

British Endgame Study News

Special number 47

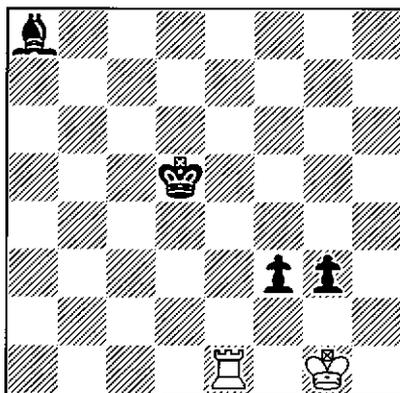
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Some studies by Ladislav Prokeš

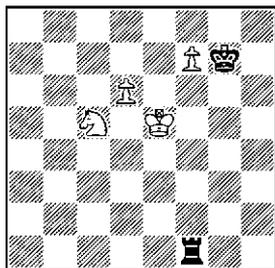


White to play and draw

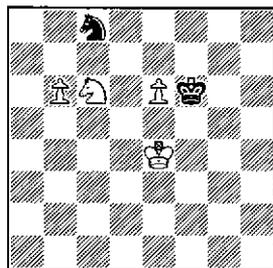
Some studies by Ladislav Prokeš

We all have blind spots, and the Bohemian composer Ladislav Prokeš (1884-1966) has always been one of mine. It isn't that his studies are bad, because they aren't, but he was vastly prolific and so a lot of his work is inevitably a little thin; whatever he did, one or two classics apart, there seemed always to be someone else who had done it better. There is only one study of his in *Endgame Magic* (though that one is first rate), and only two or three others were even shortlisted. But it recently occurred to me that the studies of Prokeš should be treated like those of Mike Bent, another vastly prolific composer whose work is very similar in spirit if completely different in style: these aren't studies to be read, but to be *solved*. So I am breaking from our normal practice and am giving a page and a half of bare diagrams first, with solutions and repeat diagrams on succeeding pages. Don't take them all at a sitting, take them two or three at a time, and you will find a lot of gentle pleasure.

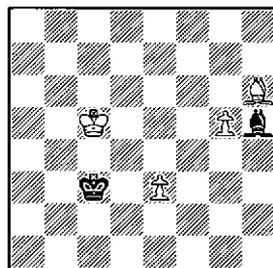
The standard sources for Prokeš's studies are his comprehensive *Kniha šachových studií* of 1951 and the supplementary booklet *Studie 1951-1966* which was compiled by Vladimír Kos and published by SNZZ in Brno in 1996, but arguably more rewarding than either, because it is so much more condensed, is the 1941 selection *Šachové studie / 150 miniatur* with commentary by František Dedrle. The studies that follow have all been taken from this. Note that 7-8 and 14-15 form pairs. 2 is in *Endgame Magic*, but I did not think it could properly be omitted.



