

British Endgame Study News

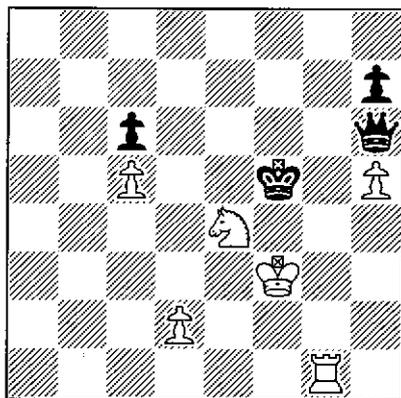
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Some studies by

Johann Sehwers

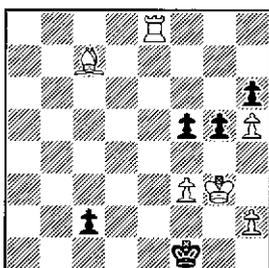


How can White play to pick up the queen?

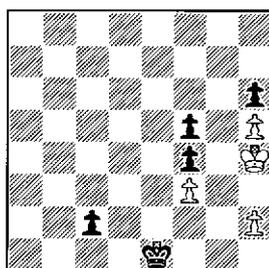
Some studies by Johann Sehwers

In his introduction to the first edition of Timothy Whitworth's book on Mattison's endgame studies, Alexander Hildebrand drew attention to some other Baltic-German study composers: Amclung, the Behting brothers, Sehwers, and even the Kubbel brothers (whose parents had apparently moved to St Petersburg from Latvia and who invariably spoke German among themselves). Timothy has dealt handsomely with the studies of Mattison and Leonid Kubbel (the other brothers appear to have produced few studies), and *BESN* has already devoted a special number to the work of Amclung. The present issue looks at Sehwers, and I have earmarked the Behting brothers for attention in the future.

Hildebrand gave Sehwers's dates as 1868-1940, and a search on the web turned up a description of a Johann Sehwers thus dated as "a prolific Latvian linguist and literary historian [...] unduly neglected by contemporary scholarship". According to another web source, *Ajedrez en Madrid*, he was born Janis Zevers in Latvia, but he seems to have spent much of his life in Estonia with a period of 13 years in Archangel. His 1922 book *Endspielstudien* contains 87 studies, and Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database III" adds a few more. 54 of the studies in *Endspielstudien* were originals, and most of the rest had appeared in German-language Baltic-shore periodicals (the long-standing importance of the Baltic as a trade route appears to have generated substantial German-speaking communities in towns and cities as far east as St Petersburg, and there were enough chess enthusiasts among them to have prompted the foundation of the *Baltische Schachblätter*.) The web also gave me a reference to a Johann Sehwers who wrote on musical instruments, in Latvian in 1924 and in German in 1953, but I take this to have been somebody else.



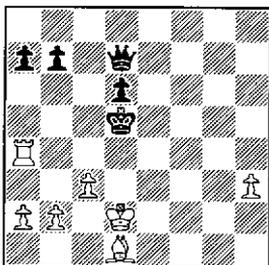
1 - draw



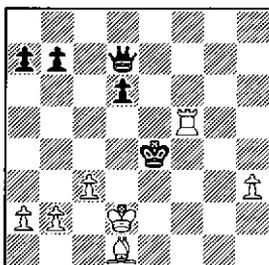
1a - after 3 Kh4

Sehwers appears not to have published his first study until 1898, so **1** (*Düna Zeitung* 1899) was a very early composition. The pawn ending after 1 Ba5 c1Q 2 Re1+ Qxe1+ 3 Bxe1 Kxe1 is soon seen to be won for Black, and 1 Bf4 gxf4+ 2 Kxf4 c1Q+ 3 Kxf5 also fails (simplest is probably 3...Kf2 and the f-pawn will go). The solution is quite unexpected: **1 Re1+! Kxe1 2 Bf4 gxf4+ 3 Kh4!!** (see 1a). White will now play 4 h3 with self-stalemate, and Black can do absolutely nothing about it. As anyone who has tried to set this theme will confirm, the technical

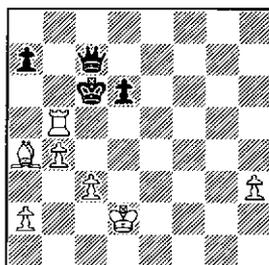
challenge lies in making the opening position look as natural and innocent as possible, and here Sehwers succeeds with no more than one doubled pawn on the board. *Endspielstudien* gives the names of the journals of original publication, but I am relying on Harold van der Heijden for the dates.



