

British Endgame Study News

Special number 48

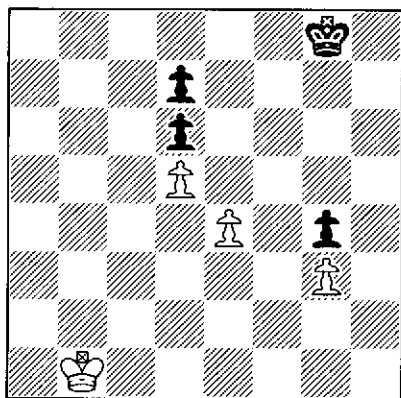
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Some British studies from 1860-99

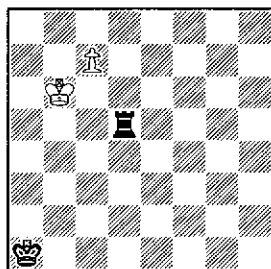


Either side to move; what results?

Some British studies from 1860-99

The period from 1860 to 1899 was a relatively thin one as regards endgame study composition in Britain. We still had Kling and Horwitz, but Kling produced little after 1868; Horwitz remained active and indeed prolific until his death in 1885, but much of his later work was well below his best. From others, there were isolated classic productions such as the Barbier-Saavedra study, but most composers seem to have preferred the short-range certainty offered by problems in two or three moves.

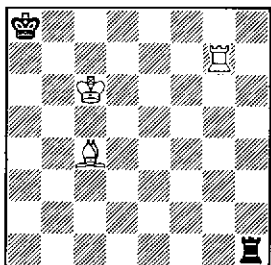
We have looked at the Barbier-Saavedra study before and it is in *Endgame Magic*, but we must repeat it here in the interests of completeness. I give it as it appeared. Barbier, in the *Glasgow Weekly Citizen* for 4 May 1895, set the position shown as **1** for solution as "Black to play and draw" with intended answer **1...Rd6+ 2 Kb5 Rd5+ 3 Kb4 Rd4+ 4 Kb3 Rd3+ 5 Kc2 Rd4! 6 c8Q Rc4+ 7 Qxc4 stalemate**, and Saavedra said No, **6 c8R!! Ra4 7 Kb3** and White mates or wins the rook. For the claim of a certain editor to have reached the same position in play a few years earlier, see our issues for March 2001, September 2001, and September 2006.



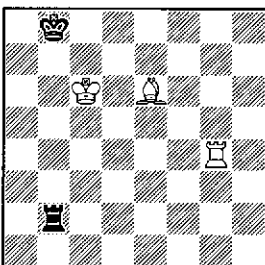
1 - see text

In fact the nineteenth century was an age of analysis as much as of isolated puzzle composition, and among the fields to receive particular attention were $2N \ v \ P$, $Q \ v \ R$, and $R + B \ v \ R$. $2N \ v \ P$ is excellently covered on pages 433-448 of the 1922 edition of Berger and some of the analysis quoted there is quite astonishingly accurate (one line branches off 45 moves from the mate, and the computer has now shown that the play as eventually established by a succession of analysts is optimal right through), but the only British names mentioned are Kling, Horwitz, and H. F. L. Meyer, and their contribution appears to have been relatively minor.

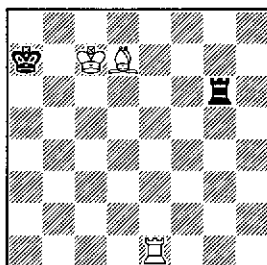
It was a different matter with $Q \ v \ R$ and $R + B \ v \ R$, where Alfred Crosskill became a pre-eminent figure. We looked at his work on $Q \ v \ R$ in special number 25 and need not repeat it here, but good though this may have been it was outclassed by what he did on $R + B \ v \ R$. **2** shows a position which he analysed in the *Chess Monthly* in 1864. His solution appears in the *Oxford Companion*, and it is an instructive exercise to go through it move by move against the Thompson CD-ROM (better for this purpose than the Nalimov tablebase since it counts moves only to a winning capture) and note just where the computer ultimately found a shorter win or a more obstructive defence. I have remarked elsewhere that this is an unfair test, because a human analyst does not spend time counting moves; he looks for the simplest win rather than the shortest, he concentrates on the most challenging defensive moves even if they turn out to lose more quickly in the end, and wherever possible he transposes into a line he has already analysed. Even so, let us apply it and see what it tells us. Bear in mind that while $Q \ v \ R$ is only a four-man ending, and $2N \ v \ P$ normally has only three mobile men because one knight has to maintain the blockade of the pawn, $R + B \ v \ R$ is a fully mobile five-man ending, and three of these five men are very mobile indeed.



