THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

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## SERIES-MATES: Serious Fun

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Puzzles are a fun way to pass the time. But seriously, nothing is more fun than Halloween. If you agree, today is your day. Trick or treat!

This column continues our series on series-mates with five original problems and a classic from times gone by. As before, we begin with the shortest form of series-mate, the double whammy.

*The correct way to wear a pumpkin.*

Double Whammy 69
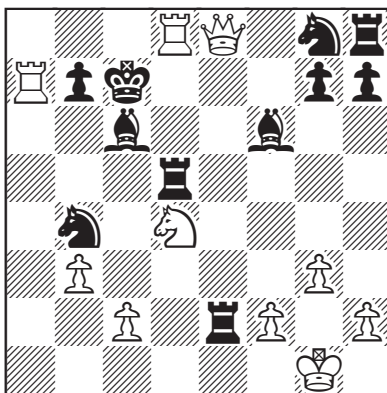
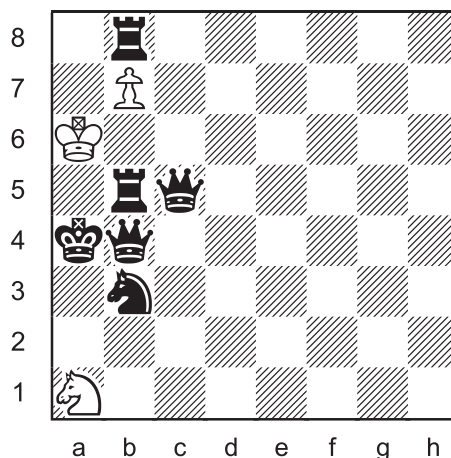White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

The first move may not be check. Either move may be a capture. Both moves may be with the same piece. Black does not get a turn.

The strategy in series-mates varies considerably. Sometimes it's easy to see the eventual mating pattern and the only question is how to get the pieces to the right squares. In other cases, the mate is well concealed, especially when promotions to different types of pieces are possible. Often the initial moves are more or less forced once the defenders to be eliminated are identified. But occasionally there are multiple opening sequences to choose from where a single tempo is the deciding factor.
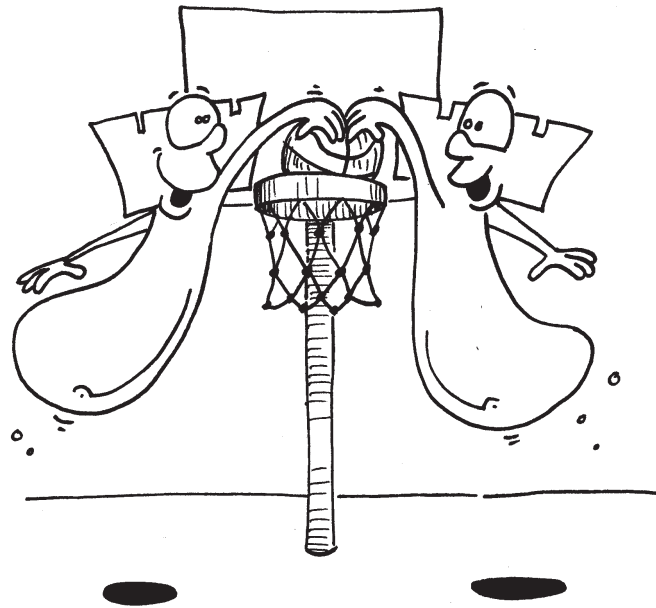
The strategic options in this apparently basic position may surprise you.

Multi-Wham 59

series-mate in 9

White plays nine moves in a row to mate Black.
Only the final move may give check. Captures are allowed.
Black does not get a turn. White may not place their own king in check,
even if they get out of check on a subsequent turn.

Our next problem, from 36 years ago, is by an American composer known as the "king of series-movers", George Sphicas. He has published over 400 such problems, though less than 30 are direct mates like those in this column. He preferred series-movers with the stipulation stalemate, self-mate, self-stalemate, or help-stalemate.

