices.

a)

2...Kf7	The cool line.
3.g8=Q+	Giving up the last pawn! (3.g8=R? e6+! =)
3...Kxg8	3...Kf6 4.Qe6#
4.Ke6 Kh8	
5.Kf7 e5	
6.Bg7#	A dazzling lone bishop mate.

b)

2...e5	The prosaic line.
3.Ke6	3.Kxe5? Kf7 = The black king cannot be expelled.
3...e4	
4.Kf6 e3	
5.Bxe3 h5	
6.Bg5 1-0	6...Kh7 7.Kf7 or 6...h4 7.Bxh4 Kh7 8.Kf7

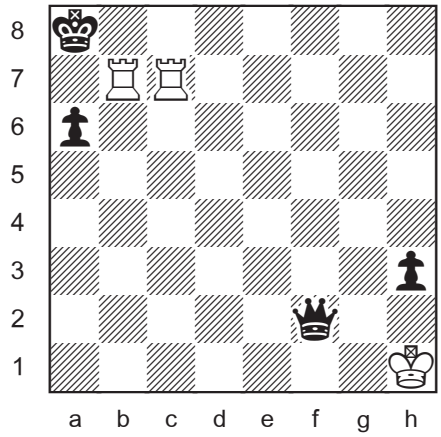
c)

2...e6+	The slightly tricky.
3.Kd6!	3.Kxe6? stalemate 3.Ke5? Kf7 = or 3.Ke4? e5! 4.Kf5 Kf7 =
3...Kf7	
4.Ke5 Kg8	
5.Kf6 e5	
6.Ke6 e4	
7.Kf6	As in line b.

12

J. Coakley 2013

ChessCafe.com



White draws by either perpetual check or stalemate. It's up to Black to decide which.

1.Rb8+	1.Ra7+? Qxa7 2.Rxa7+ Kxa7 3.Kh2 a5 0-1
1...Kxb8	
2.Rb7+	2.Rc8+? Kb7 wins for Black.
2...Kc8	2...Ka8 3.Rb8+ Ka7 4.Rb7+ Ka8 5.Rb8+ is a perpetual check. 2...Kxb7 is stalemate.
3.Rc7+ Kd8	3...Kxc7 = Here and later, capturing the rook with the king is stalemate.
	3...Kb8 4.Rb7+ Kc8 5.Rc7+ repeats the position.
4.Rd7+ Ke8	
5.Re7+ Kf8	
6.Re8+!	6.Rf7+? Qxf7 frees the black king.
6...Kg7	After 6...Kf7 7.Rf8+, 7...Kxf8 is stalemate and 7...Kg7? 8.Rxf2 wins for White.
7.Rg8+ Kh6	Against 7...Kh7, White can draw with 8.Rg7+ or 8.Rh8+.
8.Rg6+	Black wins after 8.Rh8+? Kg5 9.Rg8+ Kf4 10.Rf8+ Kg3 11.Rg8+ Kf3 12.Rf8+ Ke2 13.Re8+ Kf1.
8...Kh5	
9.Rg5+ Kh4	
10.Rg4+ Kh5	
11.Rg5+ ½-½	Threefold repetition is on its way.

The Puzzling Side of Perpetual Check

Every chess player knows what a perpetual check is. Yet surprisingly, there is no specific rule about this kind of draw. In fact, the term *perpetual check* is not even mentioned in the FIDE laws!

Games ending with perpetual check are technically drawn by either *threefold repetition* or the *fifty move* rule (FIDE laws 9.2 and 9.3).

12b

Black can play **twenty** moves before conceding a draw by threefold repetition of the position. That's a long way from fifty moves. Here is one of the maximum lines.

1.Rb8+ Kxb8 2.Rb7+ Kc8 3.Rc7+ Kb8 4.Rb7+ Kc8 5.Rc7+ Kd8 6.Rd7+ Ke8 7.Re7+ Kd8 8.Rd7+ Ke8 9.Re7+ Kf8 10.Re8+ Kg7 11.Rg8+ Kh6 12.Rg6+ Kh7 13.Rg7+ Kh8 14.Rg8+ Kh7 15.Rg7+ Kh6 16.Rg6+ Kh5 17.Rg5+ Kh4 18.Rg4+ Kh5 19.Rg5+ Kh4 20.Rg4+ Kh5
And now, before playing 21.Rg5+, White can claim a draw according to rule 9.2.

[*This line, courtesy of Geir Sune Tallaksen Østmoe, improves on the 19 move solution given in the original column.*]

12c
Bonus Puzzle

Construct a position in which perpetual check leads to a draw by the fifty move rule before there is a threefold repetition.

The side playing for the draw (White) must make their best moves, aiming for the shortest draw. In other words, White must seek a threefold repetition. Black's goal is to avoid a draw as long as possible. An additional stipulation is that Black must have a significant winning advantage if White does not force a draw.

I haven't worked on a solution. You can post one on the *ChessCafe blog* if you like. Otherwise, I'll include something in the January 18 column.

Until next year!