British Endgame Study News
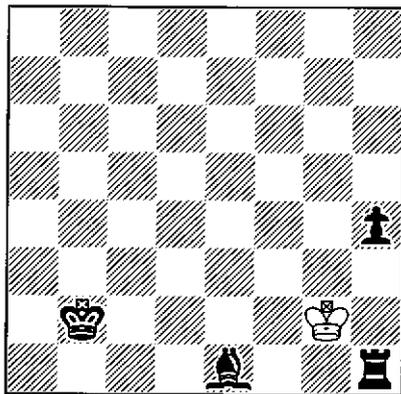
## Some studies by

A. O. Herbstman

When R+B+P cannot win against a bare king

Some studies by A. O. Herbstman

One of my most regular visitors at the annual British Chess Problem Society "Library Day" is Paul Valois. Not only does Paul travel down from Leeds, he normally gives us a short talk about some interesting topic or other. Last year, he spoke on A. O. Herbstman, and it occurred to me that Herbstman's studies would make an excellent subject for one of our special numbers. I invited Paul to contribute it, but he said No, he was happy to leave it to me; but if it turns out that I have omitted all his particular favourites, he will no doubt lose no time in telling me.
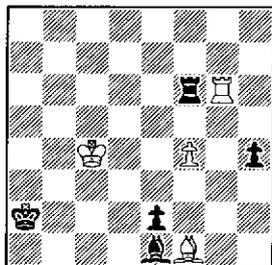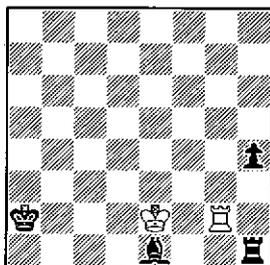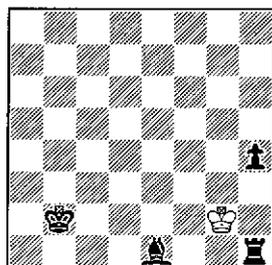

| 1 - draw | 1a - after 3...Rh1 | 1b - after 6 Kg2 |

Herbstman was particularly fond of unusual drawing finishes. We mention his pioneering draw with wKb2 against bRa1/Nb1/Na2 in *Endgame magic*, and **1** (3 Pr *Zadachy i etyudy* 1934, version) exploits a similar idea. The e-pawn needs attention, and **1 Rg2 Rxf4+ 2 Kd3 Rxf1 3 Kxe2 Rh1** is fairly obvious. We now have **1a**, and R+B+P v R is normally a comfortable win; what can White do? The answer lies in an unlikely rook exchange: **4 Kf3+ Kb3 5 Rb2+! Kxb2 6 Kg2** (see **1b**).
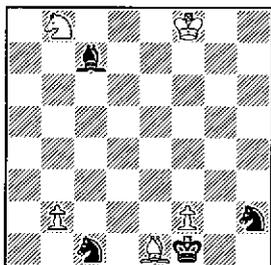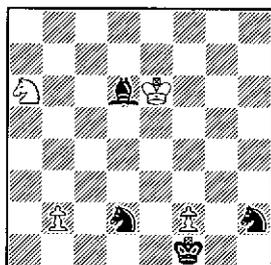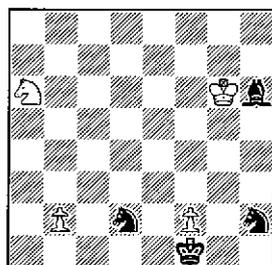

