Starting Out: Chess Tactics and Checkmates
by Chris Ward

First published in 2006 by Gloucester Publishers plc (formerly Everyman Publishers plc), Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 1 85744 418 3
ISBN13: 9781 85744 418 6

Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O Box 480, 246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
tel: 020 7253 7887; fax: 020 7490 3708
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To the health of D and W. Please get well soon.

Everyman Chess Series (formerly Cadogan Chess)
Chief Advisor: Byron Jacobs
Commissioning editor: John Emms

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.
Production by Navigator Guides.
Printed and bound in the US by Versa Press.

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Symbols

+	check
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder

Introduction

I'm sure that you are itching to get into the main body of this book, so I won't keep you here long. Of course I have no idea how you will use this manuscript, but I would obviously prefer that it wasn't to swat flies or balance a table leg! Seriously, I am confident that you will be well versed in tactical play and the art of delivering checkmate if you work through this book from beginning to end, but it is important that you do so at your own pace. Please ensure that you take all the time that is required for you to get to grips with each theme.

The obvious problem when solving puzzles set in a newspaper or quiz book, as compared to a practical game of chess, is that in real life there is no angel (or devil!) who appears to inform you that you have a sacrifice available, leading, for example, to mate in three. In truth, recognising when it is worth investing time on your clock in tournament play to locate a 'winning combination' comes with experience. However, this book will try to fast-track you in that department, by making observations on such conditions under which tactical play is likely to be successful. Indeed, work your way through the exercises as well and you will soon become adept at recognising patterns. Then all that will be left will be for you to employ such ideas in your own games, and if you do so, then I'm sure that you will be satisfied.

In chess, winning is the important thing, but – well, nobody can deny that winning as a result of a snazzy combination or a pretty checkmate really adds the icing!

I hope you enjoy *Starting Out: Tactics and Checkmates*.

Chris Ward,
Beckenham,
July 2006

Chapter One

The Basics

- Playing Chess
- Check
- Checkmate
- The Value of the Pieces
- Sacrifice
- Stalemate
- The Fork
- The Pin
- The Skewer
- Discovered Check
- Double Check

Playing Chess



WARNING: Chess can be a whole lot of fun (especially when you are winning!) but is not an easy game!

For the purposes of this book basically I have assumed that the reader knows how to move the pieces and an incredibly hard-fought game might go from this...

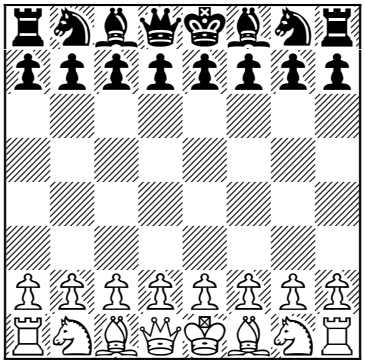


Diagram 1 (W)

Ready, steady, go!

to this...

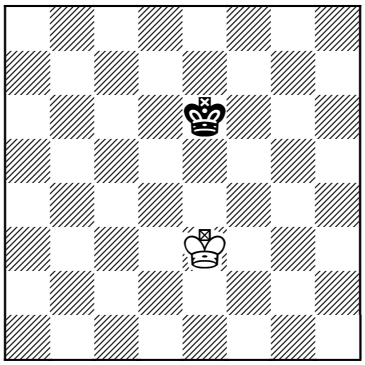


Diagram 2

Honours even!

In between, both sides may have applied general opening principles, a selection of middlegame plans and even some endgame technique. Perhaps somewhere along the line some tactics may have occurred, the likes of which may appear in this book. The beauty of chess is that there are so many available permutations that almost anything could have happened.



TIP: If you are looking for a less complicated game then noughts and crosses certainly has fewer possibilities!

A draw would of course be declared in the rare event of a game being reduced to just two kings, but – well, there's plenty of ways to avoid that from happening!

Check

If you are to progress in chess then it is absolutely vital to get to grips with the concept of check. Having spent a lot of time teaching young beginners I know that it is one of the hardest features of the game for them to come to terms with.



NOTE: Put simply, 'check' is when a king is attacked by an enemy piece.

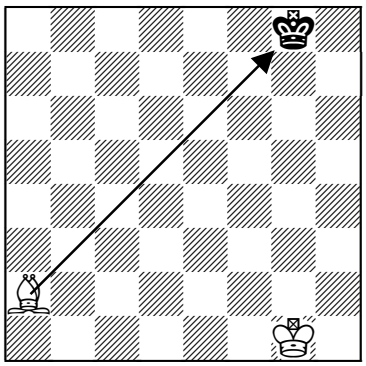


Diagram 3 (B)
Checking from a long distance

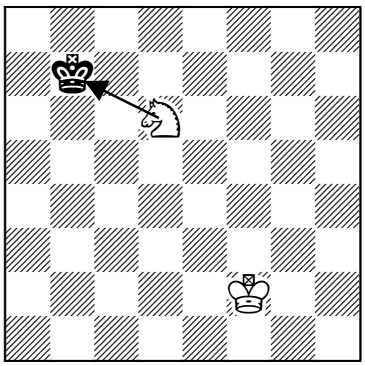


Diagram 4 (B)
The white knight checks the black king

In Diagrams 3 and 4 the black king finds itself attacked by enemy pieces, first by the bishop along the a2-g8 diagonal, and secondly in an 'L' shaped distance from the knight.

Whereas a player has an option of whether to ignore or do something about any

other attacked piece, the king is a law unto itself.



WARNING: When a king is in check, it must somehow escape it.

The three general ways in which to get out of check are:

1) Take the enemy piece that is doing the checking.
2) Move the king out of the way.
3) Block the check with any friendly piece.

In any given position one of these methods may be more applicable than another or may even be forced by a process of elimination.

Common sense would dictate that if it is possible to take the enemy piece doing the checking for nothing then that would be preferable, but life (and chess!) isn't always that straightforward.



NOTE: It is not possible to block a check from an enemy knight.

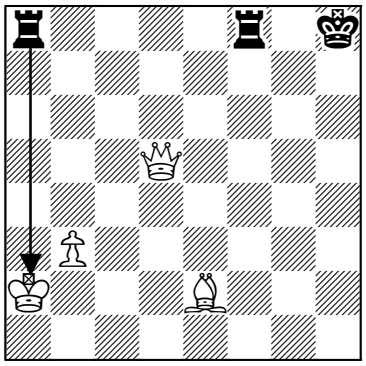


Diagram 5 (W)
Take, block, or move?

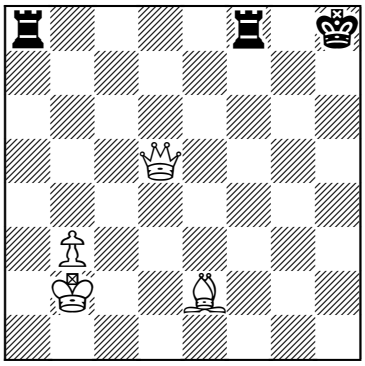


Diagram 6 (B)
The best option!

In Diagram 5 the black rook on a8 is checking the white king and White has options for us to investigate:

a) He could take the offending piece with his queen. This would be a good idea were the rook unprotected and hence *en prise* (as it is commonly known). However, as the rook is well guarded by its compatriot on f8, it would simply be replaced, with White effectively having lost a queen for a rook and

once again facing the problem of how to get out of check.

b) White could block the check either by sliding his queen over to a5 or by plonking his bishop on a6. Although either of those moves would temporarily solve the getting out of check problem, they would both be suicidal as the black rook could take them for nothing.

c) The white king could escape the a-file check by nudging one square to either b1 or b2. Both seem satisfactory but as this is an endgame situation, I would favour not returning to the back rank.

The conclusion then is that White should play 1 Kb2 (as in Diagram 6).

The difficulty then (and to be honest, it's not that difficult!) is understanding that a king is different from the rest of the army, and not just because it moves differently. Kings cannot be taken and it is compulsory to move out of check.



NOTE: There is no (as juniors so commonly seem to think) taking, killing, or destroying the king. There must always be two kings on a chessboard and one is *not* allowed to move a king into check.

Checkmate

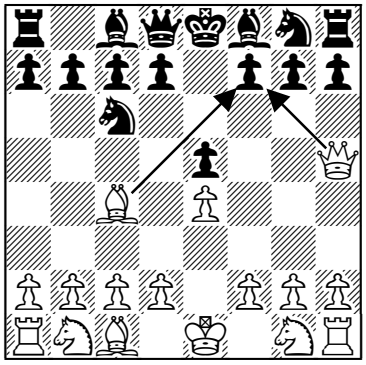


Diagram 7 (B)

The white queen and bishop combine

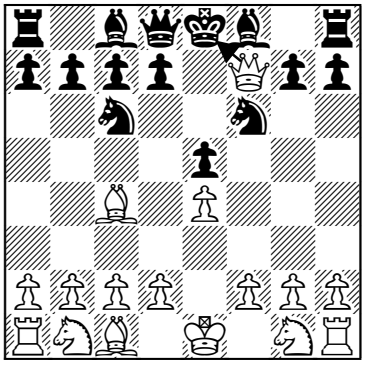


Diagram 8

Black fell asleep!

If it is not possible to take, block or move away to escape a check then 'checkmate' has occurred. Although youngsters very much enjoy taking their opponent's pieces and then commonly hoarding them like a squirrel with nuts, the actual aim of a game of chess is to achieve checkmate. Different players will set about achiev-

ing this aim in different ways. Beginners may set about trying to attack their opponent's king as quickly as possible, hoping to give mate in as few moves as possible, whereas grandmasters may frequently appear to ignore the enemy monarch during the opening stage of the game, instead preferring to develop their army to sensible squares and tuck their own king into safety.

Let us take a look at the famous four-move checkmate:

1 e4 e5 2 Qh5 Nc6 3 Bc4 (see Diagram 7) **3...Nf6 4 Qxf7 mate** (see Diagram 8)

What are we to make of this rather short encounter? Well, I think that we can deduce a few points:

1) It certainly is checkmate! The white queen attacks the black king which has nowhere to go. There is insufficient room to block the check and the queen can't be taken by the black king because it would be putting itself into check by the bishop.

2) Black was very careless. In line with general opening principles he developed his knights and placed a pawn in the centre. Unfortunately he failed to deal with White's threat and that cost him the game and an early bath.

3) Whilst Black may be embarrassed by this miniature and should endeavour to ensure that there is no repetition, in contrast White was probably most pleased that his 'plan' had worked out. It has probably worked for him before and will probably do so again!

4) Perhaps White is enjoying this way of playing – after all everyone likes winning! However, if he is to progress to any decent level of play then he will ultimately have to change his strategy.



TIP: The squares f7 and f2 are typically weak points in the early stage of a game and one should be careful to ensure that a disaster doesn't occur there.

Had Black guarded his f7-pawn or prevented the white queen from landing on f7 (e.g. through **3...g6**) then White would have lost time through having to move his queen. As the queen is such a valuable piece then, when it is attacked by enemy piece other than the queen, it has to keep moving. Regarding White's 'going for a quick checkmate' strategy, my view is that were his opponent going to fall for such a trick, the chances are that White was going to win through more conventional means anyway. However, if Black wasn't going to be fooled in such a manner, then White was destined to suffer for his early queen moves and would clearly have been better off employing more sensible moves early on.

Remember then...

NOTE: There are no special prizes for winning a game as quickly as possible.

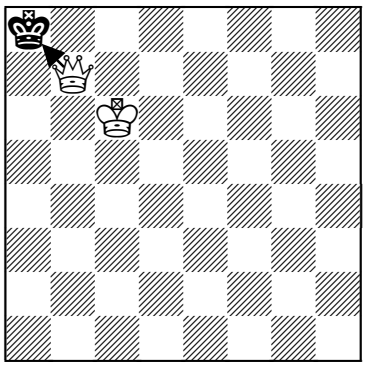


Diagram 9
One king protects, one king is mated!

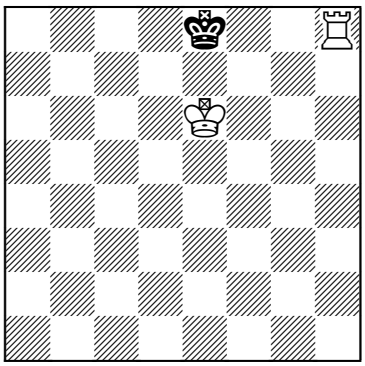


Diagram 10
A back rank mate

Diagrams 9 and 10 are two more examples of checkmate. In my experience the most common type of checkmate sees a supported queen checking a king on the edge. In Diagram 9 the white queen is protected by its compatriot king. As a king cannot move next to another king, the black monarch is deprived of any options.

In Diagram 10 the black king is checked by the white rook along the back rank. As it would remain so should it try to move left or right, his majesty needs to escape the back rank. Unfortunately its opposite number prevents it from doing just that.

The Value of the Pieces

When one first learns the game one is taught the following score chart:

Pawn = 1 point
Knight = 3 points
Bishop = 3 points
Rook = 5 points
Queen = 9 points

As we have already established that a king cannot be taken, it doesn't have a price, though that is certainly not to say that it is not valuable. When I was a junior

I once played a computer in a competition and reached an unlikely endgame position of a king (obviously!) and 7 pawns each. Whilst I understood that my king would be very useful coming out into action to try to capture enemy pawns, the metal box that was my opponent kept his own king tucked away in the corner. I promptly guzzled three of its pawns before its monarch suddenly appeared to spring into action – clearly too late. After I enjoyed advancing several of my pawns closer to promotion, its embarrassed human operator soon resigned on its behalf. Later he explained that the computer was programmed to 'keep its king safe' until it had fewer than five pawns remaining!

Alas computers and computer programmes tend not to play like that anymore and have much more complex criteria to work with. When playing a game, a human has to use his judgement to decide whether a king should be:

a) Guarded and safe.

b) Tucked away, but with little or no resources around to defend.

c) Brought into action. Endgames are prime suspects for such action, but it could be earlier.



WARNING: As always when trying to make generalisations, the truth is that everything depends on the position. General rules and principles are useful but there are nearly always exceptions.

I would say that the generally accepted scoring system for the pieces is about right. Sure, bishops may be better than knights in endgames and more often than not top players may favour them. By the end of this book, though, you will notice that knights frequently figure in tactics and combinations and it is a little inconvenient to value a bishop at 3⅓ or 3½ points as some texts do!

Although this book is intended to provide you with attacking options and help you recognize when a tactic may be possible, it is always important to remain realistic.



WARNING: The vast majority of practical games do not involve stunning visual tactics and combinations and are instead more mundane affairs.

Although it may be nice to sacrifice lots of pieces and to give a smothered mate (the likes of which you will shortly see), at the end of the day the aim is to win and one should play in a manner that will maximize one's chances of winning.



TIP: Taking the opponent's pieces will reduce the likelihood of them being able to win, and by removing defenders you will increase your chances of being able to deliver a successful checkmate.

Don't ignore 'no strings attached' gifts just because the freebie in question may not currently be directly defending the enemy king. Think more long term!

Take a look at the following situation:

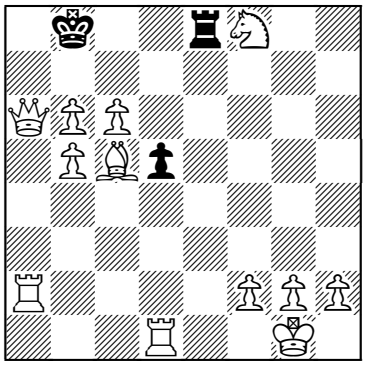


Diagram 11 (W)
Checkmate, anyone?

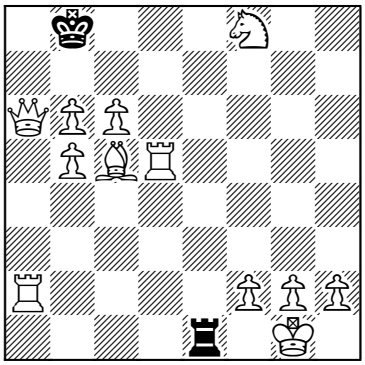


Diagram 12
Greed punished!

In Diagram 11 White has an overwhelming material advantage and on the move could employ any of 1 Qa8, 1 Qb7, 1 c7, 1 Nd7 and 1 Bd6, each of which would be checkmate. Frankly, at any sort of high level chess, Black probably would have resigned some while ago, but at a lower level of chess anything is possible! White has racked up enough of his opponents pieces, but to go that one very unnecessary step further with

1 Rxd5?? would end in disaster after **1...Re1 mate** (see Diagram 12)

The resulting situation then is that White had secured 26 points worth of extra material, but none of it was of any use as Black has achieved a 'back rank' mate and has had the last laugh.



TIP: When selecting a move, always consider any checks that you may have available. Furthermore, once you have decided on your move, before playing it check that your opponent won't have any good checks available. Basically then, always check for checks!

In a variant of our previous example, White may have nudged a kingside pawn up to give his king some breathing space. In a more materially equal situation, preventing any possibility of a back rank mate and freeing up a defensive piece may have been a good idea. In our extreme example, I suppose 1 h3, 1 g3 or 1 f3 would have ensured that the white king had somewhere to run. If White decided that his own monarch needed to join the action then the start of a centralisation via 1 Kf1 would also cover the e1-square, but simply leaving his d1-rook on the

back would prevent an enemy rook invasion. White was extraordinarily careless and would no doubt have been embarrassed by not selecting any of the available five checkmates!

Sacrifice

Though I have alluded to this word already, I have chosen to include a section on the subject to ensure that there is no confusion.



NOTE: A 'sacrifice' occurs when a piece of greater value is deliberately conceded, either for nothing or for an enemy piece of lesser value, ultimately for the greater good.

The key is that, for a concession to be a genuine sacrifice, the intent must be there with some justification in mind. Too often I have heard juniors claim they have sacrificed a piece, when the reality is that they hadn't noticed it was attacked and in fact had just lost it for nothing. Clearly there is a difference!

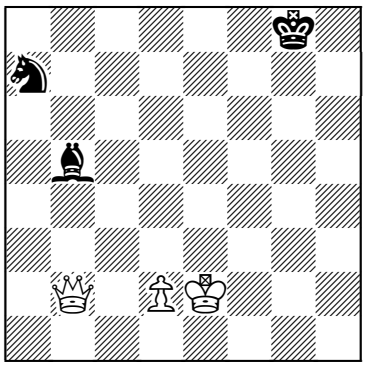


Diagram 13 (W)

1 Qxb5?? escapes check

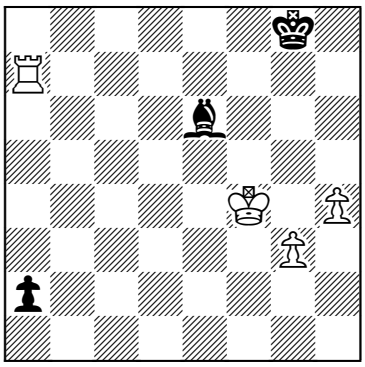


Diagram 14 (W)

1 Rxa2?? prevents a promotion

The examples in Diagrams 13 and 14 are essentially of poor decisions to concede material.

In Diagram 13 White finds himself in check and would do well to move his king off the enemy bishop's diagonal or block the check with his pawn. Taking the bishop with the queen constitutes a serious error as White loses 9-3 = 6 points worth of material. In playing 1 Qxb5 it could well be that White hadn't noticed that the black bishop was protected by a knight. Even worse! Either way blundering a piece is *not* the same as sacrificing it!



TIP: In the previous section I advocated always looking out for checks. In the same way I would recommend always looking out for ways to attack your opponent's queen and to check that your own queen is *not* in danger before playing the move you are about to.

This does *not* mean that you should always give a check or attack a queen whenever you can, but rather that you are always aware that such possibilities exist. That way you will never be hit by a surprise checkmate or blunder your queen, and you will never overlook a good opportunity.

Obviously the above tip involves discipline and the investment of time, but good chess is not played quickly.

In Diagram 14 it is true that the black pawn on a2 is just one square from promotion. However, the active white rook has that situation well under control, and should Black attempt to turn the pawn into a new queen or any other piece then the rook could take it free of charge. There is therefore no need to hit the panic button and concede the rook for the pawn. Instead White should concentrate on advancing his own pawns with or without the use of his king.



TIP: Rooks like to be behind passed pawns.

Either way **1 Rxa2??** couldn't really be described as a 'sacrifice'. Diagram 15 brings our first example of this important concept.

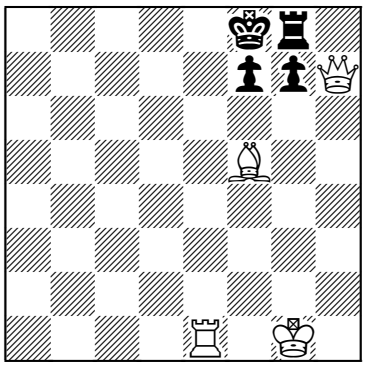


Diagram 15 (W)

White to play and mate in two

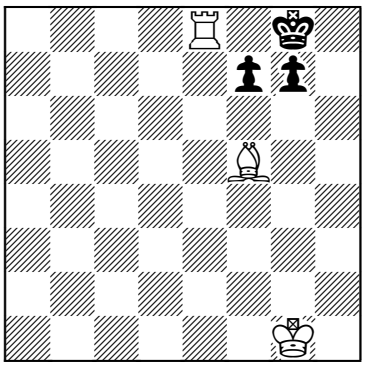


Diagram 16

A successful sacrifice!

If one took Diagram 15 to be a puzzle, the question might be 'How can White to play give mate in two?'



NOTE: In case you didn't know, mate in two means that White will move, Black will respond and then White will give checkmate on the next turn. Beginners frequently misunderstand that, assuming instead that White will get two moves on the trot. That unrealistic scenario (except in the variant of the game called progressive chess!) is most certainly *not* the case.

The solution to the puzzle is:

1 Qxg8+

The white queen sacrifices itself for the black rook.

1...Kxg8

Black's only option was to take the queen. Material-wise he has gained 9-5 = 4 points worth of pieces. Unfortunately there is something more relevant than that.

2 Re8 mate (see Diagram 16)

That's right. As we discovered in our last section, the material situation is irrelevant when there is checkmate on the board. Clearly the sacrifice of the white queen was a perfectly sound and good idea.

The objection I have to problems that you might see in puzzle books or newspaper and magazine articles is that often there is a mate in two or three to solve, when in fact one could win easily (if more slowly) through more standard means.



NOTE: There are no extra prizes for winning a game as quickly as possible.

Far more useful are situations where one side may appear to be struggling or seemingly only equal or slightly better. Then a sacrifice or combination to achieve checkmate or a winning advantage takes on far more significance. In truth our last example seemed like overkill. Granted it was a neat combination, but the queen sacrifice was hardly required to ensure victory. Had White just played simple chess, and in the course of play even swapped off rooks, then completely risk free, White could have gone on to win by delivering checkmate with the king and queen, with the bishop also on hand to help out.

The next example is a far more critical situation:

It is White to play in Diagram 17 and Black is up on material and specifically threatening both 1...Qb2 mate and 1...Qa1 mate.

There is no way to way to deal with those threats, but if White sticks to my earlier advice and looks out for checks then he will find the following combination:

1 Qg8+!!

The black rook has this square covered, so this definitely counts as a queen sacrifice.

1...Rxg8

1...Kxg8 would count as an illegal move as the white knight covers g8 and of course the black king cannot move into check.

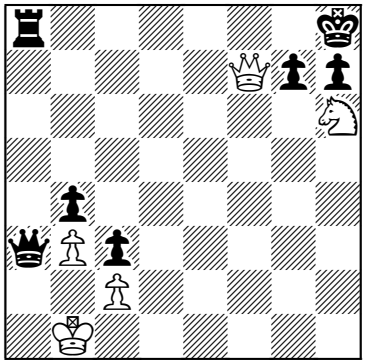


Diagram 17 (W)
Black threatens mate

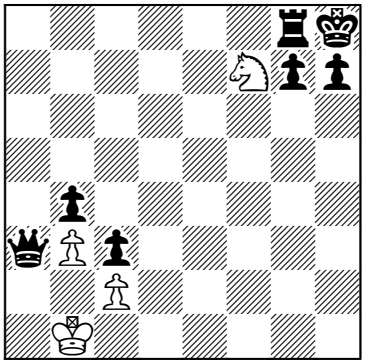


Diagram 18
but Black gets 'smothered' mated!

NOTE: An illegal move is quite simply a move that contradicts the rules of the game. It's not exactly an imprisonable offence, but it is not allowed and nothing good can come out of an attempt to employ one. Indeed in practical play, typically the offender is penalized in some way.

Returning to our game, White can now bring it to an end by **2 Nf7 mate** (see Diagram 18).

This is our first example of 'smothered' mate in which friendly pieces next to one's own king prove detrimental. A check from a knight cannot be blocked, and the black monarch is unable to move anywhere because the rook and two kingside pawns are in its way.

Stalemate

Young juniors also have trouble coming to terms with this concept. 'Stalemate' is when one side is unable to make any legal moves but is not actually in check.

This example is a mini disaster. In Diagram 19 White has successfully trapped the enemy king on the back rank. Depriving the enemy king of squares is part and parcel of forcing it to the edge when attempting to deliver checkmate with a king and a queen against a king. Unfortunately, the move **1 Qc7??** (leading to Diagram 20) has gone one step too far as Black cannot now legally move his king, whilst his

pawn is blocked too. Were he in check it would be checkmate, but as he is not, it is stalemate. Instead of 1 Qc7?? White could have set about eliminating Black's remaining pawn and then promoting his own, but 1 Kb6 would have settled the matter rather quicker. Black's only move would have been 1...Kb8 when 2 Qb7 would have been mate.

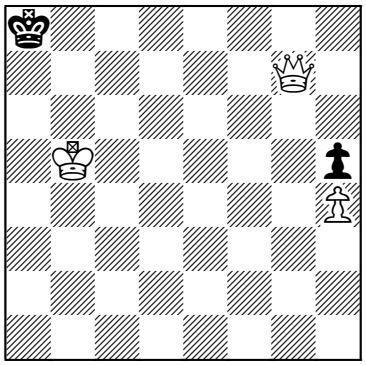


Diagram 19 (W)
Don't get complacent!

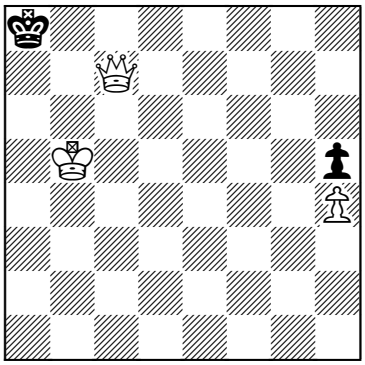


Diagram 20
Stalemate (oh dear!)

Strong players tend to give each other a lot of respect and will frequently resign for reasons that a complete novice will not comprehend. At beginner level though, the existence of the stalemate rule means that even in the most desperate of situations there is hope and in such an eventuality, the game is declared a draw.

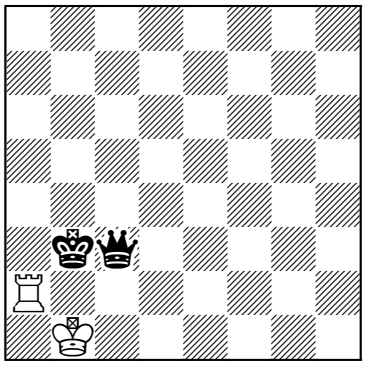


Diagram 21 (W)
Black is closing in

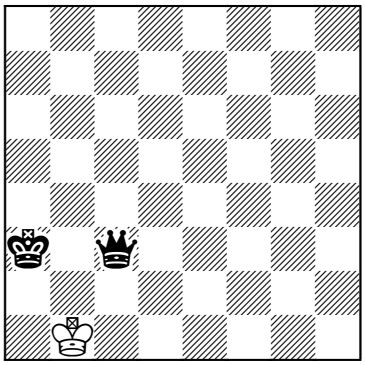


Diagram 22
White salvages a draw



WARNING: When moving in for the kill, always make sure that if you are not checkmating your opponent on that turn, that they have at least somewhere to move. Basically then, *beware stalemate*.

In fact stalemate tricks can occasionally come to the rescue. Take Diagram 21:

White is a queen for a rook down and appears to be in a spot of bother with 1...Qe1 mate one obvious threat. Instead of throwing in the towel though, White could employ the rook sacrifice **1 Ra3+!**. The only way for Black to avoid losing his queen is to accept the offering with **1...Kxa3**, but the resulting position (Diagram 22) is stalemate and, instead of losing the game, White will have obtained a draw and a possibly valuable half point.

