

British Endgame Study News

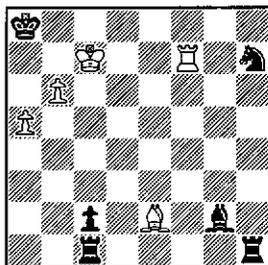
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by Jean-François Baudoin
White to play and win (?)

This issue. Sadly, our first item speaks for itself. I am devoting two pages to it, and am postponing my intended report on recent computer progress until June. Our special number takes a look at one of the major 20th-century study collections, and you may care to try the position above (published last year in *diagrammes*) before looking inside. And this being March, my annual **book list** is enclosed.

Through my door shortly before this went to press was a copy of José Mugnos's *200 estudios*, being his selection of studies published during the years 1968-1977. It looks very attractive; more next time.

ARVES website. Peter Boll has asked me to publicize a link

<http://members.home.nl/bloemansdall/ARVES/English/index.htm>

to the web site of the Dutch-Flemish study group ARVES (publishers of *EG*).

Spotlight. Timothy Whitworth and Colin Russ both tell me that C. S. Howell (2 in special number 41) was indeed American (see for example Korn's *American chess art*, page 186), and Colin adds more: apparently he played on top board for the USA in at least one of the Anglo-American cable matches, and was responsible for the "Howell Attack" in the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5 Be6 9 Qe2) which featured four times in the 1948 World Championship and is still played. Nevertheless, Timothy was glad I printed the study, and I am sure others will have been as well.

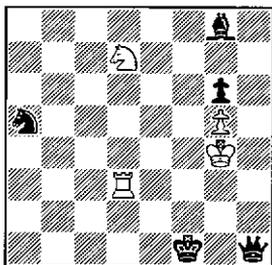
Noam Elkies points out that Lommer's record of six rook promotions (16 in the same special number) has been extended to seven by Gady Costeff (11236 in *EG* 132, 1999): White Kh1, Qa3, Ra5/e4, Bc5/d5, Ng5, Pa7/b7/c7/d7/e6/e7/f7/h7 (15), Black Kg3, Qe3, Rh5, Nf8/h2, Pe5/f4 (7), play 1 h8R Rxh8 2 exf8R Rh5 3 Rh8 Rxh8 4 f8R Rh5 5 Rh8 etc. Gady's own comment to me was characteristically modest: "Strictly a technical exercise though removing the ugly black material is a bonus. With a computer for testing he would have found this himself."

Large print copies. Readers are reminded that I can supply *BESN* in large print, and any reader who would prefer to receive it in this form is asked to tell me.

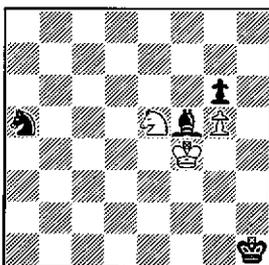
Mike Bent

Mike (Charles Michael) Bent died on December 28, just over a month after his 85th birthday. We knew him as a study composer, but he was much more: a tennis player good enough to compete at junior Wimbledon, an athlete able to run a half-marathon in his seventies, a knowledgeable and enthusiastic fell walker, a skilled boyhood carver of model battleships (he was from a naval family, a career denied to him by seasickness), the owner of a splendid collection of Malayan butterflies assembled during some postwar years as a rubber planter, a lifelong lover of word play and word puzzles, a talented writer of light verse. On his return from Malaya, he and Viola settled in the country in a small house which was originally a row of three labourers' cottages, and the superb address "Black Latches, Inkpen Common" continued to find him long after the rest of the world had gone over to postcodes. A man of character, from a family of character; a brother of one of his forbears was the J. Theodore Bent who travelled in Arabia and pre-colonial Africa in the late 19th century, and whose vivid and instructive books about his journeys read well even today.

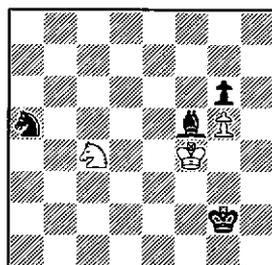
Mike's creed as a composer was very simple: he tried to amuse. There would be a few straightforward moves, a little headscratching, and then the penny would drop. Although he was vastly prolific, his studies were rarely deep, and a reader perusing them in quantity sometimes wished that he had devoted the same amount of time and effort to producing a small number of true masterpieces; but you can't have it both ways, and as an editor with a regular column to fill I was extremely glad that he used his talent in the way that he did. Don't take Mike's studies in bulk, take them little and often; few composers can have given so much gentle pleasure to so many.