Multi-Wham 60

George P. Sphicas 1986

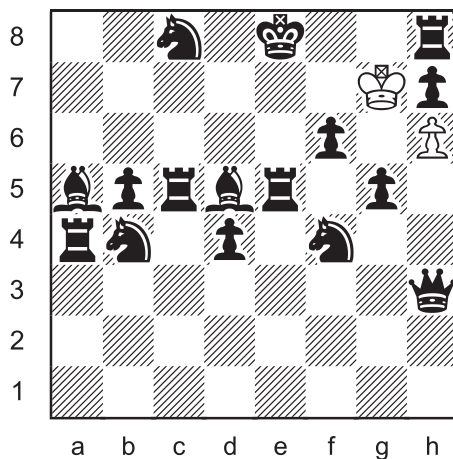*Ideal-Mate Review*
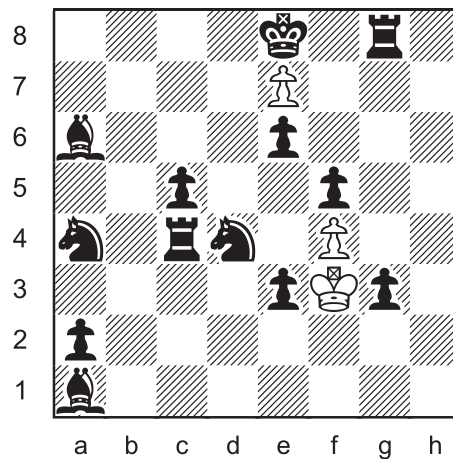
series-mate in 60

White plays sixty moves in a row to mate Black.

As fun as a brick wall.

White has king and pawn against the whole black army in the following position. But being greatly outnumbered is not a disadvantage in a series-mate. Though it does make for a longer solution.
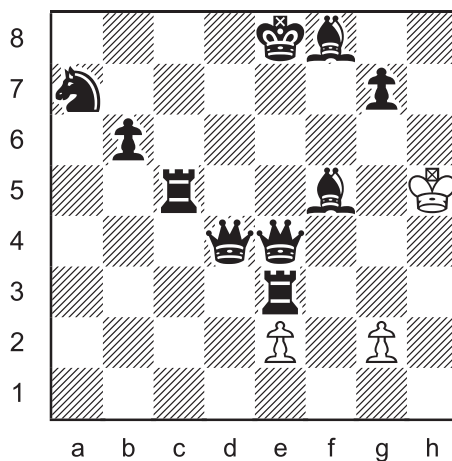
Multi-Wham 61

series-mate in 26
White plays twenty-six moves in a row to mate Black.

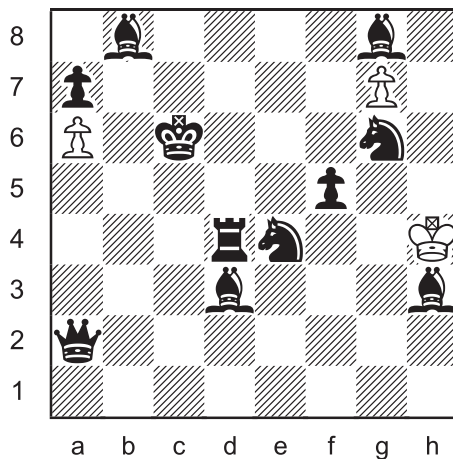White gets two pawns this time with more than twice as many options.

Multi-Wham 62

series-mate in 19
White plays nineteen moves in a row to mate Black.

Our final puzzle is full of strategic tricks and treats. Hopefully a few detours and dead ends won't scare you away.

Multi-Wham 63

series-mate in 32

White plays thirty-two moves in a row to mate Black.


Happy Halloween!

SOLUTIONS

All problems except multi-wham 60 are by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2022).

