

# British Endgame Study News

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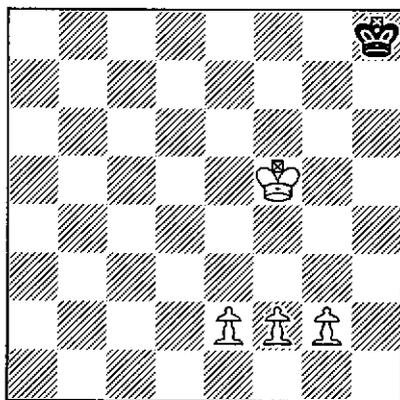
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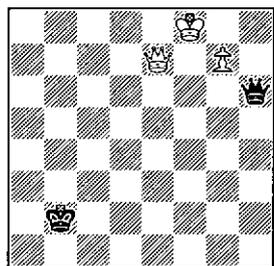
## Some studies from Alexandre



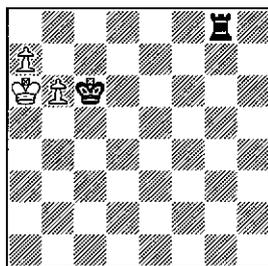
Can White win *without* promoting a pawn?

## Some studies from Alexandre

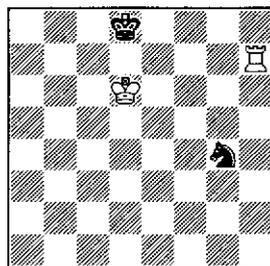
Aaron Alexandre's *Collection des plus beaux problèmes d'échecs* of 1846 is one of the standard early chess collections. It was produced when he was in his late seventies and is notoriously thick with error, but most of the errors were identified and corrected in a paper *Der gereinigte Alexander* by Oskar Korschelt which appeared in *Deutsche Schachblätter* in 1913, and this paper was included in the reprint of Alexandre produced by Olms in 1979. The result provides a convenient if somewhat untidy source for a large amount of early material. It is primarily a collection of problems, but I was recently going through it for other purposes and noticed that it contained several studies and study-like positions which might be of interest.



1 - win



2 - draw

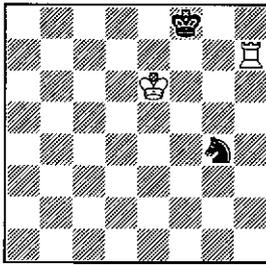


3 - BTM, White to win

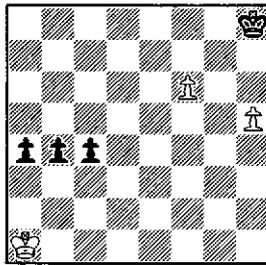
Several positions which have become part of basic endgame theory are here, but Alexandre normally gives just a single line of play, perfectly adequate for the conventional problem of his day but sufficient for only the shortest and simplest of endgame positions. 1 is one such. The computer has found many ways to win, but I don't think any of them improves on the elegant and effective **1 Qe5+ K~ 2 Kf7 Qh7 3 Qg5 and 4 Qg6**. This is given by Lewis, in his *Chess Problems* of 1827, as by himself, though I doubt if it was completely new even then.

2 is also very simple. Korschelt attributes this to Cozio, in his 1766 book *Il giuoco degli scacchi*. **1 b7 Rg2 2 b8N+**, and after **2...Kc7** Alexandre gilds the lily and continues **3 a8N+** (which does indeed draw, but so does **3 a8Q**, and so for that matter does every move apart from **3 Nd7**). If I read Korschelt correctly, Cozio actually gave a Black win by **1 b7 Rb1 2 Ka5 Ra1+ 3 Kb4 Kxb7** etc, which would make sense only if the rules at the time still allowed promotion only to queen (see the note with **18** later on); but I haven't seen the original source, and the position appears to be in neither John Roycroft's book *Test Tube Chess* nor his article on Cozio in *EG* 33.

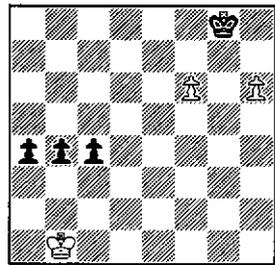
Korschelt attributes 3 to Ponziani, whom we shall meet again. Alexandre gives **1...Ke8 2 Ke6 Kf8** (see **3a**) **3 Rh4 Ne3 4 Re4 Nc2 5 Kd5 Kf7 6 Kc4 Kf6 7 Re2 Na3+ 8 Kb4 Nb1 9 Rb2; 3 Rh3** is crisper (I don't know which Ponziani gave), but versions of Alexandre's line continue to work even if Black plays differently at moves 1 and 2. Positions equivalent to **3a** have occurred in master play, and on at least one occasion the move **Rh3** was found over the board (by Jan Christensen in 1979).