1 - draw

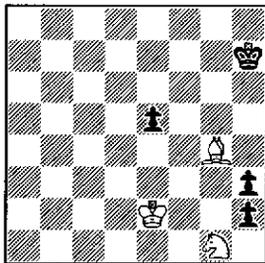


1a - Black has consolidated

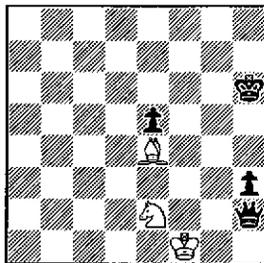


1b - main line, 8 Nc4

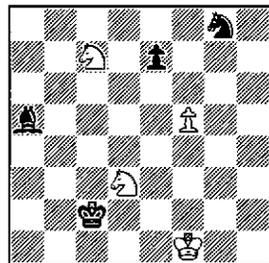
Over forty of Mike's studies have appeared in our retrospective special numbers, but I don't think we have had 1. This is from Mike's 1993 book *The Best of Bent*, and was suggested by Timothy Whitworth. **1 Rd1+ Kg2** is all right, but **2 Rxf1 Kxf1 3 Ne5** lets Black play **3...Be6+** and **4...Bf5** consolidating (see 1a). The penny? **2 Rd2+ Kg1 3 Rd1+ Kh2 4 Rd2+ Qg2+** (else perpetual check) **5 Rxf2+ Kxf2**, bringing the Black king forward into play instead of forcing it back to h1! This would normally be absurd, but **6 Ne5 Be6+ 7 Kf4 Bf5** gives 1a with the Black king on g2, and White has **8 Nc4!** (see 1b) with stalemate if Black takes and a fork if he doesn't.



2 - draw



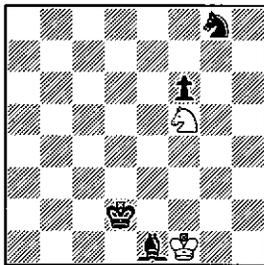
2a - after 3...Kh6 4 Ne2



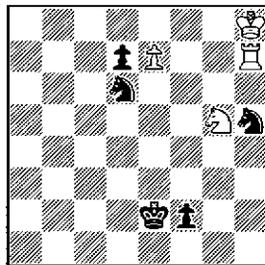
3 - draw

Mike's best studies combine delicacy of touch with an impish humour, and 2, from *Schakend Nederland* 1976, is one of my favourites. Black's promotion cannot be prevented, but 1 Kf1 limits him to 1...h1Q and 2 Bf3 forces 2...Qh2. Now 3 Be4+ and 4 Ne2 give a position typified by 2a, and what can Black do? His queen cannot get out, his king cannot get in, and White will mark time on e1 and f1. In Mike's words, White's fortress holds a dungeon.

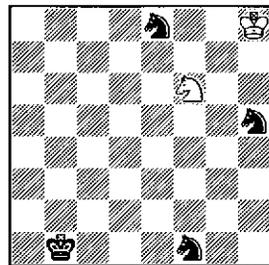
3, from *The Best of Bent*, is another of my favourites. Black needs to win a piece for nothing, White needs only to stop him. Hence 1 Ne1+ Kd1 2 Nd5, and if Black does not play 2...Bxe1 he will lose the opportunity for good. But play continues 3 f6 exf6 4 Ne3+ Kd2 5 Nf5! giving 3a, and White's lone knight is suddenly in command of the board. Black's only safe move is 5...Kd1, and White simply replies 6 Ne3+ Kd2 7 Nf5 repeating the position.



3a - after 5 Nf5



4 - draw



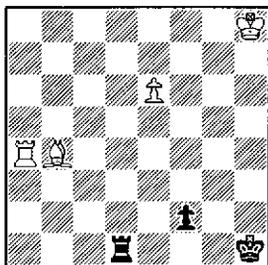
4a - after 8 Nf6

But Mike's first love was always the stalemate, and I am going to finish this very brief selection with one of his most striking. Play in 4 (*Československý šach* 1978) starts 1 e8Q+ Nxe8 2 Re7+ Kd1 3 Rxd7+ Kc1 (3...Kc2 4 Rd2+) 4 Ra7, and 4...f1Q will be met by 5 Ra1+. But Black has 4...Kb2 keeping the White rook from the bottom rank, and after 5 Rb7+ Kc2 White's resistance appears to be at an end. Not so: 6 Rb1! ignoring Black's command of this square. The capture 6...Kxb1 is forced, but 7 Ne4 attacks the vital pawn and 7...f1Q/R/B will be met by a fork on d2, while after 7...f1N we have 8 Nf6! (see 4a) and either capture will give stalemate.