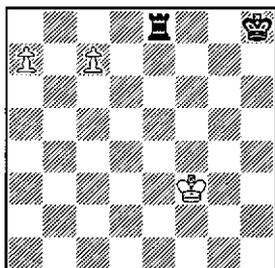
1 - win



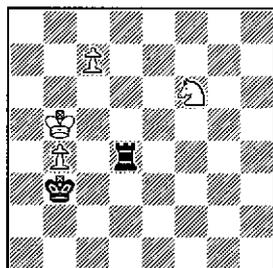
2 - win



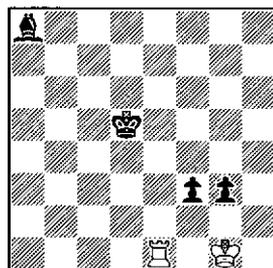
3 - win



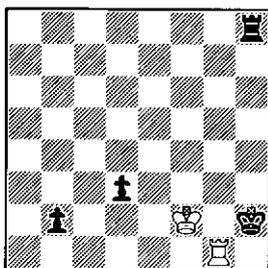
4 - draw



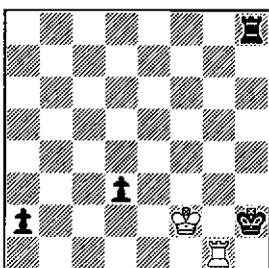
5 - win



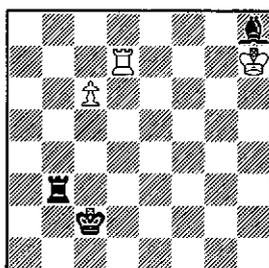
6 - draw



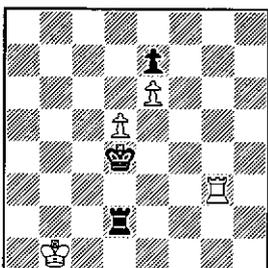
7 - draw



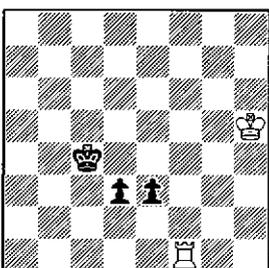
8 - WTM, Black to win



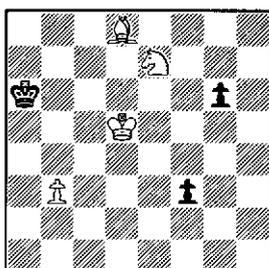
9 - win



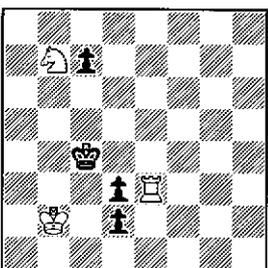
10 - win



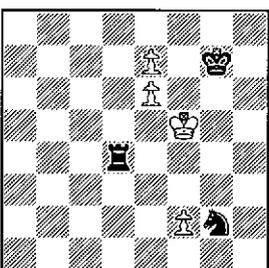
11 - draw



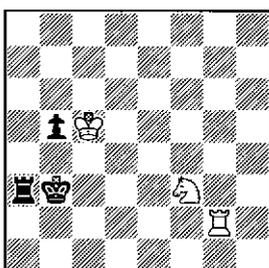
12 - win



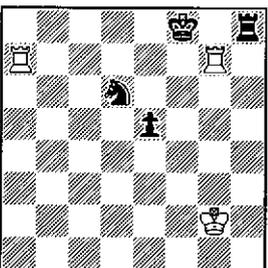
13 - draw



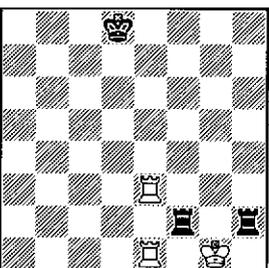
14 - win



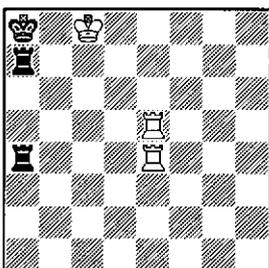
15 - win



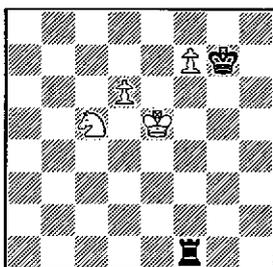
16 - win



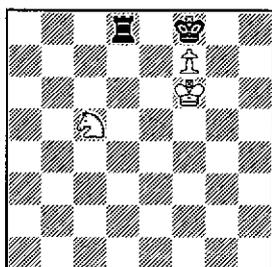
17 - win



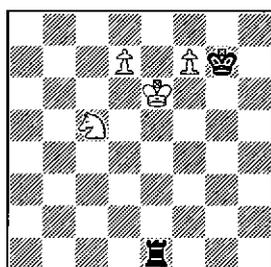
18 - win



1 - win

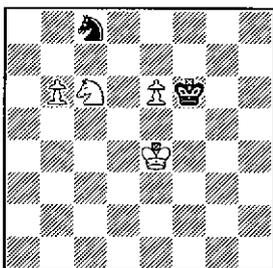


1a - 2...Kf8, after 4 Kf6

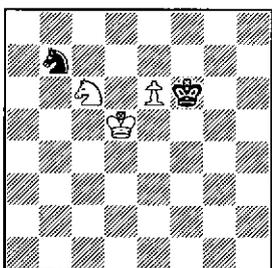


1b - after 2...Re1+

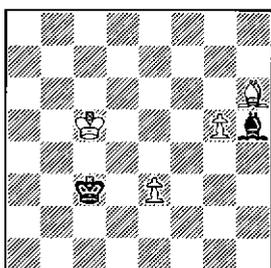
