

British Endgame Study News

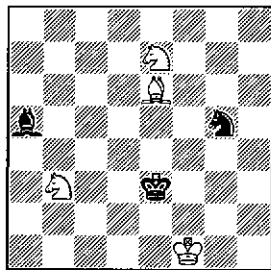
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Edited and published by John Beasley, 7 St James Road, Harpenden, Herts AL5 4NX
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Contents of this issue

Editorial	185
Recently published British originals	186
Another tale of two honoured studies	188
Computers and tourneys - a different view	189
From the world at large	190
News and notices	192



by Mike Bent

White to play and win

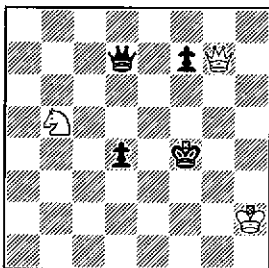
Another BCF President's Award. It is most pleasant to report that one of this year's BCF President's Awards for services to chess has been given to Mike Bent. This follows a similar award to John Roycroft a few years back, and shows that "chess for fun" is still recognized even in these rating-obsessed days. For once, there is no Bent study in the main magazine, but the above is one of several in the accompanying special numbers. Truly, it is an honour well deserved.

This issue. There are two special numbers, since I have decided not to delay the planned selection of British studies from 1968-74 even though Adam Sobey has produced the second of his special numbers on his years with *The Problemist*. There is no "variants" number, but readers may care to note a paper by Václav Kotěšovec on the ending "King and two generalized knights against king" in the June *ICGA Journal* (pages 105-107). As for the claim that the Saavedra study had been anticipated in play by Porterfield Rynd, look for an article by John Roycroft in the December *BCM*.

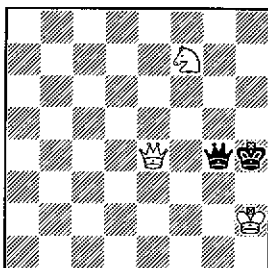
Accounts for 2001. The unusually large amount of material provided this year (seven special numbers instead of the usual four, plus the Moravec book) means that the annual charge is greater than usual, and I am charging £9 to UK readers (£10.50 to readers in Europe, £12 elsewhere). If your subscription has now run out, there will be a letter accompanying this issue; otherwise, please assume you are in credit until I tell you otherwise. I do *not* undertake to provide more than the usual material next year, but I hope readers will think that this year's extras have been worth while.

Spotlight (see also page 191). David Shire draws my attention to an unfortunate oversight in my treatment of A. W. Daniel's study 4 in special number 17 (December 1999). In the line 3 Re5? a1R! I wrote that mate was is threatened on the h-file and "if White tries 4 Rf5+ ... then Black has 4...Kg6 with mate or capture of wR", overlooking that in the resulting position (wKh8, Rf5, bKg6, Ra1, Bc2) White had 5 Rf8 meeting both threats. It doesn't save him, of course, because Black continues 5...Rh1+ 6 Kg8 Bb3+ and wins because the rook which has just moved to f8 now blocks its own king, but it is a pretty point which I apologize for having overlooked.