2 - win

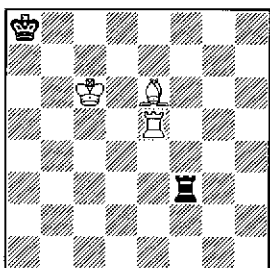


2a - after 5...Rb2

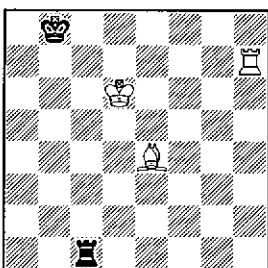


2b - after 15...Rg6

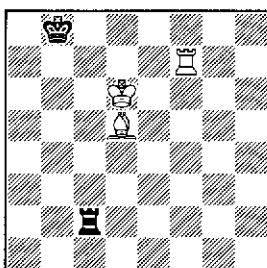
Crosskill's solution is as follows. **1 Bd3 Re1** (1...Rh6+ would hold out 16 moves longer against best play, but Crosskill presumably thought 1...Re1 the better move because he overlooked 6 Rg3) **2 Bf5 Re3 3 Bd7 Kb8 4 Rg4 Rb3 5 Be6 Rb2** (see 2a) **6 Bc4** (the one seriously inferior move: 6 Rg3 would save 22 moves) **Rh2 7 Rg8+ Ka7 8 Rg7+ Ka8 9 Bd3 Rh6+ 10 Kc7 Rf6 11 Rh7 Ka7 12 Re7 Rf8 13 Bb5 Rg8 14 Re1 Rg7+ 15 Bd7 Rg6** (see 2b) **16 Be6 Rg7+ 17 Kc6 Rg6 18 Ra1+ Kb8 19 Rb1+ Ka7 20 Rb7+ Ka8 21 Re7 Rg2 22 Bf5 Rf2 23 Re5 Rf3 24 Be6** (see 2c) :



2c - after 24 Be6



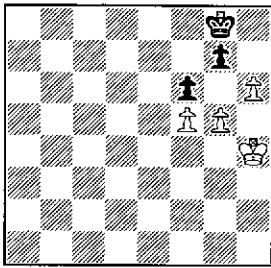
2d - after 38 Kd6



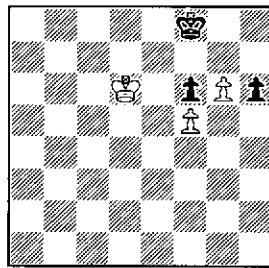
2e - after 41...Rc2

24...Kb8 (the first inaccuracy of any kind for 18 moves: 24...Rf1 would hold out six moves longer) **25 Rb5+ Ka7 26 Ra5+** (26 Rb7+ would save two moves) **Kb8 27 Bd5** (27 Rb5+ would save five moves) **Rg3 28 Rb5+ Ka7 29 Rb7+ Ka8 30 Rh7 Rg6+ 31 Kc7+ Ka7 32 Bc4 Rg5 33 Kc6+ Kb8 34 Rh8+ Ka7 35 Bd5 Rg1 36 Rh7+ Kb8 37 Be4 Rc1+ 38 Kd6** (see 2d) **Rc8** (38...Rc7 would hold out two moves longer) **39 Rb7+ Ka8 40 Rf7+ Kb8 41 Bd5 Rc2** (see 2e) **42 Rb7+** (the last inaccuracy: 42 Re7/Rg7Rh7 would save a move) **Kc8 43 Ra7 Kd8 44 Rf7 Re2 45 Rg7 Re1 46 Rb7 Rc1 47 Bb3 Rc3 48 Be6 Rd3+ 49 Bd5 Rc3 50 Rd7+ Kc8 51 Rf7 Kb8 52 Rb7+ Kc8 53 Rb4 Kd8 54 Bc4 Kc8 55 Be6+ Kd8 56 Rb8+ Rc8 57 Rxc8**, and although we are happy just to have taken the rook this capture is in fact mate.