2 - win

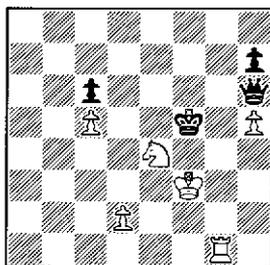


2a - 1...Ke4, after 2 Rf5

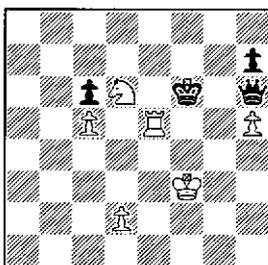


2b - see text

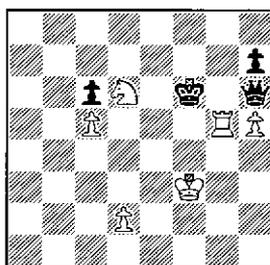
2 (*Rigaer Tageblatt* 1900) might just be won by advancing the h-pawn, but a dark-square blockade will not be easy to overcome and the danger of perpetual check will never be far away. 1 Ra5+ starts an attack which puts the matter quickly beyond doubt. If 1...Ke4 then the problem-like move 2 Rf5! leads to mate or win of the queen (see 2a), and if instead 1...b5 then 2 Rxb5+. Given as the main line of this variation is 2...Qxb5 3 c4+, but perhaps more interesting is the sideline 2...Kc6 3 Ba4 Qc7 4 b4 (see 2b). Again, there may be difficult and long-winded alternatives (White has R + B + 4P against Q + 2P), but this is by far the crispest.



3 - win

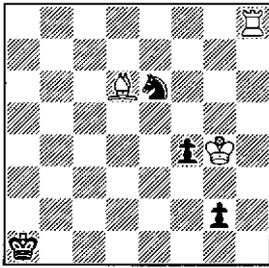


3a - 1...Ke6, after 3 Re5

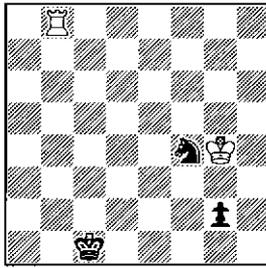


3b - 1...Kf6, after 2 Rg5

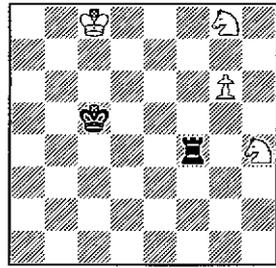
Black's queen in 3 (*St Petersburg Zeitung* 1900) is temporarily off-centre and cramped, but this state of affairs will hardly persist and White must play elegantly in order to take advantage. He starts 1 Nd6+, and there are two lines. If 1...Ke6 then 2 Re1+ Kf6 (2...Kd7 3 Re7+ with a fork next move, 2...Kd5 3 Re5+ ditto) 3 Re5! (see 3a), and Black has no good move. If instead 1...Kf6 then 2 Rg5! (see 3b), and again Black has no good move. The pawn ending after 2...Kxg5 3 Nf7+ Kxh5 4 Nxh6 Kxh6 5 d4 Kg- 6 d5 is won for White, and if 2...Ke6 then 3 Re5+ Kf6 4 Ke2! with a position equivalent in all essentials to 3a (Black has an extra move in ...Qf4, but it does him no good).



4 - draw



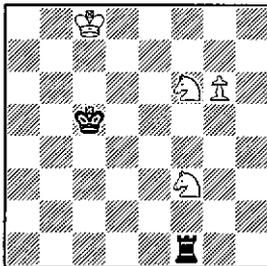
4a - after 3...Nxf4



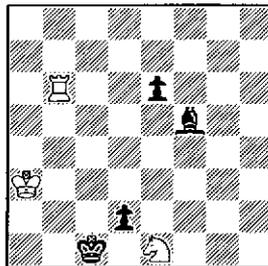
5 - win

Continuing in chronological order brings us to 4 (2 Pr *Rigaer Tageblatt* 1905). The Black g-pawn appears to be out of range, but **1 Be5+** forces **1...Kb1** (if instead **1...Ka2** then **2 Rh2** wins), and the sequel **2 Rb8+ Kc1 3 Bxf4+ Nxf4** gives **4a**. Now comes **4 Kh4** threatening **5 Rg8**, and if Black promotes by **4...g1Q** White can play **5 Rb1+ Kxb1** for stalemate. Alternatively, Black can interpolate **4...Ng6+** before promoting, but it doesn't help; after **5 Kh3 g1Q 6 Rb1+ Kxb1** we again have stalemate, and promoting to a rook instead will leave Black with too small a material advantage to win.