The Fork

A fork occurs when a piece attacks two or more enemy pieces at the same time, and when referred to, the implication is usually that something is to be won as a result. Any piece is capable of forking and here are a couple of basic examples:

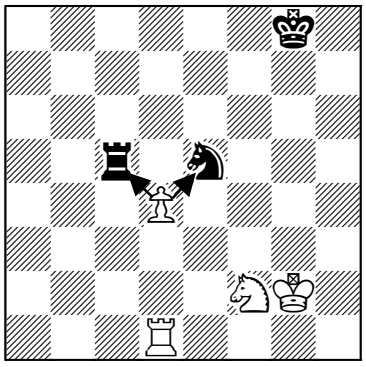


Diagram 23
A pawn fork

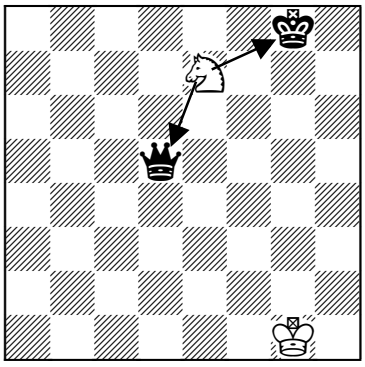


Diagram 24 (B)
A knight fork

In Diagram 23 the white pawn on d4 attacks two of Black's pieces. As there is no way to escape the fork by giving a check, Black must choose which piece to concede and usually one would opt to preserve the piece of greater value (in this case the rook).

Our second example in Diagram 24 demonstrates a knight doing what it is famous for: forking!

Here the recipients are the black king and queen, and as it is check, Black has no

decision to make as to which piece to lose. He must move his king, after which the happy white knight will gladly capture the black queen.

NOTE: A family fork is when a knight is attacking the enemy king (i.e. check!), queen and rook all at the same time and it is an enjoyable experience!

The Pin

NOTE: The rows (going from left to right) on a chessboard are called 'ranks' and the columns (going up and down) are termed 'files'. Bishops of course move along diagonals.

A pin occurs when one piece pressurizes an enemy piece along a rank, file or diagonal. If the enemy piece were to move off the line, then the attacking piece would find itself hitting a different enemy piece of greater value along the same line. Although moving the first attacked piece may seem silly from a materialistic point of view, were that second in line piece a king then of course the first piece is simply not allowed to move. Anyway, this may sound more tricky than it is, but everything is made simpler by a couple of illustrative examples:

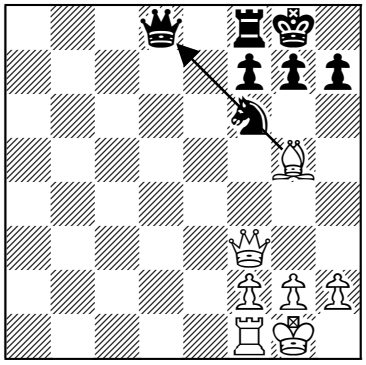


Diagram 25 (B)
The bishop pins the knight to the queen

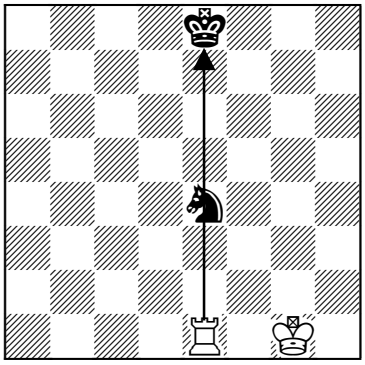


Diagram 26 (B)
The rook pins the knight to the king

In Diagram 25 we see a fairly common scenario of a bishop pinning an enemy knight to a queen. There is nothing particularly spectacular about the position, but the obvious feature is that Black doesn't want to move the knight yet or else it will be the end of the road for her majesty. In order to free up the steed Black will either have to move the queen off the g5-d8 diagonal or else set about forcing the

white bishop away.

NOTE: The chess term for escaping from a pinned situation is 'unpinning'.

Diagram 26, however, is rather bad news for black knight. The white rook 'pins' it to the black king along the e-file. As it can't move away (as that would put the king in check), White is set to capture the steed next turn.

Very similar to that example is the reason why one should generally try to castle fairly earlier in a game of chess, particularly when the e-file is open or half-open.

NOTE: An open file is one in which there are no pawns, and a half-open file is one in which there are no pawns of one of the two players.

I frequently see the scenario of Diagram 27 in lower level games. Black has made the mistake of not castling and has made things even worse by parking his queen in front of his king. On the move White could punish him with **1 Re1**, pinning the queen to the uncastled rook and therefore guaranteeing a gain of 9-5 = 4 points worth of material.

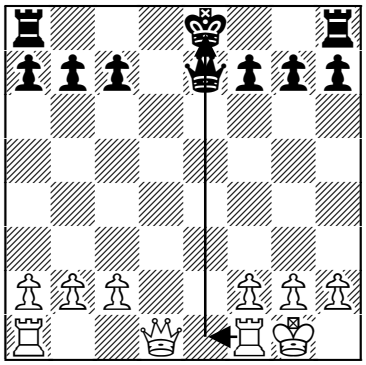


Diagram 27 (W)
The black king is vulnerable

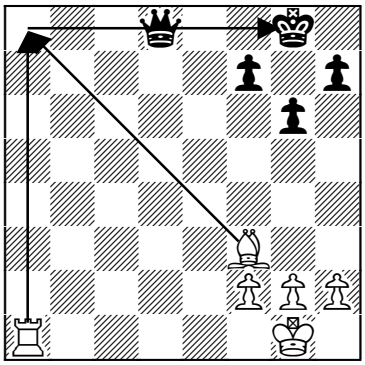


Diagram 28 (W)
Watch that back rank!

The black king has castled in Diagram 28, but if it is White to play he could again exploit the fact that the black king and queen are on the same line (this time a rank) with **1 Ra8**. Note how White's bishop guards that square, and if that move occurred then the fact that the black queen is pinned would mean that White would secure the win of the queen. Obviously Black could get a rook in return, but if instead it was him to move in the starting position then he would do well to deal with the threat. As he earlier employed the pawn advance ...g7-g6, he isn't in

danger of being back-rank mated. In fact he could use the escape square now by advancing his king to g7. That or a queen move off the back rank would avoid the dangerous pin, thus leaving the queen to fight on.

The Skewer

I always view a skewer as a kind of inverted pin. Basically a skewer occurs when one piece attacks an enemy piece along a line, and if that enemy piece were to move off that same rank, file or diagonal, then the attacking piece would hit another enemy piece of equal or lesser value.

Again pictures tell the story better than words:

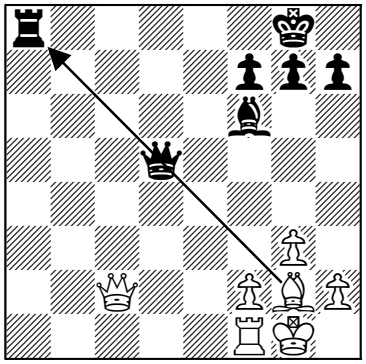


Diagram 29 (B)
The white bishop skewers queen and rook

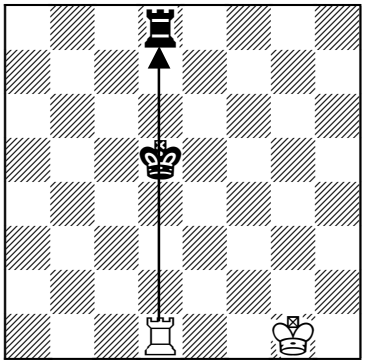


Diagram 30 (B)
Rook takes rook is inevitable!

In our first example (Diagram 29) the black queen is attacked by the white bishop. When it moves, the bishop will capture the black rook located on the same g2-a8 diagonal. Even if Black wins the bishop, e.g. after 1...Qd8 2 Bxa8 Qxa8, then White will emerge the 'exchange' (rook for knight, or rook for bishop) up.

Rather than netting 2 points (5-3), White will secure a full 5 points in Diagram 30. Black is in check and when the king moves off the e-file, the white rook will capture its enemy number free of charge.



NOTE: Often a king is included in the bracket of a piece of greater value, even though, as explained earlier, strictly speaking a king doesn't have a price. Some may even say it is of infinite value because of course it can't be taken.

Discovered Check

I was once monitoring a beginners' group playing chess when a young girl suddenly announced the presence on her board of a discovered check. Very impressed I rushed over to notice that both kings were in check. "We've just discovered that the black king has been in check for a long time," she said! That is not what a 'discovered check' is of course, but sadly the occurrence of having two kings in check does seem quite common amongst absolute novices. Having gone to great lengths to explain about looking out for checks and being compelled to escape check, I'm confident that sort of thing won't now happen in your games!

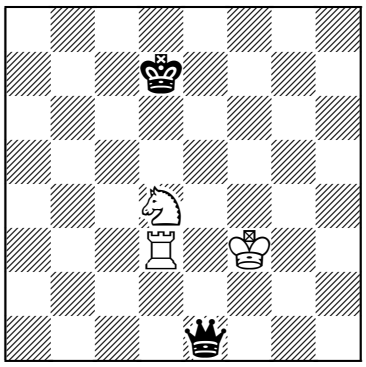


Diagram 31 (W)
The knight can't check the black king

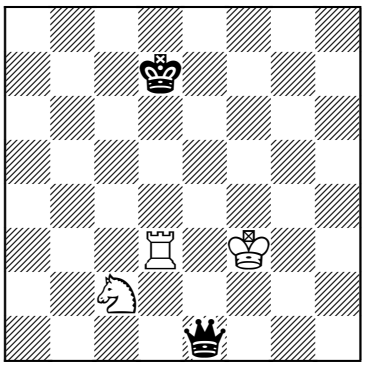


Diagram 32 (B)
But the rook can!

Diagram 31 turns into Diagram 32 after the discovered check **1 Nc2+**. Yes, although the knight has been the piece to move, it is the white rook that gives check. Retreating the knight to c2 rather than moving it anywhere else is especially beneficial here, as after the black king moves out of check, the white knight can capture the black queen.

A 'discovered attack' is very similar, the main difference being that an enemy piece other than the king is what ends up being attacked.

Double Check

A double check is just as it sounds: two pieces checking the enemy king at the same time. Actually I used this concept to my advantage in one of my own recent games:

C.Ward-B.Laval

French League 2006

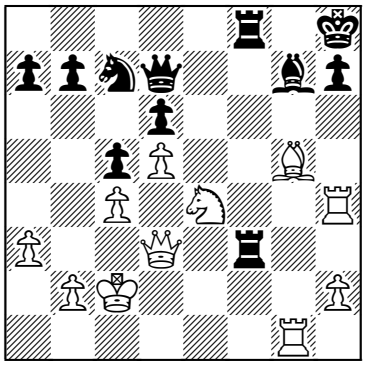


Diagram 33 (W)

Preparing to sacrifice

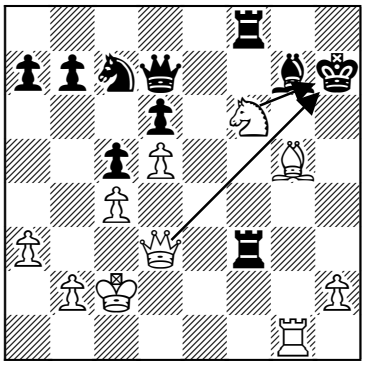


Diagram 34 (B)

Double check

As White, 26 moves into the game, I found myself in Diagram 33 with my queen attacked by the black rook on f3. I had been prepared for this eventuality though, and confidently responded with the rook sacrifice **27 Rxh7+!**. My shell-shocked opponent soon realized that he couldn't accept my offering and so declined it with 27...Kg8, but lost a few moves later. My justification for apparently conceding my rook for a mere pawn was that, after **27...Kxh7**, I could employ the double check **28 Nf6+** leading to the position illustrated in Diagram 34. The knight checks the black king from f6, but despite having three pieces covering that square (i.e. both rooks and the bishop), Black can't take the knight because he is also in check from the white queen along the d3-h7 diagonal. And of course he can't take the queen because he would still be in check from the knight. This is, therefore, an example of 'double check' and the only legal reply would be **28...Kh8**. The icing on the cake for this combination would then come in the form of **29 Qh7 mate**, fully vindicating my decision to sacrifice.



NOTE: Double check is *not* when a king is already in check and another piece suddenly checks it as well, as that would surely imply that an illegal move has previously been played. Rather it is when a piece moves to give check, simultaneously uncovering a second piece which then also gives check. So basically it is a normal check combined with a discovered check!

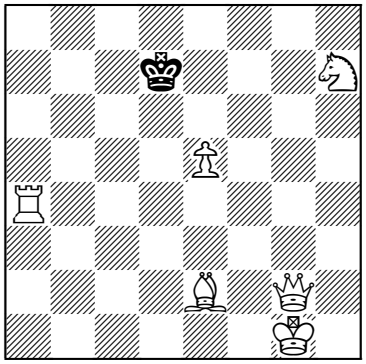
Exercises

Exercise 1: For this first question, close your eyes and try to envisage a chess board at the start of a game.

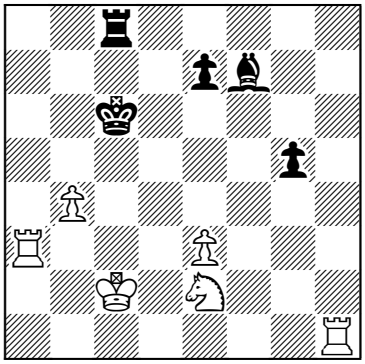
a) Now figure out how many 'legal' moves White has available on his first turn.

b) As neither king can move at the beginning, why is it not stalemate?

Exercise 2: In each of the two positions, can you spot how many different checks White could give and suggest which would be the *worst* one?

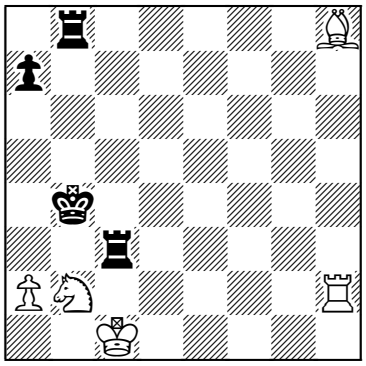


Exercise 2a (W)

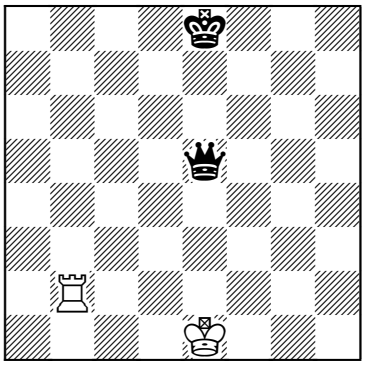


Exercise 2b (W)

Exercise 3: What is the best way for White to escape check in these positions?



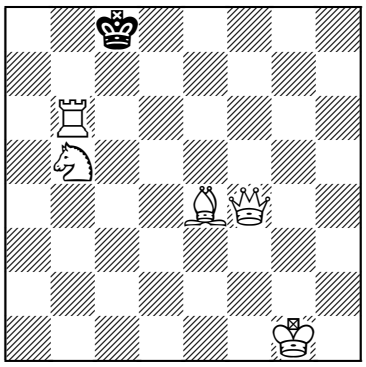
Exercise 3a (W)



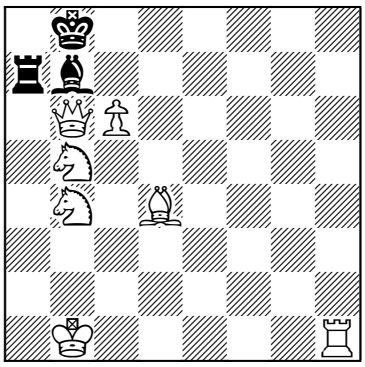
Exercise 3b (W)

In either case is it possible that it could actually be Black's move?

Exercise 4: In both Diagrams in this exercise White is in an overwhelming position. But how many checks does he have in each case, and can you find the one which is mate?



Exercise 4a (W)



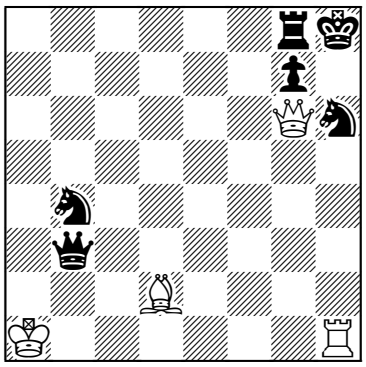
Exercise 4b (W)

Exercise 5: I hate generalized questions, but anyway(!) – which of the following imbalances is in material terms officially worth the most:

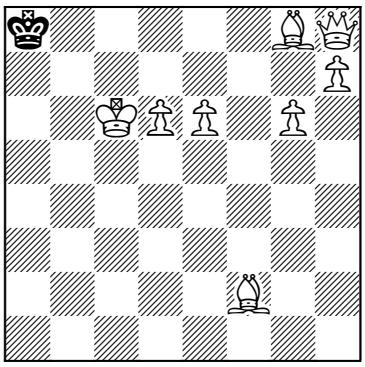
a) A rook, bishop and knight, or a queen and a pawn?

b) Three minor pieces and a rook, or a queen and four pawns?

Exercise 6: With White to move in the Diagram, which of 1 Qxh6+, 1 Rxh6+, 1 Bxh6 and 1 Bxb4 would be deemed a 'sacrifice' and which will be successful?



Exercise 6 (W)



Exercise 7 (W)

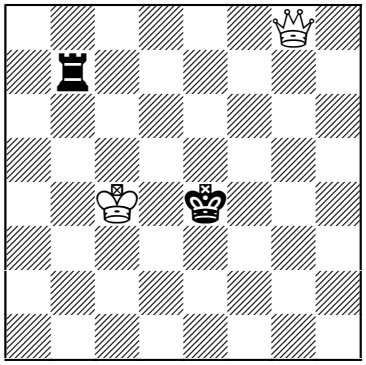
Exercise 7: In the exercise diagram, can you find...

a) A move that is just check?

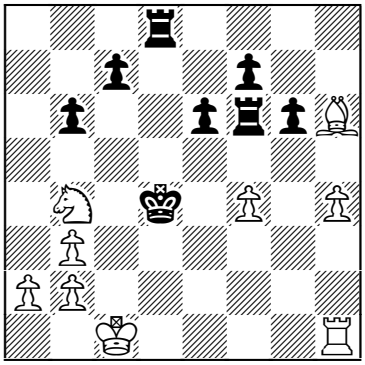
b) A move that is check and mate?

c) Not one, but two different moves that would result in stalemate?

Exercise 8: In both positions in this exercise, can you discover how White (to move) can guarantee at least one way of winning an enemy rook by means of a fork, a pin and a skewer?



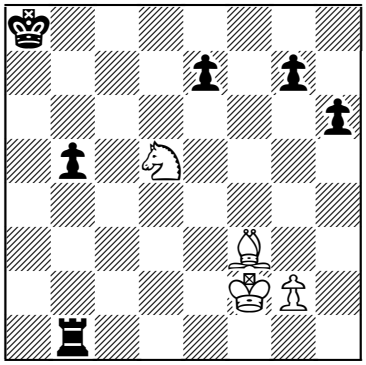
Exercise 8a (W)



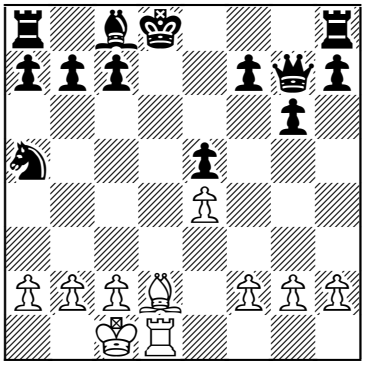
Exercise 8b (W)

Exercise 9: This may prove to be a real teaser, but what is it that that a queen can *not* do that every other piece can? Yep, you'll really have to rack your brains for this one!

Exercise 10: What is the best move for White (to play) in the two exercise positions?



Exercise 10a (W)



Exercise 10b (W)

Chapter Two

First Steps Towards Checkmate

- Introduction
- Doubling Up
- The Seventh Rank
- The Lawnmower Checkmate
- Simple Diagonal Alignment
- Eliminating an Escape
- The Queen and Knight Pairing
- Plugging the Gaps
- Destroying the Defensive Barrier
- Building a Combination

Introduction

I'm sure you will have taken from the first chapter that it isn't a particularly good idea to set off from move 1 on a quest for checkmate. However, at some stage in the game, depending on the position, it may be wise to start contemplating attacking the enemy king. A decision on when that may be will be based on the attacking arsenal you may have, compared to the defensive resources that are available to the opponent.

We have already seen back rank mates and smothered mates, whilst I also asserted that the most common checkmate in practical play sees a king checkmated by a close-up enemy queen that is protected by one or other of the pieces. I want to kick off this chapter by looking at some of the more simple ways in which this may be achieved. Please note that the majority of examples I will give will involve a minimum number of pieces so as not to cloud the issue. There may be more options for attack or defence on a more crowded board, but the principles still remain the same.



NOTE: We are frequently advised to castle early in order to help activate a rook and tuck the king into safety. It is because that advice is quite rightly commonly adhered to that most of our attacks will be aimed at a castled king.

Doubling up

In our first example though, the black king is still very much in the centre. Check out Diagram 1.

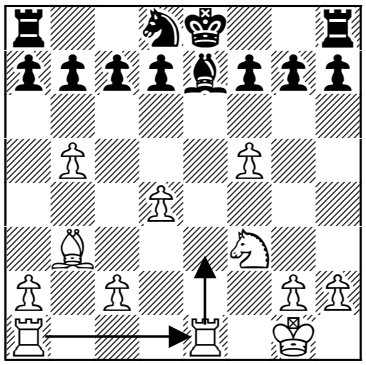


Diagram 1 (W)

Black has neglected to castle

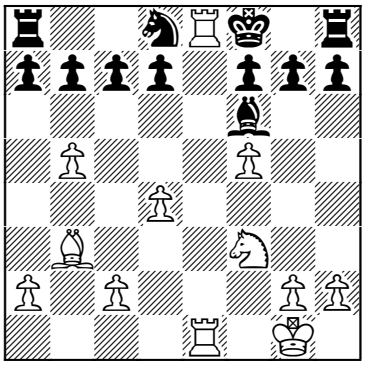


Diagram 2

The bishop was always pinned!



TIP: Rooks love open files. They love to access them and either cause damage along them or else transfer to another useful post along any one of the available eight squares.

In Diagram 1 White certainly can do some damage on the e-file. You will be well aware that the black bishop on e7 is pinned to its king, but as things stand the monarch protects it once and it is only attacked once, i.e. by the white rook on e1. White, however, intends to change that situation, and after **1 Re3** (or Re2 or Re4) he will make way for the rook's compatriot to join it on the e-file in order to add extra firepower. If Black does nothing about White's plan then in a couple of moves he will lose his bishop, but in fact a closer inspection reveals that there is little he can do anyway.

Black has evidently neglected to castle and now cannot 'unpin' in time. Indeed, Diagram 2 is the position that would be reached after the sequence **1...Kf8 2 Rae1** (doubling the rooks on the e-file) **2...Bf6?? 3 Re8 mate**.

Hence the bishop, effectively, was pinned throughout, either for legal reasons or because moving it allowed a mate in one. Clearly it would have been preferable to have conceded the bishop instead, and that's exactly what would have had to have happened because none of Black's pieces were on hand to offer support. Black didn't connect his rooks by castling earlier, whilst the knight on d8 was a right lemon. Its presence there prevented the king from escaping the e-file by moving to its right, whilst the square c6 is scrutinized by the b5-pawn, and the blocking option on e6 was not possible either because of the f5-pawn.

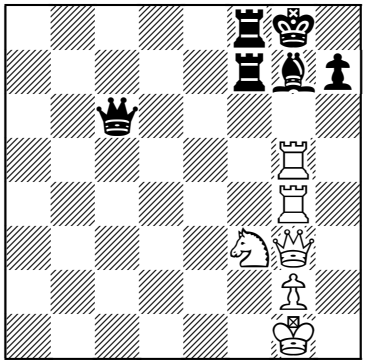


Diagram 3 (W)
More attack than defence!

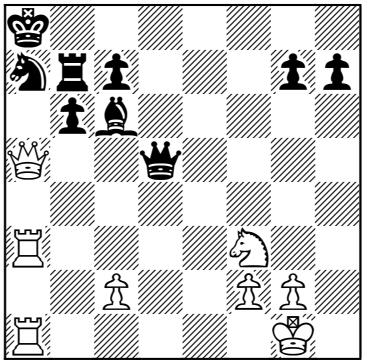


Diagram 4 (W)
The order is wrong!



TIP: If a queen is able to join its rooks on the same file then that is known as 'tripling' major pieces. There are then three pieces lined up

to pressurize, but because a queen is more valuable than a rook, take into consideration the order in which they are arranged.

Diagram 3 is a very simple case of mathematics. White attacks the bishop on g7 three times but it is only guarded twice. After 1 Rxg7+ Rxg7 2 Rxg7+ he will have won a piece for nothing.

Diagram 4, on the other hand, is a little more complicated, though still not exactly rocket science! After 1 Qxa7+? Rxa7 2 Rxa7+ Kb8 there is no chance of a checkmate using the a8-square because the black bishop guards that well. Although White will have gained two physical pieces for one, taking their values into consideration, the fact is that he has gained a rook and a knight (8 points) for a queen (9 points) and thus actually emerged from the deal with the loss of a point. Instead White should retreat his attacked queen or, because he is after all the exchange for a pawn up, he could swap off the queens on d5. The pin will remain on the a-file and could still prove very useful in the future.



TIP: When material up, swap off pieces but not pawns. This is a book on tactics and checkmates but don't forget the advice I tendered earlier about winning in the most straightforward manner. Attempts to be clever often backfire!

The Seventh Rank



TIP: Rooks love to be active and, as well as open files, they also love the seventh rank.

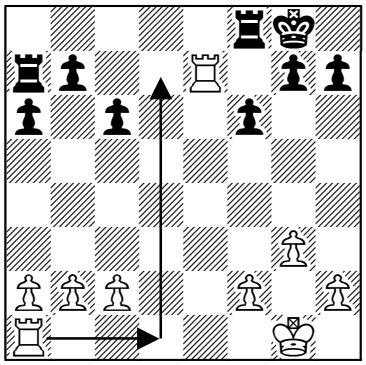


Diagram 5 (W)
Active vs passive rooks

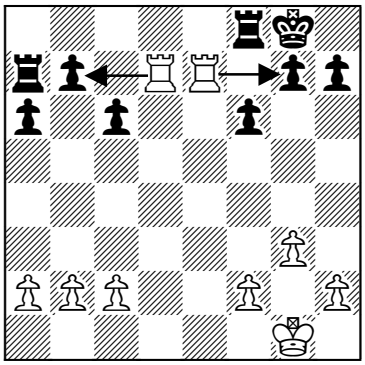


Diagram 6 (B)
Seventh rank domination

In Diagram 5 White's e7-rook is extremely active, whereas in contrast the black one on a7 is stuck in a passive role of simply defending the b7-pawn. For Black this is a highly undesirable situation and it is often worth sacrificing a pawn with the compensation being to turn a passive rook active.

Alas, it is White's move and he can quickly set about activating his other rook. One possibility is to double rooks on the e-file, but stronger still is to set about doubling the rooks along the seventh rank.

On **1 Rd1**, an attempt to intercept White's plan or at least swap off one set of rooks with **1...Rf7** would ultimately fail after **2 Rd8+ Rf8 3 Rdd7** (see Diagram 6) when the two white rooks boss the board. The black rooks can't get any action, whereas White's are threatening to hoover anything along Black's second rank. Note that White actually threatens mate by 4 Rxg7+ Kh8 5 Rxh7+ Kg8 6 Rdg7 mate.

The Lawnmower Checkmate

One idea that juniors seem to become very excited about getting to grips with is the lawnmower technique demonstrated here.

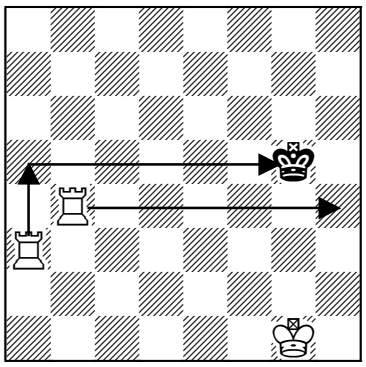


Diagram 7 (W)
Commence overlapping!