Play in 1 (Šach 1940) starts **1 d7**, and **1...Re1+** gives no trouble (simplest is **2 Kd4 Rd1+ 3 Nd3**). Better is **1...Rd1**, and after **2 Ke6** there are two lines. If **2...Kf8** then **3 d8Q+ Rxd8 4 Kf6!** and Black is curiously helpless (see 1a); he has only **4...Rd6+**, and **5 Ne6+ Rxe6+ 6 Kxe6** gives White a last-pawn win. But **2 Ke6** has put White's king out of reach of d4, so **2...Re1+** now seems more promising (see 1b) - no it isn't, **3 Ne4! Rxe4+** (**3...Rd1 4 Nd6**) **4 Kd5 Re1 5 f8Q+ Kxf8 6 d8Q+**. There is always pleasure in watching a knight outwit a line-moving piece.



2 - win



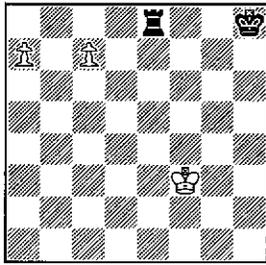
2a - reciprocal zugzwang



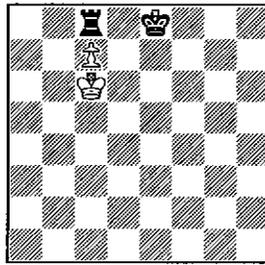
3 - win

Play in 2 (1-2 Pr Groš 1938) starts **1 b7 Nd6+**, and if White plays the natural **2 Kd5** the reply **2...Nxb7** leaves him without a good move (see 2a): **3 e7 Kf7 4 Ke5 Na5** (simplest) and the pawn will soon go. The way to win is **2 Kd4! Nxb7 3 Kd5**, after which we again have 2a but with Black to play. If the king moves, say **3...Kg7**, then **4 Nd8!** attacks the knight and forces promotion of the pawn (**4...Nxd8** and **4...Na5** are both met by **5 e7**). Black can hold out longer by **3...Nc5**, but after **4 e7** White has a book win: **4...Ne6 5 Kd6 Ng7 6 Kd7** (quickest) with **6...Kf7 7 Nd8+ K~ 8 Ne6** or **6...Kf5 7 Nd4+ Ke5 8 Ne6 Nh5 9 Kd8 Nf6 10 Nf8** and **11 Nd7**, or **4...Na6 5 Kd6 Kf7 6 Nd8+ Ke8 7 Ne6 Kf7 8 Ng7 Nc7 9 Kd7 Kf6 10 Ne8+**.