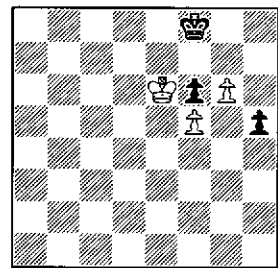
The ending had been examined by Philidor, Lolli, Cochrane, and Szen, and a long win by Zytogorsky was in the literature, so Crosskill was not the first in the field; even so, it was a remarkable achievement, particularly the unbroken sequence of 18 optimal moves for each side early in the solution. John Nunn has called it one of the high points of 19th century endgame analysis, and I imagine that few will disagree.



3 - win

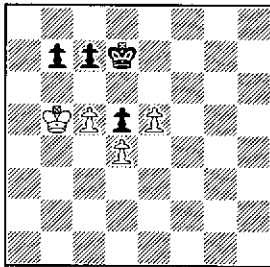


3a - after 7...Kf8

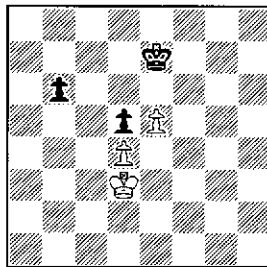


3b - 8...h5, after 9 Ke6

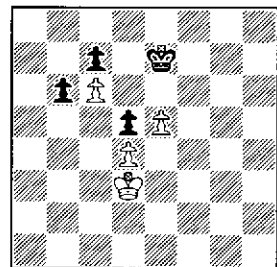
I have remarked that most of Horwitz's late studies are of little interest, but there are exceptions and **3** (*Chess Monthly* 1879) is first class. If the White king were almost anywhere else, 1 hxg7 would win (1...fxg5 2 f6), but now Black's capture on g5 gives check and he has time for 2...Kxg7. The winning move is **1 g6**, and after **1...gxh6** White must come round to the Q-side: **2-5 Kd5 Ke7** (else 6 Kd6) **6 Kc6 Ke8 7 Kd6 Kf8** (see 3a). If 8-9 Ke6 then 9...Kg7 and White will have to back off, but he can make progress by **8 Kd7!** Given as main line is now 8...Kg8 9 Ke7 Kg7 10 Kc6 postponing the fatal advance of the h-pawn as long as possible, but the more interesting line is **8...h5** seizing the opportunity to run. White replies **9 Ke6**, giving **3b**, and if 9...Kg7 then 10 Kd5 and the pawn is caught; alternatively, Black can keep running by **9...h4**, but White has **10 Kxf6 h3 11 g7+ Kg8 12 Kg6 h2 13 f6 h1Q 14 f7** and he mates just in time. Black being completely passive, White has alternatives in the play, but these are irrelevant; the interest lies in the fact that White can win only by moving to the seventh rank and releasing the Black h-pawn.