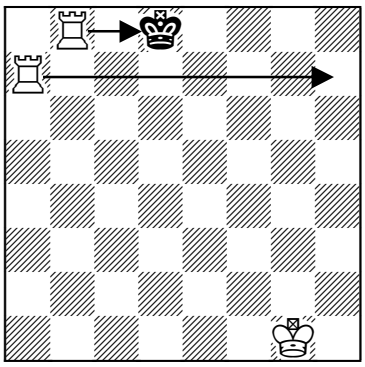


Diagram 8
No more retreating available!

In Diagram 7 the white rook on b4 prevents the black king from coming down the board. After the other rook checks along the rank above, i.e. **1 Ra5+**, the black king is forced to retreat back. Of course it has a choice of three retreat squares, but assuming White knows what he is doing, the only chance is to try to catch a rook off guard. Hence **1...Kf6**, but after **2 Rb6+ Ke7 3 Ra7+ Kd8 4 Rb8 mate** (see Diagram 8), it didn't get there in time. Note how the white rooks worked in tandem, each controlling a rank of their own, rather than doubling up. One rook stayed behind

whilst the other advanced and then they switched duties. The king is a good piece in the endgame but it is a slow one just the same. Had the black king managed to approach the white rooks sufficiently in order to interfere with the checking sequence, all White needed to have done was to switch one or both rooks over to other side of the board where they still control the same ranks.

Here are two more lawnmower checkmate positions. In Diagram 9 the white rook may have been on the b-file, switching to the h-file when the black king got too close. Just because the rooks aren't side by side doesn't mean that they can't continue to work in tandem.



NOTE: Remember the lines going across are the ranks and the ones going up and down are files. Rooks move along ranks and files.

Mating Diagram 10 may also have employed the same technique, only with White working on files instead of ranks. Though it may appear visually odd to a human, to rooks, which operate along straight lines, it is of course all the same.

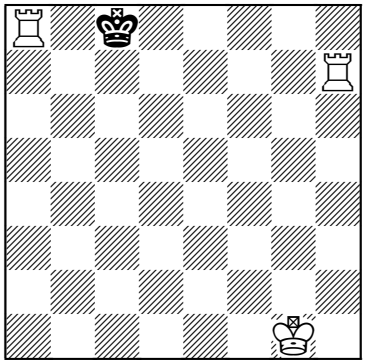


Diagram 9
Still working together!

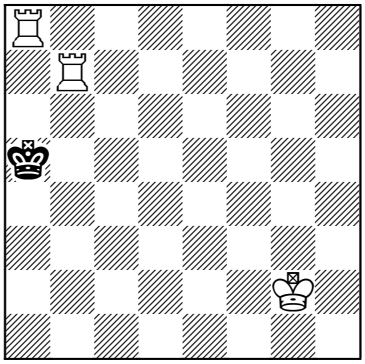


Diagram 10
Controlling straight lines

Simple Diagonal Alignment

If the queen is going to deliver checkmate by being directly next to the enemy king then it needs to have support. A very common way for this to occur is through the back up of a bishop. The following two examples are very interesting:

In Diagram 11 the bishop on b1 may be out of sight, but it is not out of mind. Together, it and the queen can combine to threaten mate on h7. In this particular position there are three ways in which this can be done:

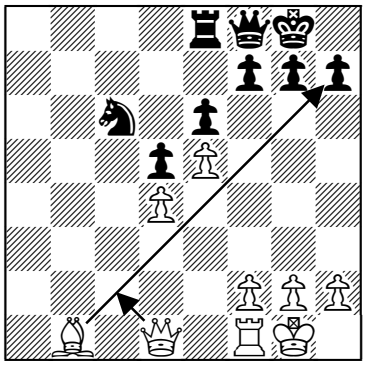


Diagram 11 (W)
A fork helps hit h7

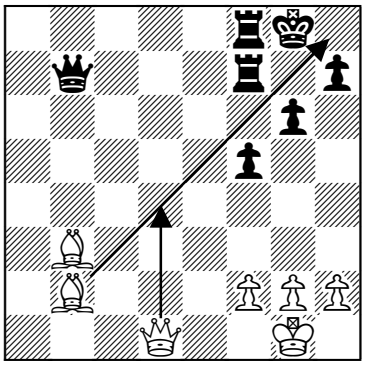


Diagram 12 (W)
Pins and a mate on h8!

a) **1 Qh5**. Here the queen would threaten to advance down to h7 and Black should choose between **1...g6** or **1...h6** to keep that from happening.

b) **1 Qd3** would see the queen and bishop aligned along the same b1-h7 diagonal. Black's h7-pawn is under threat, but **1...h6??** would merely avoid conceding the pawn. That is of little consequence after **2 Qh7 mate**. It should be noted that **1...f5** would allow **2 exf6**.



WARNING: Never forget *en passant*! It is an important rule in the game and I have seen many a tear shed because a junior didn't know of its existence.

Upon **1 Qd3**, then, Black should block the diagonal with **1...g6**. We have already seen a plus side of such a move, in that the king has an escape route making back rank mate less likely, but you will shortly see the negative side to having holes around one's king position.

c) Instead, a dual purpose move is **1 Qc2!**. This aligns the queen along the same diagonal towards h7 but also fulfils a useful role on the c-file.



TIP: Always keep an eye on unguarded pieces. There may be a way to exploit such a situation.

Yes, you've guessed it! The knight on c6 is *en prise*. Of course Black doesn't want to lose it for nothing but his priority must be not getting mated on h7. Ideally he would like to solve both problems at once, but there is no way to do that. So a correct choice of white queen moves (i.e. 1 Qc2!) wins material.

Diagram 12 shows just how good a pair of bishops can be on an open board.



NOTE: A board is more open the fewer pawns there are (particularly in the middle) clogging up the situation.

White to play may be a double exchange down (two rooks for two bishops in this case) but he could regain one immediately with 1 Bxf7+.



TIP: Unless your opponent is preparing to break a pin, don't be in such a hurry to alleviate the situation for him.

The bishop on b3 pins the f7-rook to the king, and as it is protected by the queen on d1, there is no rush to take the rook. Moreover, White has bigger fish to fry and **1 Qd4!** attacks the king along the neighbouring b2-h8 diagonal. In fact, not only does this threaten checkmate via 2 Qh8, but 2 Qg7 would also be mate if the f7-rook were still pinned to its king. There is no remotely satisfactory way for Black to deal with this mating threat, although strictly speaking it doesn't force mate in one because Black can give a kamikaze check on g2!

Eliminating an Escape

Although this may seem like a big jump in terms of topic toughness, I feel it is important to bring to your attention the point that, while it is always a good idea to keep an eye out for checks, sometimes a 'quiet' move may be even more effective.



NOTE: A quiet move is one which isn't check but may help the overall cause of checkmate in a greater way.

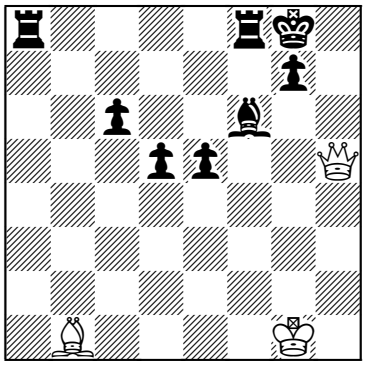


Diagram 13 (W)
Think carefully!

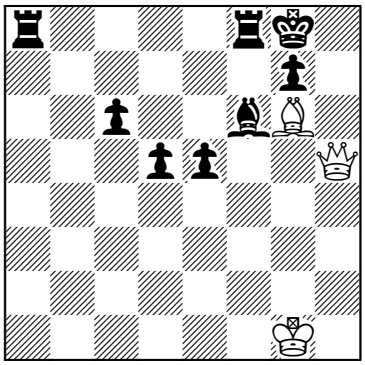


Diagram 14 (W)
No escape!

In Diagram 13, I know that the majority of juniors would spot the queen check on h7 and bash it out straight away.



TIP: Always take time over your moves. To play chess the most important part of your body is your brain, not your hand!

Actually White is quite a bit of material down and, after **1 Qh7+ Kf7**, the black king will escape to the relative safety of e7. Note how Black's own bishop fulfils a good defensive role defending g7 and e5, while preventing an enemy queen check along the h4-e7 diagonal.

More subtle would be **1 Bg6**, which would prevent the black king from using the f7-square as an escape route. In that instance, however, leaving out the fact that Black may have time to do something attacking of his own (though admittedly not that much time!), he can create a new escape route by simply moving his rook. Yes, **1...Rfb8** or **1...Ra1+ 2 Kg2 Rfa8** would both leave the black monarch with an f8-e7 path to safety.



TIP: Keeping rooks connected logically leaves them protecting each other and thus less vulnerable to enemy major pieces.

With regard to the above tip, note that the variation 1...Ra1+ 2 Kg2 Rfb8?? would allow White to win a rook via 3 Qh7+ Kf8 and then the skewer 4 Qh8+.

Correct play sees White gaining the useful Bg6 move free of charge: **1 Bh7+ Kh8 2 Bg6+** (a discovered check) **2...Kg8**. This would lead us to Diagram 14, in which White to play can terminate the game by **3 Qh7 mate**.

Let's break from tradition for a bit to view a complete game – in the form of an opening trap in the famous 'Ruy Lopez' or 'Spanish' opening. The next four diagrams relate to this encounter.

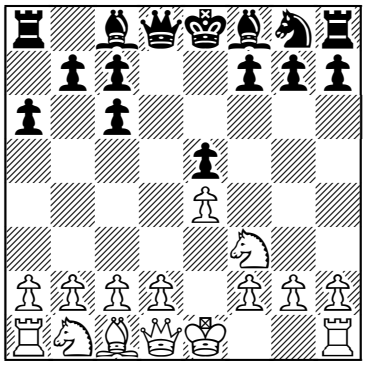


Diagram 15 (W)
A fork guards e5

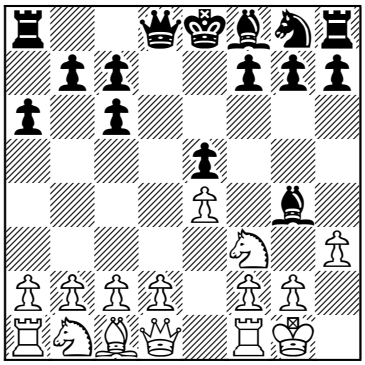


Diagram 16 (B)
A pin guards e5

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5

Both sides have put a pawn in the centre and developed a knight. The text brings a bishop into play. This bishop attacks the c6-knight, which therefore ultimately adds more pressure to the e5-pawn.

3...a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 (see Diagram 15) **5 0-0**

As 5 Nxe5 Qd4 shows, Black effectively still had the e5-pawn guarded by a fork trick. White will preserve the knight and then Black will regain the e4-pawn. Had White already gotten castled this would have proven disastrous for Black, as he may then have found his queen being pinned to his king by a white rook on e1. Only now, though, White castles, thus leaving Black time to do something about his e5-pawn.

5...Bg4

Indirectly guarding the black e5-pawn by pinning the knight to the white queen.

6 h3

Diagram 16 sees White attempting to unpin his knight so that it may be free to net its target.

6...h5

An odd-looking move, which nevertheless initiates an opening trap that has caught out many a player.

7 hxg4 hxg4

Black is now a piece down but he has opened the h-file and fully intends to use this line to attack the white king.

8 Nxe5?

White moves the attacked knight to guzzle more material. Unfortunately he is not considering that Black may have plans of his own!

8...Qh4

And Black does! As seen in Diagram 17, the text threatens to bring the queen down to either h2 or h1. As the rook offers support along the file, just like the bishop did along the diagonal in our previous example, both of these moves would be mate.

9 f3

White could cover the h2-square with 9 Nxg4, but there is nothing that can be done to prevent ...Qh1. Hence White advances his f-pawn in order to give his king the chance to flee.

9...g3! 0-1

The final position (see Diagram 18) of the game. Rather than giving a check and driving the king away, Black correctly cuts off the escape route. Mate on h1 is forced next turn and so White resigns.

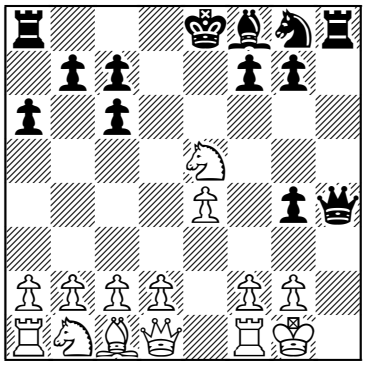


Diagram 17 (W)
An attack down the h-file

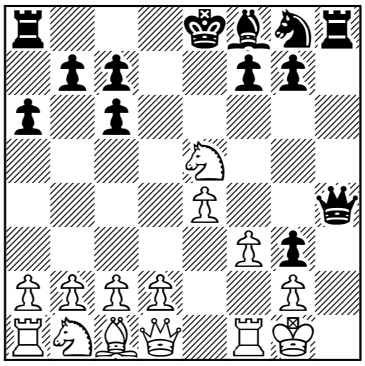


Diagram 18 (W)
No using the f2-square!

The Queen and Knight Pairing



NOTE: It is often said that a queen and knight are the most deadly attacking combination.

Of course if you were going for an attack, the ideal strike force would be two rooks, two bishops, two knights and at least one queen! In practice, though, that isn't usually possible, and if there are just two main attacking pieces then it is often said that a queen and a knight work best together. The reason for this is that between them they can cover diagonals, ranks and files (i.e. the queen's role) and tricky 'L' shapes (i.e. the knight jumping involvement!).

In Diagram 19, the material situation is level but a draw doesn't look on the cards!



NOTE: A passed pawn is a pawn that has a clear run to the end of the board, which means there are no enemy pawns in its potential path either on the same file or an adjacent one.

Black has a passed pawn on b3 which is just two moves from promotion. White could try to prevent that from happening by manoeuvring his queen to block it on b1 (e.g. via f5 or g6), or even using his knight as a blocker through Nd2-b1. These comprise very passive plans though, and here White would be far better off going on the attack with **1 Ng5!**. Previously we have seen a bishop and a rook offer the required support for a queen to confront the enemy king, but here it is the knight that allows White to threaten Qh7 mate. The beauty of a knight is that it controls different angles, and specifically here provides the bonus of controlling the f7-square. Ideally Black would like to prevent the queen check on h7 and for that matter f7, too. As 1...Qf5 certainly isn't legal, to stay alive Black will have to create

a different escape route for his king. Alas **1...Be7** doesn't cut the mustard as **2 Qh7+ Kf8** is easily seen off by the **3 Qh8 mate** depicted in Diagram 20.

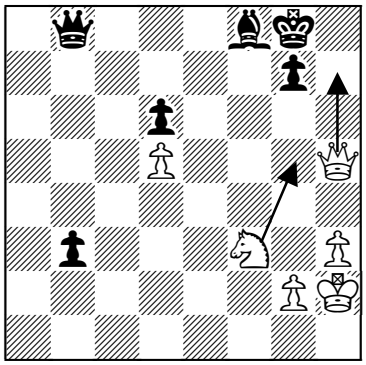


Diagram 19 (W)
A time to attack

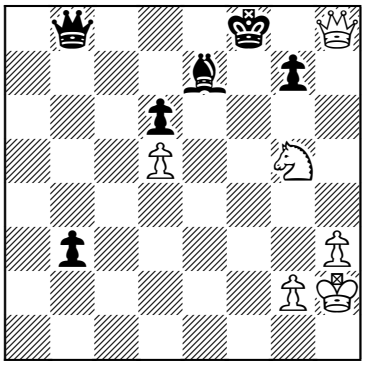


Diagram 20
Mission accomplished!



TIP: It is often stated that attack is the best form of defence. Clearly that was the case in our previous example.

Knights are relatively slow pieces and take their time travelling from one side of the board from another. When they are in the thick of the action, though, they can be wicked pieces. Recently, Grandmaster Jim Plaskett told me that arguably the World's greatest ever player, Garry Kasparov, once tendered him the following advice:



TIP: The presence of a white knight on f5 or c5 with the black king castled on that same side of the board, or likewise a black knight on f4 or c4 and ditto with the white king, is worth at least a pawn.

I often warn against generalizations, but I can confirm that knights on such squares are fantastic pieces. In our next example, the presence of a white knight on f5 proves to be worth rather more than just one pawn.

Highlighted in Diagram 21, the knight on f5 controls several potentially valuable squares, the most important one at present appearing to be g7. Black may currently be a lot of material up but he must now somehow deal with the threat of Qxg7 mate. He has no checks of his own and the only way to guard his g7-bishop is with **1...Qf8**. You will notice then, though, that the black king is completely blocked in by friendly pieces. White could force Black to part company with his queen via **2 Ne7+**, but given that Black will have plenty of pieces remaining and is on the verge of promoting his b-pawn, that wouldn't be a disaster for him. Considerably more impressive would be **2 Nh6 mate**. Yes, the g7-bishop is pinned to the king and it is a checkmate of the smothered variety!

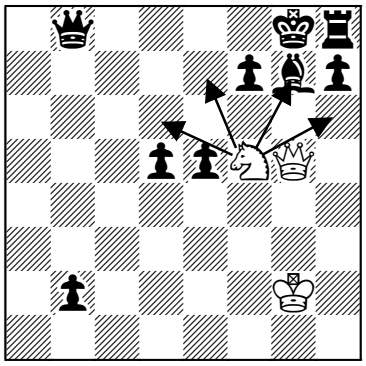


Diagram 21 (B)
Options galore!

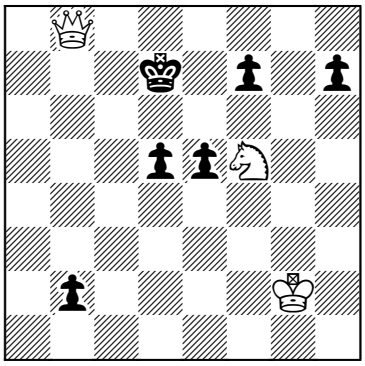


Diagram 22 (B)
A material swing!

With that in mind, the only way that Black can try to make things last is by running with his king. However, after **1...Kf8 2 Qxg7+ Ke8 3 Qxh8+** (taking a rook and skewering the black king and rook) **3...Kd7 4 Qxb8** (see Diagram 22), his army will have been reduced to ashes and, to add insult to injury, the white queen prevents the passed black b-pawn from successfully promoting too!

Plugging the Gaps

In Diagram 23, the white bishop on f6 is attacked. However, instead of retreating it, White can focus his attention on g7.

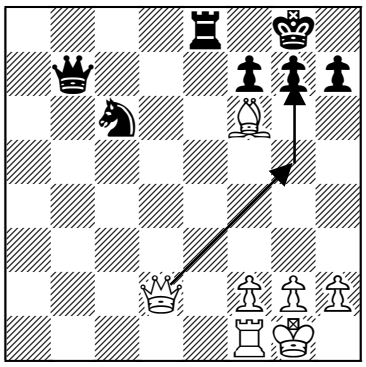


Diagram 23 (W)
Time to provoke a hole

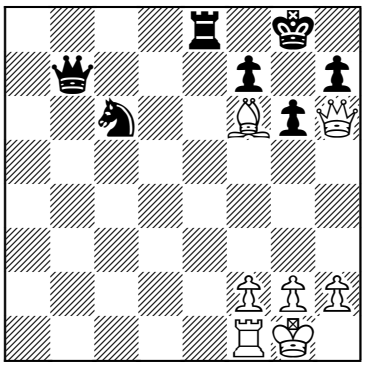


Diagram 24 (B)
Get in there!

After **1 Qg5**, the g-pawn is now pinned and mate is threatened. There is no way to defend this square so **1...g6** is the only way to avoid mate next turn. However, where there was once a pawn, there now exists a big hole, and with the huge influence that White's dark-squared bishop has, this is easily exploited by **2 Qh6**. In Diagram 24 there is nothing that Black can do about 3 Qg7 mate. Yes, the hole will be plugged by the white queen to devastating effect.

Destroying the Defensive Barrier

When middlegames occur with castling on opposite sides, often there is exciting play in which both players are trying to attack the enemy king.

In Diagram 25, it would appear that the white monarch has moved to b1 after having castled queenside. Both sides have half-open rook's files down which to attack. Actually, should the black queen make it down to a2 (i.e. backed up by the rook on a8), then mate still wouldn't be on the cards. The white king could slip back to c1 and the fianchettoed bishop on b2 is an excellent defender.

With White to move, he could attempt to deliver mate on g7 by immediately attacking the black pawn there with his queen (the obvious candidates being 1 Qe5 and 1 Qg4). Depending on how White does this, Black has a choice of available defences. He might block the b2-g7 diagonal by advancing his f-pawn, or indeed block the g-file by parking his knight on g6. The knight could also offer protection from e6, so the conclusion may be that White should find another approach.

An alternative idea would to be to work on the h-file with the ultimate aim of delivering mate on h8. This could be attempted via a 'pawn storm' with White employing his g-pawn (and, if required, the neighbouring f-pawn too), to try to uncover the shell around the black king, and, well, specifically the h-pawn.

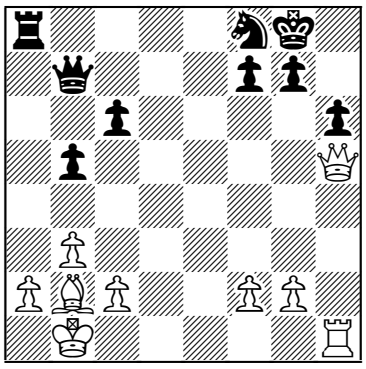


Diagram 25 (W)
Negotiating the shell

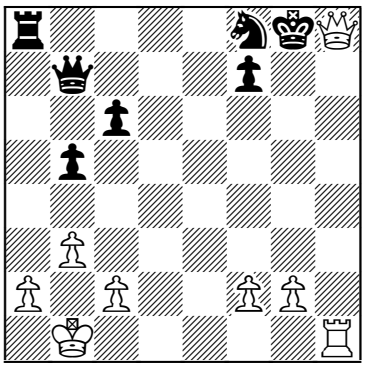


Diagram 26
A successful breakthrough!

A valid plan, but not as swift as an immediate sacrifice aimed at destroying the black pawn shield. Take a look at **1 Bxg7! Kxg7 2 Qxh6+ Kg8 3 Qh8 mate** (see Diagram 26). Truthfully, Black may have been able to survive longer by not accepting White's bishop sacrifice, but once 1 Bxg7 occurs, the h-pawn is destined to drop too and in 'Star Trek' terms the defensive shields are nearly down to 0%!

Building a Combination

I think the time has come for us to put a sequence of moves together in order to deliver mate, and so we have our first real combination. Take a few moments to get to grips with Diagram 27.

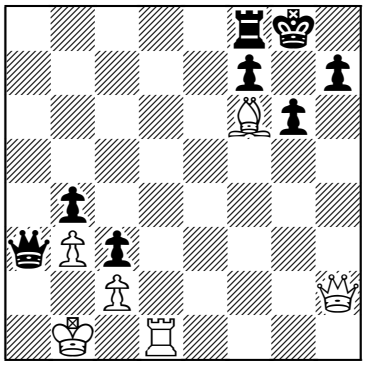


Diagram 27 (W)
A critical situation

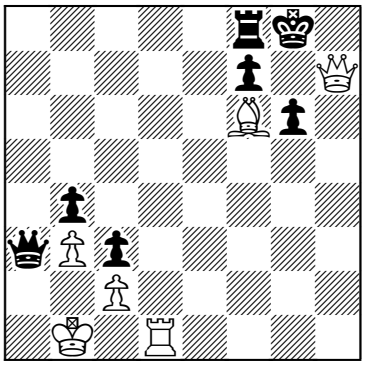


Diagram 28 (B)
A queen sacrifice

Let's talk about what we can deduce from this position:

1) Were it Black to move, he could mate his opponent immediately by nudging his queen down to b2 where it is offered support from the c3-pawn.

2) On the move, White's defensive options are limited. The only piece around to help guard the b2 square is his bishop through the continuation Bxc3. That would only be a temporary relief though, as ...b4xc3 simply replaces the old black pawn with a new one and White is faced with the same problem as before; i.e. he is back to square one without his bishop!

3) White could try to exploit the big hole on g7 (strong players tend to describe such a square as 'big', even though strictly speaking it is the same size as all the others!) by 1 Qh6, but although Black can't actually cover the g7-square, as we have already seen he can get his mate in first on b2.

In fact, provided White doesn't throw the towel in, he should discover a forced checkmate of his own through a process of elimination. Given that we have established 1 Bxc3 to be futile, to avoid being mated White must give a check of his own. Hence **1 Qxh7+!** (see Diagram 28), a sacrifice that must be accepted.

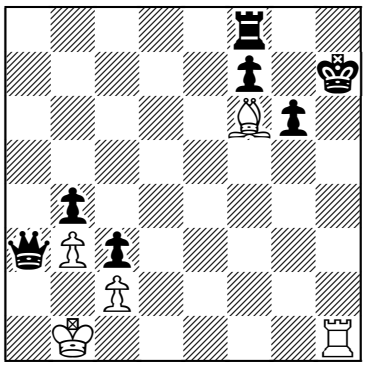


Diagram 29 (B)
Check again!

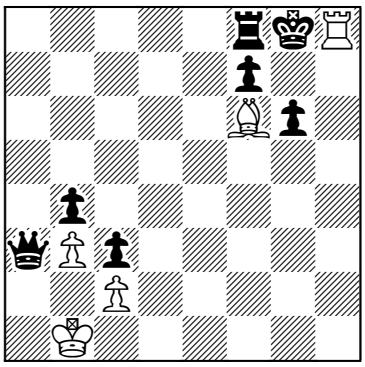
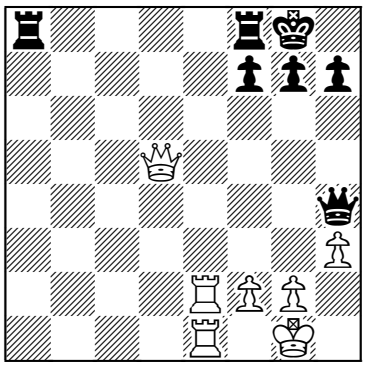


Diagram 30
A fantastic combination!

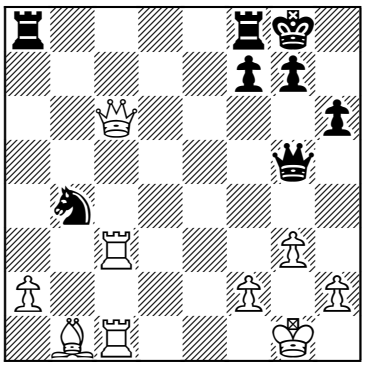
Black's only move is to take the queen, and after **1...Kxh7**, again White must give a check. So **2 Rh1+** is played, leading to Diagram 29 when **2...Kg8** is forced. It's not the end of the checks, though, as there is one more to come. You've guessed it: **3 Rh8** is mate (see Diagram 30). It may appear to be luck, but if you have made a mental note of this sequence (and there are plenty similar), it could easily turn up in one of your own games. Particularly instructive is the manner in which it sort of combined the previous themes of destroying the defensive barrier and exploiting holes around the enemy king. White sacrificed to eliminate the h7-pawn shield and then homed in on the weak (i.e. as it was covered by an attacking piece, but not a defensive one) h8-square.

Exercises

Exercise 1: What do you think of the queen sacrifice 1 Qxa8 in each of the exercise positions?

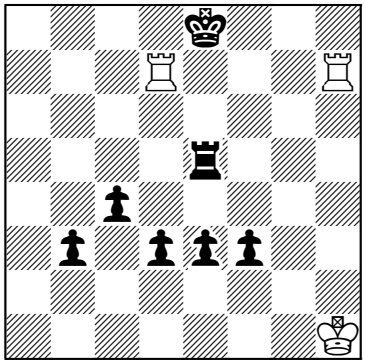


Exercise 1a (W)

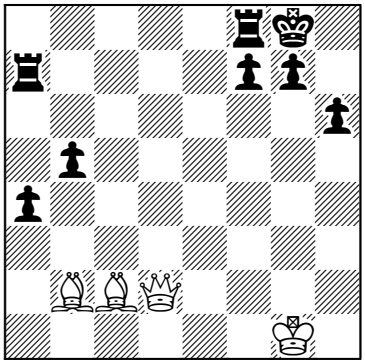


Exercise 1b (W)

Exercise 2: The diagram shows an unusual balance of five connected passed pawns for a rook. Those pawns aren't far from queening, but on the other hand, White has doubled rooks on the seventh rank. With White to play, who do you think stands better and why?