| 2 - draw | 2a - after 4 Ke6 | 2b - after 6 Kg6 |

2 (*Izvestia* 1926) ends in a run-around. White would like to keep both his pieces (the pawns will fall and a single B or N normally loses against B+2N), but one of them must go and **1 Bd2 Nb3 2 Na6 Bd6+ 3 Kf7! Nxd2** is the way to concede it. Now **4 Ke6** puts the Black bishop under pressure (see **2a**) and where is it to run? **4...Bf4 5 Kf5 Bh6 6 Kg6** (see **2a**) **Bf8 7 Kf7 Bd6 8 Ke6**; there is no escape.
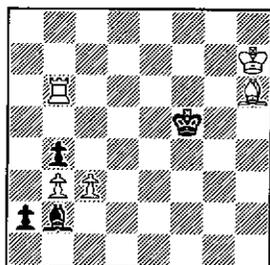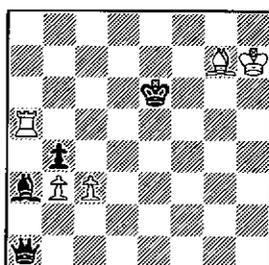
**3 - draw**   **3a - after 3...a1Q**

White cannot prevent Black's promotion in **3** (2 Pr *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1953), because 1 Ra6 will be met by the shielding move 1...Ba3, but this is not the end of the matter. **1 Ra5+** forces **1...Ke6** (1...Kf6 2 Ra5+ Ba3 3 Bg7+ and 4 cxb4, 1...Ke4/Kg4 2 Rxb4+), and **2 Ra5 Ba3 3 Bg7 a1Q** gives **3a**. White now starts checking along the fifth rank, **4 Re5+**, and how is Black going to stop him? If 4...Kf7 then 5 Rf5+ forces him straight back to the e-file. Alternatively, Black can go to the left, **4...Kd6**, but again White chases: **5 Rd5+ Kc6 6 Rc5+ Kb6 7 Rb7+ Ka6 8 Ra5+**. Black can capture on any of the squares a5...d5, but if he captures on b5 or d5 White has c4+ and Bxa1, and if on c5 or a5 White has cxb4+.
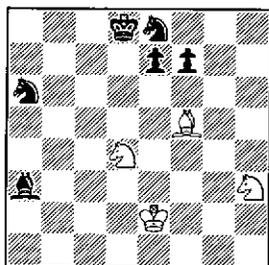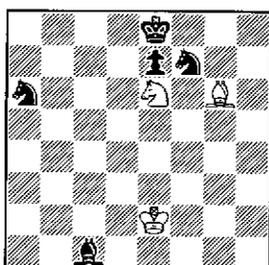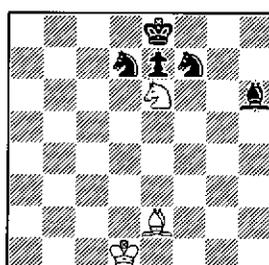

**4 - draw**   **4a - after 4...Bc1**   **4b - after 8 Be2**

White needs to win back at least a pawn in **4** (2 Pr *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1956), hence **1 Ng5**, and only **1...Nd6** preserves Black's material advantage (1...f6 2 Nge6+ and the knight on a6 will go). White captures by **2 Nxf7+!** anyway, and after **2...Nxf7** we again have **3 Ne6+**. 3...Kd7/Kc8 still lose material, though now it's the knight on f7 which goes (4 Ng5+ and if 4...Ke8 then 5 Bg6), hence **3...Ke8**, and **4 Bg6** forces **4...Bc1** to prevent 5 Ng5 (see **4a**). Next comes **5 Bd3** threatening both Bb5 mate and Bxa6, and if 5...Kd7 then 6 Nf8+ Ke8 7 Ne6 repeating the position. So Black has to try **5...Nb8**, which invites **6 Bb5+ Nd7**, and now **7 Kd1** chases the bishop away. It moves somewhere, say **7...Bh6**, and **8 Be2!** completes the tableau (see **4b**). Black is now helpless. If a knight moves, White checks it straight back again and then resumes his station on e2, while his bishop can do nothing on its own. We may note that White cannot play Kd1 at move 5 (5...Bh6 6 Bd3 Kd7! and 7 Nf8 is unavailable); I cannot see why he cannot play it at move 6, but this is a very minor flaw.
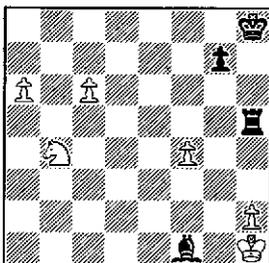
5 - win
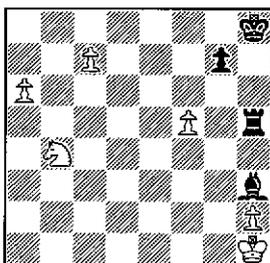
**5a** - after 2 f5
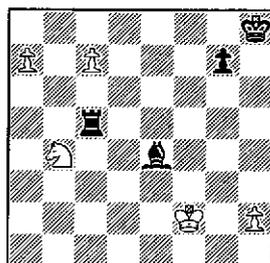
5b - after 5...Rc5

