

British Endgame Study News

Special number 41

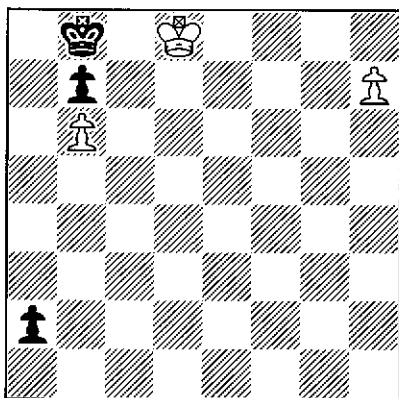
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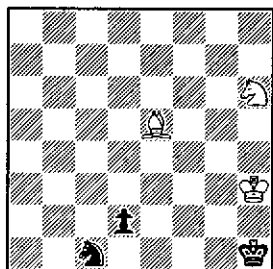
Some British studies from 1920-36



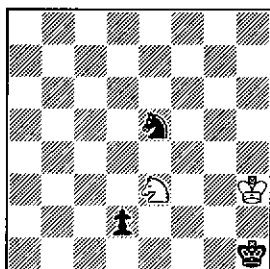
1 h8Q Qa1! 2 Qg8 Qa2 3 Qe8 Qa4 4 Qe5+ Ka8 5 Qh8!

Some British studies from 1920-36

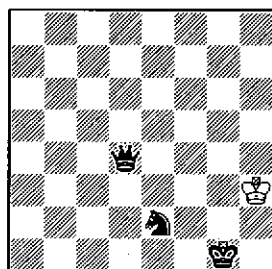
The years from 1920 to 1936 are not seen as a vintage period for British endgame study composition, and in volume at least this was certainly true; there was nothing like the flood of material that was being published in Russia and in Central Europe. However, the best of what did appear was very good. There were two all-time classics by H. A. Adamson and David Joseph, some remarkable promotion studies by Harold Lommer, and a number of other compositions which are well worth a second look.



1 - draw



1a - 1 Ng4, after 2...Nxe5



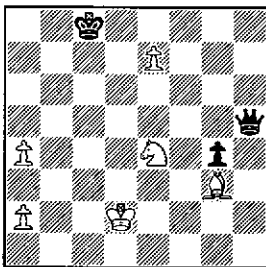
1b - 4...Nxe2 stalemate

W. J. Wood's 1 (*Chess Amateur* 1923) not only anticipated a Prokop study with the same finish but did so more elegantly and economically. White's natural first move is 1 Ng4 ready to meet 1...d1Q by 2 Nf2+, but Black can reply 1...Nd3, guarding f2 and meeting 2 Ne3 by 2...Nxe5 (see 1a). This N+P v N position is won, and without great difficulty: 3 Kh4 (3 Kg3 Kg1 is easier) Kg1 4 Kg3 Nc4 5 Nd1 Kf1 6 Kf3 Ke1 7 Nf2 (7 Nc3 Nb2 and 8...Na4) Ne5+ 8 Kg3 Ng4 9 Nd3+ Ke2 10 Nb2 Ne5 11 Na4 Kd3 and 12...Kc2.

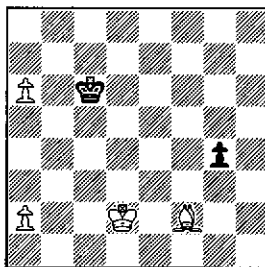
So White must try 1 Nf5, and now 1...Nd3 can be met by 2 Ng3+ Kg1 3 Bd4+ Nf2+ 4 Bxf2+ Kxf2 5 Ne4+. But why should Black bother with 1...Nd3, when he can play 1...d1Q promoting at once? The answer is soon seen: 2 Ng3+ Kg1 3 Bd4+ Qxd4 4 Ne2+ Nxe2 and stalemate (see 1b). It's a class production, which bears comparison with the work of composers far better known for studies of this kind.