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.
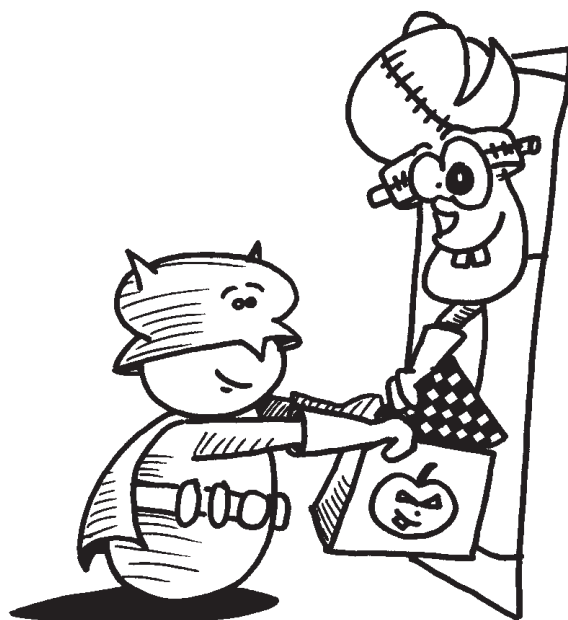
Archives. Past columns are available in the *Puzzling Side* archives.
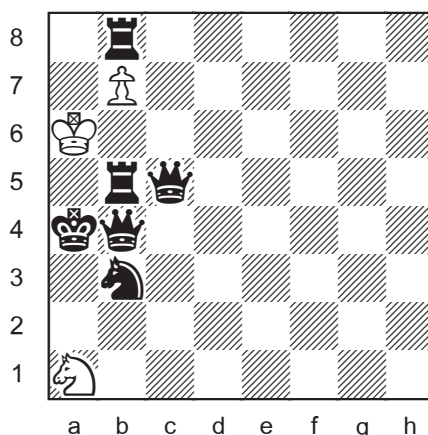
Double Whammy 69
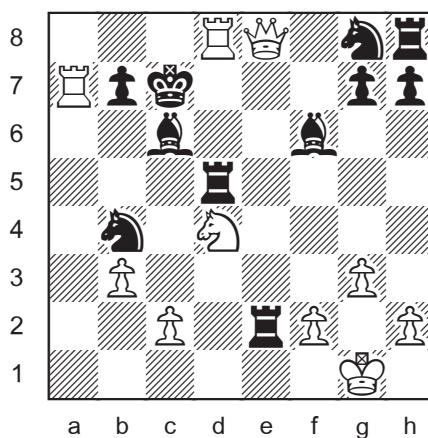
1.Qe3 2.Ne6#

The queen shields e6 and covers b6.

Chessboard tricks and treats.

Multi-Wham 59

Obviously, the black rook on b8 must be captured so that the white pawn can promote.

1.Nc2   Taking the black knight takes two moves too many. There are lots of ways to mate in 11. For example, *1.Nxb3? 2.Nd4 3.Nc6 4.Nxb8 5.Nc6 6.Nxb4 7.Nc2 8.b8=Q 9.Qb6 10.Qxc5 11.Qxb5#*
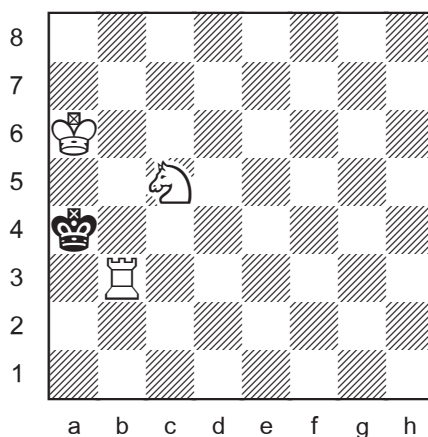
2.Nxb4 3.Nc6 4.Nxb8   At this point, White must foresee the rook and knight mate.

5.Nd7   Returning to c6 is one turn slower. Three different lines after *5.Nc6?* are:

       6.Nd4 7.Nxb5 8.Nd4 9.b8=Q 10.Qxb3#
       6.b8=Q 7.Qc8 8.Qxc5 9.Qc2 10.Qa2#
       6.b8=R 7.Rxb5 8.Rxc5 9.Rc2 10.Ra2#

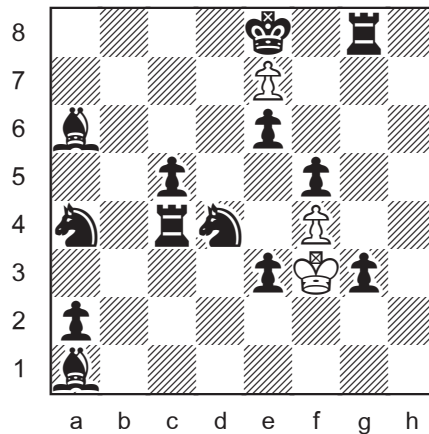6.b8=R   Promoting to queen is not as fast.