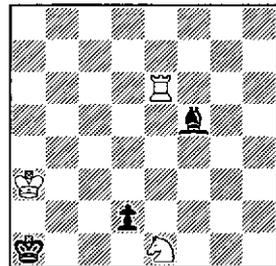
Play in 5 (*Revaler Beobachter* 1908) starts **1 Nf6** to prevent Black's threatened ...Rg4, and if **1...Rxf6** then **2 g7** and the pawn will soon promote. Can Black try **1...Ra4**, intending ...Ra8+ etc? No, it will be hopeless; **2 g7 Ra8+ 3 Kb7** will force **3...Rd8**, after which White's second knight will come up and interpose on f8, and if Black tries **2...Ra1** instead White has **3 Nd7+ K- 4 g8Q Ra8+ 5 Nb8**. The best chance is to go to the bottom rank at once, **1...Rf1** threatening **2...Rg1**, but now White echoes his first move by playing **2 Nf3** (see **5a**). Black has nothing better than **2...Rxf3**, and after **3 g7 Rg3 4 Ne4+** he finds he has left himself open to a fork.



5a - after 2 Nf3

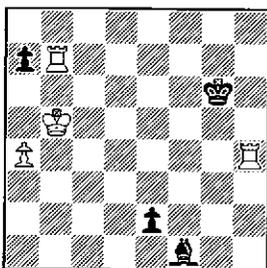


6 - draw

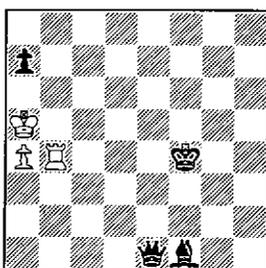


6a - after 3 Rxe6

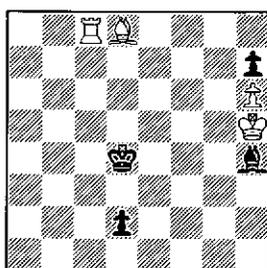
6 (*Rigaer Tageblatt* 1909) brings us back to the theme of stalemate. Play starts with the neat introduction **1 Rc6+ Kb1 2 Rb6+ Ka1**, and having driven Black to the corner White can play **3 Rxe6** (see **6a**). The recapture **3...Bxc6** allows **4 Nc2+** and **5 Ne3** drawing, while if **3...d1Q** then **4 Nc2+ Bxc2** (**4...Qxc2 5 Re1+**, **4...Kb1 5 Re1** pinning) **5 Re1!** and the capture **5...Qxe1** gives stalemate. Nor can Black do better at move 1; **1...Kd1** allows several drawing replies, and **1...Bc2** loses.



7 - draw



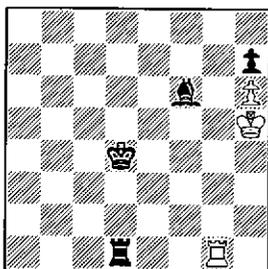
7a - 4...Kxf4, after 6 Rb4+



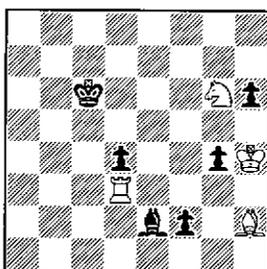
8 - draw

7 took 3rd HM in *Rigaer Tageblatt* in 1909. It was apparently accepted that queen and bishop would win against two rooks (a verdict since endorsed by the computer), so we need not spend time on moves such as Rbh7, and the way to draw is **1 Rg4+ Kh5 2 Rh4+ Kg5 3 Rg4+ Kf5 4 Rf4+**. The e-file is poisoned, so Black must capture or submit to perpetual check, and after say **4...Kxf4** White plays **5 Ka4! e1Q+ 6 Rb4+** and the crosscheck gives Black no time to release the stalemate (see 7a). If **6...Qxb4+** then **7 Kxb4** and White will reach a1; if **5...e1R** then simplest is **6 Rxa7**.