C. S. Howell's 2 (*Chess Amateur* 1922) has a most surprising first move. 1 e8Q+ Qxe8 2 Nd6+ wins the queen, but 2...Kd7 3 Nxe8 Kxe8 leaves White with the wrong bishop for his pawns. He can try 4 a5 Kd7 5 a5 Kc6 6 Bf2 (see 2a) intending 6...Kc7 7 Ba7 Kc6 8 a4 keeping the Black king out of the corner, but the g-pawn will distract and overload the bishop: 6...g3! 7 Bd4 Kc7 8 Ba7 g2 9 any g1Q 10 Bxg1 Kb8, or 7 Ba7 Kb5.

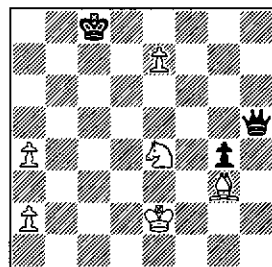
So White must find an improvement, and he does so playing 1 Ke2! (see 2b). Remarkably, Black can do nothing with the tempo thus given him; he must continue to guard e8, and he has no move better than 1...Qg6. Play continues 2 Nd6+ (not now 2 e8Q+ Qxe8 3 Nd6+?? because the knight is pinned) Kd7 3 e8Q+ Qxe8+ 4 Nxe8 Kxe8 5 a5 Kd7 6 a6 Kc6 7 Bf2 and we have 2a with the White king on c2 instead of d2. Now the king can look after the g-pawn. 7...g3 8 Bd4 (Bc5 and Be3 also work)



2 - win



2a - 1 c8Q+, after 6 Bf2

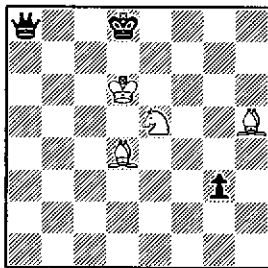


2b - after 1 Ke2

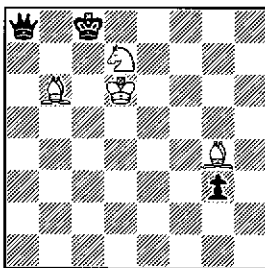
Kc7 9 Ba7 g2 10 Kf2 Kc6 11 a4, and after he has finished his dinner he will come across to the queen's side and settle matters.

And we may notice that only 1 Kc2 works. 1 Ke3 allows 1...Qh6+ with ...Kd7 to follow, and Black will at least draw; 1 Ke1 allows 1...Qh1+, and Black will win.

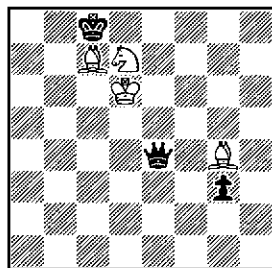
This was one of a set of four on the theme of keeping the defending king out of the promotion corner, and only seven of the *Chess Amateur* solvers appeared to crack it. The composer's address is given as "Madrid (and New York)", so perhaps he was American rather than British, but he appears to have sent his few original studies to a British journal and I am sure readers will be happy if I include him.