7.Rxb5 8.Rxb3 9.Nxc5#   A pretty picture.

Multi-Wham 60

George P. Sphicas 1986
Ideal-Mate Review

The eventual mate is fairly easy to see in this problem. The white king will go to e6 followed by pawn to f7. But getting the king there is no small feat. The e6 square is guarded by the black knight on d4. That knight is guarded by pawn c5, bishop a1, and rook c4. Additionally the rook on c4 is defended by the bishop on a6 and the pawn on c5 by the knight on a4. All of these pieces in the chain of defence must be eliminated.

It takes a bit more thought to see that the only way for the white king to capture the bishop on a6 is to go through f6-e5-d6-c7. That means that the rook on g8 will also have to be eliminated.

1.Kxe3   The e-pawn must be captured before the king heads to g8.
          After *1.Kg2?*, the white king can never reach the d3 square
          later to take the rook on c4.

2.Kd2 3.Ke1 4.Kf1 5.Kg2 6.Kh3 7.Kh4 8.Kh5 9.Kh6 10.Kh7
11.Kxg8 12.Kg7 13.Kf6 14.Ke5 15.Kd6 16.Kc7 17.Kb8 18.Ka7
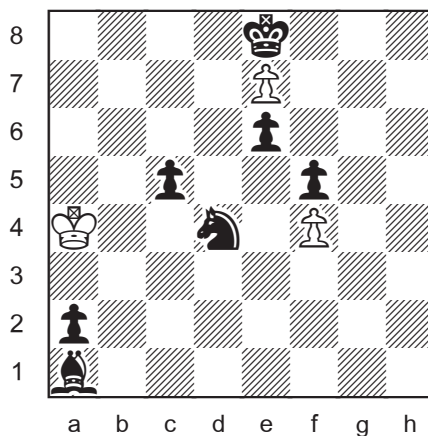19.Kxa6
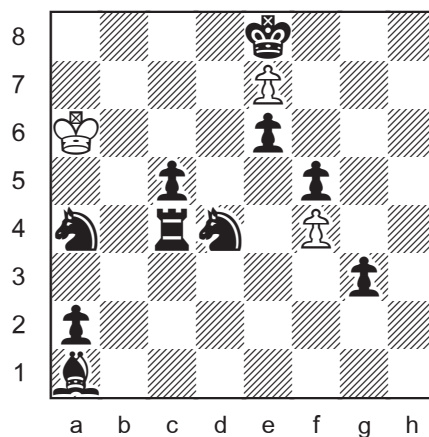
Now the king goes back around the board to capture the rook on c4.

20.Kb7 21.Kc7 22.Kd6 23.Ke5 24.Kf6 25.Kg5 26.Kh4 27.Kxg3
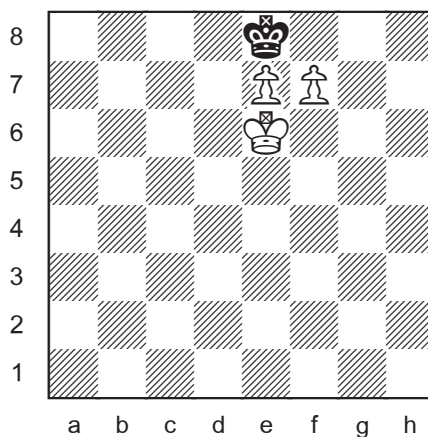28.Kf2 29.Ke3 30.Kd3 31.Kxc4
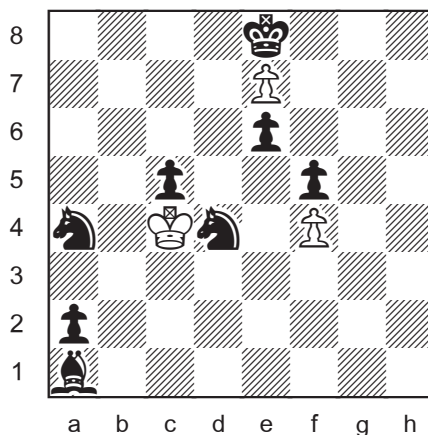
Taking the knight on a4 requires another trip around the world.