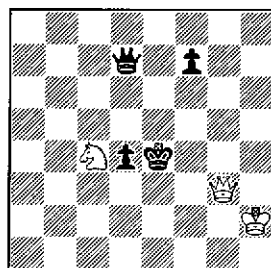
Recently published British originals



1 - win

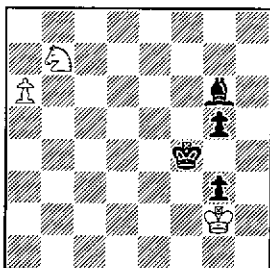


1a - 1...Qg4, after 5...Kh4

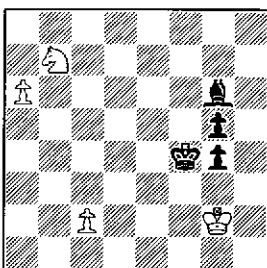


1b - 1...Kf3, after 4...Kc4

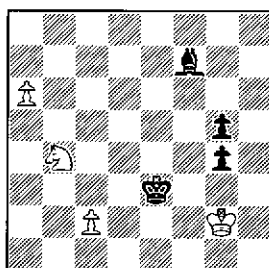
1, by Paul Byway and Timothy Whitworth, appeared in the May issue of *The Problemist*. **1 Nd6** threatens mate and **1...Qxd6** loses the queen, leaving Black three possibilities: the king moves **1...Kc3/Kf3**, and **1...Qg4**. This last leads to **2 Qxd4+ Kf3** (**2...Kg5 3 Nxf7+ Kh5 4 Qh8+** and we have a position that occurs later in the main line) **3 Qe3+ Kf4** (**3...Kf2 4 Ne4+** etc) **4 Qe4+ Kg5 5 Nxf7+ Kh4** (see 1a) **6 Qe1+** (**6 Qh7+ Qh5 7 Qe4+ Qg4** repeats the position and other moves forfeit the win entirely, in particular **6 Qe3 Qe2+!** **7 Qxe2** stalemate) **Kh5 7 Qa5+ Kh4 8 Qd8+ Kh5 9 Qh8+** and a fork next move. We have been in the database since move 5, but it is a pleasant wQ tour. Of the king moves, **1...Kf3** is given as an alternative main line, **2 Qg2+ Ke3 3 Nc4+ Kf4 4 Qg3+ Ke4** (see 1b) and the given **5 Qh4+** is simplest though **5 Kg2** also wins, while **1...Ke3** is met by **2 Nc4+** followed by **2...Kf4 3 Qg3+** transposing into the previous line, **2...Kc4 3 Qg2+ Kf4 4 Qg3+**, or **2...Ke2 3 Qg2+ Ke1 4 Kg1**.



2 - win



3 - win



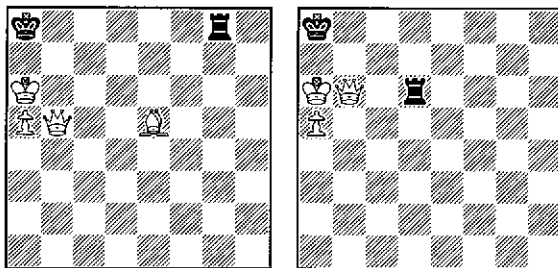
3a - 1...Bf7, after 3 Nb4

In Hugh Blandford's (*London Chess Bulletin*, June 1949), White must keep the Black bishop off the long diagonal. Intended was **1 Nc5 Bh5** (aiming for f3) **2 Nd3+ Ke4 3 Kxg3 Ke3 4 Nb4 Bf3** (**4...Bg6 5 Nd5+** and **6 a7**) **5 Nc2+ Ke2 6 Nd4+**, but unfortunately **4 Ne5** wins more easily. Paul Byway reset the idea as shown in 3 (*The Problemist*, May, version): **1 Nc5** (**1 Nd6 Bxc2 2 a7 Bd1 3 a8Q Bf3+**) **Bf7/Be8** (**1...Bxc2 2 a7 Bd1 3 Nd3+** and **4 Ne1**) **2 Nd3+ Ke3** (**2...Ke4 3 Nb4 Bg6 4 a7 K-**

5 a8Q Be4+ 6 Qxe4+ and wN will defend wP, 2...Kf5 3 Nb4 Bc4/Bb5 4 a7 Be2 5 a8Q and much the same) 3 Nb4 (see 3a) Bg6 (3...Bc4/Bb5 4 a7 and again the same) 4 Nd5+ Kd4 5 Nf6 Bxc2 6 a7 Bd1 7 Nxg4 Bc2 8 Nf6! and wins (but not 8 Nf2 Bb3). The unwanted line has vanished, and the play as a whole is improved.

3 was published without bPg5, and Paul tells me that he was in two minds as to which version to present. With it, there is a redundant pawn in the final position, always something to be avoided if possible; without it, Black can play 2...Kg5, giving the long and possibly distracting sideline 3 Nb4 (Ne5 if bB is on e8) Bg6 4 c4 Be4+ 5 Kg3 Ba8 6 c5 Kf5 7 Kh4 Kf4 (if the g-pawn goes, Paul inferred from Averbakh's examples of N+aP+cP v B that White would win) 8-9 c7 g2 10 Nd3+ Ke3 11 c8Q g1Q 12 Qc5+. However, Averbakh describes the win in one of his examples as "hanging by a thread" (1976 English edition, p 70), and if Black plays 7...Ke6 8 Kxg4 Kd7 he appears to reach a position where White cannot win even though two pawns up; in a 75-minute run, Hiarcs 7.32 calculated exhaustively to 25 ply and selectively to 31 ply, and reported a draw in all lines. So it looks as if the computer has made Paul's decision for him, and he has asked me to present the version with bPg5 here.