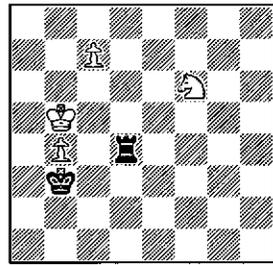
In 3 (Národní listy 1939), the immediate advance **1 e4** leads only to **1...Kd3 2 e5** (**2 Kd5 Bf3**) **Ke4 3 Kd6 Kf5 4 e6 Bd1** (simplest) **5 e7 Ba4 6 Kc7 Ke6/Kg6 7 Kd8 Kf7** with a draw. White must bring his king to the help of his g-pawn: **1 Kd6 Kd3 2 Ke7!** (threat **3 Kf6** etc) **Kxe3 3 g6+ K~ 4 g7**. **2 Ke6** isn't enough on account of **2...Kxe3 3 g6+ Ke4 4 g7 Bd1** etc, while **2 Ke5** doesn't control f7 and allows **2...Kxe3 3 g6+ Kd3 4 g7 Bf7**.



4 - draw



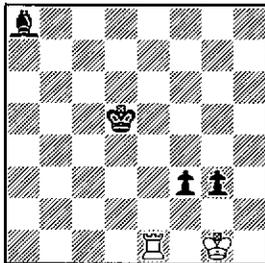
4a - after 5...Rc8



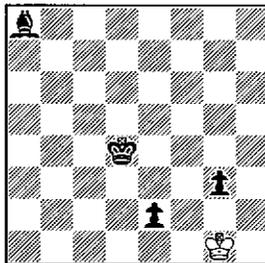
5 - win

We shall need a deflection sacrifice in 4 (*Národní listy* 1940), but an immediate 1 a8Q fails (1...Rxa8 2 Ke4 Rc8 and the second pawn falls) and the correct sequence is **1 Kf4 Kg7 2 a8Q Rxa8 3 Ke5 Kf7/Kf8 4 Kd6**. The threat of Kd7 forces **4...Ke8**, and after **5 Kc6** the new threat of Kb7 forces **5...Rc8** (the king having inconveniently blocked e8, no other eighth-rank square is available). This gives **4a**, and now comes the curious waiting move **6 Kd6!** A move by the Black king will allow **7 Kd7**, hence **6...Ra8**, after which White can play **7 Kc6** with a draw by repetition.

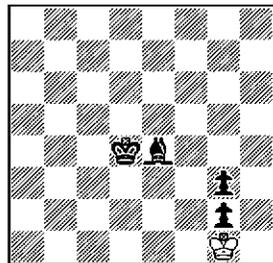
An immediate promotion in 5 (*Schachvärlden* 1938) allows 1...Rxb4+ with perpetual check, hence **1 Nd5!** to guard the pawn. Black obviously replies **1...Rxd5+** (if instead 1...Rc4 then 2 Kb6 etc wins), and now we have 2 Kb6 carefully avoiding the c-file? No, 2...Kxb4, and again the promotion can be met by perpetual check. White must play **2 Kc6** to attack the rook, and after **2...Rd1 3 b5 Rc1+** the moves **4 Kd7/Kd6** both win (but not 4 Kb7/Kb6, when 4...Ka4/Kb4 hold the draw).