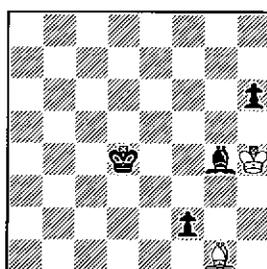
Schwerns tried several settings of this idea with a separate stalemate after the rook promotion (we saw one in special number 42), but the only one which was completely accurate in the second line was **8** (original to *Endspielstudien*) and this is open to a different objection: I am far from certain that the simple **1 Kxh4** is not sufficient to draw. In this case, the attractive opening sacrifice **1 Bf6+ Bxf6** is unnecessary. However, this only affects the introduction, and if necessary we can start at move 2. The play from here is **2 Rg8**, with **2...d1Q+ 3 Rg4+** as before; alternatively, **2...d1R 3 Rg1!** (see 8a) **Rd2 4 Rg2 Rd3 5 Rg3** with stalemate or perpetual rook opposition.



8a - 2...d1R, after 3 Rg4

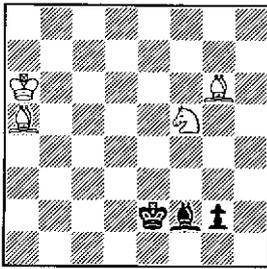


9 - draw

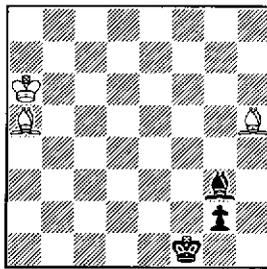


9a - after 4 Bg1

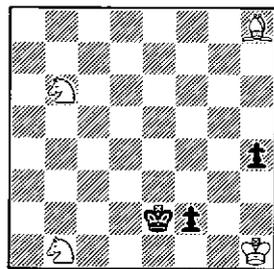
9-14 will also be original to *Endspielstudien*. Black's f-pawn appears to be well shielded in 9, but **1 Ne5+** starts to make inroads: **1 Kb~ 2 Rb3+** and **3 Rb1, 1...Kc7/Kd6 2 Nxg4+, 1...Kc5 2 Rd1 Bxd1 3 Nd3+**. This leaves **1...Kd5**, when White can play **2 Nxg4** and meet **2...f1Q** with **3 Nc3+**. So Black has nothing better than **2...Bxg4**, and there follows **3 Rxd4+ Kxd4 4 Bg1!** (see 9a) with a range of drawing motifs: **4...fxg1Q/R** stalemate, **4...fxg1B 5 Kxg4** and the White king will reach h1, **4...fxg1N 5 Kxg4** (or **4...Ke3 5 Bxf2+ Kxf2 6 Kxg4**) and the last pawn will go.



10 - draw



10a - after 2...Kf1

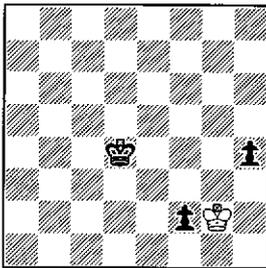


11 - draw

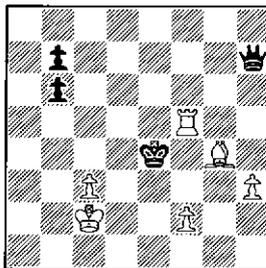
The idea behind **10** was not new even in 1922, but the setting is as neat as any that has been produced. The deflection sacrifice **1 Ng3+** effectively forces **1...Bxg3** (if instead **1...Kf3** then **2 Be4+**, or **1...Ke3 2 Bb6+ Kf3 3 Be4+**, or **1...Kd1 2 Bh5+** and **3 Ne2**), and now the White dark bishop has a line by which it can reach g1. However, an immediate **2 Bb6** can be met by **2...Bf2**, and he is shut out again. White can interpolate **2 Bh5+**, but **2...Kf1** keeps a guard on f2 (see **10a**) and what can he do now?

The answer is of course **3 Bg4**, conceding the promotion **3...g1Q** but meeting it with perpetual check: **4 Bh3+ Ke2 5 Bg4+ Kd3 6 Bf5+ Kc4 7 Be6+** etc.