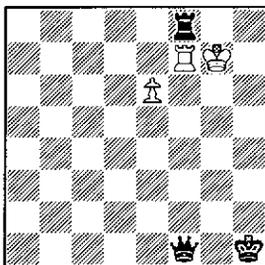
If you want more, look through our back numbers; if you want more still, copies of *The Best of Bent* are still available.

Another selection from 1995-97

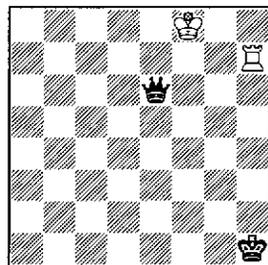
Given the vast amount of work involved in the production of the so-called "FIDE Albums", I expected last time's criticisms of their content to be greeted with howls of abuse. In fact, at least as far as readers of *BESN* are concerned, I seem to have struck a chord. "Mille fois d'accord," wrote Alain Villeneuve, author of the standard French endgame treatise *Les finales*, and he went so far as to send me his own first selection of 22 studies from the period. Eight have already appeared in *BESN* (a corresponding square pawn study by John Gemmell quoted in June 1996, Wallace Ellison's knight and pawn study in the same issue, four posthumous Krikheli studies quoted in special number 34, the Ulrichsen study which I cited last time, and the Kiryakov gem which graced our front page in September 1998); here are the first four of the rest.



1 - draw

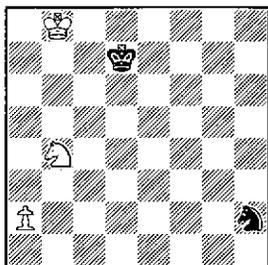


1a - after 4 Rf7

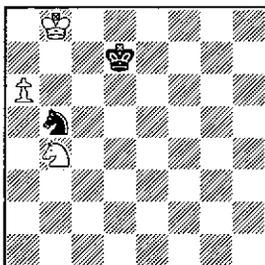


1b - after 6 Rh7+

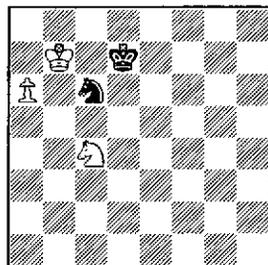
Yochanan Afek's 1 appeared in *The Problemist* in 1997. Only a draw? Yes, but Black will promote, and if say 1 e7 then 1...f1Q 2 e8Q Qh3+ and he will win. Hence 1 Ra7 to meet 1...f1Q by a perpetual check. But 1...Rd8+ will push wK to the seventh rank and disrupt the checks, and how is 2 Bf8! going to help? Well, it brings bR within range of wK, and after 2...Rxf8+ 3 Kg7 f1Q White has 4 Rf7! (see 1a). Black has nothing better than 4...Qe2 going for e6, and 5 Kxf8 Qxe6 6 Rh7+ brings us to familiar ground (see 1b); if bK comes forward to f6, Rg6+ forces stalemate.



2 - win



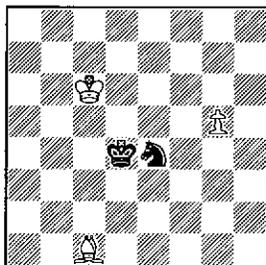
2a - reciprocal zugzwang



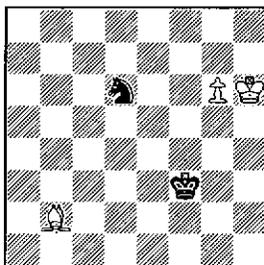
2b - after 10 Kb7

John Nunn's 2 is from his 1995 book *Secrets of minor-piece endings*. Try 1 a4 Nf3