6 - draw

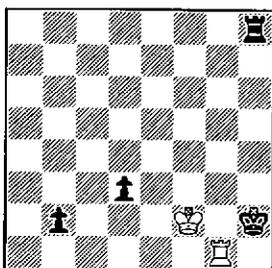


6a - after 2...fxe2

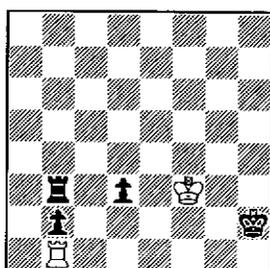


6b - 2...Be4, after 3...fxg2

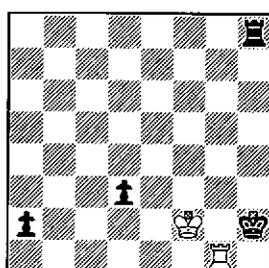
The first move in 6 (*Tijdschrift v.d. KNSB* 1938) is the correct and obvious **1 Re3**, but Black replies **1...Kd4** and how has the advance of the Black king helped White? The answer is that **2 Re2!** has become possible since **2...fxe2** is now stalemate (see **6a**), and if instead **2...Be4** intending **3...Ke5** etc then **3 Rg2!** and **3...fxg2** is another stalemate (see **6b**). There remains only **2...g2**, after which White simply rescues his rook and sets up an iron blockade. The commentary in *Šachové studie* draws attention to a study by Dehler, *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1909, White Ke1, Rf5 (2), Black Kg2, Bc4, Pc3/d3 (4), draw by 1 Rf2+ and either 1...Kh3 2 Kd1 Kg3 3 Rc2! Bb3 4 Kc1 or 1...Kg3/Kg1 2 Rc2!, but **6** offers sufficient to stand on its own.



7 - draw



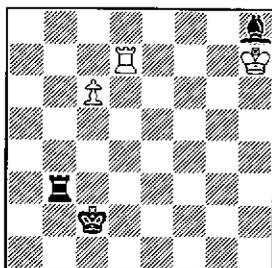
7a - after 3 Kf3



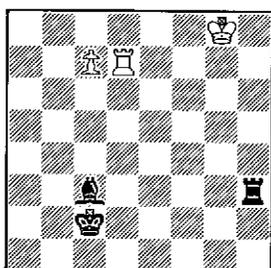
8 - WTM, Black to win

7 and 8 (*Národní listy* 1939) form a pair. In 7, after 1 **Rb1 Rb8 2 Ke3 Rb3, 3 Kf3!** keeps Black at bay (see 7a) and leaves him nothing better than 3...Rb- 4 Ke3 repeating. If instead 3...d2+ then 4 Ke2, and both pawns will go.

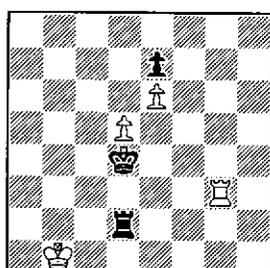
So why doesn't 1 **Ra1 Ra8 2 Ke3 Ra3 3 Kf3** work just as well in 8? Because after 3...d2+ 4 **Ke2 Rg3** the a-pawn is one file further from the White king than the b-pawn was, and its capture will cost White his rook: 5 **Kxd2 Rg1 6 Rxa2 Rg2+**, or 5 **Rxa2 Rg2+ 6 Kd1 Rg1+ 7 Kxd2 Rg2+**.



9 - win



9a - after 2...Bc3

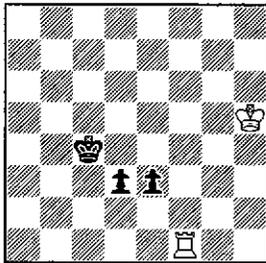


10 - win

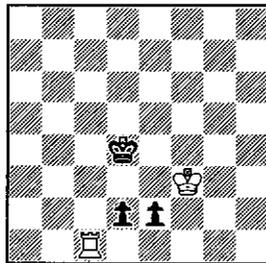
1 **c7** appears decisive in 9 (2 HM *Schackvärlden* 1938), because both 1...Rc3 and 1...Rh3+ Kg8 2 Rc3 let White take the bishop and the rest will be easy. But Black can do better: 1...Rh3+ 2 **Kg8 Bc3!** (see 9a). Now a promotion will allow a skewer check, and if 3 Rh7 then 3...Rg3+ 4 Kf7 (4 Kf8 Bb4+ and 5...Rc3) Rf3+ 5 Ke8 (5 Ke7 Bb4+, 5 Kc6 Rf8) Re3+ 6 Re7 Rg3/Rh3 and Black can hold the draw. The splendid answer is 3 **Rg7!** cutting the bishop's guard of h8 (3...Bxg7 4 **c8Q+ Rc3 5 Qf5+**).