3 - win

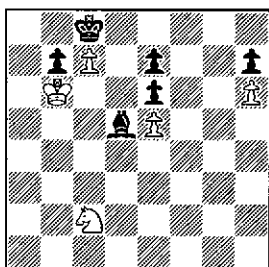


3a - after 3...Kc8

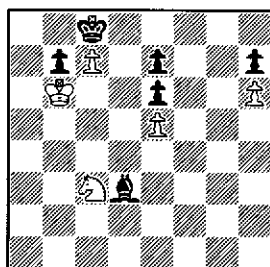


3b - after 4...Qe4

F. W. Whitehead's 3 appeared in the *Chess Amateur* in 1922 as a competitor in a study tourney, and took 2nd-3rd Honourable Mention. It looks as if we shall have a straightforward queen hunt, but having won the queen we shall have to deal with the pawn as well. Play starts simply enough, **1 Bb6+ Kc8 2 Bg4+ Kb8 (2...Kb7 3 Bf3+)** **3 Nd7+ Kc8** (see 3a), and we cannot now fork on b6 because the bishop is occupying this square. However, **4 Bc7** threatens mate by **5 Nc5**, and if **4...Qa6+** then **5 Nb6+ Kb7 6 Bc8+ Ka7 7 Bxa6** and the pawn can be stopped (**7...g2 8 Nc8+ Kxa6 9 Bb6**, or **7...Kxa6 8 Kc6 g2 9 Bh2**). So the queen must play to attack the bishop on g4. **4...Qa4** allows **5 Nb6+ Kb7 6 Nxa4 g2 7 Bb6** and again the pawn is caught, but **4...Qe4** (see 3b) is more dangerous because the natural line **5 Nf6+** fails: **5...Kb7!** and if **6 Nxe4** then **6...g2** and Black will promote. Instead, White must play **5 Ne5+** and now everything works: **5...Qxg4 6 Nxc4** with either **6...g2 7 Bb6** or **6...Kb7 7 Nc3**, or **5...Kb7 6 Bf3 g2 7 Bxe4+** and **8 Bxc2**.

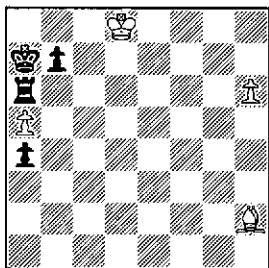


4 - win

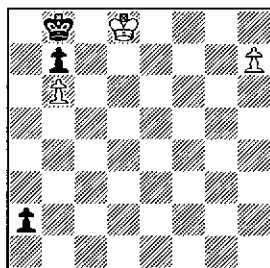


4a - after 3...Bd3

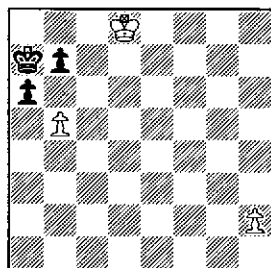
Time for our two classics. H. A. Adamson's 4 (*Chess Amateur* 1924) graced the front of our first special number and has been widely quoted elsewhere, but there is always somebody who is seeing it for the first time. White will win at once if his knight can reach b5 or g6, and more slowly but no less certainly if he can capture any pawn. Hence **1 Na3 Bc6** (else 2 Nb5) **2-3 Nc3 Bd3** (White threatened both 4 Nb5 and 4 Ne4, the latter winning as shown below, and if 3...Bc6 then 4 Nc2 followed by 5 Nd4 or 5 Nf4 as appropriate), and we have **4a**. Now comes a magnificent knight manoeuvre: **4-5 Nc5 Bd5** (else 6 Nxb7 or 6 Nxe6) **6-7 Nf4 Bf5** (else 8 Nxe6 or 8 Ng6) **8 Ne2 Bd3** (so as to meet 9 Nd4 by 9...Bc4, but...) **9 Nc3!** and we are back at **4a** but with Black to move. Whatever the textbooks may say, a player *can* sometimes play so as to lose a move with a knight! There might follow **9...Bc4** (nothing better) **10 Ne4** and either 10...Bd3 11 Nc5 or 10...Bb3 (say) 11 Ng5, in either case winning a pawn. This was one of a set of six knight-against-bishop studies which were set as a "special solving contest", and the complete set can be found in our special number 1.