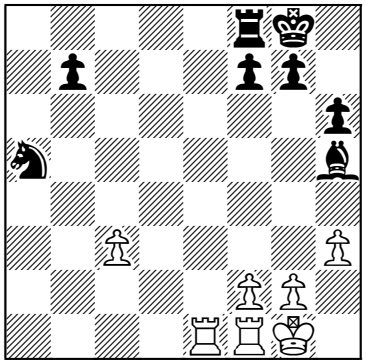
Exercise 2 (W)



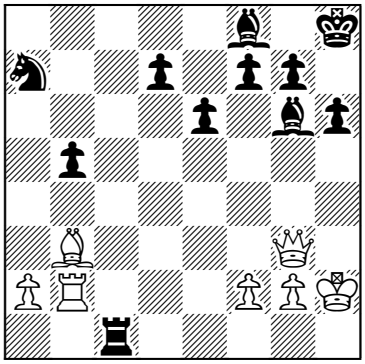
Exercise 3 (W)

Exercise 3: From the diagram, how many different ways can White combine his queen and a bishop to sensibly threaten mate in one? Which way do you believe to be best?

Exercise 4: In both of the exercise positions, suggest a way in which White can guarantee winning material.

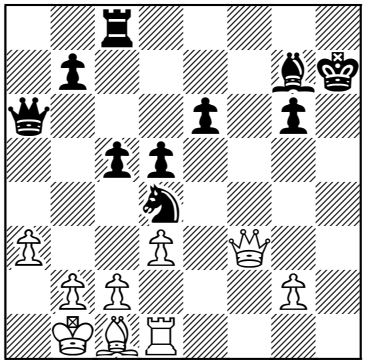


Exercise 4a (W)

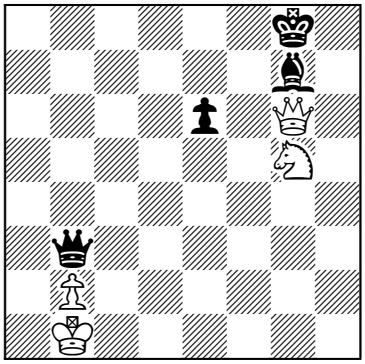


Exercise 4b (W)

Exercise 5: White is a piece down in this position, but is there any realistic way in which he can create a serious attack along the h-file?



Exercise 5 (W)



Exercise 6 (W)

Exercise 6: White has more than one way to cruise to victory from the exercise position. Which (and again there is more than one!) of the following six suggested start moves should (with the correct follow-up) see him get there?

a) 1 Qh7+

b) 1 Qf7+

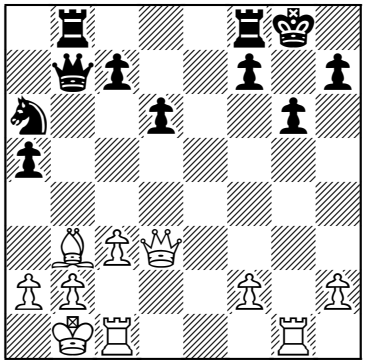
c) 1 Qe8+

d) 1 Qxe6+

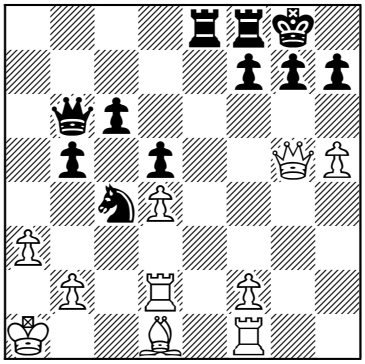
e) 1 Qc2

f) 1 Nxe6

Exercise 7: From the diagram, can you suggest a suitable plan for White (to move) to employ to try to compromise the black king shield.



Exercise 7 (W)



Exercise 8 (W)

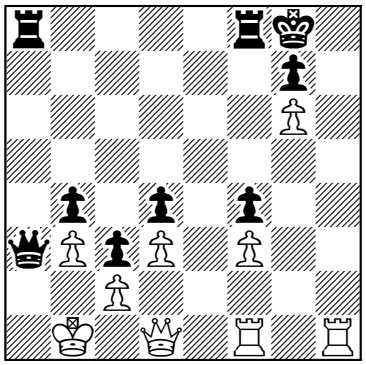
Exercise 8: Black is a pawn up with a superbly placed knight in the exercise diagram. However, White has some good attacking prospects of his own. Which of the following suggestions is his most accurate way to continue?

a) 1 Rd3, i.e. moving the attacked rook with the possible intention of a 'rook swinger' along the third rank.

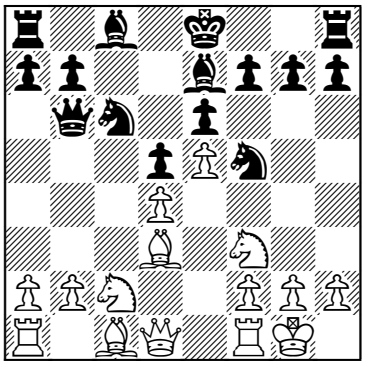
b) 1 Rg1 with serious threats along the g-file.

c) 1 h6 with the intention of creating problems on g7.

d) 1 Bc2 with the aim of focusing on h7.



Exercise 9 (W)



Exercise 10 (B)

Exercise 9: With Black threatening an immediate checkmate, is there any hope for White (on the move) whatsoever?

Exercise 10: In the final exercise of this chapter, can Black (to play) successfully get away with winning a pawn in a smash and grab raid on d4? Analyse the move 1...Nfxd4 and deliver your conclusion.

Chapter Three

More Practical Lessons

- The Overloaded Piece
- Exploiting Unprotected Pieces
- Discovered Check Carnage
- Escaping Pins Houdini Style!
- Legall's Mate
- Copying Errors and Miscalculations
- A Pinning Interlude
- Tricks to Aid in Promotion

The Overloaded Piece

An overloaded piece is one which is being asked to do more tasks than it is capable of fulfilling. Depending on the position, 'too many' may be just two. In Diagram 1 the rooks are all attacking pawns which are protected by the friendly kings.



TIP: Most of the time, and particularly in positions involving rooks, connected pawns (such as the black ones on b6 and c6) are preferable to isolated pawns (such as the white ones on h2 and f2). The most obvious reason for this is because, by definition, connected pawns are capable of supporting each other, whereas isolated pawns have no compatriot pawn on either adjacent file.

Here, the white king is the more stretched of the two and, as advised in the previous tip, Black has the superior pawn structure. I would certainly prefer to have the black position (as it easier to advance his passed pawns), but neither side can immediately win any material. Note that Black to play could try 1...Rxh2? 2 Kxh2 Rxf2+, but two pawns for a rook is not a good deal!

The black king has no problems defending its pawns as they are both within close range.

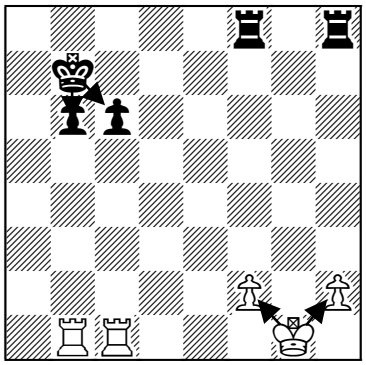


Diagram 1
Kings defend pawns

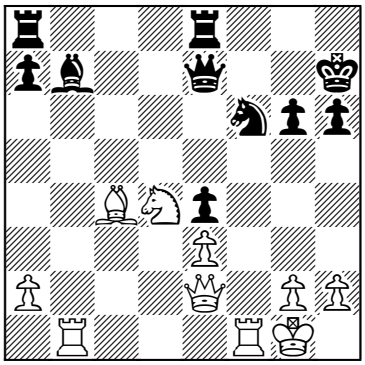


Diagram 2 (W)
The black queen is overloaded

In Diagram 2 the black queen is being asked to defend both the bishop on b7 and the knight on f6. With that in mind, both **1 Rxf6!** Qxf6 2 Rxb7+ and **1 Rxb7**! Qxb7 2 Rxf6 would net two minor pieces for a rook.



TIP: Two minor pieces (bishops and knights) for a rook mathematically constitutes a gain of just 1 point, but in practice it tends to be more valuable than that, particularly in the opening and middlegame.

A more complicated example comes from one of my own encounters. Here, 23 moves into the game, Diagram 3 could have been reached, in which I would actually have been a piece down.

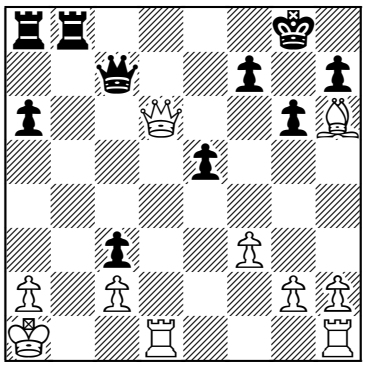


Diagram 3 (B)
Time to use the b-file

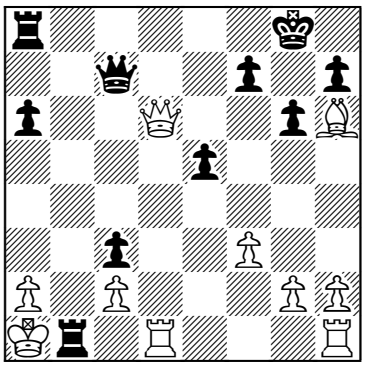


Diagram 4 (W)
The white rook is overloaded

However, I had everything under control and actually intended the rook sacrifice **23...Rb1+!** (see Diagram 4). My point was that, after **24 Kxb1**, I could deliver checkmate along the b-file via **24...Qb7+ 25 Ka1** (okay White could delay matters a move by a kamikaze queen block on the b-file first, but obviously it wouldn't help in the slightly longer run!) **25...Qb2.**

Rather than get checkmated, White should take on b1 with his rook. However, the d1-rook doing the taking is officially overloaded as its main role was protecting the white queen on d6. After **24 Rxb1 Qxd6** Black would be material up.



WARNING: Beware overworking any of your own pieces and always be on the lookout to exploit any overloaded pieces of your opponents.

Exploiting Unprotected Pieces

I have already touched upon why it is very important to keep an eye on unprotected pieces. Look after your own to ensure that you don't lose them, and your

opponents' in case you can turn that situation to your own advantage. Reminding ourselves of the topic, let's take a look at two relatively simple examples.

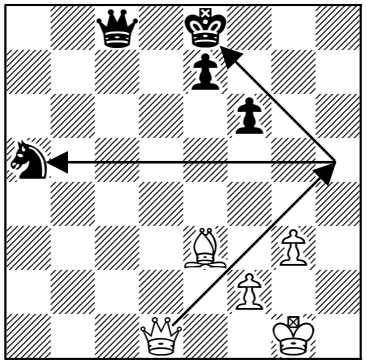


Diagram 5 (W)
A loose knight

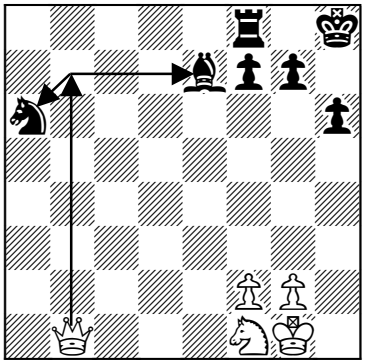


Diagram 6 (W)
Forking ahead!

In Diagram 5 the black knight on a5 is unguarded. To attack it and something else at the same time could easily result in a material gain, and doing just the job is **1 Qh5+!**. Black must escape the check after which the white queen will be ready to snap up the offside knight. Note that 1 Qa4+ would not be as effective because Black could kill two birds with one stone. He could rescue the knight and simultaneously block the check with 1...Nc6.



TIP: Knights on the rim are dim! I think that I have got this piece of advice into every single book that I have ever written. The simple fact is that knights control fewer squares when they are stuck out on the edge compared to when they are more centralized.

In Diagram 6, again we see an unprotected black knight languishing on the a-file. Another black piece which is officially *en prise* is the bishop on e7. White can exploit this situation with the simple fork **1 Qb7!**, after which Black will have to say 'farewell' to one of those minor pieces.

We have previously seen, and will continue to see, how effective knights can be in an attack. One of the reasons that strong players often consider them to be slightly inferior to bishops is that, when they are out on a limb, they can become a liability. The long range power of the bishop may enable it to escape trouble by quickly transferring from one side of the board to another. The knight is a more cumbersome piece. Do remember the advice that 'knights on the rim are dim', but on the other hand do consider that a knight may temporarily move to the edge whilst on the way to greener pastures.

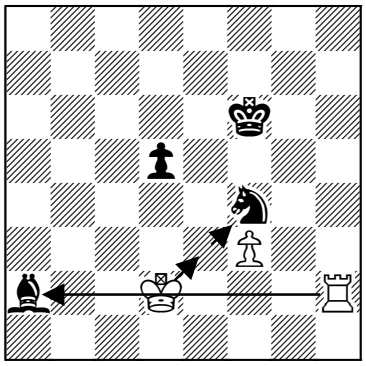


Diagram 7 (W)
Two to exploit!

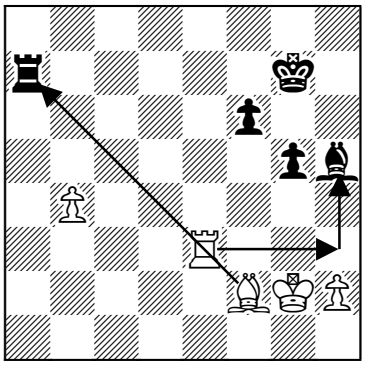


Diagram 8 (W)
Uncovering the bishop

In Diagram 7, both Black's knight and bishop are unguarded. The move **1 Ke3!** directly attacks the knight with the king, but also unleashes a discovered attack on the black bishop from the white rook. Black will lose a minor piece.

In Diagram 8 the sly continuation is **1 Rh3!**. The rook attacks the bishop on h5 whilst the uncovered bishop on f2 hits the rook on a7.

NOTE: Simple logic naturally dictates that if a piece is attacked by an enemy one of lesser value, it is isn't sufficient to just defend it as material would effectively be lost when they are traded.

Bearing the above note in mind, in our last example, even if the rook on a7 was protected (or say perhaps the black rook was on b6 with a pawn on a7), the same trick would still be applicable, though White would only net the exchange rather than a whole piece. The important point is that, after the discovered attack 1 Rh3, the black rook is unable to move to a square which defends the h5-bishop. Were it able to move to a square that attacks an undefended white piece then he might be okay, but here the pawn on b4 is as good as it gets.

Discovered Check Carnage

In Diagram 9 White is a queen for a bishop down and is in danger of losing his bishop with mate. However, it is amazing what can be salvaged with the help of a discovered attack, and that is exactly the case here. In Chapter 1 I introduced the concept of discovered and double checks, and here I would just like to stress how important they can be. Check out **1 Rg8+!! Kxg8 2 Rg1 mate**. What a transforma-

tion from the starting position to Diagram 10 – and what a cool way to end the game!

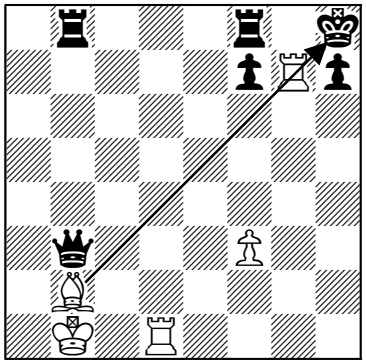


Diagram 9 (W)
The black king is cornered

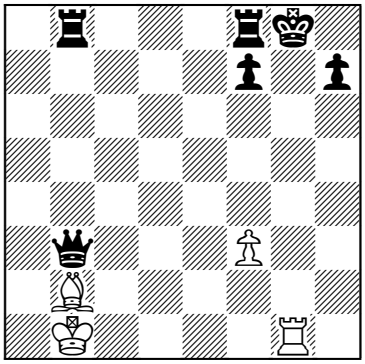


Diagram 10
Yes, it's mate!

Even though the bishop was attacked, the b2-h8 diagonal proved vital and the double check rook sacrifice was a killer.



TIP: Often it is better to retain the option of a discovered check than to give the check itself.

In our last example the black king was boxed in on h8 and there is a similar scenario in Diagram 11. The black king is sort of trapped in the corner, but there seems little prospect of checkmate when you consider that a white rook retreat along the g-file would allow the monarch to escape his cage via h7 and h6.

Black is plenty of material up, but you are about to witness a radical turnaround.

At first it seems inconceivable that the positions in Diagrams 11 and 12 are related, but play through the following continuation and you will soon start to get the picture.

1 Rxf7+ (a check of the discovered type) **1...Kg8 2 Rg7+** (cleverly loading up another discovered check) **2...Kh8 3 Rxe7+** (and then using it to bag more material) **3...Kg8 4 Rg7+** (White is getting a taste for this 'seesaw' style action!) **4...Kh8** (whilst Black is compelled to move his king!) **5 Rxd7+** (White is enjoying himself) **5...Kg8** (and Black is not!) **6 Rg7+ Kh8 7 Rxc7+** (thank you) **7...Kg8 8 Rg7+ Kh8 9 Rxb7+** (thank you!) **9...Kg8 10 Rg7+ Kh8 11 Rxa7+** (and thank you again!) **11...Kg8 12 Rxa8** and incredibly White emerges a rook up (see Diagram 12).

Such a checking sequence is often referred to as 'rocker checks' and, as you've just seen, is a very useful weapon.

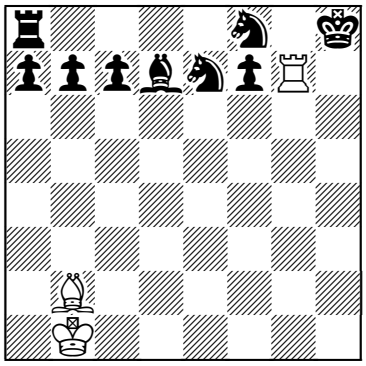


Diagram 11 (W)
Ready to rock and roll!

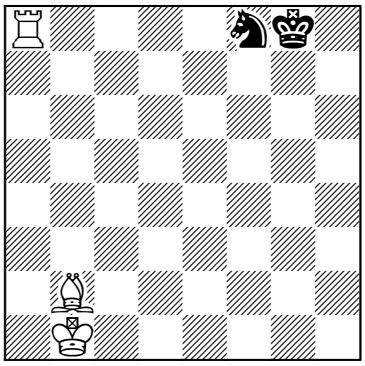


Diagram 12 (B)
No longer hungry!

Escaping Pins Houdini Style!

In Chapter 1 I gave the definition of a pin. With that in mind, the following two examples are bending that description a bit!

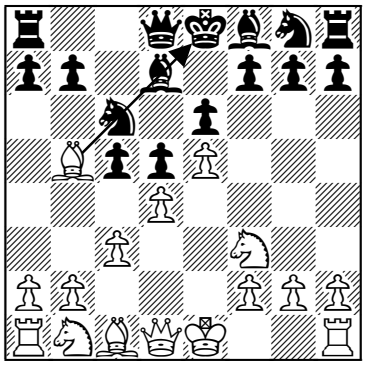


Diagram 13 (B)
Not a great pin!

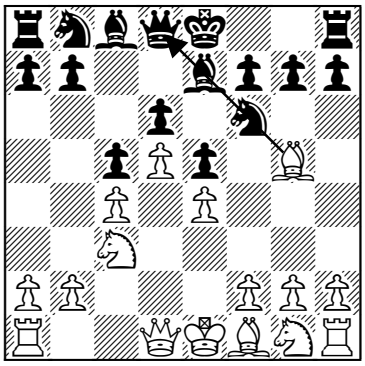


Diagram 14 (B)
More of the same

NOTE: A 'bad' bishop is one which has its view hindered by friendly pawns fixed on the same colour as the one on which it operates.

In Diagram 13, White's last move, 6 Bb5, hasn't pinned the c6-knight to the black

king but rather to the 'bad' bishop on d7. As White should be looking to preserve his good bishop (particularly for anything less than a queen or a rook!), just in general terms, it should go down as a poor idea.



TIP: When in possession of a space advantage, one should avoid fair swaps.

So, to clarify, especially with the space advantage afforded to him by his pawns on d4 and particularly e5, White shouldn't desire swapping off his light-squared bishop for either a knight or a bishop. To make matters worse, **6 Bb5?** walks into the tactic **6...Nxe5!**. The white pawn on e5 was defended by the d-pawn and the f3-knight, but the text puts the bishops into direct confrontation. After **7 Bxd7+**, Black can retrieve his endangered knight via **7...Nxd7.** That little combination will have netted him a free pawn and gotten his bad bishop swapped off into the bargain.

Diagram 14 is a similar scenario. White's last, poor move of 6 Bg5? pins the knight, not to the black queen but rather to the bad bishop on e7. Not much of a pin, and in fact well punished by **6...Nxd5!**. As White's good bishop on g5 isn't even defended once and is effectively attacked twice (by the black bishop and the queen behind it), White finds himself in a similar predicament to our last example. Once more the bishop swap **7 Bxe7** is met by the escape from the cauldron **7...Nxe7**.

To demonstrate how complicated and in frequent need of calculation chess can be, from Diagram 14 **6...Nxe4** would be also tricky. Were White just to take this knight with his own then Black would regain the piece on g5, ultimately emerging a pawn up. Hence **7 Bxe7**, but then **7...Nxc3** would leave both queens attacked. Again the simple recapture on c3 would just leave White a pawn down and with a worse structure after he takes on e7, and so **8 Bxd8 Nxd1** and then **9 Bc7** is critical.



WARNING: Beware pinning a knight to a bad bishop. The previous two examples more than adequately demonstrate why.

Now we move onto the 'great escape artist' relevance of this section. In Diagram 15 the black bishop is pinning the white knight to the queen. Nevertheless, it is White who is going to make the most of the d1-g4 diagonal, and specifically the fact that the black bishop is unprotected. Yes, White would very much like to take the bishop with his queen immediately, but it is of course knights and not queens that do the jumping! The only way that the queen is going to get the opportunity to take the enemy bishop before the bishop can take her majesty is if the white knight moves away with check. As it happens that is exactly the case after the standard combination **1 Bxf7+! Kxf7 2 Ng5+**. Yes, in Diagram 16, as Black is in check the g4-bishop doesn't get the chance to take the queen, and in fact it is the bishop that will perish next. The outcome will be that White will win a free pawn and a very useful one at that. There will be a big hole on e6 and of course Black will no longer be able to castle.

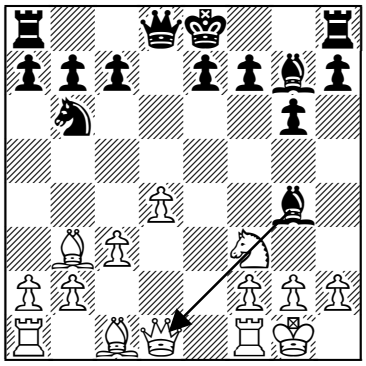


Diagram 15 (W)
Looking for a check

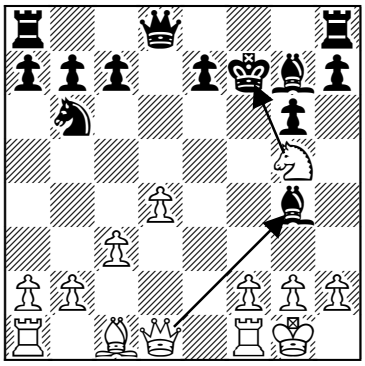


Diagram 16 (B)
No time to take the queen

Clearly Black suffered because his bishop was unprotected, but in fact a pinning piece can be punished even if it does have a guardian. Take, for example (and there are many positions of this type), a standard position in the Queen's Gambit Accepted after the moves 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Bg4 5 Bxc4. It is Black's move in Diagram 17 and already we can pinpoint a couple of weaknesses in his camp. We know that one should seek to exploit the opponent's undefended pieces and here the b7-pawn comes into that category. I was also eager to mention earlier in the book why the f2- and f7-squares should be monitored at all times. As well as the clever combination that we soon see in action, White is currently threatening to win a pawn via the mundane fork 6 Qb3. In that instance the white queen would hit b7, whilst its partnership with the c4-bishop would attack f7.

It is Black to play in our starting position (Diagram 17) and I would definitely recommend 5...e6, blunting the c4-f7 diagonal and preparing to develop the dark-squared bishop. This would also bring Black one step nearer to castling. Before I go on, I should remind you that I have previously advocated castling early, and had Black have gotten around to doing that in our previous example (and indeed in the one you are about to see), then his king wouldn't have been lured into the firing line.

Suppose Black deals with his b-pawn problem via **5...b6?** instead. I don't like that move in any case, because the light-squared bishop has already moved to the kingside and this simply creates light-squared holes. More to the point though, observe the cool combination **6 Bxf7+! Kxf7 7 Ne5+** (see Diagram 18). The knight on f6 is guarding the bishop on g4, but as the white knight was able to check on e5 instead of g5, another piece is attacking it. Just as before, White will emerge a pawn to the good, with the black king position looking shaky.

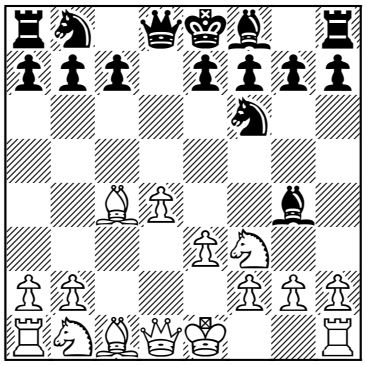


Diagram 17 (B)
Targeting f7 and b7

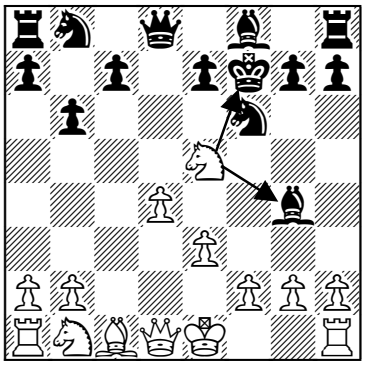


Diagram 18 (B)
A fork beats a pin!

Legall's Mate

Let me show you a famous checkmate. The moves 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 Bg4 4 Bc4 a6 lead us to Diagram 19 and, to be honest, Black's play has been rather poor. Sure, he put a pawn in the centre on his first move, but since then he has made an unnecessary pawn move on the edge of the board and ignored the 'knights before bishops' rule, which recommends that usually at least one knight should be brought into play before a bishop. Ironically, it is the bishop pin that he is now about to be punished for, though it should be noted that White's forthcoming play would not be successful had Black now got a knight on f6 or c6.

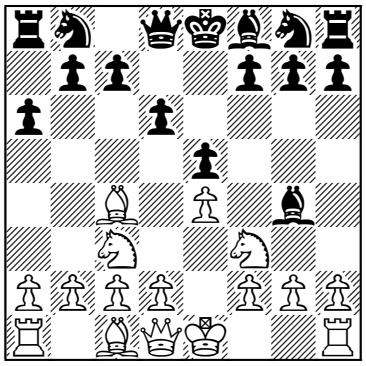


Diagram 19 (W)
Hold onto your seat!

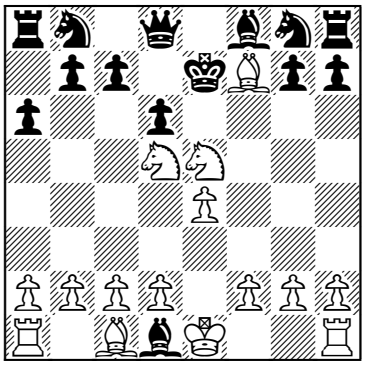


Diagram 20
Wow!

5 Nxe5! is extremely visual. This knight can be taken, but then the white queen will zap the bishop. **5...Bxd1** nets the queen, but allows the three developed white minor pieces to combine to devastating effect: **6 Bxf7+ Ke7 7 Nd5 mate** (see Diagram 20).



WARNING: Remember to adhere to opening principles, especially developing pieces. One can't do battle without an army!