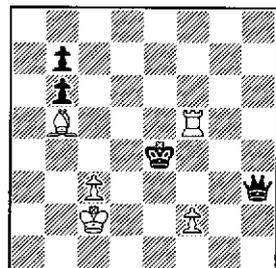
11 also features three White minor pieces, but the play is quite different. The opening sacrifice **1 Nd2 Kxd2** is obvious, but the apparently natural continuation **2 Kg2** is met by **2...Ke2** leaving White helpless. The second knight must come into the fray, **2 Nc4+**, and after **2...Ke2** it too must be sacrificed: **3 Ne3**. And when Black has captured, **3...Kxe3**, the bishop must go as well: **4 Bd4+**! But **4...Kxd4** finally takes Black out of contact with e2, and now **5 Kg2** exerts some real pressure (see **11a**). The square e2 being no longer available, Black can only play **5...Ke3**, and after **6 Kf1** he will have to abandon the f-pawn or give stalemate.



11a - after 5 Kg2

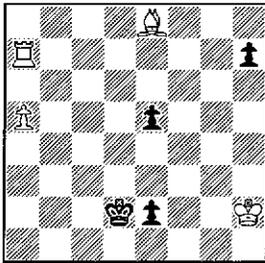


12 - win

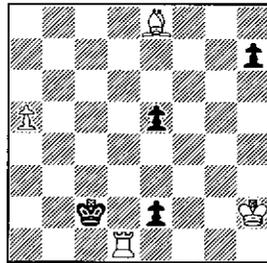


12a - after 2 Bb5

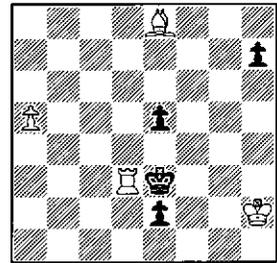
In **12**, as in **2**, White might just possibly be able to win by pushing his pawns, but the win is in no sense demonstrable and **1 Be2** settles the matter in short order. The threat is mate on d3, either capture on f5 loses the queen, and if **1...Qd7** then **2 Bf3+ Kxf5 3 Bg4+**. This leaves **1...Qxh3**, after which the move is **2 Bb5!** putting Black in zugzwang (see **12a**).



13 - win



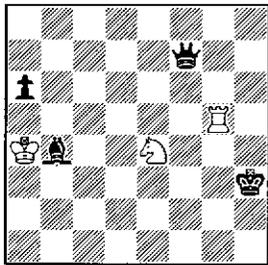
13a - 1...Kc2, after 2 Rd1



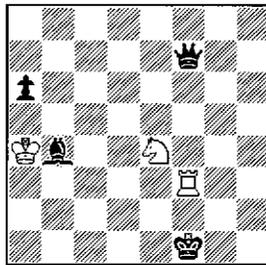
13b - main line, after 2 Rd3+

13 features yet another fight between White pieces and an advanced Black pawn, but this time White is trying to win and stalemate is not an option. The opening move **1 Rd7+** allows Black five replies, but **1...Ke1** is clearly hopeless and **1...Kc1** sets no problems (simplest is **2 Bh5 e1Q 3 Rd1+** but **2 Rg7** also wins). Try **1...Kc2**: no, **2 Rd1!** (see 13a) with a pin or skewer to follow. Try **1...Kc3**: no, **2 Rd3+** with another skewer, or **2...Kc4 3 Re3**.

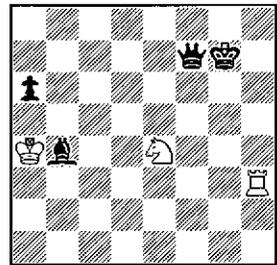
This leaves **1...Ke3**, which the composer gives as the main line. It leads to **2 Rd3+** (see 13a) **Kf4** (if **2...Ke4** then **3 Bc6+ Kf4 4 Rf3+** and **5 Re3**) **3 Rf3+** (the same motif again) **Ke4 4 Bc6+ Kd4 5 Rd3+!** (yet again the same motif) and at last Black must concede the skewer or allow the White rook access to e3. At his best, Sehwers was as good as anyone at presenting a motif in multiple in this way; most composers would have settled for considerably less.