5 - win



5a - after 4...a2

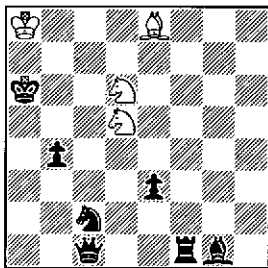


6 - win

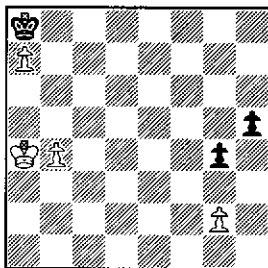
The other British classic of the period came from David Joseph. According to John Roycroft's book *Test tube chess*, this first appeared in the *Sunday Express* in 1921 in the form shown by **5**: **1 Bg1+ Kb8! 2 Bb6 Rxb6 3 axb6 a3 4 h7 a2** (see **5a**) **5 h8Q a1Q! 6 Qg8!** (6 Qxa1 will be stalemate, but White can threaten mate by discovery) **Qa2 7 Qe8 Qa4 8 Qe5+! Ka8 9 Qh8** and the counter **9...Qa1** no longer works because **10 Qxa1** is check and not stalemate. Note that White's play on the eighth rank must be precise. If he plays **Qe8** while the Black queen is still on a1, Black can reply **...Qg7**, and White can neither discover check nor play **Qe5+**; if he plays **Qf8** at

any time, Black replies ...Qa3, and now Qe8 can be met by ...Qd6+. However, the introduction, while not without interest, is out of keeping with what follows, and the study has often been quoted either starting from **5a** or in the alternative form **6** given by an unknown author in *Československá republika* in 1923 (I am again relying on *Test tube chess*): **1 b6+! Kb8! 2-5 h7 a2** and again we have **5a**.

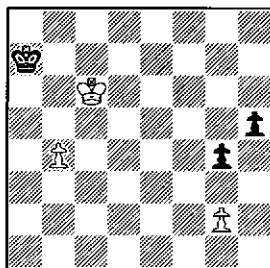
All these studies except **5** and **6** appeared in T. R. Dawson's column in the *Chess Amateur*. Dawson of course composed studies himself, more than twice as many as any other British composer of the period, but he was primarily a problemist and many of his studies were simple tactical affairs. That said, he made a point of trying things which nobody had done before. Play in **7** (*Chess Amateur* 1921) starts **1 Nb7**, and Black can choose between four different perpetual checks by the knights: **1...Qa3 2 Nc5+ Ka5 3 Nb7+**, **1...Rf7 2 Nc5+ Ka5 3 Nb3+**, **1...e2 2 Nc7+ Kb6 3 Nd5+**, and **1...Nd4 2 Nxb4+ Kb6 3 Nd5+**.



7 - draw



8 - draw



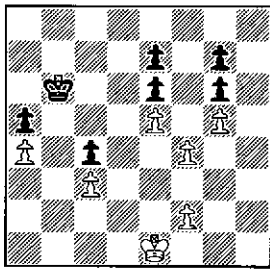
8a - 1...Kxa7, after 2 Kc6

The deeper and more conventional **8** (*Chess Amateur* 1924) was based on the Réti theme. Black seems to have time for both ...h4 and ...Kxa7, but **1 Kb5** shows this to be illusory; if Black plays 1...h4, White replies 2 Ka6, and 2...h3 can be met by 3 b5 and 4-5 b7 mate (but not by the careless 3 gxh3 gxh3 4 b5, when the long diagonal will be clear and Black's promoted queen on h1 will control b7).

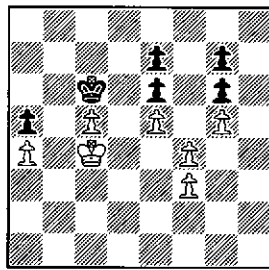
So Black plays 1...Kxa7, and White continues 2 Kc6 (see **8a**). This threatens 3 Kd5 catching the pawns, hence 2...h4 (or 2...g3 if preferred, the sequel is the same) 3 Kc7 (threat 4 b5 etc) Ka6 4 Kc6 (again threatening 5 b5+) Ka7 5 Kc7 with a draw. But if Black plays 3...h3, this time the interpolation 4 gxh3 gxh3 is necessary before advancing the b-pawn; if White plays 4 b5, Black replies 4...hxg2, exchanges queens after both sides have promoted, and wins with the last pawn.