White has two advanced pawns in **5** (*Shakhmatny Listok* 1928), Black has two defenders. 1 a7 can only be met by 1...Ra5, so the rook must look after the a-pawn while the bishop takes care of the c-pawn. Thus **1 c7** forces **1...Bh3**, and now **2 f5** interrupts Black's lines of communication (see **5a**). But can Black not escape? 2...Rxf5 may permit immediate promotion, but **2...Bxf5** allows only **3 a7** and Black has time for **3...Be4+**. Now the bishop will look after the a-pawn, leaving the rook to transfer its attention to the c-pawn. Let's play on: **4 Kg1 Rg5+** (4...Rc5 gives the climax straight away) **5 Kf2** (5 Kf1 allows 5...Rf5+ and 6...Rf8) **Rc5** (see **5b**). The Black men have changed roles, but it is to no avail: **6 Nc6!**
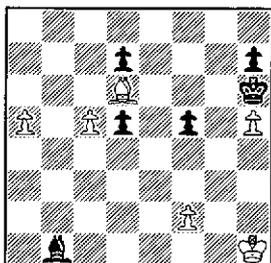

**6 - win**
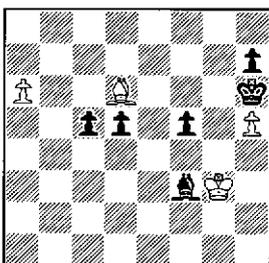
6a - after 5 Kg3
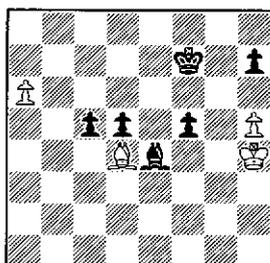
6b - after 8 Bd4

White has only one passed pawn in **6** (1 Pr *64* 1929), and 1 a6 Be4+ 2 K-- d4 clearly leads nowhere. **1 c6**, therefore, but it doesn't seem enough; Black still plays **1...Be4+** (1...dxc6 transposes) and he will follow up with 2...dxc6 3 a6 c5 and 4...d4. But **2 f3!** lures the bishop forward, and we see that White has another string to his bow: **2...Bxf3+ 3 Kh2 dxc6 4 a6 c5** (4...d4 5 Bc5) **5 Kg3!** (see **6a**). The bishop must move to safety, **5...Be4** say, and White has time for **6 Kh4** with a snap mate threat. Black has only **6...Kg7**, and **7 Be5+ K-- 8 Bd4** sees the pawn safely home (see **6b**).