The column in *The Problemist* is now being run by Alain Pallier, La Mouzinière, F-85190 La Genétouze, France. He reported in the September issue that he was short of originals, so please send him anything you have on hand that is of suitable quality.



4 - Black to move, White wins 4a - reciprocal zugzwang

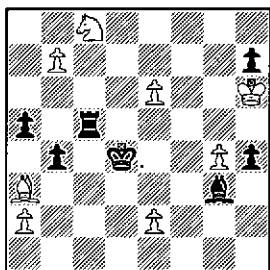
My column in *diagrammes* is likewise far from over-subscribed, and I have to use my own work more often than I would like. 4, from the January-June double issue, is the merest of trifles. I dislike starting with Black to move, but to reach this position by sensible play would involve a horrendous sequence of captures if it is possible at all. So we give Black the move and play the obvious 1...Rg6+, and now what?

Easiest to refute is 2 Qb6, when Black plays 2...Rxb6+ and both 3 axb6 and 3 Kxb6 give stalemate. So the bishop must interpose. Let's try the wrong square first: 2 Bf6. Black must capture, 2...Rxf6+, and 3 Qb6 Rxb6+ 4 axb6 duly leads to a win. However, Black has 3...Rd6 (see 4a) and what is White to do? 4 Qxd6 gives stalemate at once, while 4 Kb5 allows 4...Rxb6+ because now axb6 does not win.

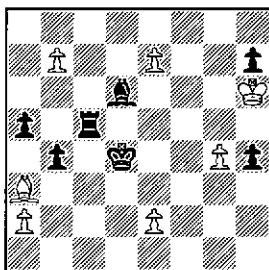
So the move is 2 Bd6, after which 2...Rxd6+ 3 Qb6 gives 4a with Black to move and he cannot play ...Rd6 because hc is already there. Examination of Harold van der Heijden's database showed two existing studies ending with this position, but neither included a natural try leading to the same position with the wrong side to move.

Another tale of two honoured studies

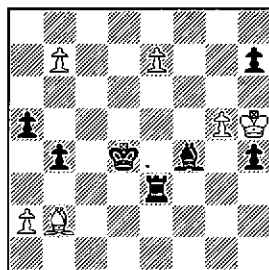
Timothy Whitworth reacted to September's tale by sending me the studies in the 1909 *Rigaer Tageblatt* award. This time the judges saw things the other way round, putting the light and elegant study first and the more ambitious but heavier one lower down.



1 - win



1a - after 2 e7

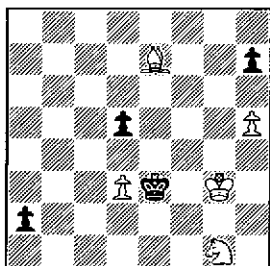


1b - after 6 Bb2+

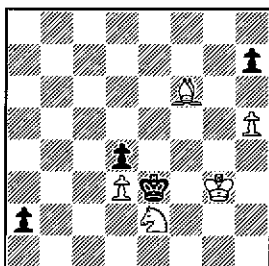
Troitzky's 1 only obtained 1st Honourable Mention, but Tattersall commented in the *BCM* that many might think it showed more skill and imagination than the position which won first prize (*BCM*, February 1911, page 50). Play starts **1 Nd6** (this is mere decoration) **Bxd6 2 e7** (see **1a**) **Bf4+** (2...Re5 will be met by 3 Bb2+, so Black clears the sixth rank for ...Rc6+ and ...Re6) **3 g5** (3 Kxh7 Rc7 4 b8Q Rxe7+) **Rc6+** (3...Rxc5 4 Bb2+ Ke4 5 Kxh7 Rh5+ 6 Kg8 Rg5+ 7 Kf7 Rf5+ 8 Kc6) **4 Kh5 Re6 5 e3+** (to suck bR below e5) **Rxe3 6 Bb2+** (see **1b**), and after bK has moved White will play **7 Be5!** interrupting the promotion-preventing lines of bB and bR (7...Rxe5 8 b8Q, 7...Bxe5 8 c8Q). The computer wonders whether 1 Bb2+ and 1 e7 might not also win, but even if these alternatives exist they can be cut out by starting at move 2.