And there is more. Black also has 1...Kb7, which is not as absurd as it seems; it keeps the White king out of e6, and 2 Kc5 can be met by 2...h4 winning. White must sacrifice his a-pawn, 2 a8Q+ Kxa8, and then continue 3 Kc6 as before.

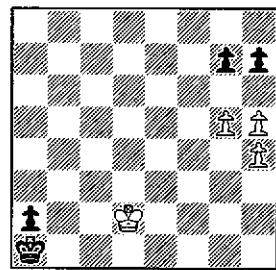
(Mention of the Réti theme reminds me that the myth is still circulating that the famous Réti study was anticipated by H. A. Adamson, *Chess Amateur* 1922, wKh7, Pc6, bKa6, Pa5, draw by 1 Kg6 2 a4 Kf5 etc. Let me reiterate that this is quite wrong; Adamson merely suggested a new version of the Réti study, he in no sense anticipated it. See the *Chess Amateur* for January 1922, page 119.)



9 - win



9a - 1 Ke2, after 10...Kc6



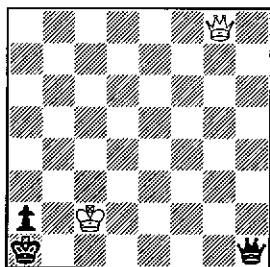
10 - win

9 (*Chess Amateur* 1922) took second prize in the tourney mentioned earlier. The starting position is unfortunate and some composers might have set the men one file to the right, but the play is instructive. White can use the tempo move f2-f3 to win the c-pawn, but this won't win the game: 1 Ke2 Kc5 2 Ke3 Kd5 3 f3 Kc5 4 Ke4 Kc6 5 Kd4 Kb6 6 Kxc4 Kc6 7 Kd4 Kb6 8 c4 Kc6 9 c5 Kc7 10 Kc4 Kc6 (see 9a) and he will get no further. What he must do is win the c-pawn *without* using the move f2-f3, play to reach 9a with the pawn still on f2, and then use the tempo move to force Black to retreat. It's a study in corresponding squares, of course, but we had several of these last time, and this time I will skip the diagram displaying the letters and just present the key moves as ordinary chess analysis.

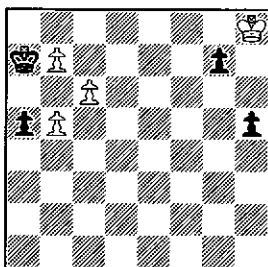
The way to win is **1 Kd1!** (1 Ke2 Kc5 as above, 1 Kd2 Kc6 with 2 Ke3 Kd5 or 2 Ke2 Kc5 to follow) **Kc6** (1...Kc5 2 Ke2 and as below) **2 Kd2 Kc5 3 Ke2 Kc6** (3...Kd5 4 Ke3) **4 Kf3!** (the key manoeuvre, ready to meet 4...Kd5 by 5 Ke3 and 4...Kc5 by 5 Ke4) **Kb6** (Black tries to avoid the issue, but to no avail) **5 Ke3** (playable because the counter 5...Kd5 isn't available) **Ke5** (else 6 Kd4) **6 Ke4 Kc6 7 Kd4 Kb6 8 Kxc4** (mission accomplished) **Kc6 9 Kd4 Kb6 10 c4 Kc6 11 c5 Kc7 12 Kc4 Kc6** (now we have 9a but with the rear pawn still on f2) **13 f3!** and Black must give way. Nor does it help Black to temporize at an earlier stage. Try 1...Kc7 or even 1...Kb7: no, 2 Ke2, threatening 3-4 Kd4 and preparing for 2...Kc6 3 Kf3 and 2...Kb6 3 Ke3.