It is natural to fend off the Black king in **7** (1 Pr *Národní listy* 1929, version), but the reason for the precise move **1 Ke3** may not be immediately obvious. Play unfolds **1...a5** (1...Kg3 sets no problems) **2 d4 a4 3 Kd2 a3 4 Kc1!** and the rest is easy (see **7a**), but why won't say 4 Kc2 do instead? Let's play on. 4...Kf3 5 d5 cxd5 6 c6 d4 7 c7 d3+ gives **7b**, and a Black pawn will promote. Much the same happens after 4 Kc3. The only way to avoid a time-wasting check from the advancing d-pawn is to
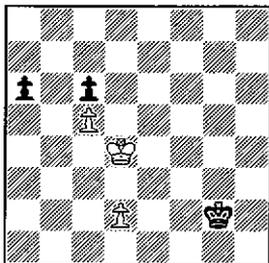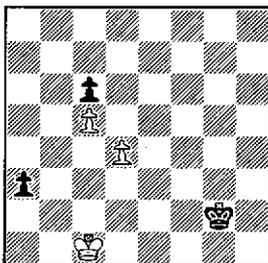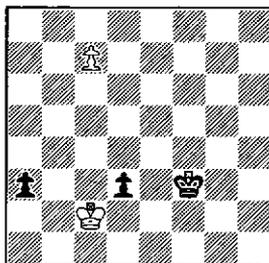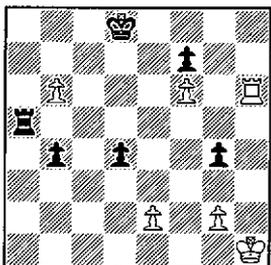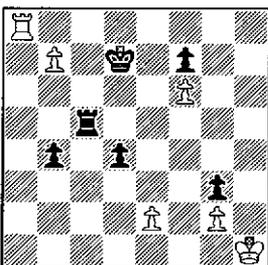
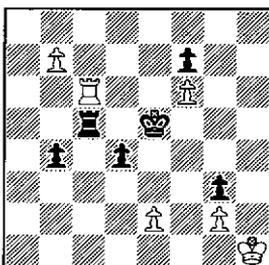**7 - win**   **7a - after 4 Kc1**   **7b - 4 Kc2, after 7...d3+**

play 4 Kc1, and so the first move must be Ke3 to make it possible.

**8 - win**   **8a - after 3...Rc5**   **8b - after 6 Rc6**

Play in **8** (5 Pr *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1931) starts **1 Rh8+ Kd7 2 b7**, and Black's only hope is **2...g3** setting up a mate threat. There follows **3 Ra8 Rc5** (3...Rf5/Rh5+ 4 Kg1 doesn't help), giving **8a**. Can White promote with check? **4 Rd8+ Ke6! 5 Rd6+ Ke5!** (5...Kf5 6 Rd5+! Rxd5 7 b8Q and no Black mate) **6 Rc6!** (see **8b**) **Rb5 7 Rc5+**. The final position echoes that after 5...Kf5 6 Rd5+, though the motivation is different.
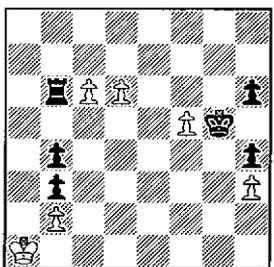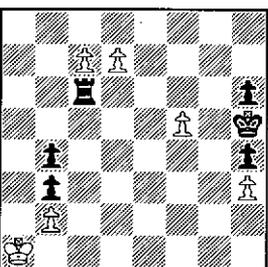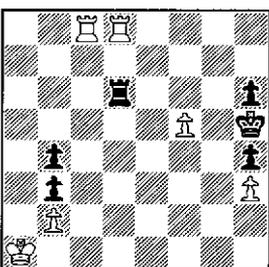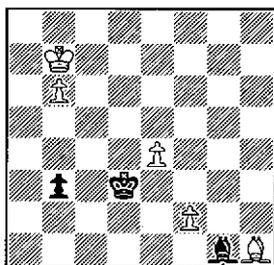
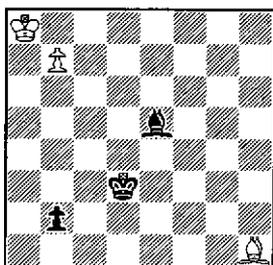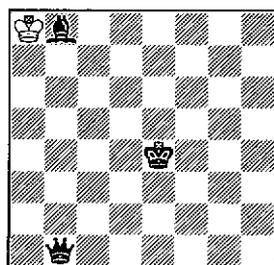**9 - win**   **9a - after 2...Rc6**   **9b - after 4 d8R**