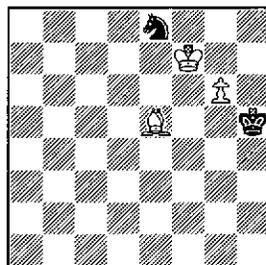
(zz) 2 a5 Nd4 (zz) 3 a6 Nb5 (zz, see 2a): no, White cannot make progress (4 Kb7 Nd6+ 5 Kb6 Nc8+). Play **1 a3!!** (the only way to lose a move) **Nf3** (say) **2 a4** (zz) **Nd4 3 a5** (zz) **Nb5 4 a6** (zz, 2a BTM) **Kd6 5 Kb7 Kd7** (5...Kc5 6 Nd3+ Kc4 7 Nf4 Nd6+ 8 Kc6 Nc8 9 Nd5 Na7+ 10 Kb7) **6 Nc2 Nd6+ 7 Kb8 Nb5 8 Na3 Nd4 9 Nc4 Nc6+ 10 Kb7** (see 2b) **Nd8+ 11 Kb6**. For a fuller analysis, see pp 33-4 of the book.



3 - win



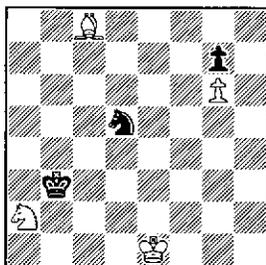
3a - after 7...Nd6



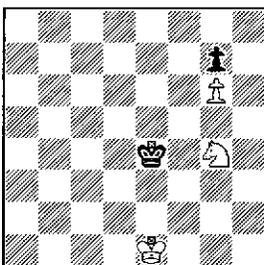
3b - after 14 Kf7

Jürgen Fleck's 3 appeared in *diagrammes* in 1997, and I must abbreviate even more fiercely (the original exposition occupied a whole page). **1 Bb2+ Ke3 2 g6 Ng3 3 Kd5 Nh5** (toughest) **4 Ke5 Kf3 5 Kf5 Ng3+** (forced from h5, bN goes for e8/f5) **6 Kg5 Ne4+ 7 Kh6 Nd6** (see 3a) and we are at the heart of the study.

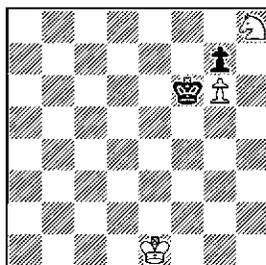
Now wK must get back into play, even at the cost of blocking wP: **8 Kg7!!** There follows **8...Kf4 9 Kf6** (the most direct) **Ne8+ 10 Kf7 Nd6+ 11 Ke6 Ne8 12 Bf6** (again the most direct) **Kg4 13 Be5 Kh5 14 Kf7** and the rest is book (see 3b): **14...Kg5 15 Bb8 Kh6 16 Bc7 Kg5 17 Bd8+ Kh5 18 Be7 Kh6 19 Bb4 Kh5 20 Ba3 Kg5 21 Bc1+ Kf5 22 Bf4! Nf6 23 g7**. Who, looking at 3, would say that White's only way to win would be to march wK right round wPg6, Kc6-f5-h6-f7?



4 - win



4a - after 6...Kxe4

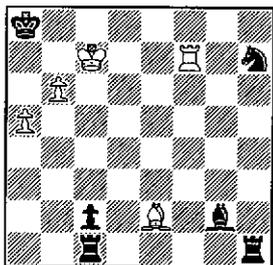


4b - after 9 Nh8

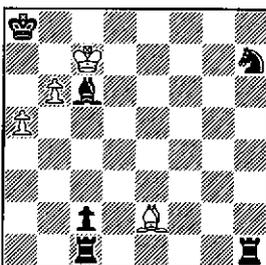
Watch wNa2 in Oleg Pervakov's 4 (3 Pr, van Reek 50 1995). White has enough material to win, so Black must go hunting. **1 Nc1+ Kb2** (1...Kc2 allows 2 Ne2, since if 2...Ne7 3 Be6 Nxe6 then 4 Bf5+) **2 Nd3+** (now 2 Ne2 does fail against 2...Ne7) **Kc3 3 Bf5 Ne3 4 Be4 Kd4 5 Nf2 Ng4 6 Nxe4 Kxe4** (see 4a) and is wP doomed? No, **7 Nh6! Ke5 8 Nf7+ Kf6 9 Nh8** (see 4b), and all is secure.

Two conventional compositions, two computer discoveries; four gems.