Copying Errors and Miscalculations

To play reasonable chess, one needs to take one's time and think things through carefully. An extremely common mistake that I see occur, particularly at junior level, is the good old 'copying error'.

In Diagram 21, let's say that White's dark-squared bishop has just taken a knight on f6. Most likely having come from g5, it seems like a completely unnecessary exchange. After all, being pinned to the queen, the knight wasn't going anywhere and, had the black queen strayed off the d8-g5 diagonal, a trade on f6 would have resulted in Black having to compromise his pawn structure. Okay, it's fair to say that ...Be7 to 'unpin' was probably up soon anyway, but my argument stands all the same.



TIP: Don't be so eager to release pins. Remember that (barring tricks!) a pinned piece doesn't do the job it might otherwise do, and you may be able to turn the situation even more to your advantage later.

Surely the most natural-looking and best move for Black from Diagram 21 is 1...Qxf6, re-establishing material equality and adding further pressure to the pinned white knight on f3.

I have, however, lost track of the amount of times in which I have seen a response such as **1...Bxf3?**, adopting a kind of 'Well, if it's good for you, then it's good for me!' type attitude. If, in a different scenario, all has been calculated and it's been decided that this is the best move for the job, then fair play. However, too often this sort of thing occurs when its exponent is blissfully unaware of any complications ahead. Ironically, the chances are that play would continue 2 Qxf3 Qxf6, and after a queen swap, Black would escape with just a compromised kingside pawn structure. A little vision though would uncover the variation **2 Bxd8 Bxd1**, and now not just both sides taking the bishops located on the queen home squares, which would again leave the piece count even, but rather **3 Bb6!** (see Diagram 22). White saves his bishop, at the same time attacking the rook on a7. When Black opts to preserve his rook, he will find himself 3 points down after White takes on d1.

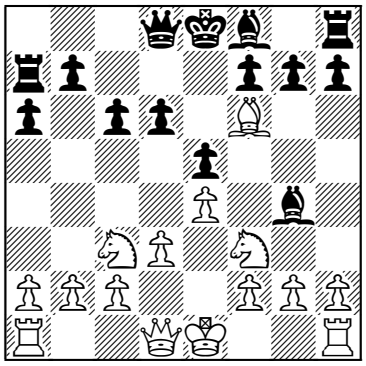


Diagram 21 (B)
A released pin

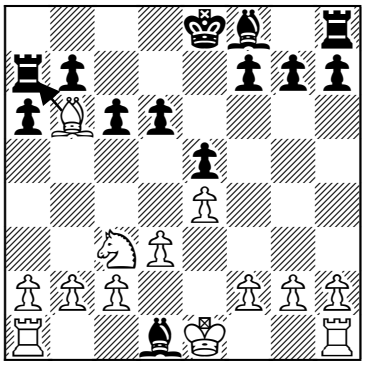


Diagram 22 (B)
Withdrawn for more action!

Incorporating something along similar lines, take a look at Diagram 23 in which it is Black to move. I would suggest that White holds a very small advantage because the pin on his knight is slightly awkward to escape. Certainly he is unlikely to ever want to meet Bxf6 with ...gxf6 as, with a shattered defensive shell, his king will then be exposed and vulnerable to attack. 1...Qd6 would unpin the knight and even facilitate a future cheeky ...Bc7 to threaten mate on h2 (though this can easily be prevented by Bg3). Also sensible is 1...Re8, but again I want to focus my attention on a common mistake that surprisingly often goes unpunished.

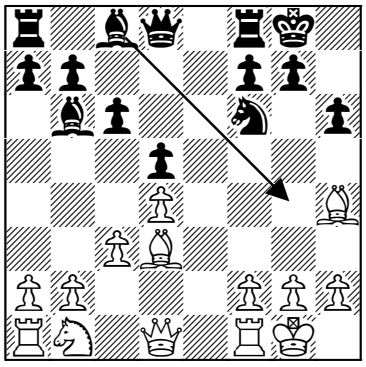


Diagram 23 (B)
About to blunder?

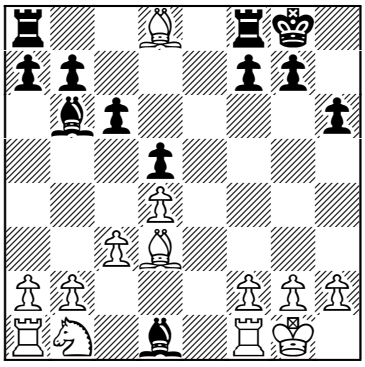


Diagram 24 (B)
Simply a piece down

The casual **1...Bg4?** attacks the white queen but opens up a whole new can of

worms! More often than not at lower level I would witness the almost instantaneous reaction of the white queen being moved out of danger, or perhaps the f2-pawn being advanced to block the attack. The reality of the situation, though, is that there is much to consider. Sure, the black queen attacks the bishop, but in that respect feelings are mutual! Indeed, the black bishop is only defended by the knight on f6 which is in turn pinned to the black queen. Yes, suddenly the plot thickens! Certainly 2 Qxg4 should even be considered, although upon 2...Nxg4 3 Bxd8 Raxd8, not a lot has been achieved. In contrast **2 Bxf6!** exposes Black's careless last move. Obviously the simple recapture on f6 drops the bishop on g4, but in fact **2...Bxd1 3 Bxd8** (see Diagram 24) ultimately fares little better. Black emerges from the complications a piece down, having to decide whether to take on d8 or preserve his own light-squared bishop.



TIP: Don't forget it pays to be careful at all times.

The basic mistake of the previous example can be easily avoided once a bit of analysis is done, but the following opening trap shows that sometimes there can be a sting in the tail.

In Diagram 25 White has just played 9 Bg5 attacking the black queen.

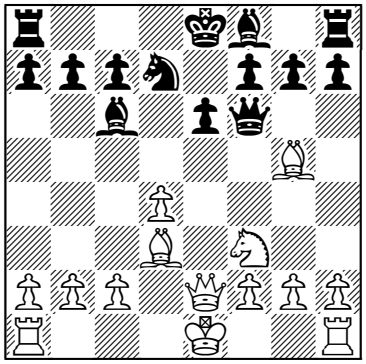


Diagram 25 (B)
A trapped black queen

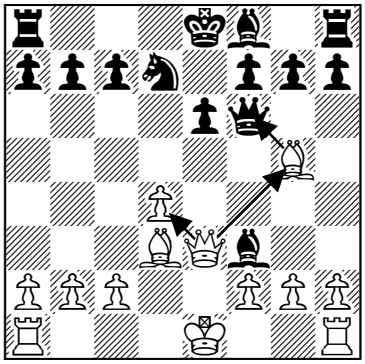


Diagram 26 (B)
No get-out clause!

Her majesty is exceedingly short of squares, but **9...Bxf3** eliminates the white dark-squared bishop's guardian whilst simultaneously counter-attacking White's own queen. To recapture on f3 would allow the black queen the chance to safely take on g5 and emerge a piece up. However, **10 Qe3!** (see Diagram 26) is incredibly crafty. Yes, White eschews the black bishop on f3 because he has bigger fish to fry. As this also cuts out the escape route on d4, the black queen is trapped for good this time.

A Pinning Interlude

I just want to take a little time out to remind everyone that a pinned piece either doesn't do the job that it originally does, or else fulfilling its role may now come at a price. Often basic mathematics comes into play. Take the situation depicted in Diagram 27. As it stands, the black knight on f6 is pinned to the rook by the white bishop on g5. If the knight were to move away then Black may lose the rook for nothing. Upon **1 Qxg4** though, were the b-file not open then it would obviously still make sense for Black to recapture the queen immediately, as gaining 9 points but losing 5 points is still a gain.

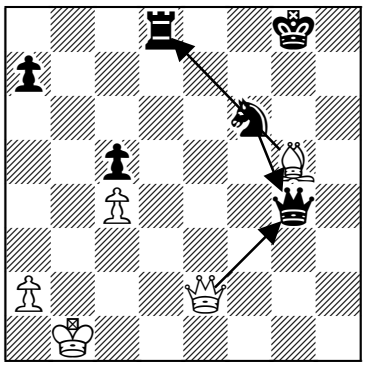


Diagram 27 (W)
Relative values

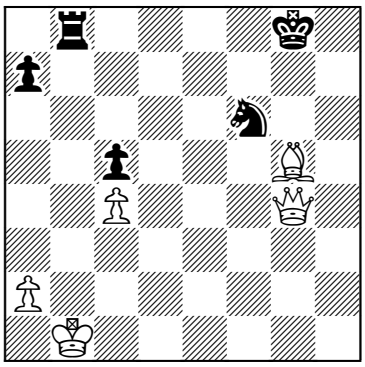


Diagram 28 (W)
A valuable 'intermezzo'

As the b-file is open though, before Black recaptures on g4 there is a *zwischenzug* or 'intermezzo' on offer. That sounds complicated, but basically all it means is that a clever and beneficial in-between move can be employed in the middle of a sequence. Specifically here, that move is **1...Rb8+!** (see Diagram 28). Essentially this intermezzo sees Black escape the pin via a free check. After White moves his king out of check, the knight can then recapture the queen on g4 and, as the rook is no longer on d8, White will remain a rook down.

Please now take in Diagram 29 where, hopefully, you will be agreeable with the following observations:

1) Black is threatening mate by taking the bishop on b2.

2) Black is effectively forking the bishop on b2 and the undefended rook on h1.

3) In a slightly different situation, if White did have more time, he could consider employing any of the following attacking ideas:

a) Align the queen and rook on the h-file with the intention of delivering mate on h7.

b) Manoeuvre the queen to h6 where it could slide into the gap on g7. Backed up by the bishop on b2, that would of course be mate.

c) Align the queen and bishop along the b2-h8 diagonal. Then both Qg7 and Qh8 would be mate.

d) Try to destroy the shield around the black king, possibly by advancing the f-pawn to challenge Black's pawn structure.

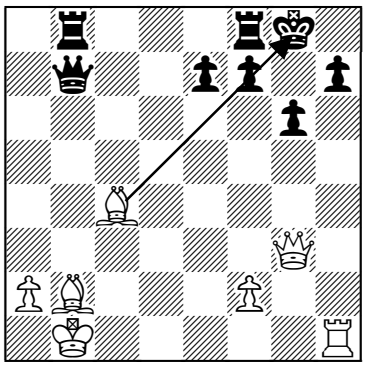


Diagram 29 (W)
The pinned f7-pawn!

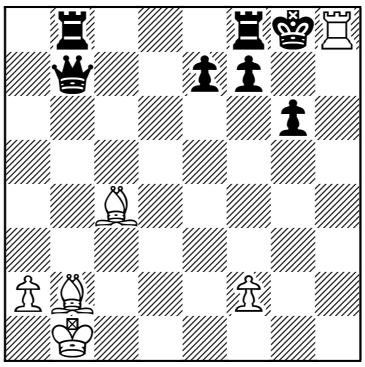


Diagram 30
Nice!

If you have now sneaked a look at Diagram 30 then you will know that, while observation '3d' had a certain amount of logic to it, in our particular example with White to move, it was clearly too slow.

The key here is in observing that, although Black does have a pawn shell around his king, in fact some pins come into play. The f7-pawn is definitely pinned by the c4-bishop to the king on g8. Hence it isn't really guarding its compatriot on g6. The h-pawn can advance but it, too, can't afford to transfer files as there would then be a mate on h8. All becomes clear after the continuation **1 Qxg6+!!**. Recapturing with the f-pawn would be an illegal move, and hence **1...hxg6** and then **2 Rh8 mate** is forced (see Diagram 30).



WARNING: Remember, a newly-pinned piece may no longer fulfil the role that it did before. If you were relying on this piece to perform a vital function then you must be aware that you need to reconsider the situation carefully.

Tricks to Aid Promotion

Everybody loves getting a pawn to the end of the board and obtaining a replacement queen, or indeed a new one to compliment the one (or more!?) already in existence. Typically a plan of promoting a pawn becomes more relevant in the endgame stage of an encounter, where there are fewer enemy pieces on hand to halt passed pawns.

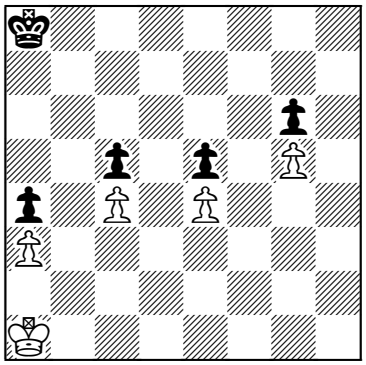


Diagram 31
No way in!

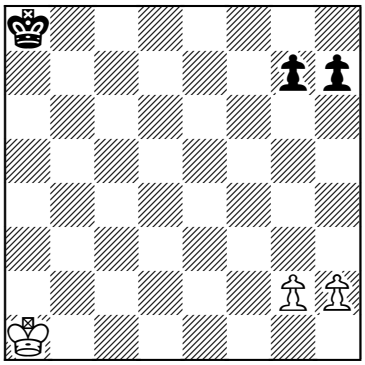


Diagram 32
Kings required!

In the two illustrated positions, there are no great shakes. Diagram 31 is in fact completely blocked. The pawns can't move and a close inspection reveals that, however much time either king has, there is no way into the opponent's position to do some guzzling (i.e. capturing of opposing pawns) as each entry square is covered by the targeted enemy pawns.

Diagram 32 offers a little more flexibility, but if left to their own devices (and do try out a few moves for yourself), the pawns would eventually reach an impasse. Earlier in the book I informed the readers how the king is a very useful piece in endgames, and here it should definitely earn its corn. Both sides would be highly advised to employ their monarchs without delay, but as they are currently equidistant, sensible play should lead to a draw.

Diagram 33, however, is about to provide us with a bit more excitement. The black monarch undoubtedly holds the more dominant of the king placings and is about to descend on the white pawns.

A simple analysis of the position uncovers that 1 a6, for example, would achieve little – after 1...bxa6 2 bxa6 Kd5 or, for that matter, 1...b6. Either way the white pawns would be sitting ducks for the hungry black king.

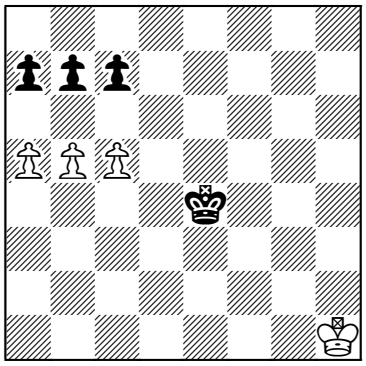


Diagram 33 (W)
Watch this space!

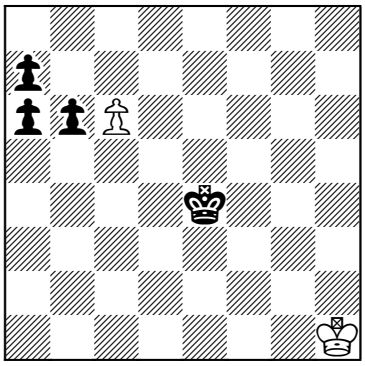


Diagram 34 (B)
Can't stop me now!

Instead, amazingly White can force a pawn home through with **1 b6!! cxb6** (or the symmetrical 1...axb6 2 c6!) **2 a6! bxa6 3 c6** (see Diagram 34). Outnumbered heavily at present, the small white pawn will soon be a mighty queen and, together with the king, will clean up, no problem!



WARNING: Sometimes all is not as it seems. Open your mind up to different possibilities and you might just be surprised.

Regarding the above warning, take a look at Diagram 35. White has a bishop for a knight in an endgame, and although more often than not that is a good thing, the focus here is on the pawn structure. One way in which White may think is that he wants to net the black pawns, and hence he needs to start by attacking the g7-pawn. With that in mind, many may only consider a plan involving manoeuvring the bishop to f8. However, because of where the black king is situated, that itself is not easy, and furthermore... knights on the rim are dim! Yes, steeds control less squares when on the edge and even fewer (two to be precise!) when stuck in a corner. The black knight is poor on a8, but will soon be back in action and could always fulfil a useful defensive duty on e8.

Thinking 'outside of the box' brings new ideas. First up, the best move is **1 Bh6!**. It is unusual to attack a pawn where the pawn can do taking, but upon **1...gxh6 2 g7** there is no preventing a promotion.

Were the white bishop on c3 instead then it could sacrifice itself, with the justification that **1 Bxe5! fxe5 2 f6** would also force a g-pawn promotion. With a similar idea, from our starting position (i.e. Diagram 35, with the bishop back on d2), **1 Bg5!** is also winning. The idea is to take the f6-pawn, and upon **1...fxg5 2 f6** (see Diagram 36), again there is no way for Black to prevent a white pawn touchdown.

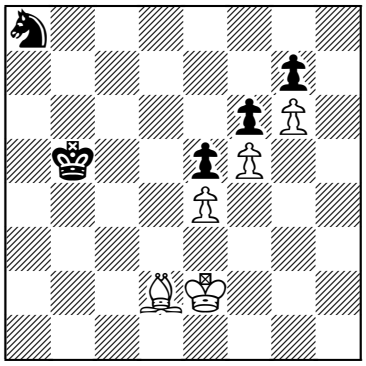


Diagram 35 (W)
Think outside the box!

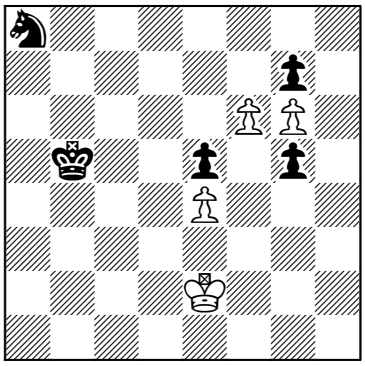


Diagram 36 (B)
Coming through!

White is a pawn down in the endgame shown in Diagram 37 and, although passive, the black knight appears to be holding the fort and, in particular, the b7-pawn which in turn is preventing the white a-pawn from promoting. However, all is not as it seems and **1 Bxb7!!** cleverly highlights the deficiencies of a knight. Yes, after **1...Nxb7 2 a6** (see Diagram 38) the attacked knight simply can't manoeuvre itself in time to prevent White's a-pawn from succeeding in its quest. The black king is too far away to offer any help, and to add insult to injury, ignoring the bishop on move 1 was of no use either. Obviously Black would prefer to concede his knight for the pawn rather than have it promote but the presence of a pawn on e6 left the manoeuvre ...Ne6-c7 unplayable.

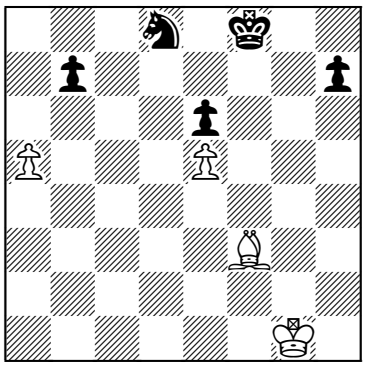


Diagram 37 (W)
The fort is not secure

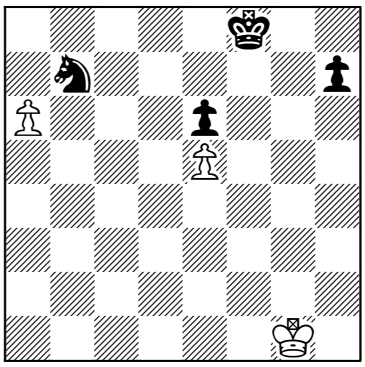


Diagram 38 (B)
The knight is powerless



TIP: Pawns tend to become more of a threat when they are closer to promotion. Always keep an eye out for possible piece sacrifices that might aid in a safe passage through to the end.

To end the chapter I have a very important endgame concept. In Diagram 39 the white a-pawn is just one square from promotion, but it is still a case of 'so near, yet so far'. Its own rook is in its way, placed on a very passive square. In contrast the black rook is excellent. It restricts the white king to the back rank and, more importantly, in line with general principles, it is posted behind a passed pawn.

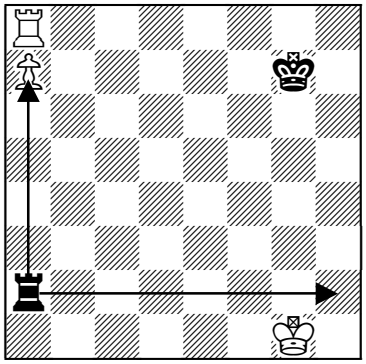


Diagram 39 (B)
Rooks belong behind passed pawns

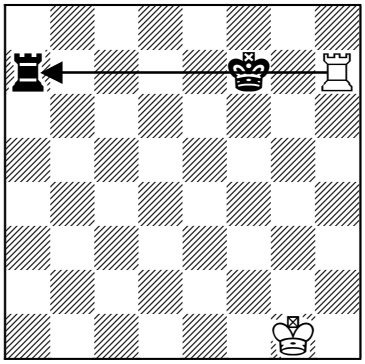


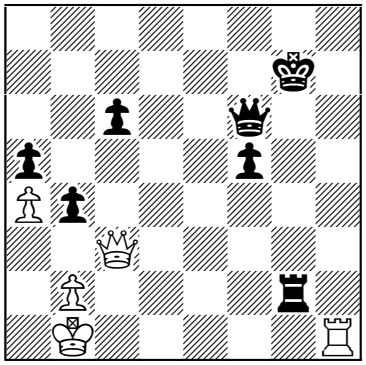
Diagram 40 (B)
Skewered!

Black need not panic at all because White cannot make progress. Thinking ahead (as is always recommended), the white king can, in time, escape its back rank by travelling over to b1. All Black need do, though, is keep the rook behind the a-pawn (oscillating up and down) so that White never gets the opportunity to bring his rook out and advance his pawn. Indeed, the only critical situation should be if the white king makes it up to say b6, when the white rook extraction would indeed be threatened. In that event, though, the black rook, which will have kept its distance on, say, a1, merely needs to give a check on the b-file. When the white king is driven away from protecting its pawn, the black rook can return to active duty on the a-file.

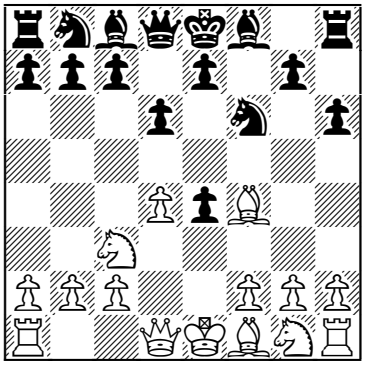
All well and good, but if Black was unaware of the trick to follow, he might be tempted to think he can march his own king over to the queenside where it can help round up the seventh rank pawn before the enemy monarch arrives on the scene. Alas **1...Kf7??** (or 1...Kf6?? 2 Rf8+ followed by a8Q next) **2 Rh8! Rxa7 3 Rh7+** (see Diagram 40) is a crushing skewer that distorts the fact that the black rook was ideally placed.

Exercises

Exercise 1: Assuming (as one always should when faced with puzzles) best play, with White to move what do you think should be the correct outcome of this game: a White win, a Black win, or a draw?



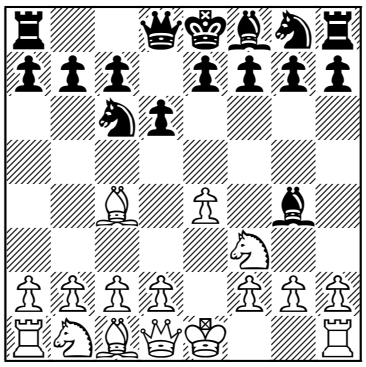
Exercise 1 (W)



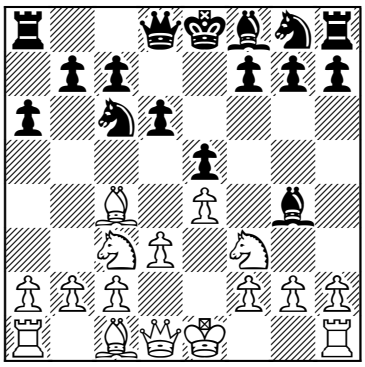
Exercise 2 (W)

Exercise 2: From the diagram, would the immediate regain of the pawn by 1 Nxe4 be a blunder for White or not?

Exercise 3: With White to move, which of the suggestions 1 h3, 1 Bxf7+ and 1 Ng5 would you say is preferable?



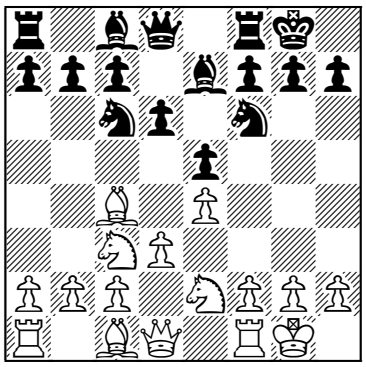
Exercise 3 (W)



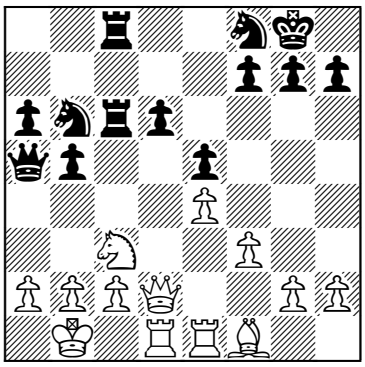
Exercise 4 (W)

Exercise 4: With potentially similar themes involved to the previous question, here I want to know whether either (or both) of 1 Bxf7+ or 1 Nxe5 is justified?

Exercise 5: There doesn't appear to be that much happening in the diagram, but with White to play I was wondering what you might think about the move 1 Bg5 and Black's possible response to that of 1...Nxe4 - ?



Exercise 5 (W)

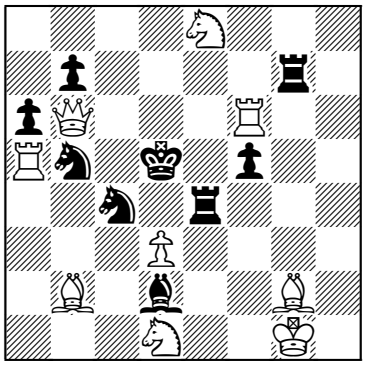


Exercise 6 (W)

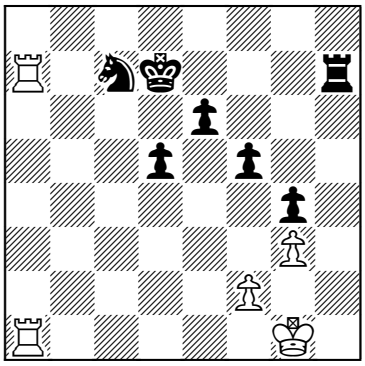
Exercise 6: In this position the material situation is level, but Black appears to be building up an initiative on the queenside. However, White to move can employ the *zwischenzug* concept to take advantage of the positioning of the black major pieces. Can you spot how?

Exercise 7: I'm not usually a fan of these sort of questions, but for a bit of fun, and to test that you are noticing all that is going on...

White to move can surely secure victory in many different ways. There is, however, only one way in which he can deliver checkmate in one move. Amongst the numerous checks, can you find that special one that is mate?

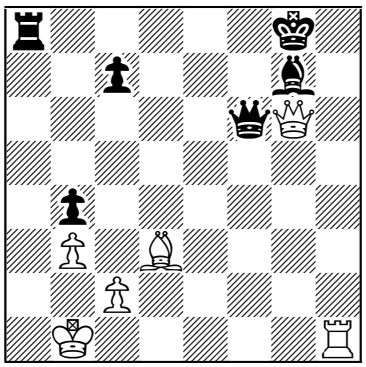


Exercise 7 (W)

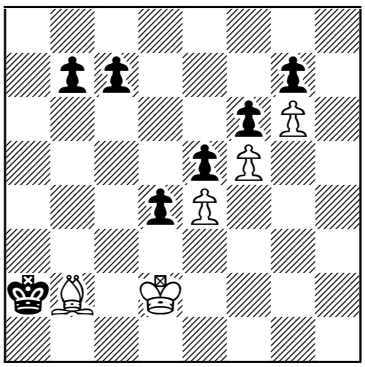


Exercise 8 (W)

Exercise 8: How can White (to play) take advantage of the pinned black knight?



Exercise 9 (W)



Exercise 10 (W)

Exercise 9: Bearing in mind the threats that Black has on a1 and b2, with White to play in the diagram, do any of the available checks do him any good, or should he swap queens?

Exercise 10: In the diagram White's bishop is attacked and he is facing the prospect of having to deal with three connected passed pawns. Currently on the move, realistically is there any hope for him?