Play in 10 (*České slovo* 1941) proceeds 1 **d6 exd6 2 Re3! Kxe3 3 e7**, and the blocking of the e-file by 2...Kxe3 has left Black helpless; he will have no more checks after 3...Rd1+ 4 **Kc2 Rd2+ 5 Kc1**, and this is not a position where rook and pawn can draw against queen.

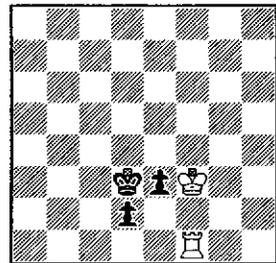
11 (HM *Schackvärlden* 1938) starts with the natural move 1 **Kg4**, and which pawn should Black advance? 1...e2 leads to 2 **Rc1+ Kd4 3 Kf3 d2** (see 11a), and White has the spectacular escape 4 **Rc4!** The capture 4...Kxc4 allows 5 **Kxe2** drawing at once, and if instead 4...Kd3 then 5 **Rd4+!** repeats the dose. And the play after 1...d2 is also interesting, even if less spectacular: 2 **Kf3 Kd3** (see 11b) 3 **Ra1!** (only move), and



11 - draw

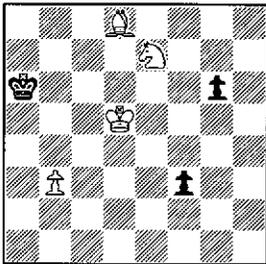


11a - 1...e2, after 3...d2

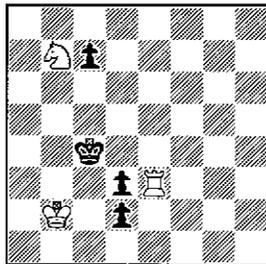


11a - 1...d2, after 2...Kd3

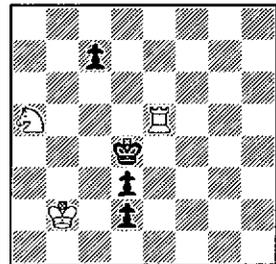
3...e2 can be met by 4 Ra3+ with a perpetual check on the a-file.



12 - win



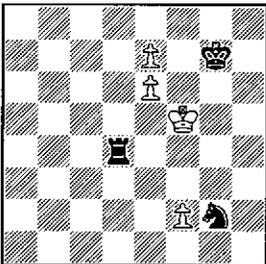
13 - draw



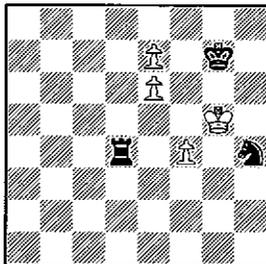
13a - after 2 Re5

After this, 12 (original to *Šachové studie*) is short and sweet. 1 Bb6 Kxb6 lures the Black king to a bad square, and 2 Kc4! frees d5 and keeps him from the White pawn. The knight can now stop the Black pawns.

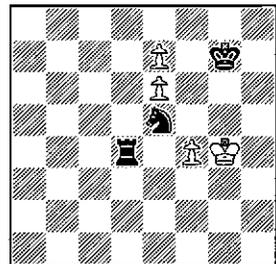
Play in 13 (*Šach* 1941, with 14) starts 1 Na5+ Kd4, and 2 Re5! halts Black (see 13a); 2...d1Q allows 3 Nc6+ with perpetual check (if Black tries a4, he will be mated), and other moves lose to a fork. But why not play Re5 at move 1?