4 - win



4a - Black draws



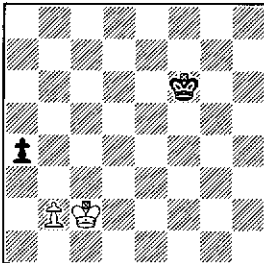
4b - Black draws

That White wins in Horwitz's **4** (*Chess Monthly* 1879) is hardly surprising, given that he has a protected passed pawn; what is more surprising is that the temporary sacrifice **1 c6+** is the only move to do so. But consider the alternatives. Left to himself, Black will patrol e6/e7, and White cannot turn him on the K-side because the moment he sets foot even on the d-file Black will play ...b6 and create a passed pawn of his own, and the resulting positions, typified by **4a** and **4b**, are drawn (from **4b**, Black meets an attempted probe Ka6 by ...Kd8, and if now e6 then ...Ke7 draws; if instead Kf5 and e6(+), ...Kc7 followed by ...b5 draws). Nor will 1 Kb4 Kc6 2 Kb5

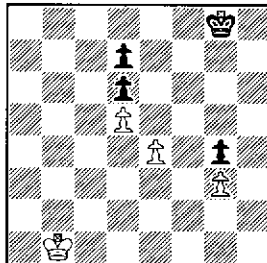
Ke7 3 c6 help, because Black will reply 3...b6 and draw as in 4b. So White must advance the c-pawn while the check prevents Black from playing ...b6 in reply, after which the White king will have access to c5 and Black's position will soon crumble.

The elegant 5 below, by F. Cassidy, appeared in *Chess Monthly* in 1884. Try the natural 1 Kc3: no, 1...a3! 2 b4 Ke6 3-4 Kxa3 Kc6, and 5...Kb6 will draw; nor will 2 b3 help, because the route from c3 to a3 via b1 will be far too long. Instead, 1 Kb1 threatening 2-4 Kxa4 with an easy win, but what about 1...a3 as before? 2 bxa3 clearly won't win, and if 2 b4 then 2...Ke6 3-4 Kxa3 Kc6 and again 5...Kb6. But now 2 b3! does make a difference: 2...Ke6 3-4 Kxa3 Kc5/Kc6 5 Ka4 Kb6 and White has room for 6 Kb4.

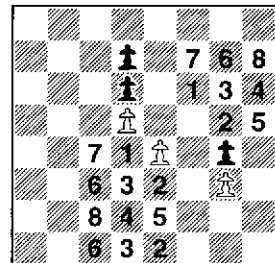
There were to be several extensions, the first of which, also published in *Chess Monthly* in 1884, featured a wholly inappropriate slaughterhouse introduction by Horwitz. (I haven't seen the original source, so I have not verified that the Cassidy appeared first, but I think it more likely that Horwitz added a poor introduction than that Cassidy blatantly plagiarized). But by far the best was by Moravec, building on an idea shown by Troitsky, who simply put the White king on c1 and the Black pawn back to a5. Now an immediate Kb1 is too slow, but 1 Kc2 threatens 2-4 Kxa5 and sucks the pawn forward, and we have the Cassidy position. There have been claims for others, but I think the credit for the final setting should go to Moravec.



5 - win



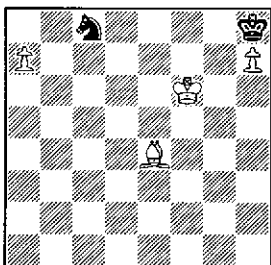
6 - see text



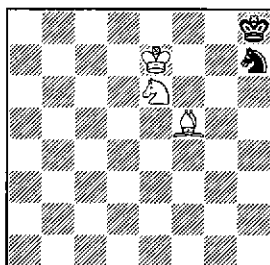
6a - where bK must go

And of course there was C. D. Locock's pioneer corresponding-square pawn study 6, which appeared in the *BCM* in 1892. It has frequently been quoted differently, so let me give the original position with its stipulation (July issue, page 308): "Either side to move first. What result in each case?" It was set as a solving challenge, with a prize, and a letter on page 351 of the August issue reported progress to date; the actual solution occupied most of pages 396-399 of the September issue, and three correct solutions were reported.