9 (*Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1932) is much simpler. **1 d7** (else mate in a few) **Kh5!** (to meet 2 d8Q by 2...Ra6+ 3 Kb1 Ra1+ and stalemate) **2 c7 Rc6** (see **9a**) **3 c8R** (3 c8Q Rc1+ 4 Qxc1 and again g5 is unwantedly guarded) **Rd6 4 d8R** and Black has run out of options (see **9b**). If 2...Rd6 instead then 3 d8R Rc6 4 c8R similarly.

**10** - draw   **10a** - after 4...Bxe5   **10b** - 7...Kxe4 stalemate
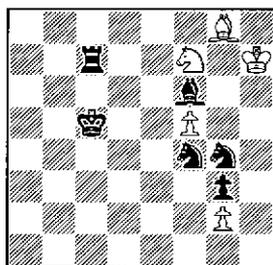
Herbstman was of course a prolific composer of stalemate studies. **10** (*Shakhmaty* 1925, version) is an early example. **1 Ka8** makes a good start, and the natural reply is **1...b2** forcing promotion (if instead 1...Bh2 then 2 f4 etc transposes). **2 b7** now forces **2...Bh2**, and **3 f4** gets rid of the f-pawn. There follows **3...Bxf4 4 e5 Bxe5** and the road has been opened for wBh1 (see **10a**), but how will this help? Ah, **5 b8Q Bxb8 6 Bd5 b1Q** (else 7 Ba2) **7 Be4+ Kxe4** and it's stalemate (see **10b**). Connoisseurs will notice two points of construction: (a) every man originally on the board has moved at least once; (b) the f-pawn is more than mere sacrificial decoration, since without it Black could win by 1...Bxb6.
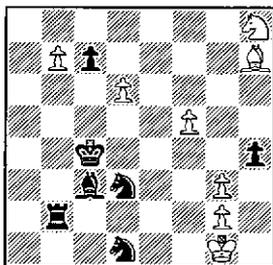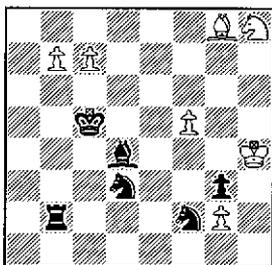


11 - draw   **11a** - after 5 Kh4   **11b** - 9 Rxc7 stalemate

11 (1-2 Pr *Magyar Sakkvilág* 1927) illustrates Herbstman's taste for the exotic. The play is almost automatic, because both sides have threats; the slightest deviation is likely to lead to a loss. **1 Bg8+ Kc5** (1...Kd4 2 d7 etc) **2 dxc7** (now c8Q+ is the primary threat) **Bd4+ 3 Kh2** (3 Kh1 N1f2+ 4 Kh2 hxg3+ 5 Kxg3 Be5+) **hxg3+ 4 Kh3 N1f2+ 5 Kh4** (see **11a**) **Bf6+ 6 Kh5 Nf4+ 7 Kh6 Ng4+ 8 Kh7 Rxb7** (at last the pawn is stopped) **9 Nf7! Rxc7** (now or never) and again it's stalemate (see **11b**). The knight is pinned, the bishop is blocked in, and all the men apart from the two White pawns have moved into position during the play.

