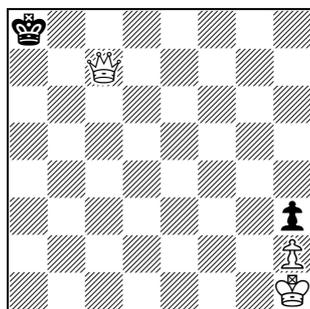


Four recent problems exploiting fuddled men

John Beasley, May 2015

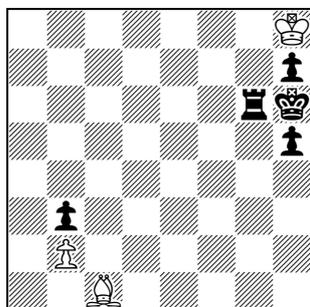
A “fuddled” man has had a little too much to drink: not so much as to incapacitate him, but enough to slow him down a bit. More precisely, he cannot make two moves in succession; having moved, he must remain stationary for a move before being able to move again (and, while immobilized, he can neither check nor pin).



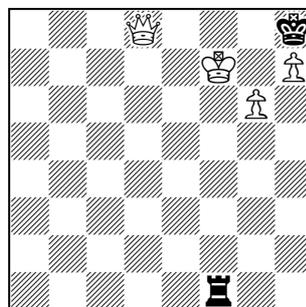
1 - White to play and mate in two

1 (*BCM* 1987) was the original “fuddled men” problem. White plays **1 Qb6**, temporarily immobilizing his queen and so allowing Black’s king to move; Black replies **1...K~** (it doesn’t matter where, since every square puts him within reach of the White queen next move); White plays **2 Kg1**, after which his queen is free to move again, so this is check; and Black’s king, temporarily immobilized, cannot move out of the check, so it is mate.

The objection to this is obvious: how do we know that White’s queen and Black’s king are free to move in the diagram position? The short answer is that we don’t, and in the absence of an explicit statement we must rely on a convention that the diagram represents a “starting position” in which every man is free to move. For a joke, this was fair enough, and nobody seems to have complained; but there appeared to be obvious possibilities for problems in which the diagram was assumed to be a position with a normal history, and the solution depended on the play leading up to it. I worked on this idea for a while, but found it intractable; the resulting problems were either clumsy, or trivial, or both. So I moved on to other things, and even **1** might not have appeared in print had it not taken the fancy of Norman Macleod when I showed it to him late one night at a BCPS meeting.



2 - White to play, game outcome?

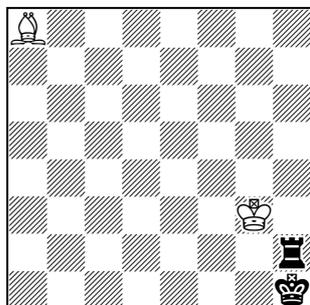


3 - White to play and mate in two

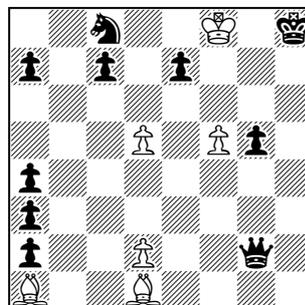
But Ronald Turnbull became interested in fuddled men, and he spectacularly succeeded where I had failed. He set up **2**, where **wBc1** must be temporarily immobilized because otherwise Black would be in check with White to play (we shall call such an apparent check by an immobilized piece a “pseudo-check”). Furthermore, **wB** must have moved to **c1** from the **NE**, which will have been possible only if **bR** was shielding **bK** while **wB** was moving. So Black’s last move must have been **...Rg5-g6**, White’s must have been **Bf4/e3/d2-c1**, and **wK** is provably free to move. Indeed it must move, because **wB** cannot, and its only legal move is **1 Kg8** moving into pseudo-check from **bR**. However, the check on **bK** from **wBc1** is now a real one, and since Black’s rook is immobilized he can escape from it only by playing **1...Kg7**. This moves into pseudo-check from **wK** and blocks the checking line from **bR**, and after White’s next move **2 B~** the check from **wK** becomes a real one and mates. Why “game outcome” and not “mate in two”? Because the result is automatic; White doesn’t just overcome Black’s best defence, he wins whether he wants to or not.