32.Kd3 33.Ke3 34.Kf2 35.Kg3 36.Kh4 37.Kg5 38.Kf6 39.Ke5
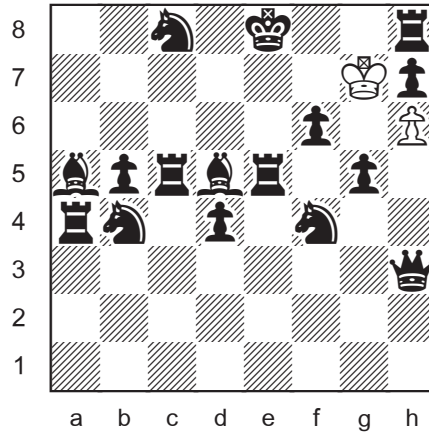40.Kd6 41.Kc7 42.Kb7 43.Ka6 44.Ka5 45.Kxa4

The rest is straightforward, more or less.

46.Ka3 47.Kxa2 48.Kxa1 49.Kb2 50.Kc3 51.Kc4 52.Kxc5 53.Kxd4
54.Ke5 55.Kxe6 56.Kxf5 57.Ke6 58.f5 59.f6 60.f7#

Multi-Wham 61

In order to checkmate, the white h-pawn must promote to queen or rook. But that is only possible if the white king is on e6 or g8 for the promotion. On e6 would be mate. On g8 would block a check along the last rank.

The black queen, which cannot be captured by the white king, prevents him from getting to e6. So the king must stand on g8 for the promotion. That requires the capture of the bishop on d5. The chain of defenders guarding that bishop includes all the black pieces on the 4th, 5th, and 6th ranks.

1.Kxf6   Immediately freeing the h-pawn by *1.Kxh8? 2.Kxh7 3.Kg7* wastes one move in the long run, mating in 27.
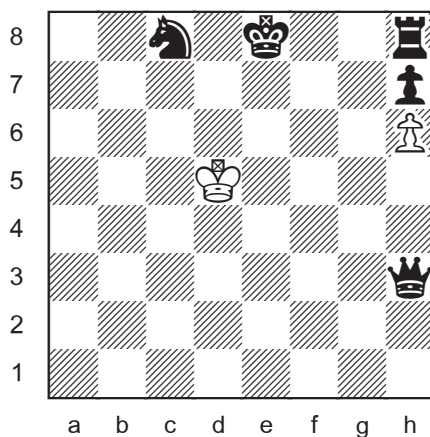
2.Kxe5   3.Kf6   It's speedier to eliminate the knight on f4 before proceeding to the queenside pieces. (*3.Kxd4?*)

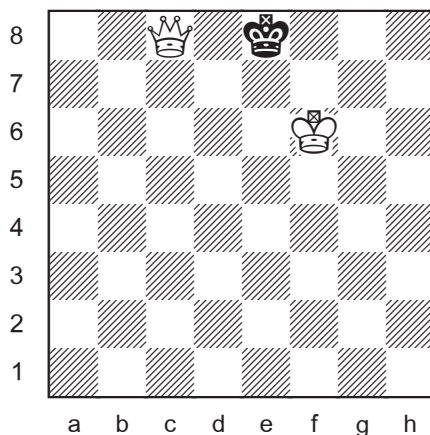4.Kxg5   5.Kxf4
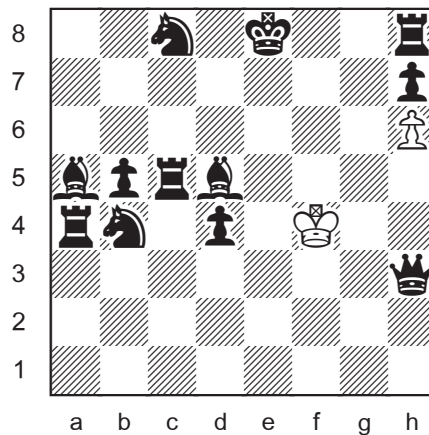
The rest of the massacre offers no distraction.

