British Endgame Study News

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by Harold Lommer
White to play and win

A British World Champion. It is only marginally a study matter, but all will applaud Jonathan Mestel's success in this year's World Chess Solving Championship. Graham Lee was 4th and Michael McDowell 25th (68 competitors). Britain came third in the team event.

This issue. There is another special number featuring chess variants (readers not wishing to receive these end-of-year "variant" numbers are reminded that I am willing to extend their subscriptions over an equivalent number of ordinary issues instead) and a half-size special number which describes some curious positions of reciprocal zugzwang. And page 59 has a historical note about the famous study above.

1997 accounts. The feared increase in local copying costs has not materialized, and I have had to charge UK subscribers only £4.50 for the year (£5.50 for the rest of Europe, £7.50 elsewhere). Each includes £1.50 towards central overheads. If any reader wants to know how his account stands, I shall be happy to tell him; otherwise, please assume that you are in credit until you receive a letter telling you otherwise.

Spotlight. The latest *EG* reports that June's Tarasyuk study is unsound after all: Luis Miguel González plays 3...Kd3! 4 d8Q (nothing better) Kxd2 and there is no win. What a pity. Harold van der Heijden and Walter Veitch tell me that *Schach-Delikatessen* (see September's Heuäcker selection) was a book by Kurt Richter (de Gruyter, Berlin, 1961), and Harold identifies the Benkő study mentioned by Walter Mees as from the de Feijter Jubilee tourney of 1981 (see *EG* 76 p 296-7 and *EG* 96 p 536-7). Harold also tells me that the "anonymous 1894 study" with 2N v P which underlay Wallace Ellison's front-page study was recently sent to him by Alain Pallier as a study by Kling from George Walker's 1846 book *The art of chessplaying*! It is in neither Kling's *Chess Euclid* of 1849 not the Kling and Horwitz book of 1851, but Alain found a copy in the Lamare collection. Ken Whyld has checked, and confirms. Kling's pre-computer solution ran to 22 moves.

And I apologize for the pallid knight on the front cover of special number 7. I obtained his mount from a dealer who described it as "a fine young black horse, sound in all respects, one careful lady owner", but all the colour ran out in the rain.

Recently published British originals

"Bien que pas très difficile à résoudre, ce problème ne manque pas de charme," wrote a solver in *diagrammes* about a recent study by Mike Bent, and this remark sums up Mike's attitude to the craft. His aim is never difficulty in itself, but rather the unexpected twist that gives pleasure: perhaps a piquant move, perhaps a position in which Black is suddenly helpless. **1** shows the study in question. One wR will have to be exchanged, and it turns out that we need to keep that on the a-file. We therefore give the first check with the other wR, and after **1 Rb8+ Re8 2 Rxe8+** (2 Ra8? Rd6+ with a draw) **Kxe8 3 Ng7+ Kd8** (3...Kf8 4 Ra8+) **4 Ne6+ Kc8 5 Nc5** we have **1a**. Now bR has only three safe squares, but two of them only put off the evil day for a couple of moves (5...Rh7 6 Ra8+ Kc7 7 Ra7+, 5...Rd8 6 Ra8+ Kc7 7 Ne6+) and the third allows immediate mate. Such a study would be unlikely to find its way into a tourney award (the judge would criticize the fact that bRd7 and the blocking bP are in place at the outset instead of being lured into position during the play), but for gentle recreational solving it is just right.
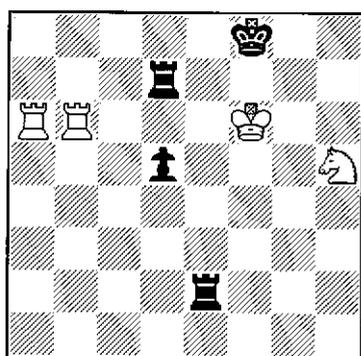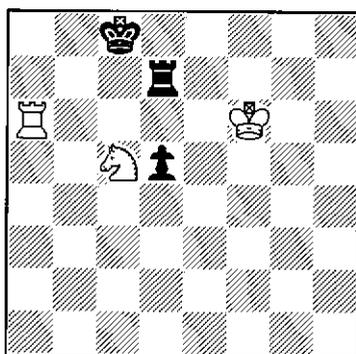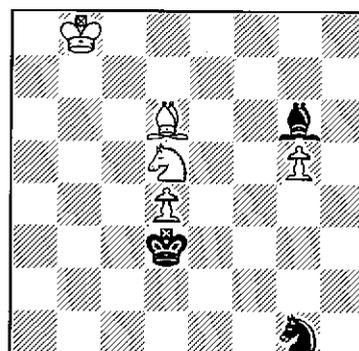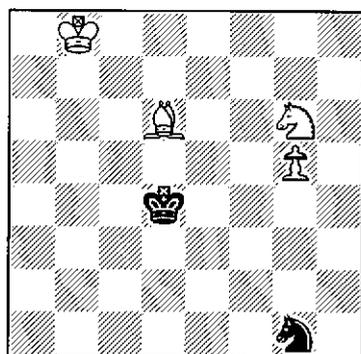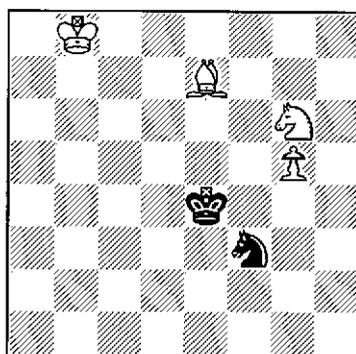