3a - after 2...Kf8

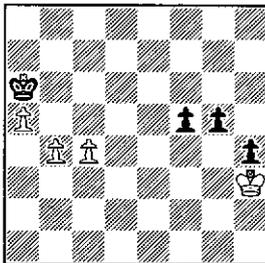


4 - win

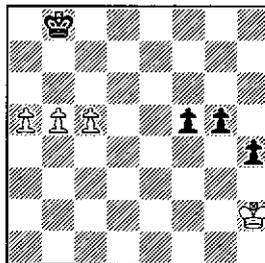


4a - after 2 Kb1

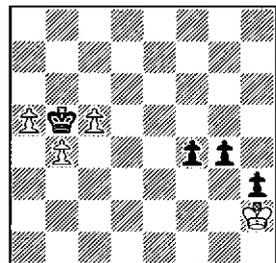
Very popular at the time was the ending of king against three united passed pawns. 4 sets the scene. This is in Lewis's *Chess Problems* as by Ponziani, but according to Korschelt it is not to be found in Ponziani's published works and its true author is unknown. Play starts 1 h6 Kg8 2 Kb1 (see 4a) and both sides are in zugzwang, but it is Black who has to move. Lewis spells it out: 2...a3 (if 2...b3 then 3 Kb2, taking all the pawns or forcing the Black king to move) 3 Ka2 c3 4 Kb3 Kf8 5 h7 and White wins. The configuration on the left in 4a, with the king poised ready to put itself in front of whichever pawn advances, is a standard objective for the king in this ending.



5 - win



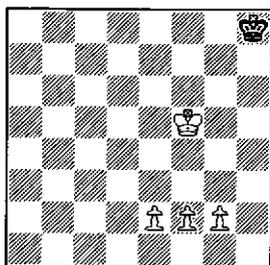
5a - 1...Kb7, after 3 Kh2



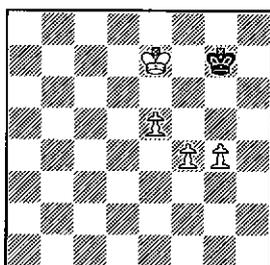
5b - main line, after 5 Kh2

Alexandre gives the more complicated 5 as by "Cochrane", and Korschelt gives its source as *Le Palamède* 1836. I guessed at first that this might be the John Cochrane who had spent some time in Paris and had played against de la Bourdonnais in 1821 (see the *Oxford Companion*, 1992 edition, pages 83-4), but by 1836 he had been some years resident in India; situation unclear. Antisymmetrical king-and-pawn position of this kind are often reciprocal zugzwang, but this is a win for the side to move.

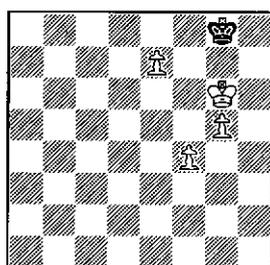
The given first move is the natural 1 e5 though I think White can also start with 1 Kh2, and the natural reply is 1...Kb5. If instead 1...Kb7 then 2 b5 Kb8 (pawn moves don't help, and if say 2...Ka7 then 3 c6 Kb8 4 a6 and Black will soon be overwhelmed) 3 Kh2 (see 5a) g4 (3...f4 is no better, and if 3...Kb7 then 4 b6) 4 Kg2 f4 (4...h3 + 5 Kg3) 5 Kgl f3 (5...g3 6 Kg2) 6 Kf2 and Black's king will soon have to move. Now 2 Kh2 g4 3 Kg2 f4 4 Kg1 h3 5 Kh2 gives 5b, and Alexandre gives up on the king's wing and plays 5...Ka6 6 c6 Ka7 7 b5 Ka8 (if 7...Kb8 then 8 a6 would win even without the b-pawn) 8 c7 Kb7 9 b6 Kc8 10 a6.



6 - win without promoting



6a - after 7 e5

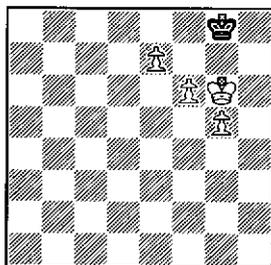


6b - 7...Kg6, after 13 e7

Our front-page study, by William Bone, is a little different from our normal fare, but it has several points of interest. It appeared in Walker's *A New Treatise on Chess* of 1841 and Alexandre presents it as "mate in 22", but what is of interest here is proving that White can win at all. I haven't seen the original source, and am relying on Alexandre and on my own analysis.