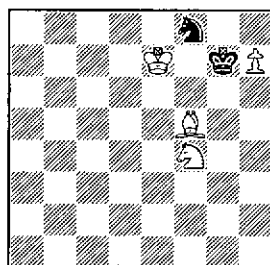
Locock gave the solution in the form of a numerical diagram (if the White king plays to a square, Black must play to the square with the same number) backed up with a proof for each pair of figures in turn. I have simplified his diagram as 6a; the original (with the figures in red, a most unusual luxury for the *BCM*) had values 11, 9, 10 on c1-e1 and on g7-g5, and also some relatively unimportant letters on b3, b2, b4, a3 and c7, c8, b7, b8. It is now soon seen that if White is to move Black can play to hold him at bay, whereas Black to move can be outmanoeuvred and will lose.



7 - win

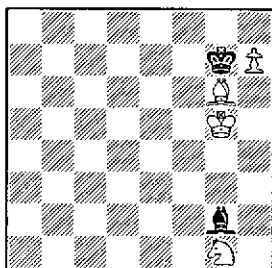


7a - after 4...Nxh7 5 Ne6

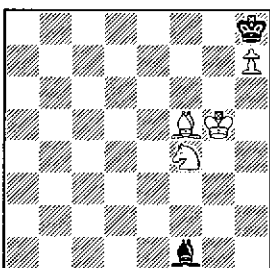


7b - 4...Kg7, after 8...Kg7

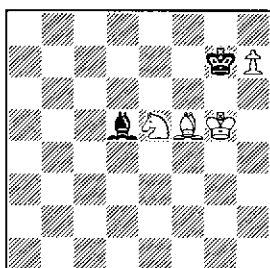
7 appeared in the *Leeds Mercury* in 1892 as by one "Fasan", a name otherwise unknown to me. 1 c8N, of course, and the given defence is 1...Nb6 2 Nc7 Nd7+ going for the h-pawn. There are now duals, partly because Black is passive and partly because the computer has shown long and difficult wins in positions with B + N v N which the composer had assumed to be drawn, but the composer's crisp line remains of interest. He plays 3 Ke7 Nf8 (if 3...Nf6 then 4 Bf5 and more or less the same) 4 Bf5 and if 4...Nxh7 then 5 Ne6 (see 7a) Kg8 6 Bg6 Kh8 7 Bf7; alternatively, 4...Kg7 5 Ne8+ (we now know that h8Q+ wins both here and at move 7, but the players of 1892 didn't) Kh8 6 Nf6 Kg7 7 Nh5+ Kh8 8 Nf4 Kg7 (see 7b) and now the win after 9 h8Q+ is within human comprehension, 9...Kxb8 10 Kf7 and if 10...Nh7 then 11 Ng6 mate. If instead 1...Nd6 then say 2 Bc2, and 2...Ne4+ 3 Ke7 Nf6 4 Nc7 Nxh7 5 Ne6 gives 7a with the unimportant difference that the bishop is on c2.



8 - win

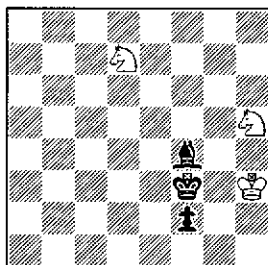


8a - after 3 Bf5

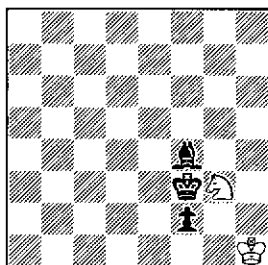


8b - after 7 Ne5

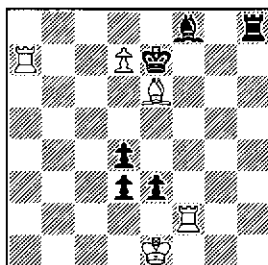
Kling's 8 (*Chess Player's Magazine* 1862) makes an interesting companion. Again Black is purely passive and so there are duals, but the basic winning method is unique. White's first task is to get his knight to e5, and the composer's line starts 1 Ne2 Kh8 2 Nf4 Bf1 3 Bf5 giving 8a. The threat is now to play the knight to e5 via d5, f6, and d7 or g4, and it is essentially unstoppable because if 3...Bc4 then 4 Ng6+ Kxh7 5 Ne5+. Hence 3...Bb5 (say) 4 Nd5 Bc4 5 Nf6 Kg7 6 Nd7 Bd5 7 Ne5, and we have 8b. White now threatens 8 Ng6 Kxh7 9 Ne7+, so the bishop must get out of range of a discovered check from g6 while still keeping an eye on f7: 7...Bb3/Ba2. But White simply guards the other square of the pair a2/b3, 8 Bb1/Bc2, and Black must come back into range since 8...Kh8 will allow 9 Kh6 and mate next move.