1 - win   1a - after 5 Nc5   2 - win

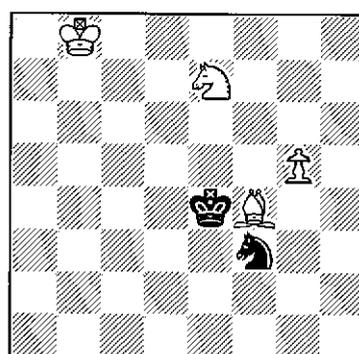Adam Sobey's **2** is a version of a study which appeared in *The Problemist* in January. The obvious opening **1 Nf4+ Kxd4 2 Nxg6** produces **2a**, and now Black must win some material before White can get organized. He has two moves which attack wP (...Nf3 and ...Nh3), and White has two moves to defend it (Be7 and Bf4); which is required?


2a - 2...Nxg6   2b - 2...Nf3 3 Be7 Ke4   2c - 2...Nf3 3 Bf4 ... 4 Ne7

Suppose Black plays **2...Nf3**. If White now tries 3 Be7, we have 3...Ke4 (threatening 4...Nxg5 5 Bxg5 Kf5, see **2b**) 4 Nf8 (nothing better) Kf5 5 g6 Ne5 6 g7 Nc6+ 7 K-- Nxe7, and wP will soon fall. The move is **3 Bf4**, therefore, after which we have **3...Ke4 4 Ne7!** (keeping bK out of f5, see **2c** - the threat was 4...Nxg5 etc as before, and if 4 Nf8 then 4...Kf5 5 g6 Kf6 soon forces the draw) **Kxf4 5 g6** and soon wins (5...Ne5 6 g7 Nd7+ 7 Kc8 Nf6 8 Nd5+).
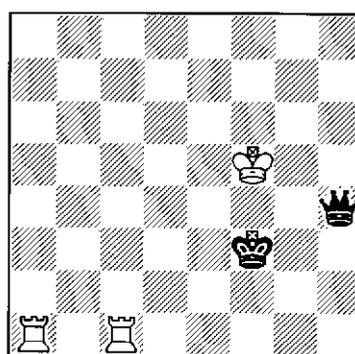
Alternatively, suppose Black plays **2...Nh3**. It is fairly obvious that 3 Bf4 now fails (after 3...Ke4 4 Ne7 Black has 4...Nxf4 instead of 4...Kxf4), but why does **3 Be7** now work? The answer is that Black can no longer play ...Ne5 and ...Nc6+, and after **3...Ke4 4 Nf8 Kf5 5 g6 Nf4 6 g7** he has no tempo-gaining check.
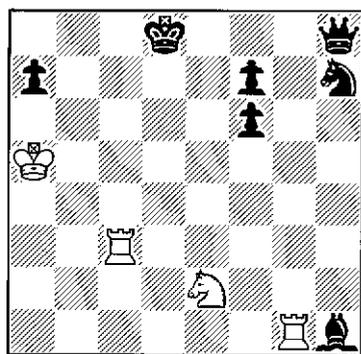