Play starts **1 Kf6** and the best reply is **1...Kg8**, forcing **2 Ke7** and gaining space for **2...Kg7**. White fences him in by **3 g4** and **4 f4** (or the other way round), and Black does best to come back to g7 (if he goes to the h-file, **5 Kf7** will win more quickly). Now **5 e3** loses a move, and **5...Kg6 6 e4 Kg7 7 e5** gives **6a** with Black to play.

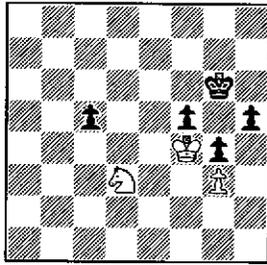
The line given by Alexandre is **7...Kg6** (we'll look at **7...Kg8** in the next paragraph), and **8 Kf8** forces him to the h-file. The move that holds out longest is **8...Kh7**, leading to **9 Kf7 Kh6 10 e6 Kh7 11 g5 Kh8 12 Kg6 Kg8 13 e7** (see **6b**) **Kh8 14 Kh6 Kg8 15 g6 Kh8 16-17 f6 Kh8** (nearly there, but White must triangulate) **18-20 Kh6 Kg8 21 f7+** and **22 g7 mate**. If **8...Kh6** then White can play **9 Kf7 Kh7 10 g5 Kh8 11-12 e7 Kh8 13 Kg6** and he won't need to triangulate. In the line **8...Kh7**, White can advance his pawns to **e7/f5** or **e6/f6** before playing **Kg6**; in the line **8...Kh6**, he can play to **e6/f5** instead of **e7/f4**, but if he unwisely advances to **e7/f6** he will end up at **6c** and he will have no good move.



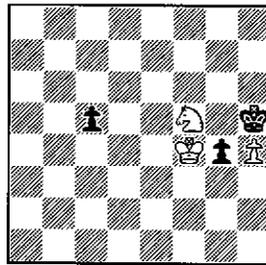
6c - a position to avoid

There remains **7...Kg8** from **6a**, when White will have to advance his pawn to **f6** in order to control **g7**. So play **8 f5 Kg7 9 g5 Kg8 10 f6**, and Black must retreat to the h-file. Suppose **10...Kh7**; **11 Kf7** (else **11...Kg6**) **Kh8 12 e6** (**12 Kg6 Kg8** and White cannot cover **f8**) **Kh7 13 e7 Kh8 14 Kg6 Kg8** and we are back at **6c**. Hmmm... Cancel **10 f6** and substitute **10 e6 Kg7 11 Ke8! Kg8 12 f6**, with **12...Kh7 13 Kf7** or **12...Kh8 13 Kf8 Kh7 14 Kf7**, and now the parity is right and everything will work. But White has to lose the necessary tempo before his pawn reaches **f6**; he cannot do so afterwards.

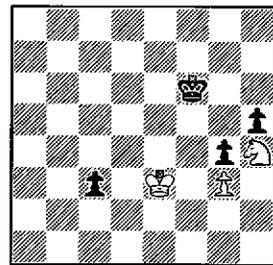
All this is assuming "mate in 22", though if my counting is correct the mate after **7...Kg8** and **12...Kh8** does not occur until move 23. If the objective is merely to win, White doesn't need to reach **6a** with Black to play; he can simply play his king to **e7** and his pawns to **e6/f5/g5**, tempo with **Ke8** if necessary, and play **f6** etc.



7 - win



7a - 3...h4, after 5 Nxf5

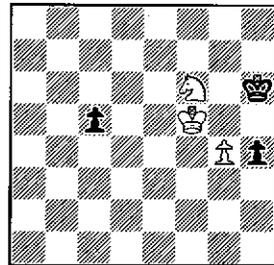


7b - 3...c4, after 6 Ke3

7 (Ponziani, in the 1782 edition of his book *Il giuoco incomparabile degli scacchi*) is an ending which turns out to have unexpected depths. I show the position in the form given by Alexandre, but for the solution I am using an English transcription, apparently made by E. E. Cunnington, which appeared many years ago in an English chess magazine and was copied for the BCPS by Ken Whyld.