14 - draw

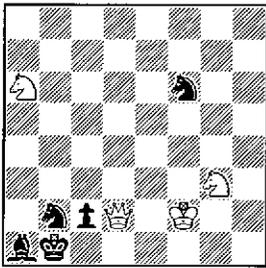


14a - 1...Kh2, after 4 Rf3+

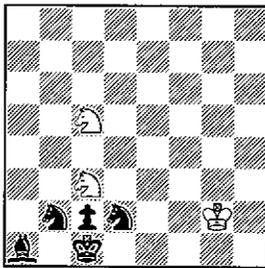


14b - 1...Kh4, after 6...Kg7

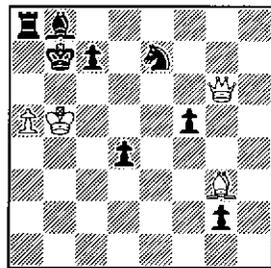
The only sensible opening move in 14 is **1 Rg3+**, and Black has to decide which way to go. If he chooses **1...Kh2**, White continues **2 Rh3+ Kg2/Kg1 3 Rg3+ Kf1 4 Rf3+** (see 14a), and after **4...Qxf3 5 Nd2+ Bxd2** it is stalemate. If instead Black tries **1...Kh4**, the sequel is **2 Rh3+ Kg4 3 Rg3+ Kh5** (if **3...Kf4** then **4 Rf3+**, so Black plays to escape via f8) **4 Rh3+ Kg6 5 Rg3+ Kh6 6 Rh3+ Kg7** (see 14b) and if White continues **7 Rg3+** Black will indeed escape, but of course White has **7 Rh7+**. Curiously, **1...Kh4** appears to be given by the composer as the main line even though the Black bishop and pawn take no active part in the play (though they must be physically present on the board, since in their absence White would have alternative ways to draw).



15 - win



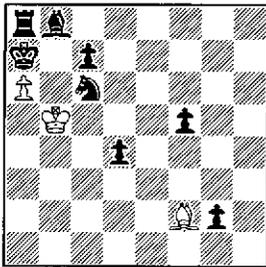
15a - after 4 Nc5



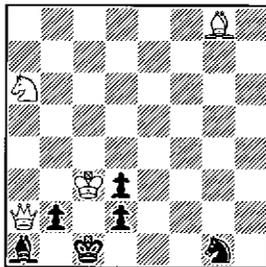
16 - win

We finish with some early studies in unashamedly problemistic style. **15** (*Rigaer Tageblatt* 1900) starts with **1 Nc2** allowing the fork but commanding c1, and after **1...Ne4+** the only move is **2 Kg2!** The sequel **2...Nxd2 3 Nc3+ Kc1 4 Nc5** gives a variation on a Sam Loyd finish (see **15a**), and we see that any other second move would have allowed Black a check either now or earlier.

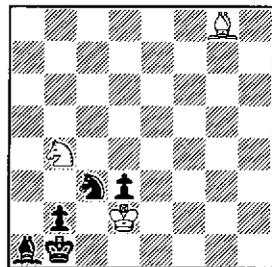
In **16** (*Schachfreund* 1900), **1 a6+ Ka7** (else mate next move) **2 Qc6 Nxc6 3 Bf2** (see **16a**), and White marks time on g1 and f2 until Black's pawn moves have run out.



16a - after 3 Bf2



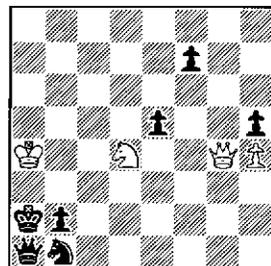
17 - win



17a - after 3...Nc3

In **17** (*Rigaer Tageblatt* 1908), the queen sacrifice **1 Qb1+ Kxb1 2 Kxd2** now seems obvious and if **2...Nf3+** then **3 Kd1** followed by **Nb4** and **Ba2** mate, but does not **2...Ne2** lead to **3 Nb4 Nc3/Nc1** guarding a2 and stopping White's attack (see **17a**)? It does indeed guard a2, but this proves to be to no avail; **4 Ba2+! Nxa2 5 Nd5** and Black must allow mate on c3 instead.

And in **18** (*St Petersburg Zeitung* 1898), which appears to have been Sehwers's first published study, **1 Qe6+! fxe6 2 Ne2** and this time it is the king who marks time; he simply paces between b4 and a4 until Black has no more pawn moves.



18 - win

My usual but nevertheless sincere thanks to Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database III". - JDB