Chapter Four

Popular Themes and Real Life Chess

- Introduction
- Deflections and Decoys
- Working with Knight Forks
- An Arabian Knight
- The Greek Gift
- Standard Sacrifices on f7 and e6
- Eliminating the Fianchettoed Bishop
- Exploiting the Restricted King
- The Development of a Combination

Introduction

Although I have stated previously that the aim in a game of chess is simply to win, most players may have some favourite themes that they would love to get to play in a real game. Most, for example, would be thrilled at the prospect of sacrificing a queen to deliver a smothered mate and would probably get a twinge of excitement when about to wheel out any combination. Will it look brilliant and its appearance have everyone hailing them as a genius? Or will they have miscalculated and have their plans flop miserably?

In this chapter I want to introduce a few more ideas and demonstrate some of the snazzier themes.



NOTE: Fantastic combinations and brilliant sacrifices really do occur in real games. One just has to be on the ball, so that when the opportunity to employ one comes along, it isn't allowed to pass.

Deflections and Decoys

In Diagram 1, in order to win White must achieve a successful promotion. To play 1 g8Q now would be silly as Black could concede his bishop for it, and as it is not possible to win with a king and bishop against a king, the game would be declared a draw. A far better idea is to drive the black bishop off the short h7-g8 diagonal and this can be achieved by the 'deflecting sacrifice' **1 Bb1!**. The bishop effectively acts as a decoy to lure its opposite number away from its main task. As the g8-square is covered by the white king, there are no other squares on the h7-g8 diagonal. Hence the black bishop is pushed away and after **1...Bxb1 2 g8Q** White should easily go on to win.

There is a similar situation in Diagram 2. White has a dangerous passed pawn on d7, but its promotion prospects are currently well monitored by the black knight on f7. The black king is also descending on the main action area a lot faster than the white monarch, and so it is up to the white knight to work some quick magic. As it happens it can do just that with the clever **1 Ne5+!**. It's very rare to see a knight forking an enemy king and knight, but that is exactly the case here. The point is of course that the white knight is working as a decoy. To move the black king would allow knight takes knight and a certain promotion, whilst **1...Nxe5 2 d8Q** is what White was counting on.



TIP: Always keep an eye out for ways in which to lure away defenders from critical defensive tasks.

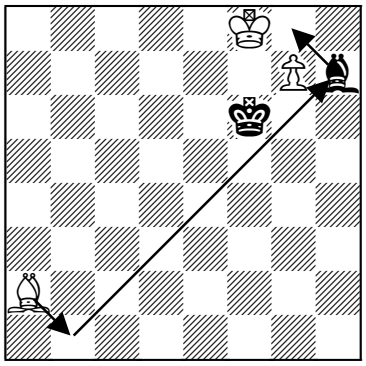


Diagram 1 (W)
Ready to deflect!

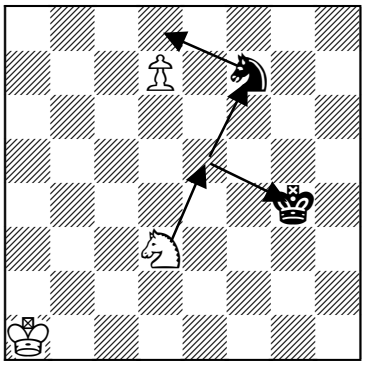


Diagram 2 (W)
About to fork!

That said, I would have to add that there is implied within a deflection or decoy a certain amount of justification. A feeble bribe attempt, the likes of which I frequently see, is most certainly not the same thing. To illustrate what I mean, take a look at Diagram 3.

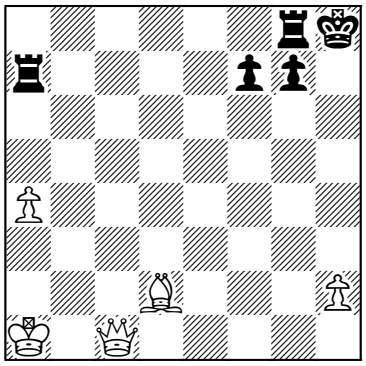


Diagram 3 (W)
Don't play for hopes!

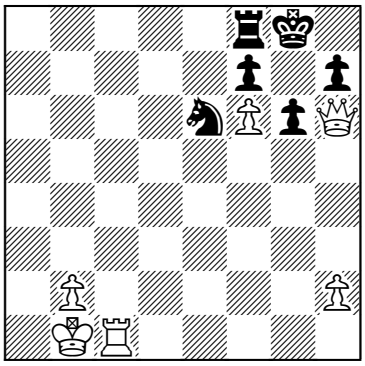


Diagram 4 (W)
Have a constructive plan!

White is a queen and a bishop for two rooks up but there are plenty of possibilities for him to mess up! He should defend his a-pawn or advance it, and with sensible play, in time he will be victorious. Too often, though, at lower levels I might see the likes of **1 Bh6?**, with the logic being that after the pawn takes the bishop, the queen will recapture and it would be checkmate. The point is, of course, that there

is absolutely no compulsion for Black to accept White's offering. Indeed, after **1...Rxa4+ 2 Kb2 Rb8+ 3 Kc3 Rc8+**, a handy skewer will have seen the tables completely turned.

Surely there is only going to be one winner in the trivial Diagram 4, but a 'duff deflection' such as 1 Rc5 or 1 Rc7 is hardly constructive. One can see the attraction of trying to tempt the black knight from its vital job of guarding g7, but in the event of either of those moves there is absolutely no need for Black to take the bait. White need not be in any hurry and could simply take time to promote his b-pawn. He could also plan to arrange a rook swap that would make life incredibly easy, but to terminate things swiftly a 'rook swinger' of Rc3-h3, with mating ideas on h7, looks good. Equally impressive, though, is a direct effort to remove the key defensive knight. After **1 Re1!** or **1 Rc6!** there would be nothing that Black could do about the exchange sacrifice on e6. Mate on g7 would be inevitable.



TIP: When playing chess always try to work with plans, rather than just playing unrelated moves at a time. Employ constructive ideas, rather than playing for hopes!

Working with Knight Forks

I don't know what it is about knights that bring the best and worst out of people. There just seems a certain thrill about delivering a knight fork, and possibly it is that factor that tends to persuade weaker players to overvalue knights when compared against other pieces.



TIP: Knights are tricky pieces and arguably the most unpredictable of all.

Do look out for forking opportunities of your own, but remember that you never play against a wall! Your opponent will have plans of his own, so ensure that you monitor the actions of enemy steeds.

In Diagram 5 Black is a queen for a rook and a knight up, but as we learnt earlier in the book, a white knight on f5 can be a very dangerous piece. Typically that would be when there is a queen around to combine in an attack, but here the partner in crime is the white rook. Were the black h-pawn back on h7 then White could exploit the opponent's vulnerability on the back rank with 1 Nd6. The knight would be immune to capture because of the mating 2 Rc8+ and, that aside, Black would not have enough time to deal with the skewer 2 Rc8 anyway. However, in our Diagram 5 the black king can escape the back rank via h7, so such a move would not be successful. A useful theme to commit to memory, though, is **1 Rc8!**. This skewers the black king and queen and, after **1...Qxc8 2 Ne7+**, Diagram 6 depicts the white knight delivering a killer fork.

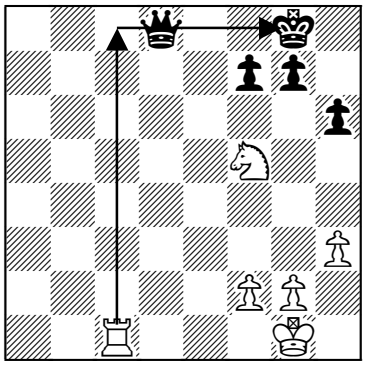


Diagram 5 (W)
Time for a rook decoy

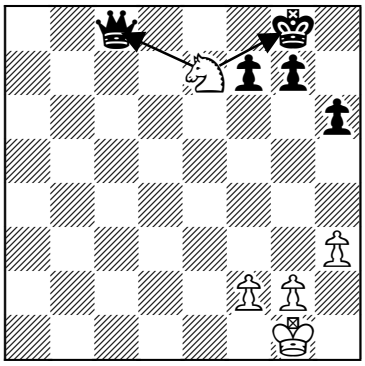


Diagram 6 (B)
Check and so much more!

There are a few things to consider in our next illustrative example, in which the material situation is level but White has a slight lead in development and Black has an isolated d-pawn. It is White to move in Diagram 7. Check it out and see if you agree with my thoughts.

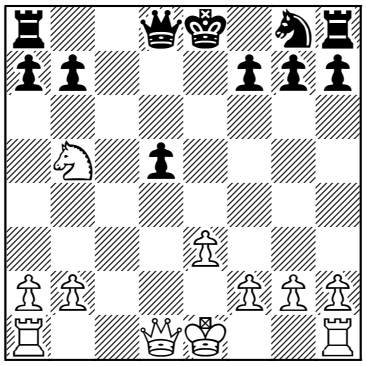


Diagram 7 (W)
Targeting the isolated d-pawn

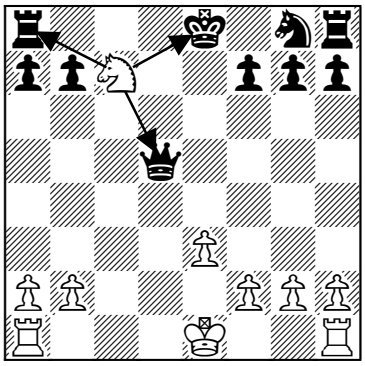


Diagram 8 (B)
Keeping it in the family!

1) White has not yet castled and to do so now could not be a bad thing. As it happens, a black queen check on a5 could be met by the attacked b5-knight being retreated to c3, so that would not be a disaster, but I hope you noticed that check all the same!

2) The g7-pawn is currently undefended, but scrutinising the weak d5-pawn would look like a sensible plan. The isolated d-pawn could be blockaded, and it is not difficult to imagine that in the not so long run White could attack it with a knight and three major pieces along the d-file.

All good stuff, but if you were keeping a lookout for checks to come, then you may have spotted that in fact White can net the pawn immediately via **1 Qxd5!**, the point being that, after **1...Qxd5**, the **2 Nc7+** shown in Diagram 8 guarantees that the temporarily sacrificed queen is regained. You may recall that this knight check is in fact a family fork as, just for good measure, the knight is attacking the rook too. Not that that is too relevant here as it's the queen that White wants, and the emergence from a standard combination that has netted him a pawn, hopefully to be put to good use in the ensuing endgame.



NOTE: Combinations, and indeed sacrifices, aren't always about delivering checkmate.

They could gain a measly pawn (that could later turn into a queen!) or even just a positional advantage. So long as their employment helps in the overall aim of progressing towards a winning game (or a drawing one if you were losing before), then they are most desirable.

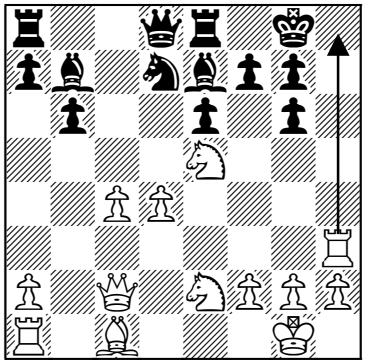


Diagram 9 (W)
The rook has swung!

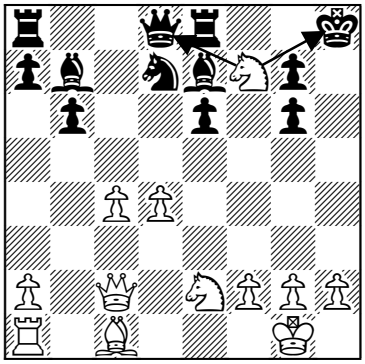


Diagram 10 (B)
Not mate, but worth the investment!

Tactics involving forks crop up frequently in real encounters; one amazing (from my point of view, for all the wrong reasons!) game of mine really springs to mind as a practical lesson from which many could learn. In fact, if I didn't know better, it would look as though my 1992 British Championship encounter had been concocted, but I can guarantee you that it is absolutely real. Over the years I have tried to forget it, but to hopefully aid in the reader's education, I have made the

ultimate sacrifice and decided to bring it under the spotlight again.

Anyway it was first blood to me as I found myself in Diagram 9, playing White, 17 moves into the tussle.



NOTE: A 'rook swinger' is a kind of slang definition that strong players have given to the manoeuvre of a rook out, up and then along. We have seen rooks operating on open rook's files before, and that is often achieved by advancing the rook's pawn, particularly against a fianchettoed pawn structure, and then swapping it off (to open the file), especially in middlegames with opposite side castling.

Having castled on the same side as my opponent I had then employed a 'rook swinger' of Rf1-e1-e3 to h3. This was in order to get some action along the h-file and Black was evidently oblivious to my big idea. I suspect he was concerned only by the unlikely prospect of my aligning my queen and rook there, but he certainly woke up after **18 Rh8+! Kxh8 19 Nxf7+** as depicted in Diagram 10.

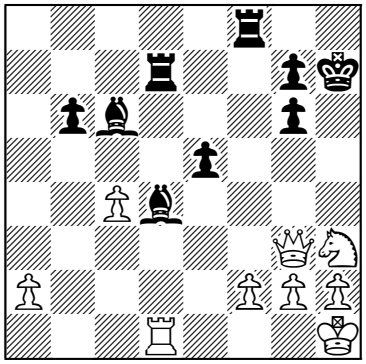


Diagram 11 (B)
Raking bishops

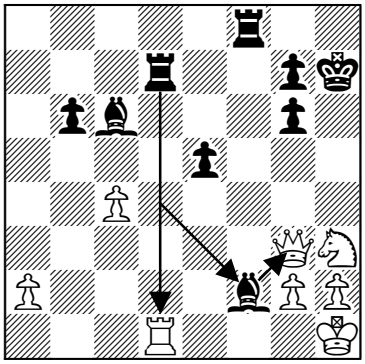


Diagram 12 (W)
And active rooks

Yes, the previous combination had seen me bag a queen and a pawn for a rook and a knight, and at the time I was pretty chuffed with myself. Convinced it was only a matter of time before I converted my advantage, alas I now started to get sloppy.



TIP: Experience of coaching has taught me that, more often than not, a pupil has to be told something twice in order to be sure that it is remembered.

I am not suggesting that you go out and buy a second copy of this book(!), but I am once more advising that you keep your concentration at all times and never get complacent. We all have human frailties, but a game is never over until it is over!

I suppose if I am totally honest, I never really considered that there would be any result other than a White win, and looking back at the moves I played, in contrast to earlier advice, I was relatively planless. Thirteen (definitely an unlucky number for me here!) moves on we reached Diagram 11. That period had proven rather unproductive for me, whereas my opponent had achieved excellent piece play. He had two superbly positioned rooks and two raking bishops on open diagonals towards my king. I had seen what was coming, but unfortunately too late. He confidently bashed out the **32...Bxf2!** that, as seen in Diagram 12, causes all sorts of problems. The bishop attacks my queen, while a discovered attack is unleashed by his rook against mine on d1. The clever part to this tactic is demonstrated in the variation 33 Nxf2 Rxd1+ 34 Nxd1 Rf1 mate. Clearly I couldn't allow that, but with me by now feeling most uncomfortable with the situation, the game continued **33 Qb3 Be3 34 Re1 Rd2 35 Qxe3 Rxg2!** (see Diagram 13)

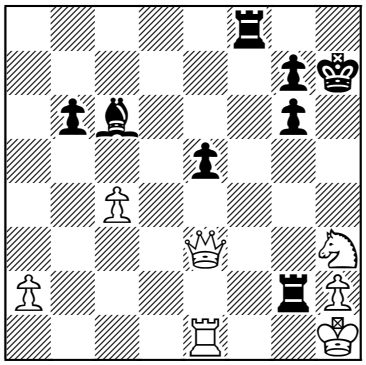


Diagram 13 (W)
Threatening a discovery!

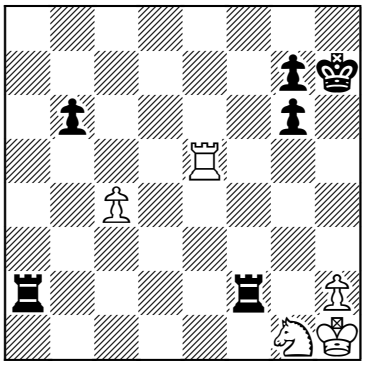


Diagram 14 (W)
Seventh heaven!

Notice how Black's last move of 35...Rxg2! is far more profitable than taking the same pawn there with bishop and giving an easily escapable check. As I advised earlier in the book, this way keeps the king pinned in and prepares all sorts of discovered checks. Indeed, dropping the rook back to g4 is now so big a threat that I felt compelled to return my queen to thwart it. Not that it helped in the long term as I simply managed to survive to a lost endgame!

Do play over the final few moves, though, as they involve a neat '1-2' with the black rooks to help sow things up: **36 Qe4 Bxe4 37 Rxe4 Rxa2 38 Rxe5 Rf1+ 39 Ng1**

Rff2 0-1.

As illustrated in Diagram 14, the good old doubling of the rooks on the seventh rank means that White must now concede the knight just to avoid mate. Hence the resignation.

An Arabian Knight

Although the previous section saw some cute combinations involving a rook and a knight, it is generally accepted that in endgames, a rook and a knight don't perform together as well as a rook and a bishop pairing. This of course falls in line with the observation that bishops are better than knights in endgames. More often than not that is true, but I did want to bring to your attention a couple of important cases.

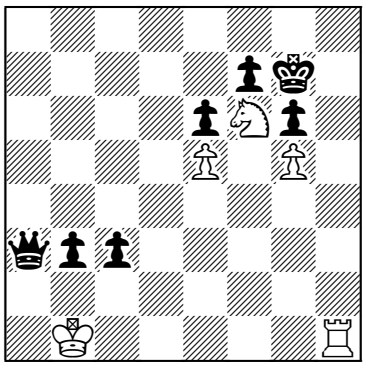


Diagram 15 (W)
The embedded knight

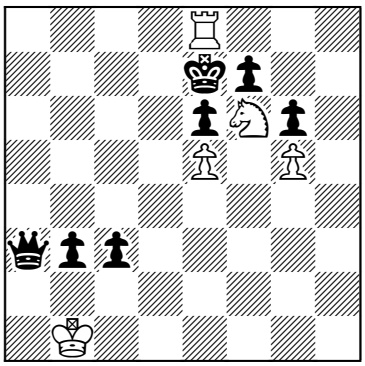


Diagram 16
A useful theme!

In Diagram 15, White faces a hopeless defensive task with the enemy queen and connected passed pawns ready to strike. However, a knight embedded on f6 (or f3 if the situation was reversed) is a fantastic weapon. Combined with a queen there would be mates available left, right and centre. In fact, on the move without even moving, the knight provides deadly support for even a rook: **1 Rh7+! Kf8 2 Rh8+ Ke7** (or 2...Kg7 3 Rg8 mate) **3 Re8 mate** (see Diagram 16).



NOTE: An outpost is a square which is defended by a pawn of one's own, but that can never be attacked by an enemy pawn.



TIP: A knight parked on an outpost deep in the heart of the opponent's position will always be a nuisance.

In that last example the white knight was parked on an outpost and certainly proved to be a nuisance. When a knight is behind enemy lines without support, though, it can often become a liability and easily wind up trapped. The situation illustrated in Diagram 17, however, is another important case worth taking note of.

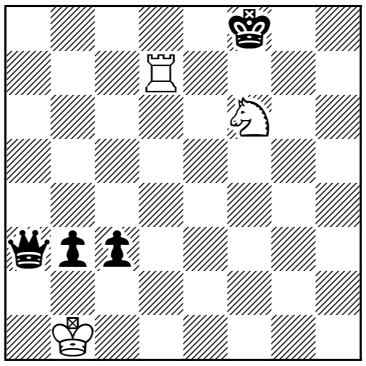


Diagram 17 (W)
An unlikely partnership

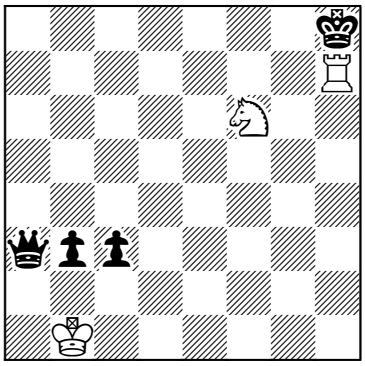


Diagram 18
A devastating duo!

Over on the queenside there is the same scenario of Black about to deliver mate, only this time in Diagram 17 the black king is not hemmed in by any of its own pawns, nor inhibited by enemy ones. Indeed, there is a lot of open space on the kingside and the concept of the white rook and knight combining to give mate seems unthinkable. A simple check like 1 Rd8+ would allow the black monarch to escape the back rank and the checks would soon dry up. The crafty readers amongst you (as well as those who have been playing close attention throughout the book!) may have observed that, as the white king has no legal options, if White could arrange to jettison both his rook and his knight, then a stalemate would result and he would have managed to salvage a draw. An 'on the ball' Black player, though, would be careful to ensure that that wouldn't happen, and anyway I have digressed from my main point.

This particular alignment (and note the theme that follows wouldn't work if, for example, the rook and knight were budged a square to the left) allows the following sequence: **1 Nh7+! Ke8 2 Nf6+**. The knight protects the rook and gives check. After **2...Kf8 3 Nh7+ Kg8 4 Nf6+** clearly White's aim is to continue checking in order to obtain a draw. However, if Black carelessly walks into **4...Kh8?? 5 Rh7** then he will have fallen for an 'Arabian mate' (see Diagram 18).



TIP: It's common sense really, but it is obviously better to obtain a draw by threefold repetition than to lose! In an otherwise bad posi-

tion a sacrifice designed to achieve a perpetual check may not be as good as one that delivers mate, but half a point is better than a big fat zero!

The Greek Gift

Instead of giving a history lesson on soldiers hiding in giant wooden horses, I am going to cut to the chase and give an illustrative example of what a 'greek gift' is in the game of chess.

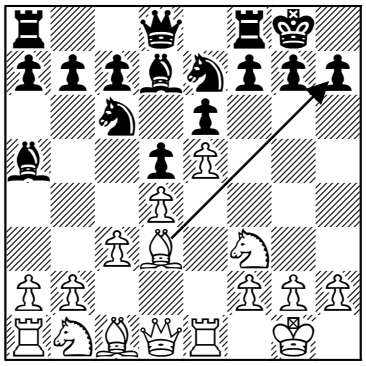


Diagram 19 (W)
h7 – the tasty option!

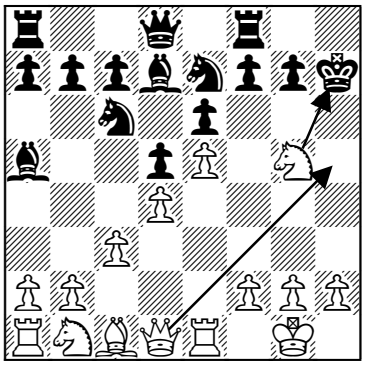


Diagram 20 (B)
Four (not great!) choices

In Diagram 19 White is blessed with a comfortable space advantage. This is afforded to him by the attractive pawn centre he has built up and, in particular, by the pawn on e5. Black has been deprived the chance to settle a knight on f6 and, with a fixed pawn on e6, he has a bad bishop locked inside his pawn structure.



NOTE: There is a difference between developing a piece and moving a piece.

Although Black has moved each of his minor pieces, none of them are particularly active. In contrast White is still to move his queen's bishop from c1 and yet, arguably, it has already been developed by other actions as it controls a very useful diagonal towards h6.

The main objection to Black's play up to now is that he did nothing to challenge White's dominant pawn centre; in particular, including ...c7-c5 before parking a knight on c6 would at least have given White the problem of having to hold his d- and e-pawns together.

As for a plan (from Diagram 19) for White, an obvious one is to initiate a kingside attack by targeting the h7-square. Aligning the queen and bishop via, say, Bc2 and Qd3 seems reasonable as then Black may soon be forced to move his g-pawn one square. That would have the repercussion of conceding a big hole on g7, justifying White's decision to leave the c1-bishop alone for a while – its first move could even be to h6.

All good stuff, but better still here is the greek gift sacrifice **1 Bxh7+!**. Should Black decline the offering with 1...Kh8 then, at the very least, a valuable defensive pawn has been won and the bishop could be immediately withdrawn, with the intention of exploiting the now draughty h-file a little later. Here though (and no doubt in similar situations), 2 Ng5 g6 3 Qf3 could soon be curtains. White will be prepared to sacrifice the bishop on g6 and transfer the queen to the h-file to give mate on h7.

Back to **1...Kxh7** and now **2 Ng5+** leaves us with Diagram 20 in which Black has a decision to make with his king.

Let's investigate all of Black's choices, something which one would of course have to do when contemplating employing a sacrifice of this type:

a) We can eliminate 2...Kh6, which at the very least walks into the double check and queen winning fork 3 Nxf7+. Demonstrating why the dark-squared bishop is still key, even while it remains at home, there will always be a strong double check, although keeping it in hand with 3 Qg4 here would actually force mate fairly quickly.

b) More testing would be 2...Kg6. Though I have not made this my main line, my experience is that, in practice, this is the option that a greek gift exponent must be sure he has under control. With the black king running into the open, typical treatments include giving a queen check along the b1-g6 diagonal, or employing the h-pawn with the intention of advancing it to h5 to give what could be a crushing check. Even more common, though, and strongest here is 3 Qg4! setting up a nasty discovered check. The black king has nowhere to run to and 3...f5 is destroyed by 4 exf6 Kxf6 5 Rxe6+ Bxe6 6 Qxe6 mate. Even without the white rook on e1 there would be other attacking options.

c) 2...Kh8 clearly walks into a mate in two; i.e. 3 Qh5+ Kg8 4 Qh7 mate and thus is easily dismissed.

d) Always White's idea is to meet **2...Kg8** with **3 Qh5**, threatening an instant mate on h7. A key element of having a black pawn on e6 is that Black doesn't have the defensive resource ...Bf5. Meanwhile, even if a black knight were able to get to f6, the vital white pawn on e5 removes that possibility from the equation anyway. To give the black king chance of an escape here, **3...Re8** is forced, leading to Diagram 21.

From this position one straightforward winning continuation is 4 Qh7+ Kf8 5 Qh8+ Ng8 6 Nh7+ Ke7 7 Bg5+ when 7...f6 would allow 8 Qxg7 mate. Putting the white rook to good use sees a 'swinger' also forcing the issue after **4 Qxf7+ Kh8 5**

Re3 Nf5 6 Rh3+ Nh6. In Diagram 22 the finishing touches are put on through **7 Rxh6+! gxh6 8 Qh7 mate**.

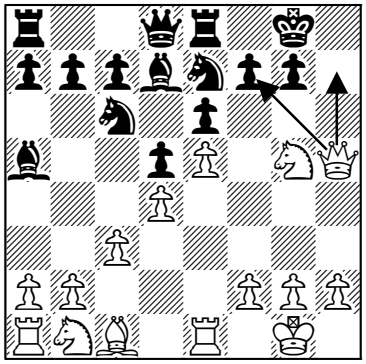


Diagram 21 (W)
Two promising paths

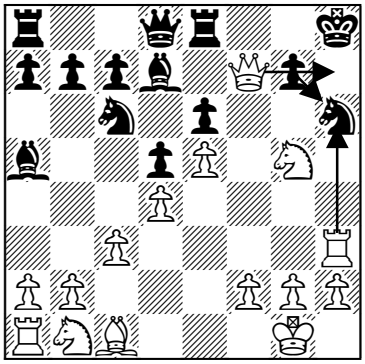


Diagram 22 (W)
It will be mate on h7!



WARNING: Beware gifts of giant wooden horses and bishops on h7 (or h2)!

Standard Sacrifices on f7 and e6

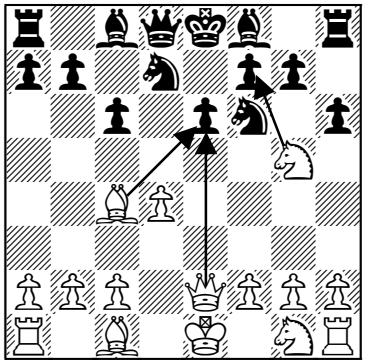


Diagram 23 (W)
f7 or e6?