3 - win
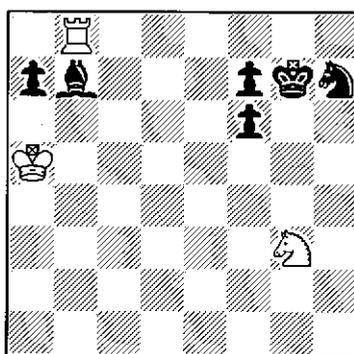
3a - after 7 Rb8

4 - win

Mike Bent's **3** appeared in the same issue of *The Problemist*. The opening **1 Rd1+ Ke7 2 Re3+ Kf8 3 Rd8+ Kg7 4 Rxh8 Kxh8** is straightforward enough, but then comes **5 Re8+ Kg7 6 Ng3 Bb7 7 Rb8** (see **3a**) and bB has nowhere to go. The only squares not controlled by White are c6/d5/f3/g2, and each allows Nf5+ followed by a fork on e7 or h4.

Finally, Harold Lommer's classic **4**. Everybody knows this: **1 Ra3+ Ke2 2 Rc2+ Kd1 3 Rh2!** (threatening RxQ and also Ra1 mate) **Qd4** (3...Qxh2 4 Ra1+ and 5 Ra2+) **4 Ra1+!** (anyway!) **Qxa1 5 Rh1+**. What is it doing in a "recent news" column?
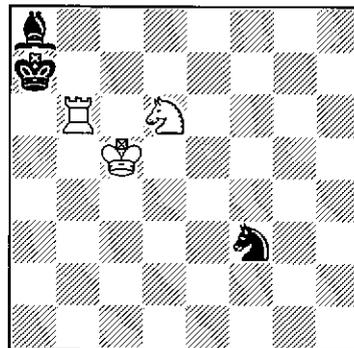
The answer is that some Lommer papers held by John Rety, and recently lodged in the BCPS Library on loan, show it to have been first published not in the *BCM* in 1948 (as stated in Kasparyan's *Domination in 2545 endgame studies* and no doubt in other anthologies) nor in *National-Zeitung* in 1947 (as stated in Lommer's own book *1357 end-game studies*) but in the ***Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham Journal*** on **20 March 1946!** Apparently Lommer, whose wife was in a touring theatrical company, spent a week in Chatham, got in touch with the local chess correspondent (A. C. Holliday, who ran a lively column), and offered him this study as an original contribution. The name of the paper is somewhat doubtful; our cutting does not contain the full title, so I went to the British Newspaper Library to check, and although they catalogue it as the *Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham Journal, Chatham Standard and Mid-Kent Advertiser*, which is consistent with what is preserved in our cutting, the copies they actually provided for me were from a different edition with the title *The North-East Kent Times*! However, I think *Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham Journal* is the most appropriate short title.
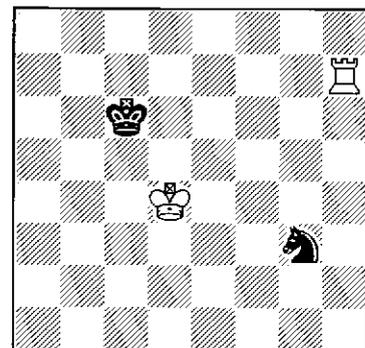
Thoughts on duals