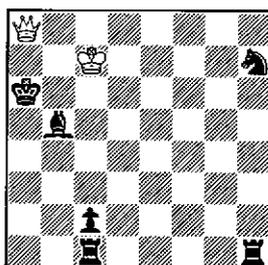
From the world at large



1 - win



1a - after 3...Bc6



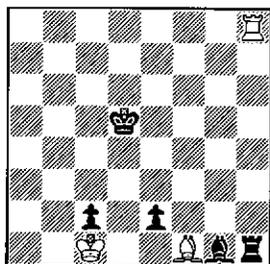
1b - 8 Qa8 mate

Well, how did you get on with our front-page study? White must act before Black can get his men into play, and lines like 1 Rg7/Re7 Nf6, 1 Rd7 Rcd1, and 1 a6 Rb1 are far too slow; Black won't merely avoid defeat, he will romp home with a win. There remains 1 Kc8 threatening mate by Ra7, and cannot Black simply play 1...Bh3+ chasing the king back again? But White doesn't go straight back; he interposes 2 Rd7!! sacrificing the rook, and 2...Bxd7+ 3 Kc7 Bc6 brings us to 1a.

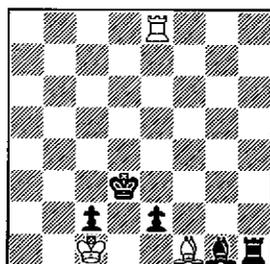
White, needing to win and apparently facing crushing defeat in all lines, has added to his material deficit by throwing a rook. However, play continues 4 Bb5, and light begins to dawn; 4...Bxb5 allows 5 b7+ etc, so Black must move his bishop to safety or defend it, and White can then play a6 without worrying about ...Rb1. I haven't seen the official solution, but I think the main line must be 4...Rh6 5 a6 (threat 6 b7+ etc) Bxb5 6 b7+ Ka7 7 b8Q+ Kxa6 8 Qa8 mate (see 1b), a last-man mate against superior force with Black having blocked his flight square during the play.

All this seems clear-cut; why the query? The answer is that the composition wasn't presented as a study but as a mate in 8, in which form it is equally valid. Yet I wonder. The somewhat artificial opening position may be that of a problem and several of the men are static, but the only moment of real interest is the sacrifice of his last remaining major unit by a player who is already at a serious material disadvantage, and this is a manoeuvre which has very much more impact in a study. Whether intentionally or not, the composition is entirely valid as a study, and with every respect to the composer and his editors I feel it might have been better suited to presentation in this form.

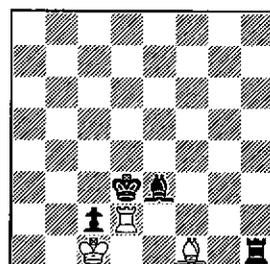
Among some very attractive studies displayed by John Roycroft at our January meeting was Mario Matouš's 2. I had looked briefly at this when it appeared in *Šachová skladba* last year, but Mario's studies are rarely easy and I didn't have time for a proper attempt. This was unfortunate, because I think a little perseverance was all that was required. White must start by playing 1 Rd8+ to get his rook out of danger, and none of Black's moves to the c-file gives trouble: 1...Kc4 2 Bxe2+ Kb3/Kc3 3 Rd3+ and 4 Kxc2, 1...Kc5 2 Bxe2 and the Black king prevents 2...Bb6+, 1...Kc6 2 Bxe2 Bb6+ 3 Kxc2 Bxd8 4 Bg2+. Black's most dangerous line is 1...Ke4 2 Re8+ Kd3 guarding the c-pawn, and we have 2a.



2 - draw



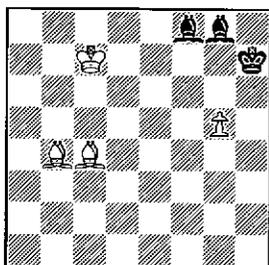
2a - after 2...Kd3



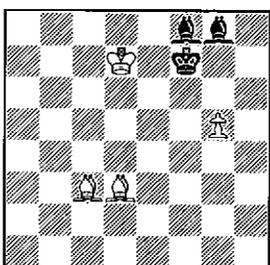
2b - after 4 Rd2+

Now a further rook check 3 Rd8+ is met by 3...Bd4, and the obvious checking capture 3 Bxe2+ allows 3...Kc3 with a quick mate. The capture that works is 3 Rxe2. Black has 3...Be3+ checking and attacking the bishop, but White counters by 4 Rd2+ (see 2b) and if 4...Ke4 then 5 Kxc2 Bxd2 6 Bg2+ (or 5...Rxf1 6 R-- drawing with R v R+B). But if Black is not to play 4...Ke4 he can only play 4...Kc3, and this gives a stalemate with two men pinned.