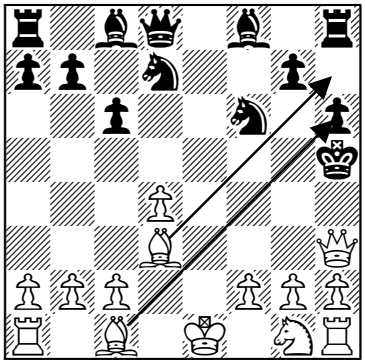


Diagram 24
Two beautiful bishops!

Earlier in the book I warned that, right from the off, White should ensure that he guards his f2-square; and Black, as he moves second, should be even more vigilant of his f7-square. Originally I wanted to ensure that readers would be prepared for a direct assault there, but it should be noted that, particularly when the king is not castled, other tricks also exist. Take a look at Diagram 23.

Here the white knight is attacked by the h6-pawn and an instinctive reaction might be to drop it back to f3 or e4. More likely, though, White has played the way he has for a reason, and with his queen and bishop lining up against e6 he has available the juicy sacrifice **1 Nxf7**. It is ironic that, because Black has a knight on d7, the inferior bishop on c8 isn't offering any support to what would otherwise be an inhibiting pawn on e6. As it is, though, after **1...Kxf7** the pawn and hence the structure that White has targeted collapses like a house of cards, with **2 Qxe6+ Kg6 3 Bd3+** spelling bad news for Black. Observe how the white bishop pair control so many squares between them, and hence after **3...Kh5** the **4 Qh3** depicted in Diagram 24 is in fact **mate**.

Note that from our starting position (Diagram 23) 1 Nxe6? fxe6 2 Qxe6+, hoping for 2...Be7?? 3 Qf7 mate, would have been nowhere near as effective because of 2...Qe7. Not only would Black then not get mated, but he could force the queens off because of the pin on the e-file.



TIP: When hoping to descend on e6, do consider a sacrifice on the guardian f7-pawn as well as the direct assault on the e-pawn.

Our next example sees the f7-pawn being lured away by a sacrifice that doesn't even gain a pawn for the offered piece.

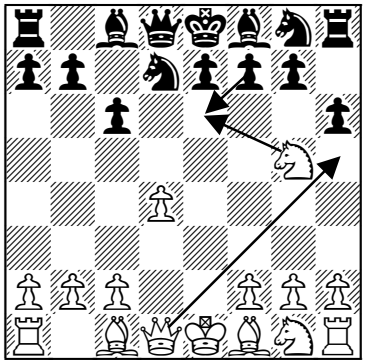


Diagram 25 (W)
Where are you going?

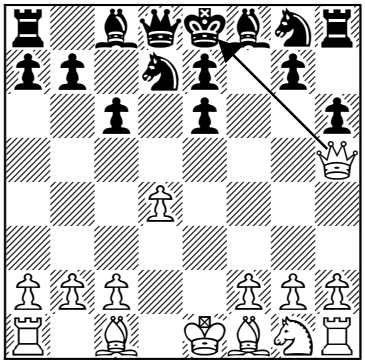


Diagram 26 (B)
...h7-h6 proved detrimental!

In Diagram 25, again the white knight has been attacked, only this time White

hasn't brought out any of his other pieces. However, he intends to expose Black's last move as a weakness by highlighting the fact that the black king is hemmed in. As it happens **1 Ne6** could be worse for the black queen if it did not have escape squares available on b6 and a5. A disaster could befall Black if he doesn't take the white knight invasion seriously, and if he doesn't look out for checks then **1...fxe6?? 2 Qh5+**, as shown in Diagram 26, would be very embarrassing. It's mate next go.



WARNING: Beware crowding in your own king and try to avoid getting your pieces in a tangle.

Actually, sacrifices on f7 can sometimes be successful in seemingly the most unlikely situations. In Diagram 27 Black is a pawn up and about to castle queenside. However, it is White to play and his developed pieces combine very well. The white knight on g5 hits f7 and e6, whilst the bishop on c4 has x-ray vision through the enemy knight on d5 to both of those squares, too. As it stands, the black king is still in the centre and it is the e-file pin that is all important.

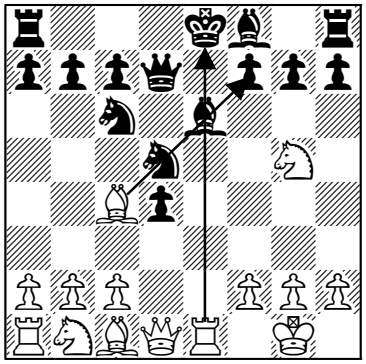


Diagram 27 (W)
Action required now!

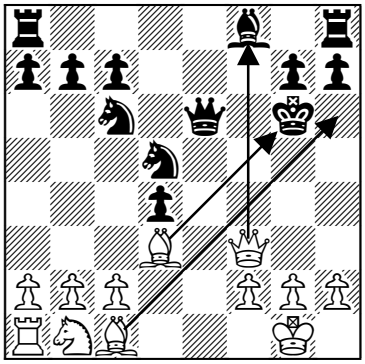


Diagram 28 (B)
The end of the line!

Yes, all of these factors combine to make **1 Nxf7!!** a stunning idea. Visually it may seem as though Black had that pawn guarded three times, but a closer inspection reveals that the bishop on e6 wasn't really protecting it, because it is of course pinned to the king by the white rook. Recapturing with the queen on f7 would allow the white bishop to capture on d5 for free, exerting horrendous pressure on its clearly still pinned opposite number, and hence that just leaves **1...Kxf7**. Then the white queen can get in on the act via **2 Qf3+** and that proves rather awkward too. If the black king returns to the e-file then, as the e6-bishop is once again pinned, White can regain the piece on d5 with interest. Even tastier for White is

the skewer that occurs after 2...Kg8 3 Rxe6 Qxe6 4 Bxd5, and so finally we come to **2...Kg6**. The white queen cuts the king off on the f-file and the bishops are dangerous along the diagonals. The immediate light-squared bishop check can be met by an enemy bishop block, but whilst 3 Bd3+ Bf5 4 Qg4+! is promising, more decisive is **3 Rxe6+! Qxe6 4 Bd3+** (see Diagram 28), when Black must interpose his queen, but **4...Qf5 5 Qxf5** is of course mate.

Eliminating the Fianchettoed Bishop



TIP: Absence makes the heart grow fonder!

Actually I wasn't regurgitating that famous phrase as advice for anybody suffering relationship problems, but rather to demonstrate the typical importance of a fianchettoed bishop!

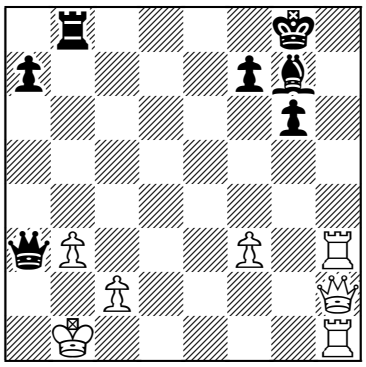


Diagram 29 (W)
To be or not to be!?

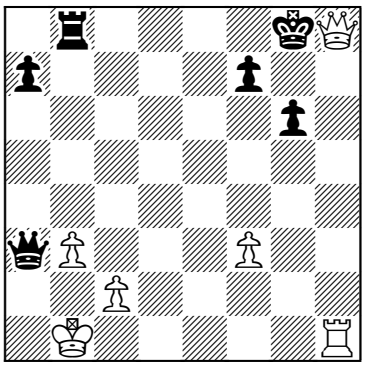


Diagram 30
Sorely missed!

In Diagram 29 the bishop on g7, though all the way over on the kingside, is proving to be an excellent attacking piece on the queenside, and the black queen is raring to use its support over there to deliver mate on either a1 or b2. However, it is not just its presence that is being felt but, after the not too difficult to spot sequence **1 Rh8+! Bxh8 2 Qxh8 mate** (see Diagram 30), its absence is clearly noted too!

Frequently the fianchettoed bishop is simultaneously a good attacker and a good defender. However, regarding its defensive role, the ironic twist is that, as a hole had clearly to be created for it to be fianchettoed originally, it could be argued that

so much defending wouldn't be required if the bishop hadn't been fianchettoed in the first place! Certainly an h2-h4-h5xg6 plan to open up the h-file wouldn't work if the black pawn were back on g7. Of course there may be other ways to provoke a g-pawn advance, other than its voluntary inclusion for the purpose of a fianchetto. But all the same...



TIP: The key to delivering checkmate to a king castled behind a pawn structure of a fianchetto nature is to negotiate the fianchettoed bishop.

Eliminating the bishop on g7 was the aim in the next two examples from my own games, in which as White I was seeking to checkmate my opponent.

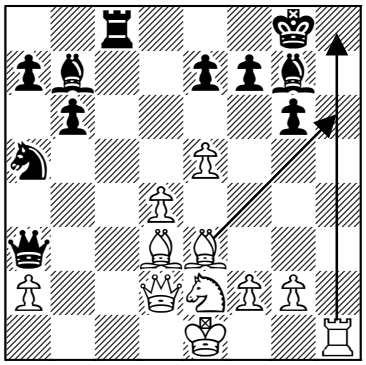


Diagram 31 (W)
Time to swap off the bishops

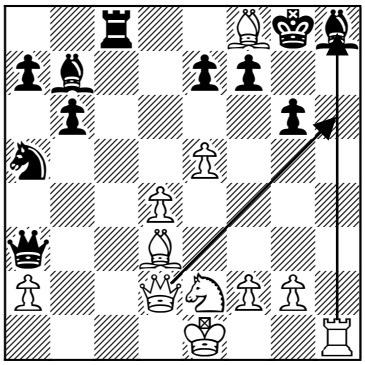


Diagram 32 (B)
You can run, but you can't hide!

18 moves into the game **C.Ward-A.Ledger**, British Championship 1993, I had still not castled and indeed, in Diagram 31, I had little intention of doing so. Instead, I was concentrating all of my efforts on an attack down the h-file before my opponent could cause me severe problems on the queenside. However, even if I could 'beam' my queen up and then down onto h7, it was clear that wouldn't be mate, as Black's dark-squared bishop controlled the vital square h8 and the king had an escape route on f8.

Therefore I knew I had to exchange off that key defender and **19 Bh6!** stood out a mile. Should Black swap off on h6 then my queen would swoop and mate would soon occur on h8. Instead, Black wisely avoided the trade with **19...Bh8**, but up my sleeve I had the neat (if I say so myself!) tactical resource **20 Bf8!** as shown in Diagram 32. Just as you, the reader, will hopefully finish this book content that you have added some tactical themes and cool checkmates to your armoury of ideas, I too had previously seen this concept on more than one occasion.



TIP: Every position must be considered on its own merits.

So yes, I had originally gotten this plan from somewhere else, but I still needed to analyse key variations. First up 20..Rxf8 21 Qh6 would have forced mate on either h7 or h8 as Black doesn't have time to move both his bishop and his rook. As 20...Kxf8 21 Rxh8+! Kg7 22 Qh6 mate was also fairly conclusive, Black had to come up with something else; the game ended through **20...f5 21 Rxh8+! Kf7** (or 21...Kxh8 22 Qh6+ Kg8 23 Qg7 mate) **22 Bxe7 Kxe7 23 Qg5+ Kd7 24 Rh7+ Kc6 25 Qf6+ Kd5 26 Qf7+ Kc6 27 Qd7 mate**.

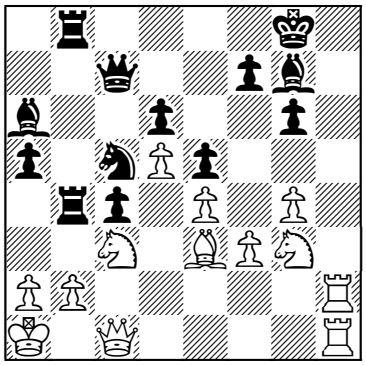


Diagram 33 (W)
Half-open vs open files

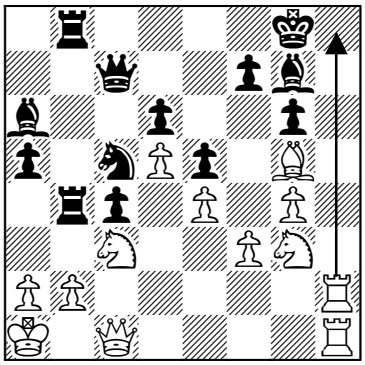


Diagram 34 (W)
What price for the g7-bishop?

The game **C.Ward-D.Agnos**, Charlton Congress 1992, involved a very exciting middlegame, with opposite side castling having encouraged both players to attack the enemy kings. 25 moves gone and, in Diagram 33, Black was definitely utilising his half-open b-file and, aside from doubled rooks there, the b2-pawn looked like coming under even more pressure from ...Nd3.

Meanwhile I was throwing all of my eggs into the h-file basket, and with **26 Bh6!** I had observed the queen sacrifice 26...Nd3 27 Bxg7 Nxc1 28 Bf6 with a forced mate on h8.

Though his fianchettoed bishop was locked out of queenside action by the fixed pawn on e5, my opponent was well aware of the necessity to preserve that piece if he was to avoid being mated. After **26...Bf6 27 Bg5 Bg7** it may have all seemed like a game of cat and mouse, but in Diagram 34 you should note that the to-ing and fro-ing had got me somewhere. Yes, rather than just seeking a repetition, I had made some progress as, free of charge, I had gained an improved placement for my bishop (i.e. g5 rather than e3).

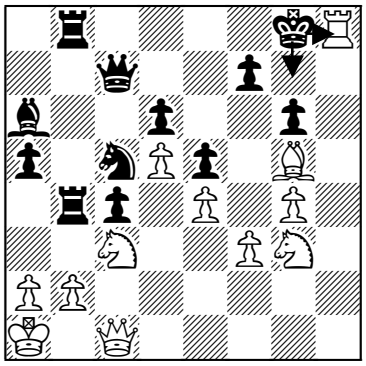


Diagram 35 (B)
One rook or two?

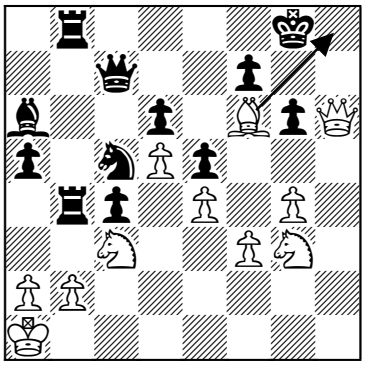


Diagram 36 (B)
Mission accomplished!

All becomes clear when you see how I continued: **28 Rh8+!! Bxh8 29 Rxh8+** (see Diagram 35). Yes, so vital was the fianchettoed bishop that I was prepared to trade not one, but two rooks for it. In particular I had **29...Kxh8 30 Bf6+ Kg8** (or 30...Kh7 31 Qh1+ Kg8 32 Qh8 mate) **31 Qh6** in mind. Illustrated in Diagram 36, the fact that I would be leaving my own king with few defenders was irrelevant as Black couldn't punish me immediately, whereas my domination of the dark-squared holes around the black king meant that mate in my favour would be instant.

As it happens, to prolong matters Black actually eschewed the second offering with 29...Kg7, but while it transpired that I could have won more quickly, 30 Rh7+ Kf8 31 Bf6 (threatening mate with the rook on f8) 31...Ke8 32 Qh6 (threatening a queen sacrifice on f8 with if accepted the same rook mate on h8!) 32...Kd7 33 Rxf7+ saw the skewer net the queen and leave me with an easy task of converting the full point.

Exploiting the Restricted King



WARNING: When a king is deprived of breathing space, alarm bells should start to ring.

You will recognize the kind of hopeless situation that the white king is in Diagram 37 from several of my examples. It is, of course, a fairly hopeless one and so the emphasis is on White finding a way to give checkmate, or obtain a draw somehow (i.e. through stalemate or a perpetual check) before Black can deliver any number of knockout blows.

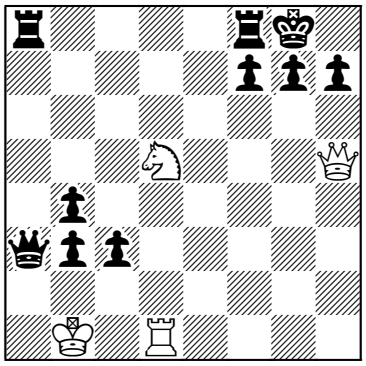


Diagram 37 (W)
Time is of the essence!

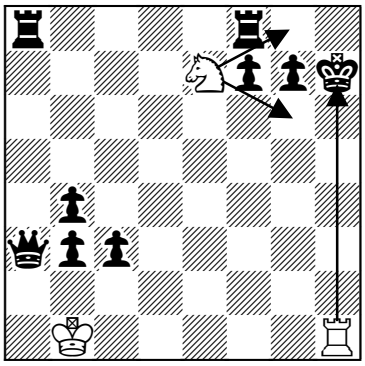


Diagram 38
Anastasia's mate



NOTE: Many of my examples have required one side to find a winning continuation before their opponent gets a checkmate in first. In practice a game might be different; but while the stakes may be lower when one's own king is not in danger, that doesn't mean that its opposite number should be let off the hook!

At present the black monarch has just h8 to move to, but after **1 Ne7+ Kh8** it has no breathing space whatsoever. All White needs to do is somehow get to give check and **2 Qxh7+!! Kxh7 3 Rh1 mate** (see Diagram 38) works a treat! This type of formation is known as 'Anastasia's mate', and I can testify that it's a theme which does turn up now and again in practical play and is really enjoyable when you get to play it!

Incidentally, had Black's a8-rook started (in Diagram 37) on a7 where it covered the e7-square, White should still not throw in the towel. As his own king has no breathing space, then if he could offload all of his remaining pieces, the result would be stalemate. For example, in that instance (i.e. with the black rook on a7 rather than a8) 1 Nf6+ gxf6 2 Rg1+ Kh8 3 Rg8+ and, whichever way Black takes the rook, the kamikaze 4 Qxh7+ to follow would be a very appropriate sequence.

In Diagram 39 the black king may have a pawn shield but, because of the white queen on d6, it can move nowhere. No doubt its hope is that, during the middlegame, it won't have to move anywhere and instead can remain safely tucked away in the corner. Alas, **1 Nb6+!** (and note: were the d1-rook on a1 already then, because the a-pawn would be pinned, this would already be mate) **1...axb6 2 Ra1 mate** (as shown in Diagram 40) shatters that illusion.

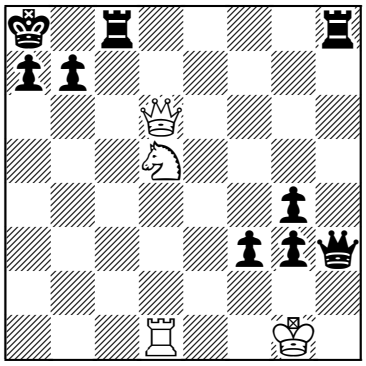


Diagram 39 (W)
My kingdom for a check!

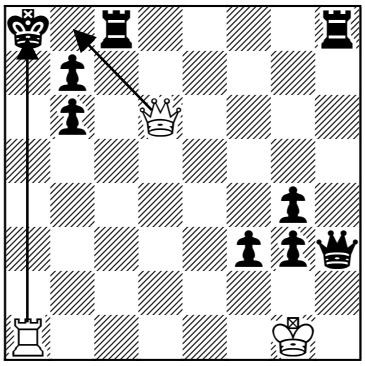


Diagram 40
That'll do nicely!

Incidentally, it should be observed that 1 Nc7+, hoping for the same idea as the tactic of the following example, won't work. After 1...Rxc7 2 Qd8+, rather than accepting the queen and getting back rank mated, the calm 2...Rc8 thwarts White.



NOTE: Taking is optional in chess, not compulsory!

The above note was implicit when I started talking about 'duff deflections' and 'playing for hopes' earlier, but let's get back to exploiting the restricted king.

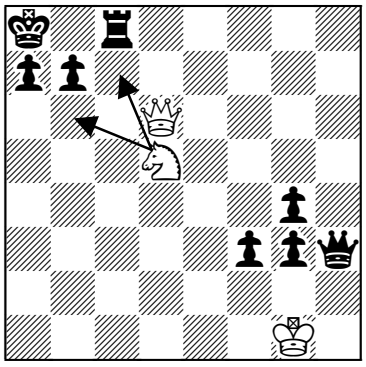


Diagram 41 (W)
The return of the queen and knight

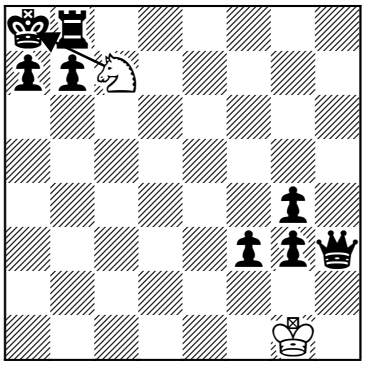


Diagram 42
No woman, no cry!

I am afraid I may have spoilt the climax to the famous 'Philidor's legacy' by talking about 'smothered mates' in Chapter 1. However, it is the lead up that is all

important in Diagram 41 which is remarkably similar to the starting diagram of our previous example.

Having removed a pair of rooks, now after **1 Nc7+!**, the knight is immune to capture because of 2 Qd8+ and a back rank mate. Hence **1...Kb8**, when White can unleash the double check **2 Na6+**. The only legal response is **2...Ka8** when, rather than seeking a repetition with the a revisiting knight check on c7, extremely visual is **3 Qb8+!!**. The king can't take the queen because of the knight on a6, but **3...Rxb8 4 Nc7 mate** (see Diagram 42) is rather terminal!

For some reason I feel compelled to talk about the inferior possibility of 1 Nb6+. After 1...axb6, unlike our previous example, there is no white rook to deliver mate on a1. However, White is still not losing as 2 Qa3+ Kb8 3 Qd6+ Rc7 4 Qf8+ Rc8 5 Qd6+ Rc7 6 Qf8+ Ka7 7 Qa3+ Kb8 8 Qf8+ Rc8 9 Qd6+ will ultimately end in White being able to claim a draw by threefold repetition. Furthermore, 4 Qxc7+ would accelerate the points being shared, as Black won't be able to decline the suicidal white queen for long (one more move to be precise!), and when it goes the only remaining white piece (the king) has nowhere to go. Hence it will be stalemate!

I have made up the example in Diagram 43 to demonstrate one of my favourite tactical themes. White is a piece down but his own king is safe for the time being, whereas he hopes to checkmate the enemy monarch on either g7 or h7. One plan is a Rf4-h4 manoeuvre, but then he would have to prepared to sacrifice on h5, as after a future ...h7-h5, the *en passant* capture resulting in a white pawn on h6 would hinder his own attacking chances.



TIP: When seeking safety for your king, particularly on a rook's file, sanctuary can often be found for your king behind an enemy pawn. However much fire-power your opponent may have in their attack, they can never take their own pawn!

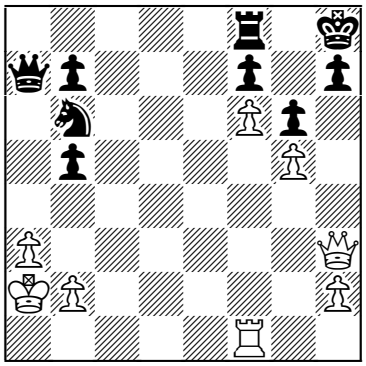


Diagram 43 (W)
White is a piece down

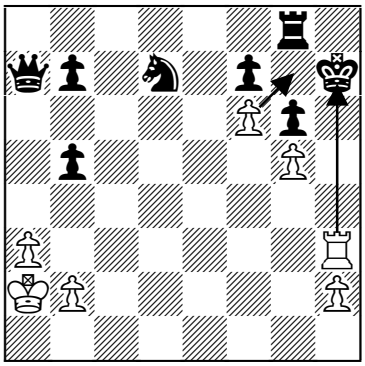


Diagram 44
But checkmate ends all!

The correct continuation, though, is **1 Qh6!**, and after the mate on g7 is prevented by **1...Rg8**, the rook swinger **2 Rf3** appears to be threatening Rh3 to support the queen in a Qxh7 assault. However, there is a sneakier threat involved, and although **2...Nd7** looks to have everything under control, in so far as the knight is set to retreat to the defensive post f8 just in time, actually Black may be in for a shock. Yes, the black king has no breathing space and **3 Qxh7+!! Kxh7 4 Rh3 mate** (see Diagram 44) exploits that situation perfectly!

The Development of a Combination

An Illustrative Game

I want to finish this chapter with one of my favourite games. It wasn't played against a fellow grandmaster, but rather against a club player when I was giving a simultaneous display at a local chess club. The format of such challenges is that the simultaneous giver (in this case me!) has but a few seconds on each move, as he must continue moving around the room effectively competing against twenty or thirty opponents at the same time. Those opponents are not supposed to confer, but in such a friendly atmosphere, and on such a fun occasion, it is inevitable that comments are made about other games. (Note: this is highly illegal in tournament play!)

With no long pauses allowed for any moves, I was unable to adhere to my earlier advice re formulating a plan. At such a fast pace it is only logical that my moves wouldn't be as accurate as in a normal competitive encounter, but all the same I was more than pleased with what follows!

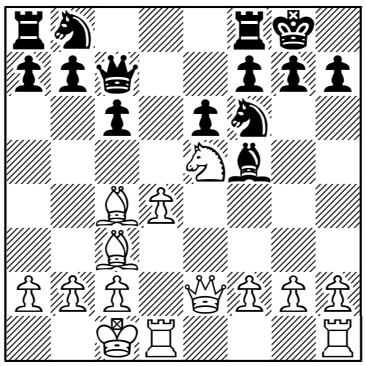


Diagram 45 (W)
Let the battle commence!

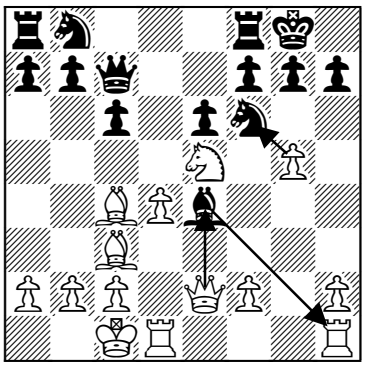


Diagram 46 (B)
Seeking g-file action

We pick up the action from the game **C.Ward-Amateur**, Petts Wood simul. 1997, in Diagram 45 as I am considering my 12th move. As White I have the two bishops for a bishop and a knight advantage and have a lead in development. With the kings on opposite sides, attacks are often the order of the day and I decided to kick mine off with...

12 g4

It's not that I believe this pawn will deliver checkmate itself, but rather the pieces that its advance will help bring into the attack.

12...Be4 13 g5! (see Diagram 46)

Instead 13 f3 and 13 Rhg1 were more instinctive reactions, but a quick calculation demonstrated to me that this exchange sacrifice would guarantee me creating a half-open g-file. Black must accept my rook offering, as if he simply moves his attacked knight then his bishop would be left *en prise*.

13...Bxh1 14 gxf6

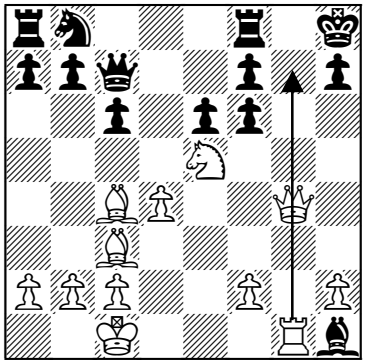


Diagram 47 (B)
Unstoppable mate on g7

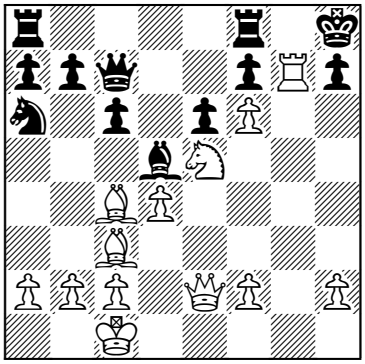


Diagram 48 (W)
check, check, check, then mate!

14...Bd5

If Black had left this bishop in the corner to be taken, he would have been material down as well as having to face a raging attack. The most basic of use for an open file, though, can be seen in the variation 14...gxf6 15 Qg4+ Kh8 16 Rg1. In Diagram 47, as Black's rooks are not yet connected, there is nothing that he can do about mate on g7.

15 Rg1 g6

Black cannot allow an invasion on g7 and, to demonstrate my point, after say 15...Na6 16 Rxg7+ Kh8 (see Diagram 48), as well as a more mundane (but nevertheless successful!) attack on h7 via 17 Qd3, White can deliver mate after a se-

quence of checks: 17 Rxh7+ Kxh7 18 Qh5+ Kg8 19 Qg5+ Kh8 20 Qg7 mate.