In December 1996, I asked the question, "Where there is a simple and clear-cut win, does the existence of a long and complicated alternative really invalidate a study?" This question was inspired by an analyst's comment on a study by Adam Sobey, in which the crucial position is shown in **1**. The composer's line is 6 Rg6, after which Black has no good move: 6...Kb4 7 Ra6 Bb7 8 Rb7+, or 6...Ka5 7 Nb6 Bb7 8 Nc4+ Ka4 9 Rb6 Ba8 10 Ra6+, or 6...Nf2 7 Rb6+ Ka5 8 Rb2, or 6...Nd2 7 Rb6+ Ka5 8 Rb2 Nf3+ 9 Kc5 Ka6 10 Nd6 Ka7 11 Rb6 (see **1a**) and Black must sacrifice bB to avoid immediate mate. (I actually wrote that Black was in zugzwang after 6 Rg6, but Timothy Whitworth points out that White is threatening a quick win by 7 Rb6+ Ka5 8 Rb8 Bc6 9 Ne7.) However, following the honouring of this study by *Schakend Nederland*, the Belgian analyst Roger Missaien commented that 6 Ra7 Bc6 7 Rh7 was also good enough; 7...Ba8 could be met by 8 Rh6 followed by play most of which repeated Adam's main line, while 7...Ng3/Nf2/Nd2 and 7...Nf6 8 Rh6 Ng4 led to known wins with K+R v K+N. Yet the line 6 Ra7 Bc6 7 Rh7 Ba8 8 Rh6 is merely a longer and less crisp version of Adam's simple 6 Rg6, while some of the wins with K+R v K+N are over twenty moves deep (the longest arises after 7...Ng3 8 Na7+ Kb6 9 Nxc6 Kxc6, see **1b**, when the computer says that 10 Rh6+ wins in 24 moves, 10 Ke5 wins in 27 moves, and no other move wins at all). Hence the question: where there is a simple and clear-cut win, does such an alternative really invalidate a study?
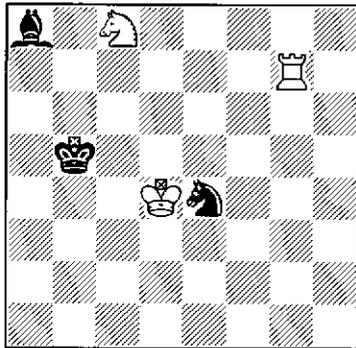
1 - White to play move 6   **1a** - after 11 Rb6   **1b** - win in 24 moves

I received three replies, and although I had hoped for more these three covered virtually the whole spectrum.

Marco Campioli's answer was the simplest. In his opinion, where there is a simple and clear-cut win, the existence of a long and complicated alternative does *not* invalidate the study.

Timothy Whitworth says, "It seems to me that the question to ask about a dual is whether it gives rise to a solution which bypasses the composer's idea." In the present case, I think one would have to concede that it does. By implication, Timothy does not admit the length or difficulty of the dual as a relevant factor.

Walter Veitch also takes a generally opposing view. After commenting that a key feature is duplicated in each line, which must diminish the study even if it does not

invalidate it, he adds, "You imply that the dual might be disregarded because some of the R v N lines are long. Surely not. ... The length of the lines is immaterial."

So, on the question as put to *BESN* readers, the majority vote of those caring to express an opinion seems to be, "Yes, it does."

Are some other opinions of interest? Although immediately inspired by a study in *BESN*, my question owed its origin to a remark by John Nunn in *EG* 61 (July 1980). In an article on unsoundness in studies, John wrote, "As studies become more complex analytically (simple ideas having been exhausted) there will arise more and more situations in which it is not possible to say precisely whether or not a particular position is winning. Should composers be given the benefit of the doubt? *My view is that if the composer's main line is a clear White win whereas an alternative White move may or may not win then the study should be considered sound.* However it is a different matter with *Black* moves. Whereas for White moves the composer's line contains best moves (a clear-cut win vs. a doubtful win) a Black move allowing a clear-cut win is obviously inferior to one which leads to an unclear position and so has no business being in the main line." The emphasis is John's. The reference to Black moves is not relevant here, but I have retained it in order to avoid distorting the quotation. There is of course an important difference: John is considering the case where the alternative White move may or may not lead to a win, I the case where it definitely does led to a win although the win is longer and markedly more difficult. Nevertheless, the two are not wholly distinct, in that many positions which were undecidable in 1980 have now been decided by computer, and a win too complicated to understand and reproduce is not a great deal more useful than no win at all.

My predecessor as the study editor of *diagrammes*, Guy Bacqué, doesn't tolerate any duals at all. To him, a study is valid only as long as White's moves are unique.

John Roycroft, writing in *diagrammes* in 1994, identified no fewer than 18 kinds of dual of varying seriousness, and in *EG* 117 he increased the number to 21. Such analysis invites argument about the extent to which the classes are truly distinct, but the mere existence of such a large number indicates that the subject is not easy.

And much depends on the context. When I am setting studies for solution, there is no question: wrong White moves must be clearly and if possible easily refutable. My primary objective is to give my solvers the satisfaction of finding the right moves, and I don't want them wasting a lot of time on false trails. Here, a difficult alternative win is the last thing that we want! However, when presenting studies to be read I have a lot of sympathy for the Nunn view. An unclear line can now be closed off with an editorial comment, and attention focused on the play of interest.