This is the "Nowotny" theme (two lines of guard cross and the attacker disturbs things by sacrificing on the crossing square), which has been much tarnished by crude and unimaginative presentation in problems. Here we have the desirable feature that both defenders have to retreat across the critical square in the course of play (Bd6-f4 at move 2, Re6-e3 at move 5), so the scene for the sacrifice is set up during the action and not merely given as a datum in the opening diagram. Even so, I do not find the result entirely convincing. The theme is intrinsically expensive in men (if we count the two pawns awaiting promotion, there are five principal actors, and this is before we start to consider the other units needed to make the mechanism work), and as a "chess endgame" I find the composition rather artificial and clumsy.

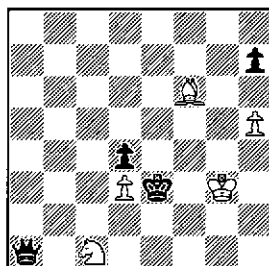
The first prizewinner **2** (V. and M. Platov) is a complete contrast. Play starts **1 Bf6**, but **1...d4** guarantees promotion; what can White do to counter the nascent queen? The first step is **2 Ne2** (see **2a**). Black obviously cannot take this (2...Kxe2 3 Bxd4 Kxd3 4 Ba1 gives White a simple win), and after the promotion **2...a1Q** White now has **3 Nc1!** (see **2b**). This threatens mate, 3...Qxc1 allows a spear check, 3...Kd2 allows a fork, and 3...h6 is met by **4 Be5** with more of the same. There remains only **3...Qa5**, but White now has **4 Bxd4+** and both **4...Kxd4** and **4...Kd2** allow forks.



2 - win



2a - after 2 Ne2



2b - after 3 Nc1

So the light and subsequently famous study was placed first, and the now forgotten one came lower down. The judges were the Behting brothers, and Timothy quotes their comment in his book on the Platov brothers: "From the very unpretentious and simple starting position the splendid main line of play unfolds with several subtle and surprising moves. Moreover, the construction of the study shows high technique."

Computers and tourneys - a different view

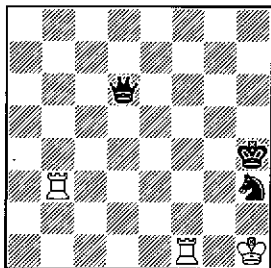
The June issue of the *ICGA Journal* carries an article "Endgame Tables and Chess Composition" by Noam Elkies (pages 93-101) in which he examines the impact of computer-generated endgame tables such as the "Thompson databases" and "Nalimov tablebases" on study composition. In the course of it, he strongly opposes the view which I have been supporting in *BESN*, that extraction of studies from an endgame tablebase or database is so different from conventional composition that compositions produced by the two means should not compete with each other.

Noam's reasons are several. He considers that the advent of endgame tables introduces no fundamentally new difficulty, and he regards trying to "level the playing field" between composers with and without access to the tables as an irrelevance: "the playing field has never been level - composers have varying access to the study literature and to strong players to test their compositions, and have never before been penalized for bringing more resources to the art." He also fears for the effect on economy. All five-man and some six-man positions are now covered by tables, and seven-man positions will follow within a generation. "Composers who aim to win tourney awards will thus not work as hard to achieve economy, and might even submit an intentionally uneconomical position, including an unneeded man just to avoid the reach of EGTs. ... To be sure, not every study composer aims to win awards, but most do, and when prize-winning studies show less and less concern for economy, the art as a whole will inevitably be affected."

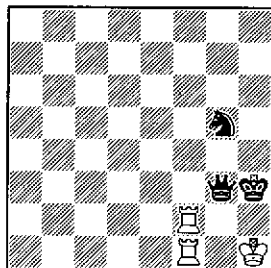
I personally remain of the opinion that studies extracted from computer-generated endgame tables should not be judged against studies composed conventionally, and judges for my column in *diagrammes* are asked to place them separately if they wish to honour them. However, I think readers should know that the opposite argument has been put, and I hope I have summarized its key points fairly.

From the world at large

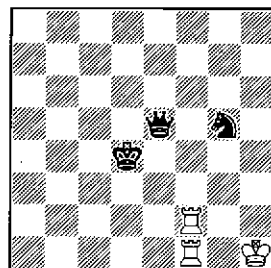
My survey of six-man endings in special number 27, with its enquiry as to possible fortress positions in "generally won" endings, has prompted Enzo Minerva to send me an original in which White draws with 2R v Q+N by setting up just such a fortress.