9 - draw



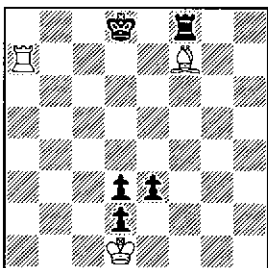
9a - after 8 Ng3



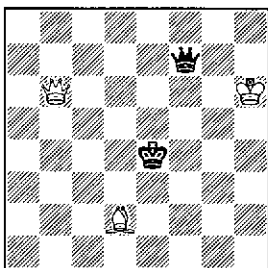
10 - win

Kling's 9 (source not recorded, 1868) extends a study by himself and Horwitz which appeared in *The Chess Player* in 1852. Play starts **1 Ne5+**, and anything other than **1...Bxe5** concedes the draw at once. This gives the 1852 position in all essentials, and play continues **2 Ng3** with the first stalemate offer. Given is now **2...Bf4 3 Nf1 Ke2 4 Kg2 Ke1 5 Kh1** (offering a second stalemate) **Kd1** (losing a move, but it doesn't help) **6 Kg2 Ke2 7 Kh1** (offering stalemate 2 again) **Kf3 8 Ng3** (offering stalemates 3 and 4, see 9a) and Black has nothing else to try. He can make his attacks in a different order, but it doesn't help; manoeuvre as he may, he cannot get through.

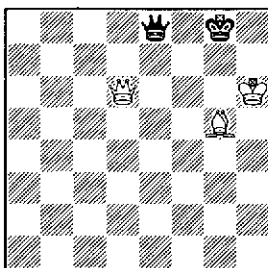
The introduction to Horwitz's 10 (*Chess Monthly* 1885) is crude, **1 d8Q+ Kxd8 2 Rxf8+ Rxf8 3 Bf7**, but now we have the first appearance of a domination which has since been exploited many times. And it is a position which White cannot hold, so after **3...d2+** he must play not **4 Kd1**, when **4...d3** gives **10a** with White to move, but **4 Ke2 d3+ 5 Kd1** and Black's pawn moves will soon run out.



10a - reciprocal zugzwang



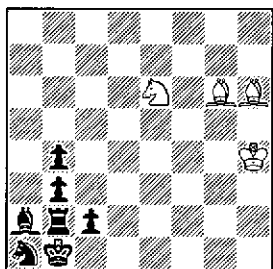
11 - win



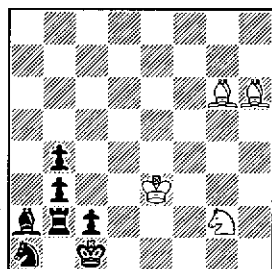
11b - after 6...Kg8

Although $R + B \text{ v } R$ was being examined in the 18th century, $Q + B \text{ v } Q$ does not appear to have received serious attention until the 1840s, and Horwitz's 11 (*Land and Water* 1872) incorporated a finesse that appears not to have been exploited before. **1 Qe3+ Kf5 2 Qf3+!** (we'll look at **2 Qf4+** in a moment) **Ke6 3 Qb3+ Ke7** (**3...Kf6 4 Bg5+**) **4 Bg5+ Kf8 5 Qb8+ Qe8 6 Qd6+ Kg8** gives **11a**, and the stunning move **7 Bd7!** leaves Black helpless. If instead White plays **2 Qf4+**, the continuation **2...Ke6 3 Qc4+ Ke7 4 Bg5+ Kf8 5 Qc8+ Qe8 6 Qc5+ Kg8 7 Bd7** puts the White queen on c5, and Black can escape by **7...Kf7**.