Let me end by praising accuracy rather than condemning duals. Problem composers achieve accuracy in two ways: by artificially restricting the number of moves available to White, and by adding men to kill unwanted lines. We never do the first of these, and we cannot normally do the second. I therefore find it particularly satisfying when a wide-open position does demand a unique move. A striking case appears on the next page. No doubt there are alternative wK paths later in the play, but the opening move is most unexpectedly precise, and the study comes alive as a result.
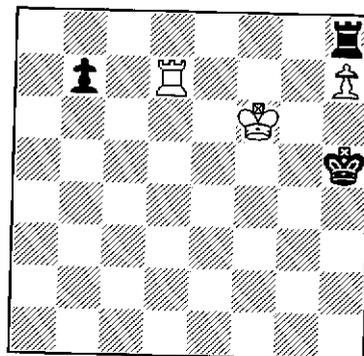
From the world at large

Recently published is the *FIDE Album 1989-91*, which claims to present the best compositions of the period (though not every composer submits his or her work). However, I fear that the classical study enthusiast will not find a great deal here over which to enthuse. Almost 90% of the book's contents are problems, and many of the "studies" have more in common with problems than with recognizable chess endings.
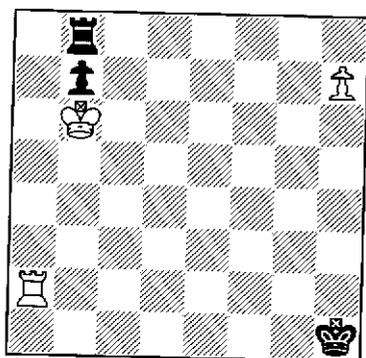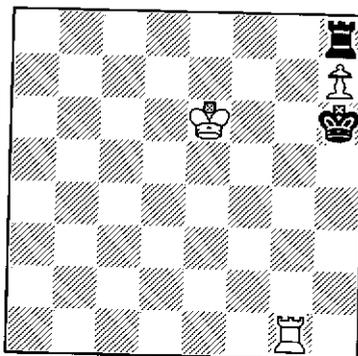
**1 - win**   **1a** - Black to move draws   **1b** - 4-5...Kh5, after 6 Kf6

One that did catch my eye was **1** (D. Gurgenidze, 3rd Place, 13th USSR Team Ty 1987-89). Black threatens 1...Rh8, and 1 Ra7 Rh8 2 Rxb7 allows 2...Kg2 3-5 Ke6 Kg5 6 Rg7+ Kh6 7 Rg1 (see **1a**) Ra8 with a draw; bR can check from the left. So White must keep bPb7 on the board as a shield, but why is **1 Rd2!!** the only move?

Let's play through the main line first. Given is **1...Rh8 2 Rd7 Kg2 3 Kc5 Kf3** (3...b5 4-5 Ke5 b3 6 Rb7, or 3...Kf2 4 Kd5 Ke3 5 Ke5 and bK is shut off from bP) **4 Kd5 Kf4** (if 4...Kg4 5 Ke6 Kh5 then 6 Kf6, giving **1b**, and if 6...Kh6 then 7 Rd1 wins) **5 Ke6 Kg5 6 Rg7+ Kh6 7 Rg1** (now we have **1a** plus bPb7) **Rc8 8 Rc1! Rf8** (nothing better) **9 Ke7 Rh8 10 Kf7** (10 Kf6 wastes time) **Rxh7+ 11 Kf6** and wins.

Now the alternatives. No reply is given for 1 Rc2, but it presumably allows bK to get too close to bP (Black can sacrifice bR for wP and then try and draw with K+P v K+R, so wR must hold bK at a distance). This certainly happens after 1 Re2, when 1...Rh8 2 Re7 Kg2 3 Kc5 Kf3 4 Kd5 b5 5 Ke5 Ke3 6 Kf6+ Kd3 is given. And after 1 Rf2 we have 1...Rh8 2 Rf7 Kg2 3-4 Kd5 Kg5 5 Ke6 Kh5; now 6 Rg7 doesn't give check and can be met by 6...b5, clearing the seventh rank, and 6 Kf6 gives **1b** with wR on f7 instead of d7 and Black can play 6...Kh6 since wR cannot reach the first rank.