1 - draw



1a - after 6...Kh3

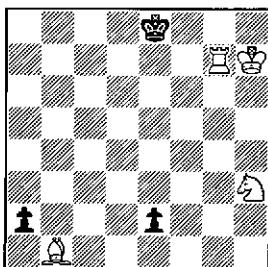


1b - see text

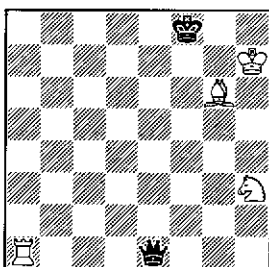
Irrespective of whether the ending Q+N v 2R is "generally won", White is so badly placed here that his chances of survival appear slight. For example, 1 Rbb1 Qc6+ 2 Kh2 Qc2+ 3 Kh1 Kg3 with mate in a few, or 1 Rfb1 Qd5+ 2 Kh2 Qd2+ 3 Kh1 Nf2+ 4 Kg1 (4 Kg2 Nd3+ 5 Kf3 Qf4+ 6 Ke2 Nc1+) Nd3 5 Rf1 Kg3 similarly. Hence **1 Rbf3 Qc6** (pinning and so threatening 2...Ng5) **2 Kh2 Qc2+ 3 Kh1 Ng5** (3...Qe4 4 Kh2 Qe2+ 5 Kh1 leads nowhere) **4 R3f2** (4 Rf6 Ne4 5 Rh6+ Kg5 6 Rh2 Ng3+ 7 Kg1 Qc5+ 8 Rff2 Qe3 9 Kg2 Nh5 10 Rh3 Nf4+) **Qd3 5 Kg2/Kh2** (5 Rf8 Kh3! 6 Rh8+ Nh7! 7 Re1 Qf3+ 8 Kg1 Qg2 mate) **Qg3+ 6 Kh1 Kh3** (see 1a) **7 Rg1!** (7 Re2 Nf3 8 Ref2 Nh4 9 Ra2 Ng2 10 Kg1 Ne3+) **Qe5** (7...Qxf2 8 Rg3+ Kh4 9 Rg4+ Kh5 10 Rxxg5+ with stalemate or perpetual check, but not 8 Rxxg5? Qh2 mate) **8 Rxxg5 Qe1+** (8...Qxxg5 9 Rh2+ Kg3 10 Rg2+) **9 Rg1** and now it's book: **9...Qe4+ 10 Rgg2! Qe1+ 11 Rg1 Qxf2 12 Rg3+** and perpetual check or stalemate. Black has alternatives at various points, but the line given puts White under the greatest pressure.

What light does this throw on the ending in general? The draw in 1a is in a sense fortuitous, since if we give the move to Black he can win by ...Qe5/Qd6/Qc7/Qb8 (keeping wRf2 tied to the defence of h2 and preparing to meet Rg1 by a check on the long diagonal) and also by ...Qd3. So the defensive position with Kh1 and Rf1/Rf2 certainly isn't an unconditional fortress. However, it does appear to be strong, and "try to get your rooks defending each other on the third rank" would seem to be sensible practical advice to the defender. As an experiment, I tried setting up the Black men almost at random (the Thompson database was still there on October 14), and one of the positions I tried was 1b with the Black king on the other side of the rook barrier. White to move can draw from here by playing Rf8, Rf5, or Rf4+, but if he plays Rf6 Black can win in 48 moves; where is the logic in this?

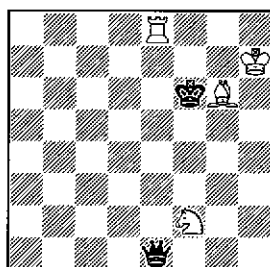
I don't normally review books in languages other than English - readers wanting proper international coverage should subscribe to *EG* - but I am going to make an exception for a recent book on Ernest Pogogyants by Yakov Vladimirov and Zinaida



2 - win



2a - after 3...e1Q



2b - after 6 Nf2

Lynkova. This contains 274 Pogosyants studies together with some related works by others, and will delight all his admirers. Take 2, which took 3rd Prize in the 1974 Lokker Memorial tourney. Play starts **1 Rg1 a1Q 2 Bg6+** and everything looks easy, but Black continues **2...Kf8 3 Rxa1 e1Q** (see 2a) and capturing this second queen will give stalemate. All right, so White goes at the queen another way, **4 Ra8+ Kf7 5 Re8+**, but Black plays **5...Kf6** and again the capture will give stalemate. However, White knows a trick worth two of this: **6 Nf2!** (see 2b). Now the queen can be taken without fear of stalemate (6...Qe2 7 Rxc2, 6...Qxf2 7 Rf8+ etc), and if it runs away White will play **7 Ne4+** and force it to give itself up anyway. I know of no general UK source of supply for the book, but British Chess Problem Society members can obtain it from Peter Fayers.