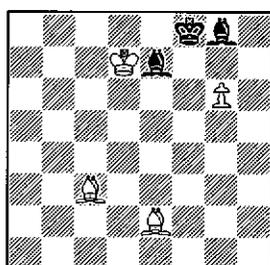
Only four moves by each side, but what a wealth of content!



3 - win



3a - after 3 Kd7



3b - after 5 Be2

John also showed 3, by the talented young Dutch composer Martin van Essen. 1 Bd3+ Kg7 (1...Kh8 2 Bxf8) 2 Bc3+ Kf7 is easy enough, but now comes the first quiet move: 3 Kd7 (see 3a). This threatens mate by g6, so Black must give himself some room, but 3...Bg7 allows 4 g6+ with mate next move and a nondescript move such as 3...Bc5 allows 4 g6+ Kf8 5 g7+ Kf7 6 Bc4+ and 7 Bxg8. However, 3...Be7 is stronger because White's eventual 7 Bxg8 can now be met by 7...Bf6 winning the pawn. The moves 4 g6+ Kf8 are still correct, but we now need a second quiet move: 5 Be2! (see 3b). This threatens 6 g6+ and 7 Bh5 mate, and if say 5...Bd5 to clear some space then 6 g6+ Kf7 7 Bh5+ Kg8 8 Kxc7.

This featured in a solving contest held as part of René Olthof's 40th birthday celebrations in November. I could not go myself, but Jonathan Mestel showed his face to good effect and John Roycroft was guest of honour. I have long held the view that the "win" or "draw" stipulation of an endgame study is insufficiently precise for serious competitive solving, but others think differently, and this was the tenth in a series of annual study solving contests conducted by ARVES.

News and notices

Other magazines. As reported in December, the international endgame study magazine *EG* (four issues a year) can be obtained for 2005 by sending me ****£17**** (cheques payable to myself, please). The British Chess Problem Society is primarily concerned with problems, but its remit includes endgame studies and its bookselling service normally has study books among its stock. The UK subscription for 2005 is £18 (new members £15, under 21 £7.50); R. T. Lewis, 16 Cranford Close, Woodmancote, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 9QA.

Outlets for original composition. I do not normally publish originals in *BESN*, but I am always glad to receive new discoveries, whether conventionally composed or computer-generated, for the *BCM*. In addition, Ian Watson (Crismill Manor, Crismill Land, Bearstead, Kent ME14 4NT, ian@irwatson.demon.co.uk) accepts originals for *Correspondence Chess*, and Yochanan Afek (van Boetzelaerstraat 26/1, CW 1051 Amsterdam, NL - Nederland, afek26@zonnet.nl) accepts them for *The Problemist*. There are also outlets abroad, and in particular my chair in *diagrammes* has passed to Olivier Ronat (2 rue Mehl, 59800 Lille, France, o_ronat@hotmail.com).

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday April 1** 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, plus any new or favourite items you may have to show which seem appropriate to the date.

Obituary. Sad news from Wien of the death of **Friedrich Chlubna**, who was only 58 but had been ill for some time. I think he himself composed only problems, but he was a good friend to the study world and we knew him as the publisher of John Roycroft's book of T. R. Dawson's studies (see June 1997 pages 46-7) and of the Israeli study anthology *Endgame virtuosity* (March 1997 page 39). I don't know what will happen to any unsold stock still with him, but in January the BCPS bookseller (see above) had at least one copy of each available for sale to members.

Chris Ward's challenges. I don't normally review mainstream books in *BESN*, but I am going to make an exception for Chris Ward's *Choice Challenge 3* (I haven't seen the earlier books in the series) since over 30 of the 80 tests set feature endings or near-endings. Furthermore, the questions are penetrating, with several alternatives to be assessed. Of course, these are practical positions, not studies, but they are none the worse for that. Quite apart from its ostensible purpose of teaching the student to play better chess, such a book can only increase awareness of the endgame and its beauties. Batsford, ISBN 0-7134-8866-2, £13.99 at your local bookshop.

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.