To me, this sophisticated piece of work, with its precisely determined opening move 1 Rd2 on a wide-open board, is just what study composition is all about. But what do we find? Studies for this Album were assessed by three judges, who gave marks from 0 to 4, and 7½ points were needed for admission. Here, two judges gave a mere 2 points, below the inclusion level, and it was only thanks to the third judge, who rightly gave a resounding 4, that the study got in. Something has gone wrong.
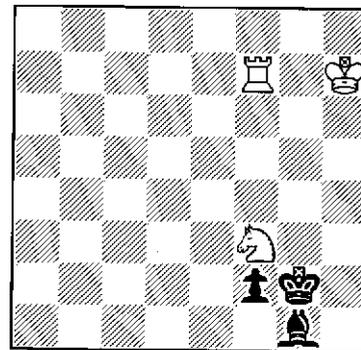
Much easier to praise is John Roycroft's *The complete studies of Genrikh Kasparyan* (see back page). Although expensive, this is a book which all serious enthusiasts will want. All Kasparyan's studies are here, plus a typical Roycroft
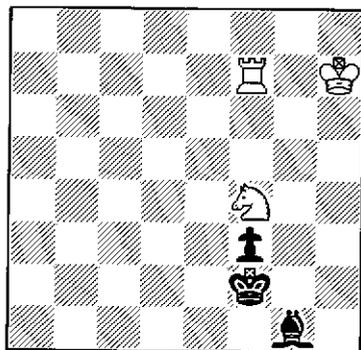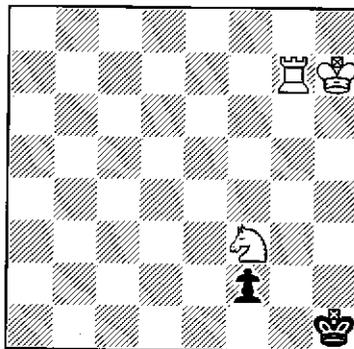
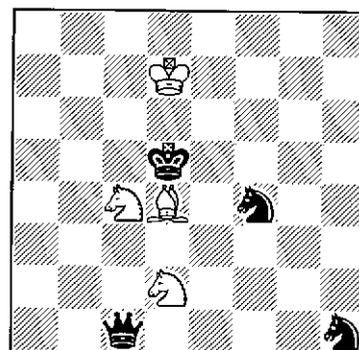**2 - win** **2a - 2 Nxg1, after 4...Kh1** **2b - main line, after 3 Nf3**

personal sketch. I opened the book at random and hit on **2** (*Leninska molod* 1973). This is lighter than most of Kasparyan's work, but it has some characteristic touches. **1 Nh3+ Kg2 2 Ng5!** (not 2 Nxg1 because Black has 2...f2 3 Rg7+ Kh2 4 Nf3+ Kh1, giving **2a**, and 5 Nd2 f1Q 6 Nxf1 is stalemate) **f2 3 Nf3!** (see **2b**) **Kf1** (unpromising, but 3...f1Q fails to 4 Nh4+) **4 Re7** (preventing ...Ke2) **Kg2 5 Nd2 f1N** (desperation, but 5...f1Q is met by 6 Rg7+) **6 Re2+ Bf2 7 Ne4 Ng3 8 Rxf2+ Kg1 9 Rf4** and wins.
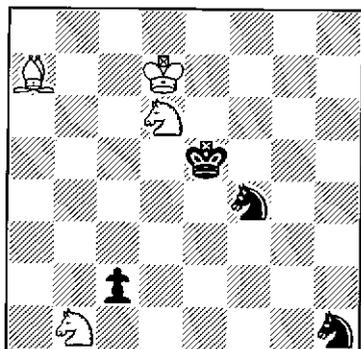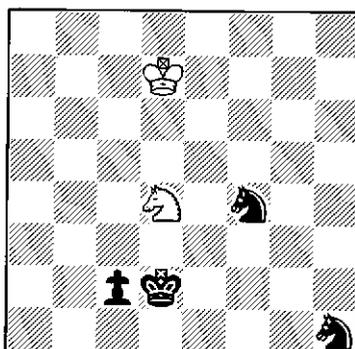
3 - draw **3a - 1 Bd4+, after 4 Nd4** **3b - main line, after 3 N6c4**