12 and **13**, although composed some years apart, go well as a pair. **12** (1-2 Pr *Roter Sportintern* 1930) starts with some preliminary wood-clearing, **1 Ra8+ Kf7 2 h7 Rh6 3 h8Q Rxh8 4 Rxh8 Bf6+ 5 Kxe3 Bxh8**, and we have **12a**. Now comes **6 Kf3** (threatening 7 Kg4 etc) **Kg6** (6...Ng1+ and 6...Bf6 transpose) **7 Kg4 Ng1 8 Bd2** (8 Bc3 is tempting, because 8...Bxc3 will be stalemate, but 8...Bf6 wins) **Bf6**
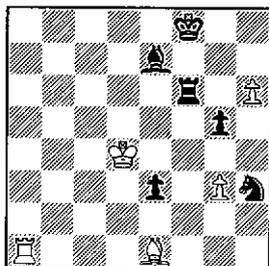
12 - draw
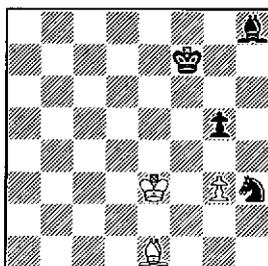
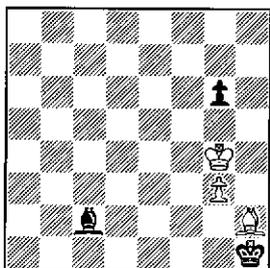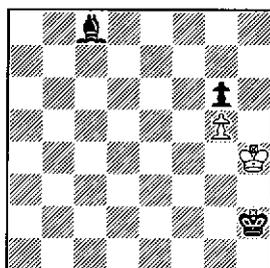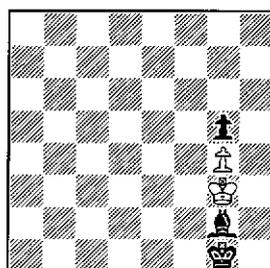**12a** - after 5...Bxh8
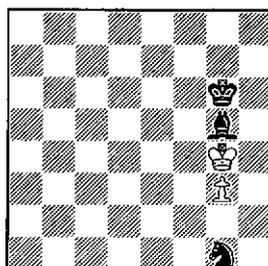
12b - 9...Bxg5 stalemate

(else the pawn goes) **9 Bxg5 Bxg5 stalemate (12b)**.
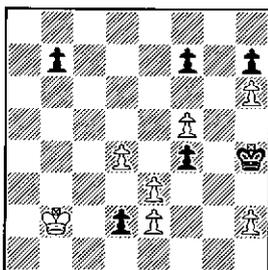

13 - draw
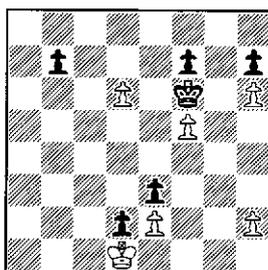

13a - 1...Bd3, 6...Kxh2 stalemate
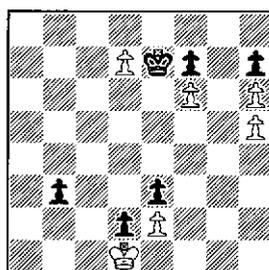

13b - 4...Kxg1 stalemate

13 (*64* 1936) starts with **1 Kh3** to save the bishop, and if 1...Bd3 then 2 g4 Bf1+ 3 Kg3 and either 3...g5 4 Kf2 with a saving counterattack or 3...Bg2 4 g5 Bd5 5 Kh3 Be6+ 6 Kh4 Kxh2 with stalemate (see **13a**); but the main line goes **1...Be4 2 g4 Bg2+ 3 Kg3 g5** (3...Bf1 4 Kf2) **4 Bg1! Kxg1 stalemate** (see **13a**).