6.Ke5   7.Kxd4   8.Kxc5   9.Kxb5   10.Kxa4   11.Kxa5   12.Kxb4   13.Kc5   14.Kxd5
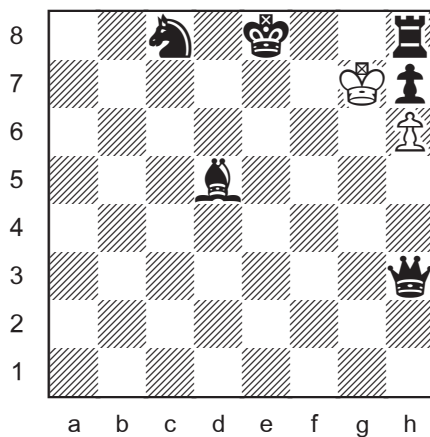
15.Ke5 16.Kf6 17.Kg7 18.Kxh8 19.Kxh7 20.Kg8 21.h7 22.h8=Q
23.Qxh3 24.Kg7 25.Kf6 26.Qxc8#

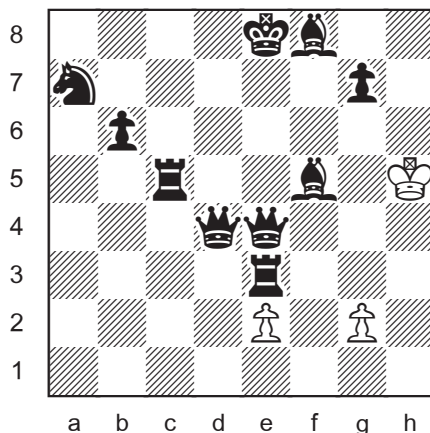Perhaps 61b, a more concise version of this problem, is preferable.

Multi-Wham 61b

series-mate in 13

1.Kf6 2.Ke5 3.Kxd5 4.Ke5 5.Kf6 6.Kg7 7.Kxh8 8.Kg8 9.h8=Q
10.Qxh3 11.Kg7 12.Kf6 13.Qxc8#

Multi-Wham 62

The white king cannot capture the black pawn on g7 or the black rook on e3. Therefore the only way for White to promote is for the g-pawn to capture on f5 and g7.

|	
1.g4 2.gxf5 3.Kg6	Unpinning the pawn from the rook on c5.
4.Kh7 5.Kg8	Unpinning the pawn from the queen on e4. *5.Kh8?* does not work because after *6.f6 7.fxg7*, the pawn is pinned by the queen on d4. This also means a promotion on g8 is impossible.
6.f6 7.fxg7	
8.gxf8=B!	Promoting to queen or rook would be check. Promoting to knight takes 21 moves total, surprisingly by making a second knight! For example, *8.gxf8=N? 9.Ne6 10.Nf4 11.Nd5 12.Nxe3 13.Nd5 14.e3 15.exd4 16.dxc5 17.cxb6 18.b7 19.b8=N 20.Nc6 21.Nf6#.*
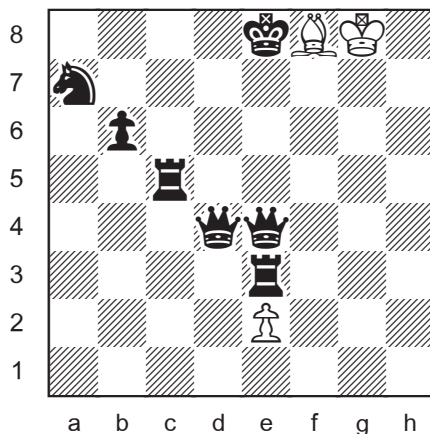
9.Bh6   Taking the black rook by *9.Bxc5?* fails because the white e-pawn must capture on d4 and c5 in order to promote.

10.Bxe3 11.Bg5   The bishop takes its place in the mating pattern.
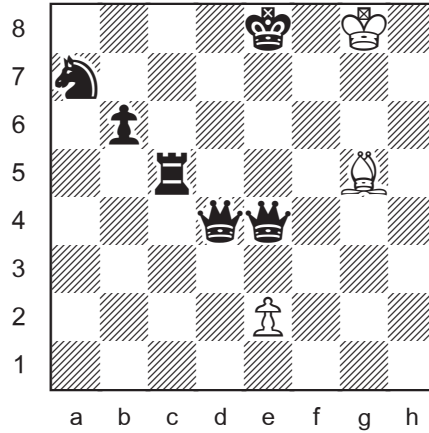
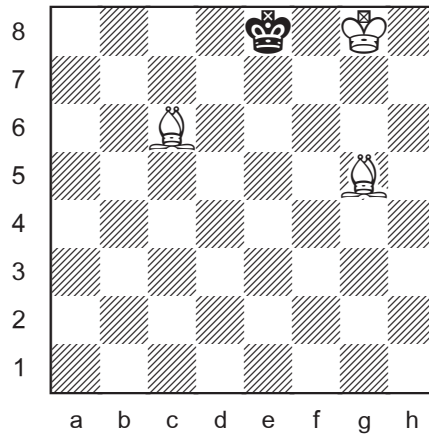12.e3 13.exd4 14.dxc5 15.cxb6 16.bxa7