Also of interest is Volume 3 of Zoila R. Caputto's *El arte del estudio in ajedrez* (again see back page). This contains nearly 2000 studies from other countries than Argentina (volume 2) and the former USSR (volume 4, to appear). I found the sections devoted to lesser-known countries and composers particularly interesting, but for present purposes I think I should quote a British item. A. W. Daniel (1878-1955) was primarily a problemist, but he composed studies as well and **3** appeared in 1916 in the *Chess Amateur*. The editor refers to what even my non-existent Spanish can read as a "siren song": the try 1 Bd4+ Kxd4 2 Nd2 (to meet 2...c1Q by 3 Nb3+) Kc3 3 Nb5+ Kxd2 4 Nd4 (see **3a**), after which the threat of ...c1Q is killed but Black has 4...c1N winning with three knights against one. Instead, we have **1 Nd2 c1Q 2 Bd4+ Kd5 3 N6c4** (see **3b**) and the three minor pieces dominate bQ; the threat is 4 Ne3+ Kxd4 5 Nb3+, and if **3...Qe1** then **4 Nb6+ Kxd4 5 Nf3+** instead. It's not profound, but it's pleasant. The book is not free from error (an apparent claim on page 507 that Adamson anticipated the famous Réti pawn study is quite wrong, the Adamson study having appeared in 1922 and not in 1921 as stated) and it is certainly not cheap, but all serious collectors will want it and I think it will appeal to general enthusiasts as well.

News and notices

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday January 9** at 6.00 pm. Non-subscribers are welcome, but please bring £5 towards the cost of the buffet (except on a first visit). Bring the latest *EG* with you!

World Chess Composition Tournament (see September, page 49). British study composers contributing to this tournament are reminded that their entries should reach Colin Crouch, 98 Elms Road, Harrow Weald, Middlesex HA3 6BT, by the end of the year, so that a provisional selection can be made at the January *EG* readers' meeting.

Each round of the WCCT is assessed by a single judge nominated by one of the participating countries, and the countries which provided judges for the most recent WCCT received an average of 30.3 points out of 47 for the round assessed by their own judge and an average of only 13.7 points for each of the other rounds. Whatever the reasons may have been, such a disparity is clearly unacceptable, and I understand that the procedure for conducting the WCCT in future is under review. However, the present tournament will be conducted under the existing rules, and those contributing material will be hoping that a similar bias does not disfigure its results.

Books. John Roycroft's *The complete studies of Genrikh Kasparyan* (see pages 62-63) is available from Chess Direct, PO Box 18, Mexborough, South Yorks S64 9AR, at £30.99 including UK postage. I know no British supplier of Zoilo R. Caputto's *El arte del estudio de ajedrez*, but it is available from Oscar J. Carlsson, Casilla de Correo N° 309, Suc. 12 "B", 1412 - Buenos Aires, Argentina. Volume 1 (early history of the study) and volume 2 (Argentina) each cost US $30 including UK postage, volume 3 (other countries apart from the former USSR, see page 63) US $85.

Also to hand is Jonathan Levitt's *Genius in chess* (Batsford, ISBN 0-7134-8049-1). Jonathan, even more than John Roycroft, is interested in people's minds and what makes them tick, and this book explores the question of what chess talent really is. I find it fascinating; you don't have to agree with all Jonathan's ideas and conclusions (a startling result involving myself is in my opinion best regarded as an isolated freak) to find them pleasantly thought-provoking. It isn't a book about studies, but it makes full use of studies and other compositions as enjoyable and penetrative tools for assessment. It too is not cheap (£12.99 for 128 pages), but Jonathan can supply it at this price inclusive of UK postage and he has asked me to include an order form with UK copies of this issue of *BESN*. I am happy to do so. The book cannot be a complete answer to a question which is surely unanswerable, but it contains some imaginative insights.

Anybody wishing to give notice here of any event, product, or service should contact the Editor. There is no charge and no account is taken of whether the activity is being pursued for commercial profit, but notices are printed only if they seem likely to be of particular interest to study enthusiasts. Readers are asked to note that the Editor relies wholly on the representations of the notice giver (except where he makes a personal endorsement) and that no personal liability is accepted either by him or by any other person involved in the production and distribution of this magazine.