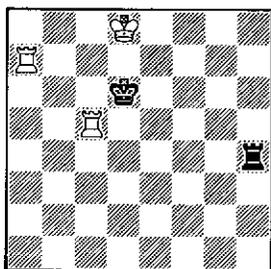
The obvious 1 Nxc5 is soon seen not to work (1...h4 2 gxh4 Kh5 3 Kg3 f4+), hence 1 Ne5+, and Cunnington gives precedence to 1...Kh6. The capture 2 Kxf5 appears to be met by 2...h4 (if 3 Nxf4+ Kh5 4 Nf6+ Kh6 5 gxh4 then 5...c4 diverts the Black knight and White's pawn will go), and the winning line is 2 Nf7+ Kg6 3 Nd6. Now 3...h4 can be met by 4 gxh4 Kh5 5 Nxf5, see 7a, with a "just in time" win which Cunnington spells out down to the mates: 5...c4 6 Kg3 c3 7 Nd4 Kh6 8 Kxg4 Kg6 9 h5+ Kh6 10 Kh4 Kh7 11 Kg5 Kg7 12 h6+ Kh7 13 Kh5 and either 13...Kh8 14 Kg6 Kg8 15 h7+ Kh8 16-18 Nf7 or 13...Kg8 14 Kg6 Kh8 15-16 Nd6 c1Q 17 Nf7+ Kg8 18 h7+ Kf8 19 h8Q+ Ke7 20 Qd8+ Ke6 21 Qd6. Cunnington's main line is 3...Kh6, when 4 Nxf5+ Kg6 5 Nh4+ wins in some comfort; if instead 3...c4 then 4 Nxf5 c3 5 Nh4+ Kf6 6 Ke3 and the king will look after the c-pawn (see 7b), but of course not 4 Nxc4 h4 etc. It remains to consider 1...Kf6, but this is now very easy; White plays 2 Nc4 Kg6 3 Ne3, and again his knight is commanding f5.

All this seemed straightforward and convincing, but when I put the position on the computer I found that after 1 Ne5+ Kh6 2 Kxf5 the "drawn" line 2...h4 3 Nxf4+ Kh5 4 Nf6+ Kh6 was nothing of the kind: 5 g4! (see 7c) h3 (nothing else is better) 6 g5+ Kg7 7 Nh5+ Kf7 (other moves allow the White king to advance) 8 g6+ Ke7 (ditto) 9 Kg5 h2 (...c4 at once is no better) 10 Ng3 c4 11 g7 Kf7 12 Kh6 Kg8 (else 13 Kh7 etc) 13 Kg6 and again White will just mate in time. The capture 2 Kxf5 does indeed fail, but the way to refute it is to advance the c-pawn to draw the White knight from the scene of action (say 2...c4 3 Kf4 c3 4 Nd3 c2) and then to play the Black king to and fro between g6 and h6. White cannot now move his king without allowing ...h4 etc, while his knight is tied to the defence of e1.

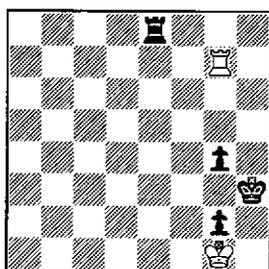


7c - 2 Kxf5 h4, after 5 g4

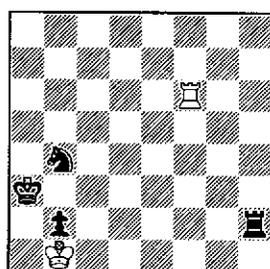
It seems to me that this line adds quite a lot to the study, but there is nothing in the material I have seen to indicate whether or not Ponziani was aware of it.



8 - win



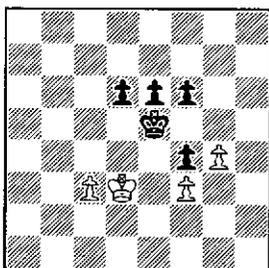
9 - draw



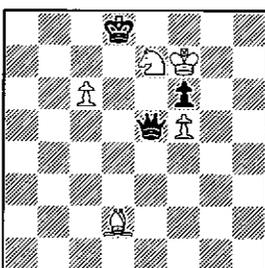
10 - draw

Several of the ancient classics are here, of course. Alexandre gives 8 as by Stamma, but its first appearance seems to have been in Bertin's *The Noble Game of Chess* of 1735. The spectacular solution **1 Rh5 Rxb5 2 Ra6+** and **3 Ra5+** may now be now seen at a glance, but that is merely the effect of familiarity and we can imagine the impact it must have had when it first appeared.

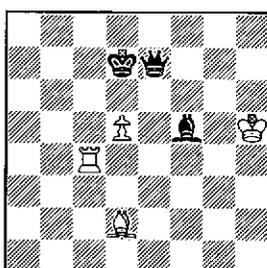
Salvio's 9, from his *Trattato* of 1604, is another simple but famous rook opposition study: **1 Rh7+ Kg3 2 Re7 Rf8 3 Rf7** etc. Ponziani's 10 is at first sight similar and does indeed start **1 Ra6+ Kb3**, but now the rook opposition move **2 Rh6** is defeated by **2...Nd5** and White must play **2 Ra3+** with a perpetual offer to the king instead. Cunnington's transcription of Ponziani gives a second solution, **1 Rf3+** etc, but this can be cut out by starting with the White rook on b6.