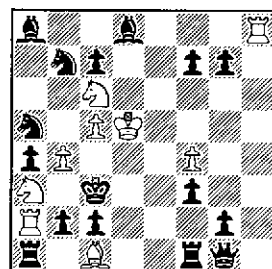
Finally, two studies which are unashamedly artificial. Our first thought in Horwitz's 12 (*Chess Monthly* 1883) might be 1 Kg5 with a staircase down, but Black can escape to d1. A preliminary **1 Nf4 Kc1 2 Ng2+** is needed, after which 2...Kd1 can be met by 3 Bh5 mate. So **2...Kb1**, and we can indeed staircase in: **3 Kg5 Kc1 4 Kf5+** (4 Kg4+ would block the line h5-d1) **Kb1 5 Kf4 Kc1 6 Ke4+ Kb1 7 Ke3 Kc1** (see 12a). Now it is g6-b1 that the king must avoid blocking, and **8 Ke2+** is crispest though 8 Kf2+ is also good enough. Mate soon follows: **8...Kb1 9 Ne3** (there are many options from here on) **Kc1 10 Nf1+ Kb1 11 Nd2+ Kc1 12 Ke1 Rb1 13 Nc4**.



12 - win



12b - after 7...Kc1



13 - win

And a "whirlpool" study by H. F. L. Meyer and Otto Blathy (*BCM* 1890). Studies of this kind date back to Arabic times and they are normally set as draws, as witness two more by Meyer that are quoted in *Endgame Magic*, but here White makes progress each time round and eventually Black is cornered. 13 was actually set as a challenge problem, White to play and mate in 45, but I am sure it is also sound as a study to win. **1 Nb5+ Kd3 2 Ne5+ Ke2 3 Nc3+ Kf2 4 Nd3+ Kg3 5 Ne4+ Kg4 6 Ne5+ Kf5 7 Ng3+ Kf6 8 Ng4+ Ke7 9 Nf5+ Kd7 10 Ne5+ Kc8 11 Ne7+ Kb8 12 Nd7+ Ka7 13 Nc8+ Ka6 14 Nb8+ Kb5 15 Na7+ Kxb4 16 Na6+ Kc3** (16...Kb3 17 Rxb2+ and soon mates) **17 Nb5+ Kd3 18 Nb4+ Ke2 19 Nc3+ Kf2 20 Nd3+** (now we have the position after White's fourth move but without the pawn on b4) **Kg3 21 Ne4+ Kg4 22 Ne5+ Kf5 23 Ng3+ Kf6 24 Ng4+ Ke7 25 Nf5+ Kd7 26 Ne5+ Kc8 27 Ne7+ Kb8 28 Nd7+ Ka7 29 Nc8+ Ka6 30 Nb8+ Kb5 31 Rxb2+** (possible because the pawn on b4 has gone, and sucking the Black knight away from a5) **Nb3 32 Na7+ Kb4** (32...Ka5 33 Bd2+ and mate next move) **33 Nbc6+ Kc3 34 Nb5+ Kd3 35 Nb4+ Ke2 36 Nc3+ Kf2 37 Nd3+ Kg3 38 Ne4+ Kg4 39 Ne5+ Kf5 40 Ng3+ Kf6 41 Ng4+ Ke7 42 Nf5+ Kd7 43 Ne5+ Kc8 44 Ne7+ Kb8**, and with the Black knight no longer being on a5 **45 N5c6** is mate. Meyer, like Kling and Horwitz, was of German birth, but all three settled in Britain and they made a major contribution to British chess.

As always, my thanks to Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" and to the BCPS Library. Our last special number of this kind is scheduled for June 2007, and will cover the years before 1860. As usual, please will readers draw my attention to studies they would like to see included, and to any from later years which should have appeared but have been overlooked. - JDB