14 - win

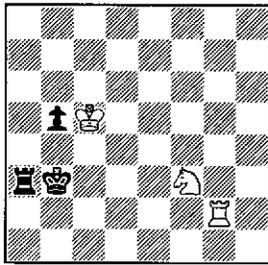


14a - after 2 f4

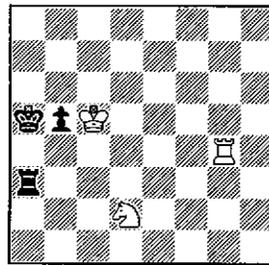


14b - after 3...Ne5+

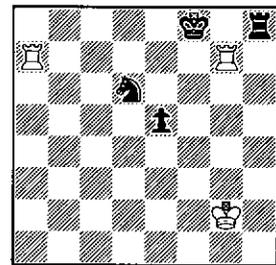
The companion study 14 shows why not: 1 Kg5! and if 1...Nh4 then 2 f4! (see 14a). Now 2...Nf3+ 3 Kg4 Ne5+ gives 14b, and 4 Kh5 wins (but not 4 Kf5 Nc4 etc, nor 4 Kg3/Kh3 Rd3+ 5 Kg2 Rd2+ 6 Kf1 Nf3 with another perpetual check).



15 - win



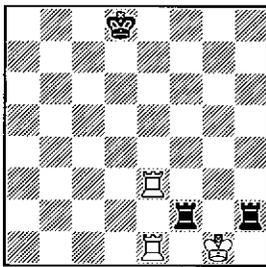
15a - after 2...Ka5



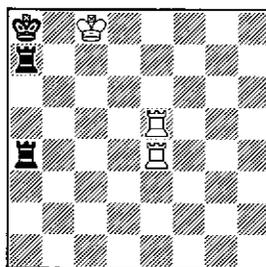
16 - win

In **15** (*Náš rozhlas* 1941), 1 Nd4+ works against 1...Kc3 but not against 1...Ka4, and the winning line starts **1 Nd2+ Ka4 2 Rg4+ Ka5** giving **15a**. Now an immediate Rg8 is met by ...Rc3+, but **3 Nc4+!** forces **3...bxc4** closing the c-file, and after **4 Rg8 Ka4 5 Kxe4** Black is helpless.

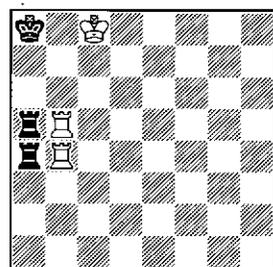
In **16** (*2 Pr Národní listy* 1940), the move **1 Rgd7** threatens not only **2 Rxd6** but also **2 Rd8+ Ne8 3 Rxe8+ Kxc8 4 Ra8+**. The simple defence **1...Rh6** allows **2 Ra6** pinning the knight, and if **2...Nf7** then **3 Rxf7+** and **4 Rxh6**. Black can try to improve on this by a preliminary **1...Rg8+**, hoping for **2 Kf- Rg6 3 Ra6 Rf6+** and **4...Ne8**, but White can play **2 Kh3** and meet further checks by advancing on the light squares. This leaves **1...Ne8**, which is given in *Šachové studie* as the main line but in fact allows play similar to the line **2 Rd8+** in the threat: **2 Rf7+ Kg8 3 Rfe7 Kf8** (knight moves are clearly hopeless) **4 Rxe8+** and **5 Ra8+**.



17 - win



18 - win



18a - after 2 Reb4

Finally, two trifles from *Šach* 1940 featuring the normally unpromising material of two rooks against two. In **17**, **1 Rd1+ Kc7** (if 1...Rd2 then 2 Rd3+ etc as below) **2 Rc3+ Kb6 3 Rb1+ Rb2** (else mate) **4 Rb3+ Rxb3 5 Rxb3+** and **6 Kxh2**, but why not **1 Rd3+** and very much the same? The answer is that after **1...Kc7 2 Rc1+ Kb6 3 Rb3+ Ka5 4 Ra1+ Ra2 5 Ra3+ Rxa3 6 Rxa3+**, Black has **6...Ka4** counterattacking. And in **18**, **1 Rb5** threatens mate and only **1...R7a5** offers any hope, and now comes **2 Reb4!!** (see **18a**) and what is Black going to do?

Not for the first time, my grateful acknowledgement to the library of the British Chess Problem Society. - JDB