11 - win



12 - win

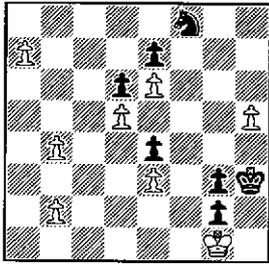


13 - draw

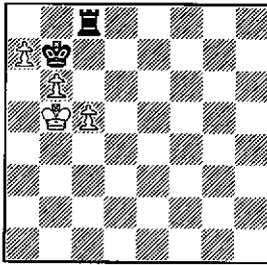
William Bone (1810-1874) was a leading British composer of the period. We have already met him as the author of 6, and he did other neat things as well. 11 is from Walker's *New Treatise* of 1841. It's a problem as much as a study and is often presented as "mate in four", but if White doesn't mate while he can he certainly won't win and he will have to play a little carefully even to draw. So let's exploit Black's badly placed king: **1 Kc4 d5+** (1...f5 2 g5 etc) **2 Kc5 f5 3 g5 d4 4 cxd4**.

The pawn on c6 prevents an immediate fork in 12 (*Le Palamède* 1836), but **1 c7+** gets it out of the way and leads to a neat pair of pin-fork echoes: **1...Qxc7 2 Ba5 Qxa5 3 Nc6+** and **1...Kxc7 2 Bf4 Qxf4 3 Nd5+**. 13 (*Chess Player's Chronicle* 1843) is similar in spirit if quite different in outcome: **1 Rc7+ Kxc7 2 d6+ Qxd6** (2...Kxd6 3 Bb4+) **3 Bf4 Qxf4 stalemate**.

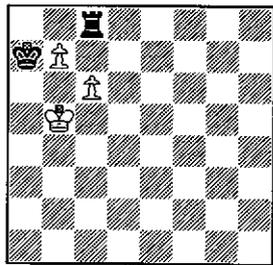




17 - win

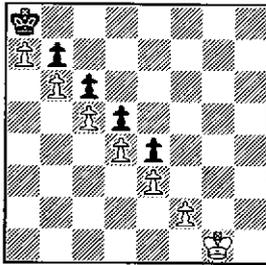


18 - win

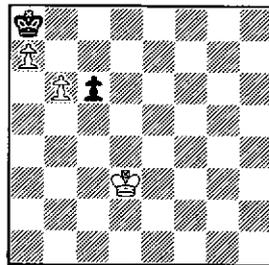


18a - after 2...Kxa7

According to Harold van der Heijden's *Pawn promotion to Bishop and Rook in the Chess Endgame Study*, 17 (I. Calvi, *Le Palamède* 1836), although sadly clumsy, was the pioneer rook promotion study. Black threatens mate in three on f3, and if 1 a8Q then 1...Nh7 2 Qg8 Ng5 3 Qxg5 and it's stalemate. Hence 1 a8R and now the capture on g5 will be safe. Salvio's 18 (from *Il Puttino*, 1634) is very much more natural, although the promotion is not uniquely determined. 1 c6+ Ka8 (1...Rxc6 2 a8Q+ etc) 2 b7+ Kxa7 gives 18a, and in Salvio's day only queen promotions were allowed and so he gave the position as drawn; by 1846, promotion to bishop or knight gave a win. Salvio presented this as having been reached in play, and for once I can believe it.



19 - win



19a - after 10 Kxd3

19 appeared in the *Chess Player's Chronicle* in 1843 as by "MM. L. and K.", and Korschelt, who must have spotted something that I have missed, refines this to Lipmann and Kieseritzky. It is striking rather than difficult, but a little care is needed. 1 f3/f4 exf3 2 Kf1 f2 3 e4 dxe4 4 Kxf2 e3+ 5 Ke1 e2 6 d5 cxd5 7 Kxe2 d4 8 Kd2 d3 9 c6 bxc6 10 Kxd3 (see 19a) and the Black king is at last freed, but of course White cannot capture on c6 without giving stalemate. Alexandre and the *Chronicle* both stop here, but we might as well spell it out: 10...Kb7 11 Kc4 Ka8 12 Kc5 Kb7 13 Kd6 and if 13...Ka8 then 14 Kc7 etc.

For once, Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database" has played only a minor role, and my main debts are to the BCPS Library, which gave me access to most of the items cited (many of them originally supplied to the BCPS by Ken Whyld), and to Colin Russ. - JDB