In **3**, by Paul Bissicks and Ronald jointly, Black is in again in pseudo-check, this time from **wQ**, so **wQ** must be immobilized; also Black’s last move cannot have been by **bK**, so it must have been by **bR**, and White too is in pseudo-check. Try **1 Kf6**, after which the check from **wQ** is real: no, after **1...Kg7** the check from **bR** becomes real, and it is White who is mated. Correct is the unexpected **1 Kf8!** blocking the checking line from **wQ**. But the only legal reply is again **1...Kg7** walking into pseudo-check from **wK**, and **wQ** gets something to do after all: **2 Qf6** blocks the now real check from **bR**, and the now real check from **wK** gives mate.

2 and 3 were published in an article by Paul Bissicks in *feenschach* 204 (2013). Ronald insisted on crediting me as joint author of 2, but in truth I did no more than provide the irritation which provoked the pearl; I had sent him a very cluttered and artificial position to show that the task “fuddled mate in two with the relevant men provably free to move” was possible, and the light and elegant setting of 2 was entirely his. I would have seen no reason to complain had it appeared under his name alone. I had remarked back in 1999 (*Variant Chess* 32, page 55) that Ronald could take a half-formed idea of mine and set it with a depth and precision which it would not have occurred to me even to attempt, and this provided a further example.



4 - White to play and mate in two (or one)



5 - White to play and mate in two

4 and 5 appeared in a follow-up article by Ronald in *feenschach* 206 (2014). I haven't seen the article as published, and am relying on material sent to me by Ronald and Paul: a copy of Ronald's original text as submitted, and a version edited by Paul to reflect what actually appeared (example 5 was changed in the course of production). In 4, by Paul, we again have Black in pseudo-check, so wB must be immobilized, but we cannot say which of Black's men has just moved and so must provide a solution for each case. Suppose **bR has just moved**; then we have **1 Kf2** moving into pseudo-check from bR, **1...Kg1** (only legal move, because wBa8 is now awake) walking into pseudo-check from wK, and **2 Bg2** shutting off the now real check from bR and giving mate by the now real check from wK. If instead **bK has just moved**, **1 Kxh2** is immediate mate. It will be noticed that although the 1 Kf2 line and the solution to 2 are similar in that wK walks into a pseudo-check from bR, there is a difference in the subsequent play; in 2 it is Black's first move that shuts off this check, in 4 White has to shut it off by his mating move.

The only pity about 4 is that the solutions are not of equal length. 5 overcomes this at the cost of using rather more men. This time I did make a contribution, though the bulk of the work was again due to Ronald.

The pseudo-check means that wBa1 must be immobilized, so all other White men are able to move, but what was Black's last move? On the face of it, there are three candidates, ...Kh7-h8, ...Pg7-g5, and ...Pf6xg5. However, Black's advanced a-pawns must have started at b7/d7/f7, and their journeys to a4/a3/a2 will have involved the capture of nine White men. Had Black's last move been ...Pf6xg5, it would have involved a further two captures (...Pf6xg5 itself and a previous ...Pg7xf6), and White has only lost ten men. So this possibility can be ignored, but we must still provide for ...Kh7-h8 and ...Pg7-g5.

If **the last move was ...Kh7-h8**, bK is immobilized, and the solution is **1 Bc2**. The check from a1 is now real and bK cannot move, so Black must play **1...e5**, and **2 fxe6** captures it *en passant* and lets the influence of wB through to h7 (we must control this square because bK is now mobile again). If instead **the last move was Pg7-g5**, bK is free to move and 1 Bc2 will be refuted by 1...Kh7, but the *en passant* capture **1 f5xg6** is enabled. Again the check from a1 becomes real, giving Black the choice of **1...e5**, met by a third *en passant* capture **2 d5xe6**, and **1...Kh7**, walking into pseudo-check from wPg6 and allowing **2 Bg4** (the check from wP is now real and wB has cut off bQ's guard).

Because I made a small contribution to one of these, I cannot properly quote them in quite the glowing terms which I would have used had they been entirely the work of others. However, I have to say that I have watched their emergence with the greatest of pleasure. Those who have *51 flights* will remember the delight I took in the way that Hiroshi Nagano's **5.2a** extended and surpassed a problem of my own. It has just been the same here. “Fuddled men” were never intended as more than a joke; to see them used as a vehicle for problems such as these was wholly unexpected.