Spotlight continued. Guy Howarth tells me that I was wrong in attributing progress on 2Q v Q+P to both Peter Karrer and Eugene Nalimov (September, p 182): "The work was all done by Karrer, though admittedly PK had advice from Eugene in modifying Eugene's code for 6-man P-endgames." Sorry.

Bias in World Chess Composition Tournament judging. John Roycroft points out that a country might be expected to do relatively well in a section for which it provides the judge, since it will naturally provide judges in areas where it is strong. This is fair comment, but the effect can be taken out by comparing a country's results when it did and did not provide the judge, and if this is done the bias in WCCT6 appears actually to have been greater than that in WCCT5. The seven countries which had received an average of 30.3 points out of 47 from their own judges in WCCT5 were given an average of 19.7 points by other judges for the same sections in WCCT6; the six countries which averaged 29.8 points from their own judges in WCCT6 had received a mere 10.3 points from other judges in WCCT5.

I have also been contacted by a friend of one of the WCCT6 judges, to say with obvious sincerity that he at least had no idea which of the compositions he was judging had come from his own country. But I doubt if such ignorance was universal, because a composition often betrays its authorship; John Roycroft once reported that as judge of an "efficiently anonymous" *New Statesman* tourney, he had successfully guessed the authors' identities of about a quarter of the entries from clues of various kinds (*Test tube chess*, page 311). Whatever the explanation may have been, the comparative figures for WCCT5 and WCCT6 appear to demonstrate own-country bias beyond reasonable doubt, and to an extent which few will think acceptable.

News and notices

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday January 11** at 6.00 pm; non-subscribers welcome, but please bring £5 towards the buffet (except on a first visit). Bring the latest *EG* with you!

Books from Brno. Readers will be aware of my enthusiasm for the excellent series of books being produced by SNZZ (Zdeněk Závodný) in Brno. I had some Czech crowns in hand at the end of my last visit to Brno, so I left a small sum on account with Zdeněk with the idea that *BESN* readers who might want to buy from him could charge their purchases against this account and I would charge the equivalent in UK £ against their *BESN* subscriptions (readers who receive *BESN* by exchange or for services rendered can pay me directly). He has published many books of interest, both on studies and on chess in general. As for studies, the books on Matouš and Moravec are in English and so are on my own list, but he has also published collections of studies by Dedrle, Hašek, Prokeš, Šulc, and Vlasák, and at least some are still in print. Zdeněk can be contacted at Hoblíkova 8, 613 00 Brno, CZ (Czech Republic), e-mail smzsnzz@brno.comp.cz (he has a translator to field letters and e-mails in English).

Indexing. The index accompanying this issue is for the current year only, but readers who are binding their copies may care to note that my present plan, disease and politicians permitting, is to continue *BESN* until the end of 2010, in the process taking the series "Some British studies from ..." back to early days, and to produce further five-year composite indexes at the ends of 2005 and 2010. By that time I shall be 70, and perhaps it will be time for someone else to have a go.

"Informal" tourneys (see June, page 176). I seem to have got hold of the wrong end of the stick here, since apparently the reason the composer is banned is nothing to do with legitimate alternative settings; it is rather that he sends *effectively identical* versions of the same composition to several magazines simultaneously. I am on record as saying that if editors hang on to a composer's work for months or years before publishing it they must expect composers to do precisely this, but editors who do treat their contributors properly will rightly object to it.

Studies as aids to exposition. I do not normally review textbooks, but I have been sent Rosalind Kieran's recent *A practical guide to rook and pawn endings* and mention it because it makes prominent use of studies to illustrate tactical points: learning made very pleasurable. Several classics are here, including some of my particular favourites. 121 examples from elementary mates upwards, 156 sparsely filled A5 pages; £5.99 from RAK Enterprises, 5 Tranquil Passage, London SE3.

Anybody wishing to give notice in BESN 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.