14 - draw

14a - after 4 Kd1

14b - after 9 f6+

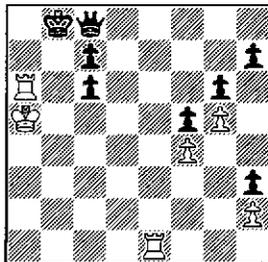Play in **14** (*Československý šach* 1935) starts **1 Kc2 fxe3 2 d5 Kg5 3 d6 Kf6 4 Kd1**, after which White's king is tied to d1/c2 and it seems that he cannot cope with the b-pawn as well (see **14a**). But a little subtlety saves the day: **4...b6** (4...b5 5 h4) **5 h3! b5 6 h4 b4 7 h5 b3** (now the king has no move and it remains only to dispose of the pawns) **8 d7 Ke7 9 f6+** (see **14b**) and any sensible reply gives stalemate.
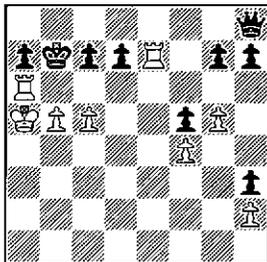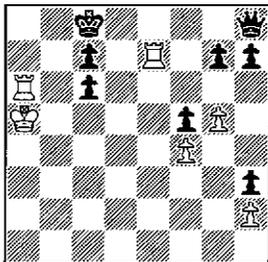
**15** - win   **15a** - after 4 Ra6   **15b** - after 7 Re1

15 (2 Pr Erevan Ty 1947, version) is a battle between the rooks and the Black queen. Never mind how she got herself to h8; now that she is there, how can we take advantage?
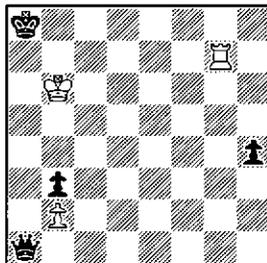
Play starts **1 c6 dxc6 2 b6 axb6 3 Rxb6+ Kc8** (3...Ka7/Ka8 make no difference) **4 Ra6** and we have **15a**. Try 4...Kb7 for Black: 5 Re2 g6 and 5 Re3 Qg8 are OK, but 5 Re1 and 6 Rb1+ defeats him. Hence **4...Kb8**, so that **5 Re1** can be met by **5...Qc8** (6 Rb1+ Qb7 7 Rxb7+ Kxb7 and White will soon be in lose-a-rook zugzwang). But **6 Re2** is now playable because Black has no move commanding b2, and the main line goes **6...g6 7 Re1** (see **15b**) Qd7 (other bQ moves commit suicide, and if 7...c5 then 8 Rb1+ Qb7 9 Rxb7+ and wRa6 can escape) **8 Rb1+ Kc8 9 Ra8 mate**. If instead 6...h5/h6 then 7 g6 prevents Black from commanding either b1 or b2, and White can move his rook between e1 and e2 and wait for Black's pawn moves to run out.
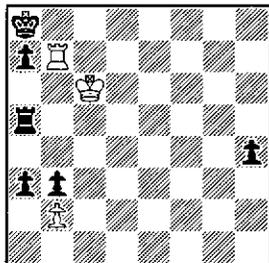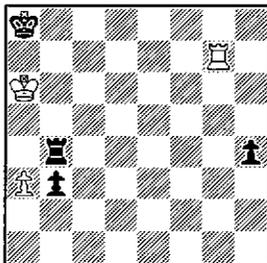
16 - win   **16a** - 3...Rb4, after 4 bxa3   **16b** - main line, 5 Kb6

Finally, in **16**, from Herbstman's 1964 book *Izbrannye shakhmatnye etyudy*, everything hangs on the first move. Any rook move to the right threatens mate; why is precisely **1 Rg7!** necessary? Let's play on. **1...a6 2 Kb6 Rb5+ 3 Kxa6 a2** (3...Rb4 4 bxa3 gives **16a**, and the rook can be saved only at the cost of the king) **4 Kxb5 a1Q 5 Kb6** and all has become clear (see **16b**): only on g7 does the rook prevent 5...Qg1+. The pawn on h4 cuts out a stalemate defence in **16a** (4...Rb7 5 Rxb7 b2 etc).

My thanks to Paul for the Library Day talk which gave me the idea of making this selection, and to Harold van der Heijden, whose "Endgame study database 2000" has once again proved invaluable. - JDB