And Dawson didn't just publish in his own column; he may have been primarily a problemist, but he was not afraid to send studies to reputable editors abroad. **10** was one of several which appeared in *Magyar Sakkvilág* in 1922. **1 Kc1!** (for 1 Kc2 see below) **g6 2 Kc2** (2 hxg6 h4) **h6 3 Kc1 gxh5 4 Kc2 hxg5 5 hxg5** and at last White has been able to capture without giving immediate or imminent stalemate, but Black has ensured that his passed pawn is on the g-file and so White will not promote with check. Never mind: **5...h4 6-8 g8Q h1Q** gives **10a**, and **9 Qg7** is mate. But had White started with 1 Kc2, he would have reached **10a** with his king on c1 instead of c2, and he would have had to waste a crucial move getting out of check.

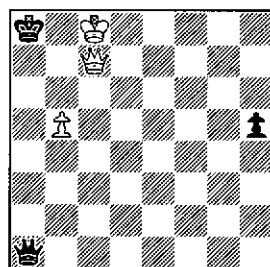
11 (*L'Italia Scacchistica* 1923) also requires the right choice at the start. Suppose the natural 1 Kxg7; play continues 1...a4 (if 1...h4 then 2-3 Ke7 h2 4 c7 Kxb7 5 Kd7 h1Q 6 c8Q+ Ka7 7 Qc7+ and 8 Qc6+) 2 Kf7 (say) a3 3 Ke7 a2 4 c7 Kxb7 5 Kd7 a1Q 6 c8Q+ Ka7 (6...Kb6 7 Qc6+ Ka7 8 b6+ etc) 7 Qc7+ Ka8 8 Kc8 (see **11a**) and White will mate next move - no, he won't, Black can play 8...Qh8+. If we start **1 Kg8!** and leave the g-pawn on the board, this will not be available, and everything will work.



10a - after 8...h1Q

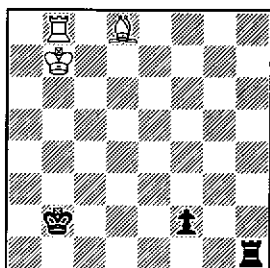


11 - win

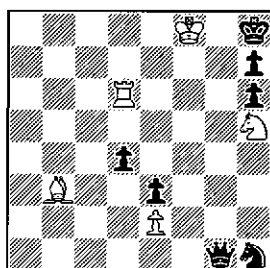


11a - 1 Kxg7, after 8 Kc8

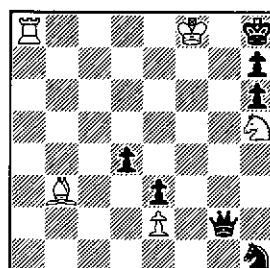
Dawson's main contribution to the endgame study field was as an editor and he never claimed to be in the front rank as a study composer, but the best of his studies were by very far from negligible.



12 - draw



13 - win

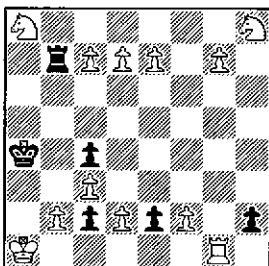


13a - after 2...Qg2

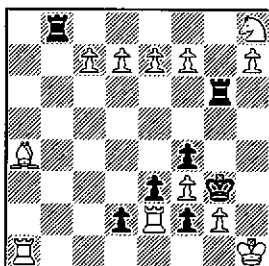
And there was Harold Lommer, who composed both conventional studies and promotion tasks. Although he was born in Britain, Lommer's early years were spent in Switzerland and most of his pre-war compositions were published abroad, but some of his compositions appeared in *L'Italia Scacchistica* in 1933 under the heading "Studi i problemi inediti di Harold M. Lommer di Londra" (issue of 1 November, page 335) and John Roycroft tells me that he had settled in London around 1926. So we can count him in, and this brings several fine compositions within our orbit.

12 was one of the studies that appeared in the issue of *L'Italia Scacchistica* cited above. The pawn cannot be stopped, but 1 Kc8+ K-- 2 Rb7 sets up a perpetual check on the seventh rank (or on b6/b7/b8 if the king tries advancing to a6). This extended a four-file version which Lommer had published in *Schweizerische Schachzeitung* in 1932.