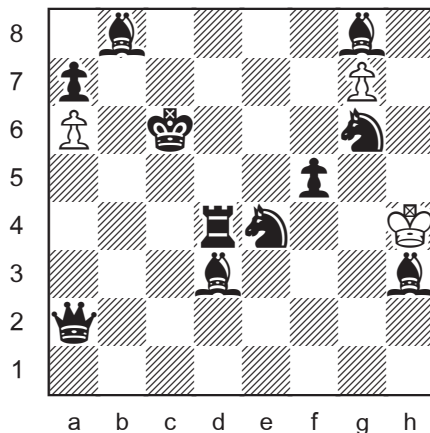17.a8=B!   Two B's or not 2 B's. That is the question.

Queening by *17.Bd8? 18.a8=Q* is too slow.
(*19.Qb7 20.Bh4 21.Qc8#*)

18.Bxe4 19.Bc6#

Multi-Wham 63

The white king cannot capture the bishop on g8 because it is guarded by the black queen. So the king must free the a-pawn. To reach a7, he must go through f6 and e7. Therefore the knight on e4 and its defenders must be eliminated.
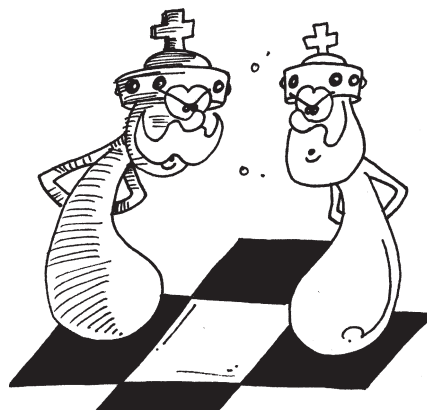
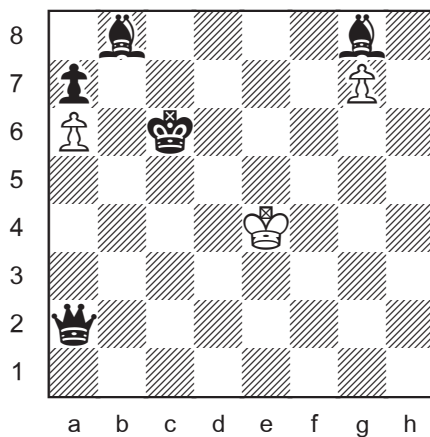1.Kh5   After *1.Kxh3?*, the king can never get to the pawn on f5.

2.Kxg6 3.Kh5 4.Kh4 5.Kxh3   Taking the f-pawn's protector.

6.Kh4 7.Kh5 8.Kg6 9.Kxf5
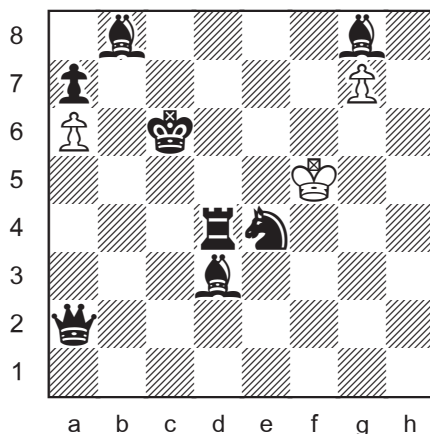
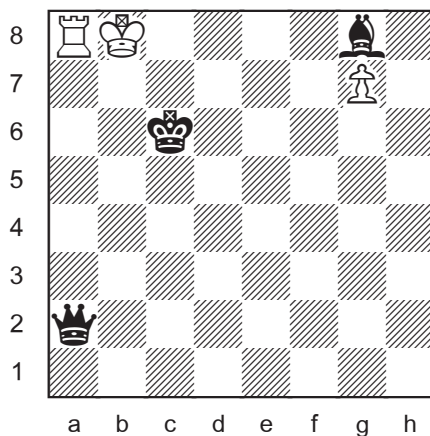10.Kg4 11.Kf3 12.Ke3 13.Kxd4 14.Kxd3 15.Kxe4

Now it's clear sailing through f6 e7.

16.Kf5 17.Kf6 18.Ke7 19.Kd8 20.Kc8 21.Kxb8 22.Kxa7 23.Kb8 24.a7 25.a8=R

Promoting to queen or bishop would be check. Promoting to a knight is two moves longer than a rook. *25.a8=N? 26.Nc7 27.Nd5 28.Nf6 29.Nxg8 30.Nf6 31.Ne4 32.g8=Q 33.Qb3 34.Qb7#*
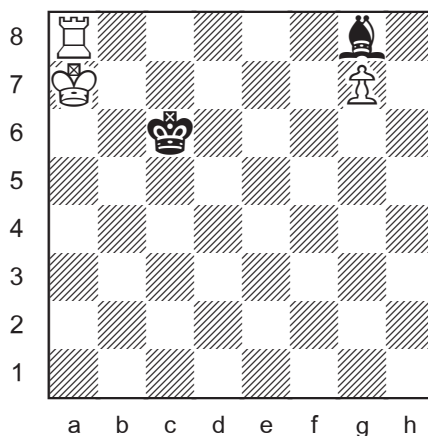
26.Rxa2 27.Ra8!

A surprise switchback to a8 which is one turn quicker than *27.Rf2? 28.Rf8 29.Rxg8 30.Rd8 31.Rd5 32.g8=Q 33.Qe6#.*
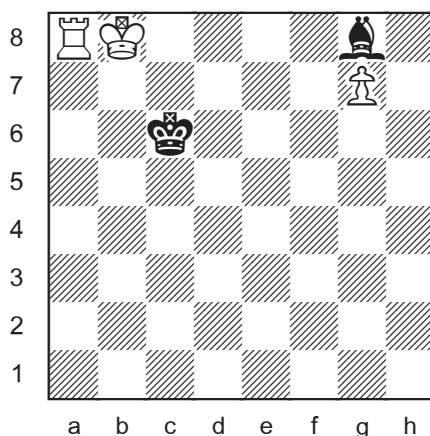
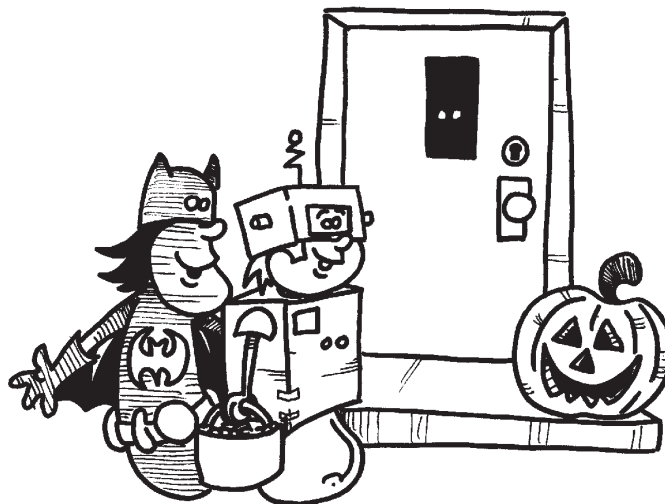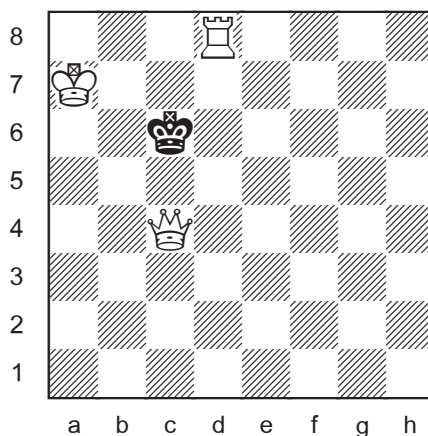28.Ka7   A switchback by the king as well.

29.Rxg8   30.Rd8   Taking control of the d-file.

31.g8=Q   32.Qc4#   Tada!

Until next time.