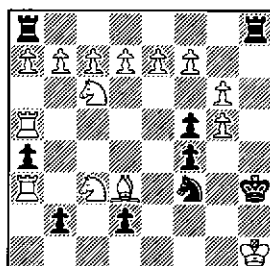
13 (*Československý šach* 1934) is a splendid example of the "little by little" theme. 1 Rd8 threatens mate in two by discovery, and Black can defend only by 1...Qg5 attacking the rook. What next? 2 Rb8 Qc5, 2 Rc8 Qf5+, 2 Re8 Qb5; only 2 Ra8 is left. This forces 2...Qg2 (see 13a), and the dance begins: 3 Rb8 (else 3...Qb7 shutting in the White king) Qh2 (no alternative) 4 Rc8 (else 4...Qc7) Qh3 5 Rd8 Qh4 6 Re8 Qxh5 7 Ra8! and Black is helpless; there is no square from which he can continue the attack on the rook.



14 - win



15 - win



16 - win

Let us finish with some of Lommer's promotion task studies. These will not be to all tastes, since the starting positions are highly artificial, but a task composition subordinates everything to getting as much out of the chessmen as is legally possible.

The most obvious task is that of forcing all four possible promotions. Both forms of this (the four promotions in four different variations, and four different promotions in succession in the same line) were achieved by Lommer in 1933, but the "different variations" task had already been done by Clausén in 1927. (In his book *Pawn promotion to bishop and rook in the endgame study*, Harold van der Heijden states that the Clausén study is unsound, Black having a refuting move, but on the evidence of his "Endgame study database 2000" the error is merely in some unnecessary introductory play and the task realisation itself is correct.) The "same line" task is shown in 14 (*Le Temps* 1933). **1 g8Q** (if say **1 Rh1** then **1...Kb3 2 c8N Rb5 3 d8Q e1Q+ 4 Rxe1 h1Q 5 Rxh1 c1Q+ 6 Rxc1 Ra5+ 7 Qxa5** stalemate, or **3 d8B Rg5** and Black wins) **hxg1Q 2 Qxg1 Kb3 3 c8N Rb5** (if **3...e1Q+ 4 Qxe1 Rxd7** then **5 Qb1** threatening mate on a2, which is why **1 g8R** wouldn't have worked) **4 d8B** (**4 d8Q e1Q+** and Black sacrifices for stalemate) **Re5 5 e8R** (**5 e8Q e1Q+** etc) and White will mop up. Curiously, forcing the promotions to knight, bishop, and rook is relatively easy, and it is in adding the initial queen promotion without introducing cooks that the constructional difficulties reside.

The most interesting promotions are of course those to bishop and rook. **15** (*Le Temps* 1934) shows two of each: **1 f8B** (**1 f8Q Rh6+ 2 Qxh6 Rb1+** etc) **Rg5 2 e8B Rd5** (or **2...Rxe8 3 dxe8B** with a third bishop promotion) **3 d8R** (**3 d8Q Rb1+ 4 Rxb1 d1Q+ 5 Rxd1 Rh5+**) **Rbxd8 4 cxd8R** and wins (**4...Rxd8 5 Bad7**). **16** (*France-Illustration* 1935) shows no fewer than six rook promotions, a record still unsurpassed, though their order after the first is not determined: **1 bxa8R** (**1 bxa8Q Rh5 2 Qh8 Kg3+ 3 Qxh5 b1Q+** etc) **Rh5 2 Rh8 Rxh8 3 a8R** (now the pawns can promote in any order) **Rh5 4 Rh8 Rxh8 5 c8R** and so on to **11 f8R Rh5 12 Rh8 Rxh8**, and at last the seventh rank is clear for **13 Ra7** and a subsequent **Rh7**.

My thanks again to Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database 2000", and to the BCPS Library and Paul Valois. Our next special number of this kind is scheduled for September 2005, and will cover the period 1900-19. As usual, please will readers draw my attention to studies they would like to see included, and to any from 1920-95 which should have appeared but have been overlooked. - JDB