16 Qh5

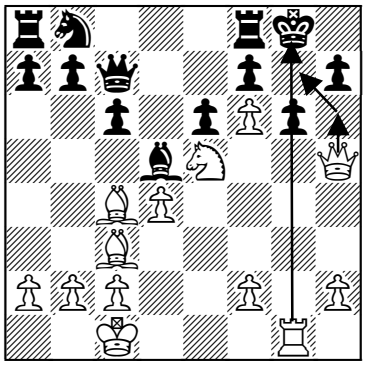


Diagram 49 (B)
The g6-pawn is pinned

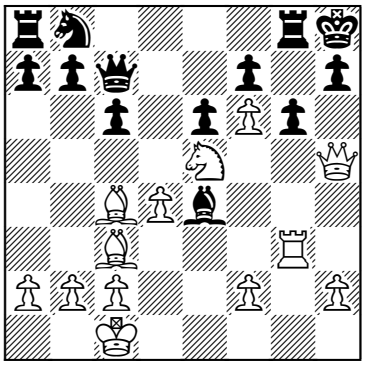


Diagram 50 (W)
Ring any bells?

I was more than happy to reach Diagram 49, although swapping bishops on d5 first may also have been a good idea. However, I was naturally eager to get my queen to h6 in order to deliver mate on the big hole g7. 16 Qe3 stood out as an obvious alternative, but the idea of utilising the fact that the g-pawn was pinned and the possibility of a future sacrifice on g6 appealed too!

16...Nd7

At this stage in the game I was half expecting/hoping for 16...Kh8 17 Qh6 Rg8 18 Rg3. From the last section we know that the h7-square will be the focus of attention, but after 18...Be4 (illustrated in Diagram 50), instead of allowing the defence to 19 Rh3 with 19...g5, I could instead employ my favourite theme of 19 Qxh7+!! 19...Kxh7 20 Rh3 mate. You should definitely be familiar with that one now!

Upon 16...Qd8 I felt certain that I could sacrifice on g6, but anyway, my opponent opted to develop his queen's knight.

17 Ng4



WARNING: Nobody likes a show-off!

Despite being well aware of the above, I'm afraid that I couldn't resist setting up the trick that followed. Most straightforward would have been 17 Nxd7, as I could block a queen check on f4 with my bishop, whilst 17...Qxd7 18 Qh6 couldn't be simpler.

I had observed that 17 Nxg6? fxg6 18 Rxg6+ wouldn't be successful because, with

18...Kh8! available, Black is far from compelled to take the rook and get mated in two!

17...gxh5 (see Diagram 51)

One story within this encounter is that I heard a lot of sniggering around the room as this move was being played. Could it really be that a grandmaster had just blundered his queen?

As it happens, of course, this is exactly the finish that I had been hoping for, although after 17...Kh8 instead, I had observed that 18 Qh6 Rg8 19 Rg3 Nf8 20 Bb4 would leave me threatening to remove a vital defender.

18 Nh6+ Kh8 19 Rg8+! Rxg8

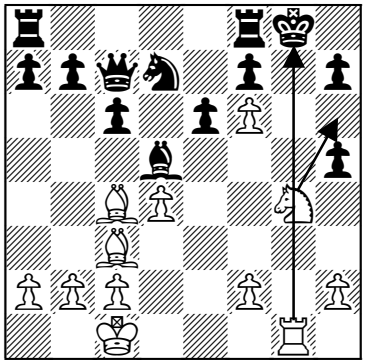


Diagram 51 (W)
Time for a double check

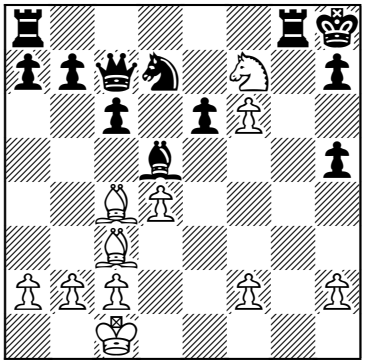


Diagram 52
Sort of smothered mate!

20 Nxf7 mate

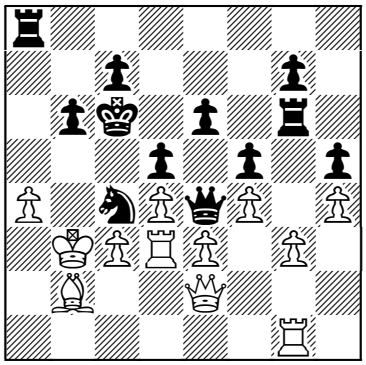
Seen in the final Diagram 52, this is not exactly Philidor's legacy, but the principle was the same.

NOTE: Winning is what counts, but if it can be done in a flashy way, then all the better!

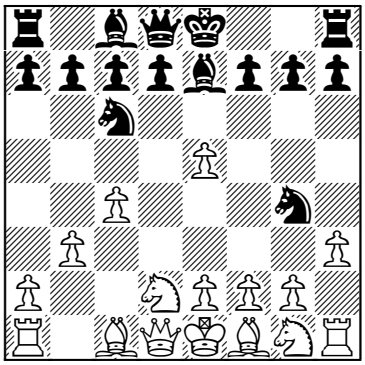
Obviously I enjoyed this encounter, as it provided entertainment on the evening for the club members, and one always gets a thrill from employing a combination that ends in smothered mate! More to the point, though, this game encapsulated several themes, notes and tips that I have provided the reader with throughout this book, and I believe it should prove to be instructive and also demonstrate that such combinations really do occur in real life chess!

Exercises

Exercise 1: Quite frankly, White has a pretty lousy position. There are plenty of pawns fixed on the same colour as his clearly 'bad' bishop, while his pieces are all tied up with defensive duties. Playing Black in a tournament game I noticed that I could win a pawn immediately and chose to do so with **27...Rxa4!**. What do you think was my reasoning behind this apparent sacrifice, and can you guess (or work out) how I responded to **28 Kxa4 -** ?



Exercise 1 (B)



Exercise 2 (B)

Exercise 2: The obvious move for Black in this position is the recapture of the pawn on e5. However, can you spot a particularly tasty alternative?

Exercise 3:

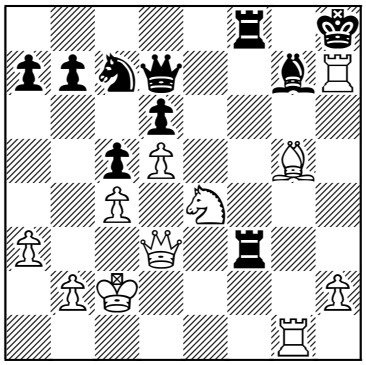
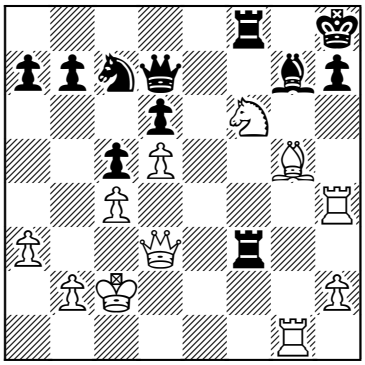


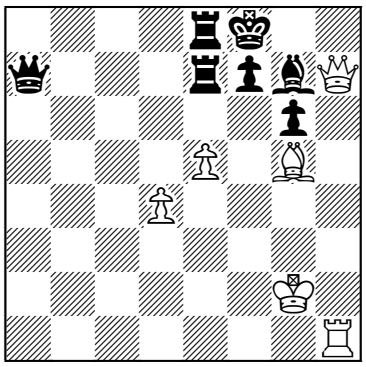
Diagram 1 (B)



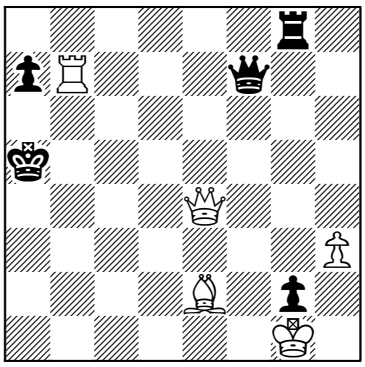
Exercise 3 (B)

You may recognize Diagram 1 as a position from a game of mine I discussed in Chapter 1. Clearly I had just sacrificed my rook on h7, with the intention of unleashing a crushing double check on f6 should my offering be accepted. As I was perfectly happy with this continuation I shouldn't have needed to look anywhere else. However, I was also exceedingly tempted by the alternative **27 Nf6** that would have led to Exercise 3. At first I thought that this visual knight insertion would be winning. Can you see why I might have thought that, but then uncover the reason (that I discovered just in time!) why it is in fact flawed?

Exercise 4: This time I want not one, but two different ways for White (to play) to force checkmate.



Exercise 4 (W)



Exercise 5 (B)

Exercise 5: Here Black's king is all at sea, whereas its opposite number appears to be safely hidden behind an enemy pawn. All is not as it seems, though, as Black to play has a stunning tactical resource. Can you find it?

Exercise 6: Which of the following four moves would you recommend that White should play in exercise diagram 6?

a) 1 exf6

b) 1 Qd8+

c) 1 Qxa7+

d) 1 Nb6+

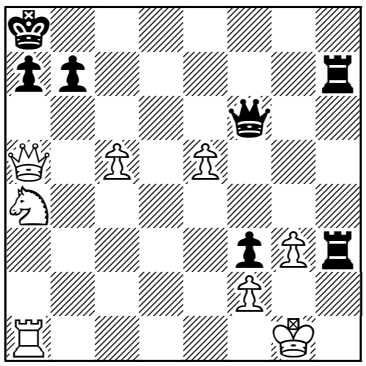
Exercise 7: Study the position carefully and then decide which of the following statements most rings true. Yes, White is a lot of material down, but he is on the move and his opponent's king is trapped.

a) White may have a check or two but at the end of the day he is completely lost.

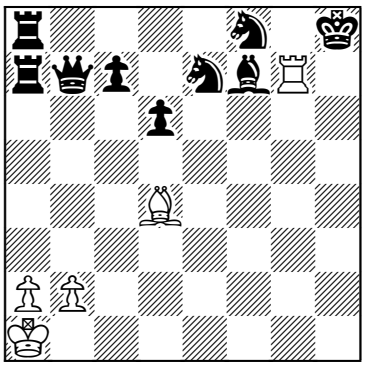
b) White can force checkmate in a few moves.

c) White can net an awful lot of black pieces and ultimately reach a comfortably winning endgame.

d) White can have a bit of fun, but sooner or later he should acquiesce to a draw by repetition.

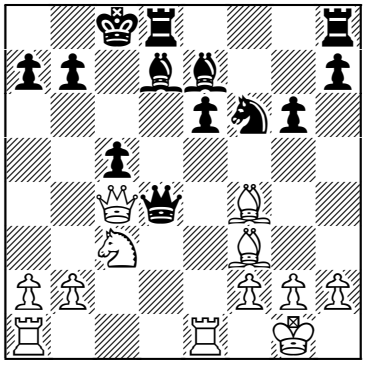


Exercise 6 (W)

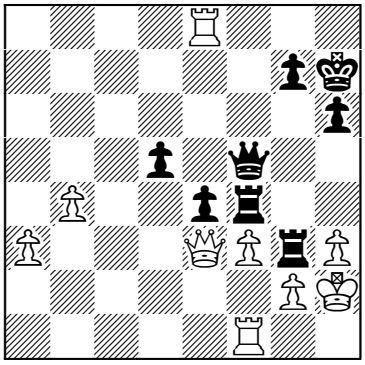


Exercise 7 (W)

Exercise 8: This is a middlegame from a practical encounter involving two strong players. Amazingly White now played a move that shortly forced his opponent's resignation. Can you guess what it was and how the game ended?



Exercise 8 (W)



Exercise 9 (B)

Exercise 9: In a practical tournament game, the position in exercise diagram 9 was reached and Black opted to leave his rook on g3 to be taken (all part of his master

plan!). Instead, he got to grips with White's defensive pawn shield via **1...exf3!**. Analyse this situation carefully and explain what happened when White actually did take up the challenge and accepted Black's offering.

Exercise 10: Take some time out to reflect upon all that you have learnt throughout this book. Forks, pins, skewers, discovered checks, Greek gifts, deflections and so much more. Do you now think that you are ready to hit the tournament scene with confidence, and utilize your newly acquired knowledge of tactics and checkmates to provide you with some stunning (or even fairly mundane) victories?

Chapter Five

Quick-fire Puzzles

Finally, just to keep you tactically astute, there now follow 100 quick-fire puzzles. Do them for fun or to get your brain working and to gain confidence in preparation for going into battle. If you have studied this book thoroughly, then frankly it should be a walk in the park!

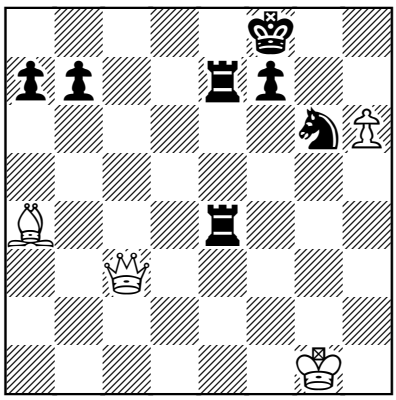


Diagram 1

1) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

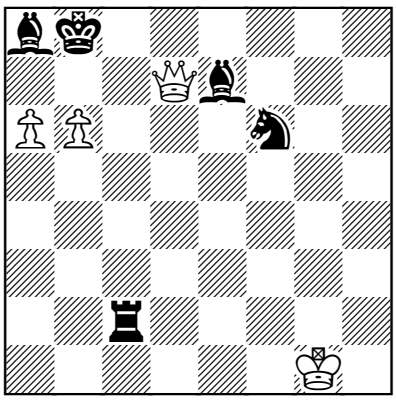


Diagram 2

2) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

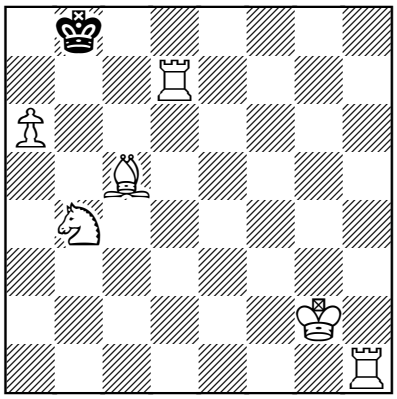


Diagram 3

3) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

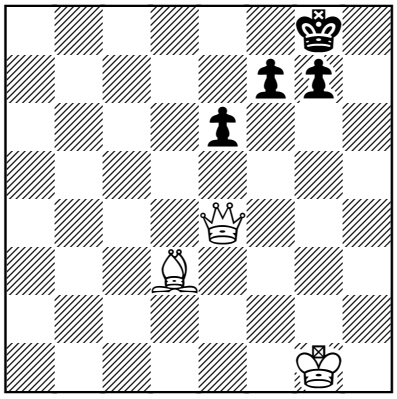


Diagram 4

4) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

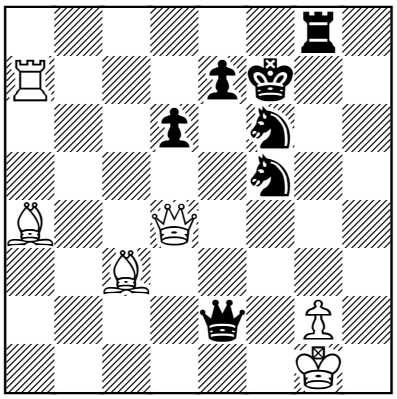


Diagram 5

5) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

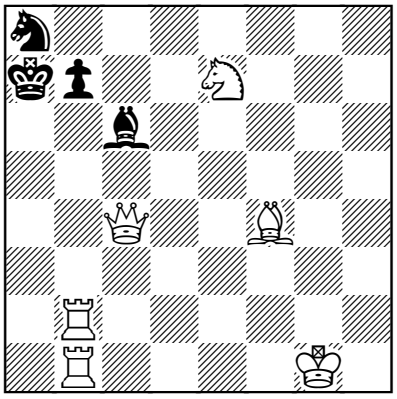


Diagram 6

6) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

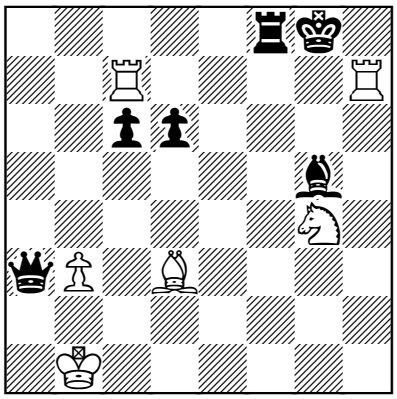


Diagram 7

7) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

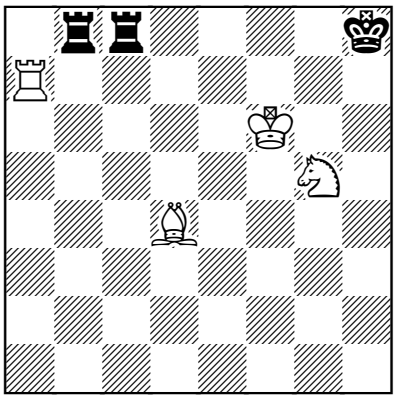


Diagram 9

9) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

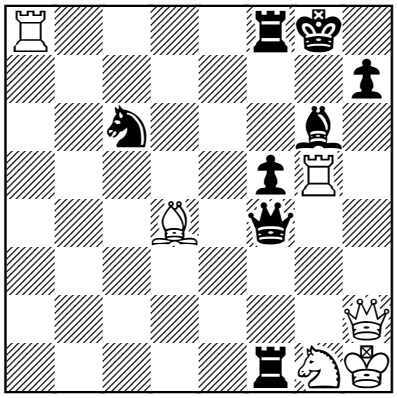
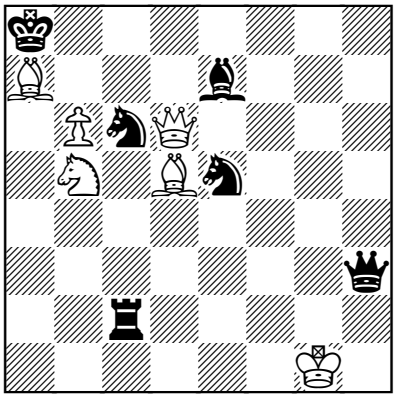


Diagram 8

8) White to play and give checkmate in one move.



Diagram

10) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

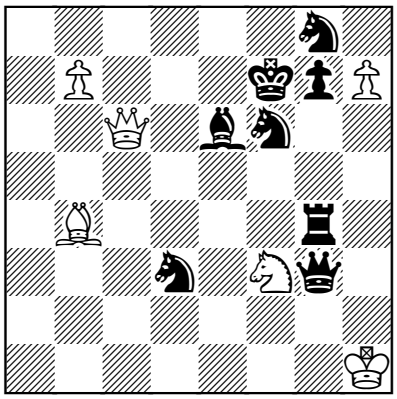


Diagram 11

11) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

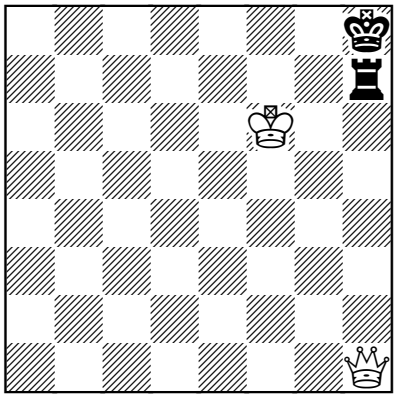


Diagram 12

12) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

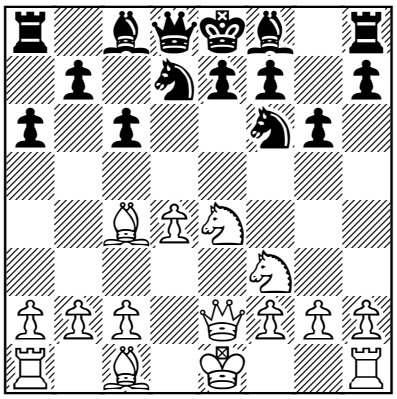


Diagram 13

13) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

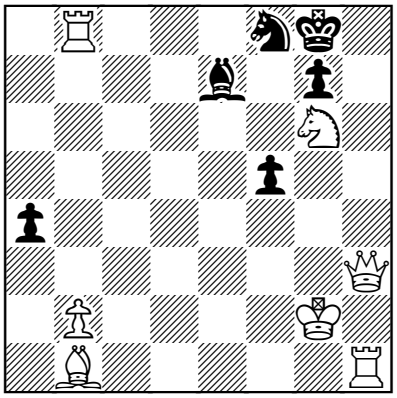


Diagram 14

14) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

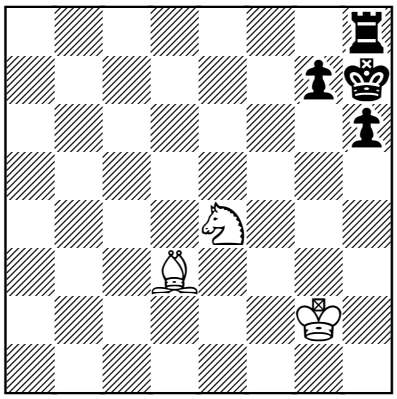


Diagram 15

15) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

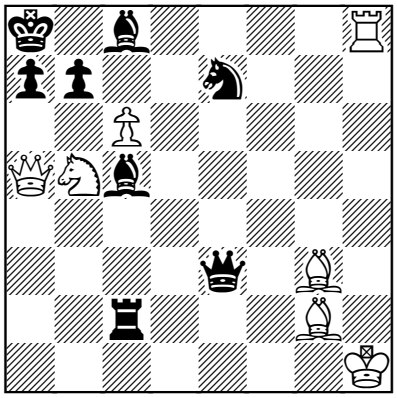


Diagram 16

16) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

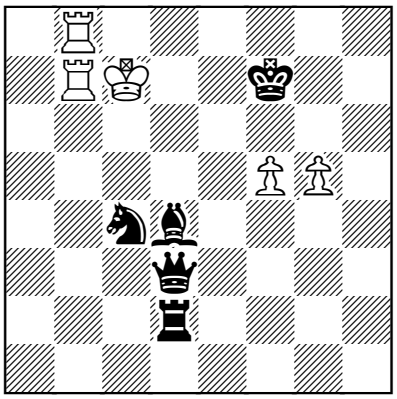


Diagram 17

17) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

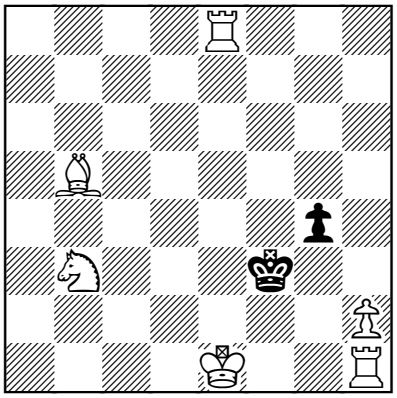


Diagram 18

18) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

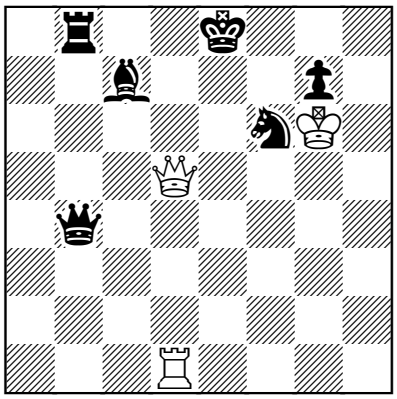


Diagram 19

19) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

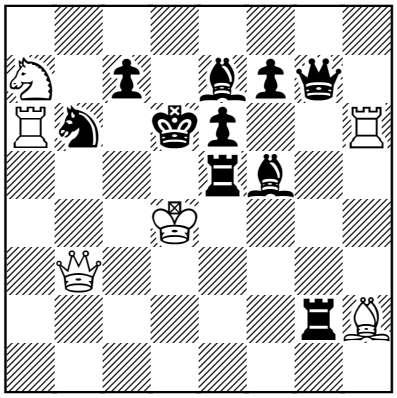


Diagram 20

20) White to play and give checkmate in one move.

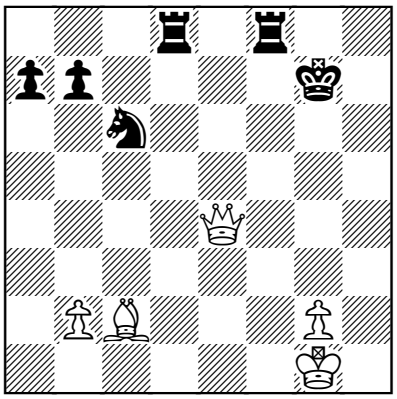


Diagram 21

21) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

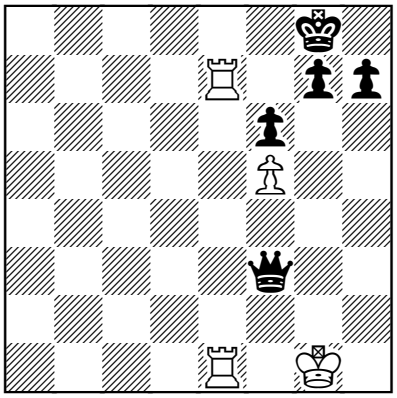


Diagram 22

22) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

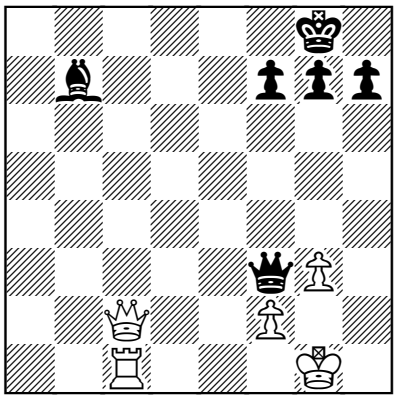


Diagram 23

23) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

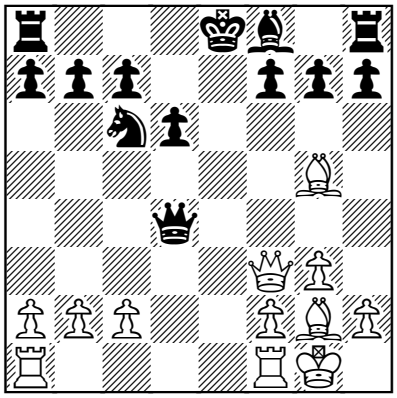


Diagram 24

24) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

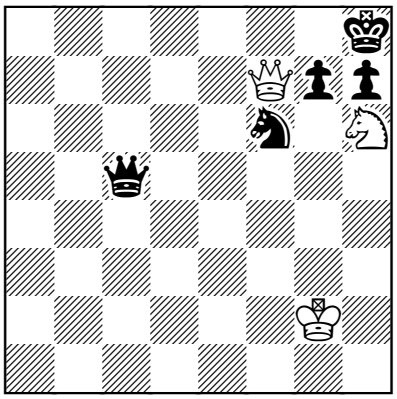


Diagram 25

25) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

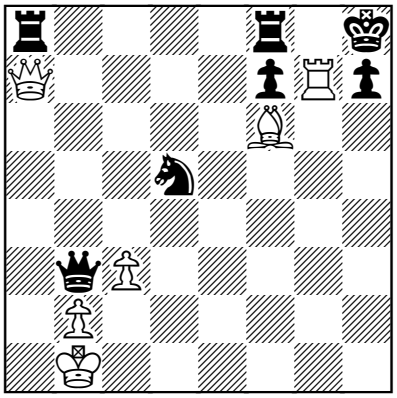


Diagram 26

26) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

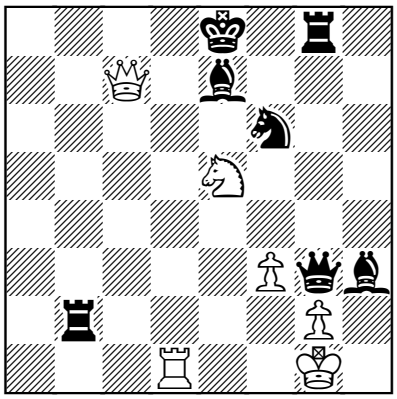


Diagram 27

27) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

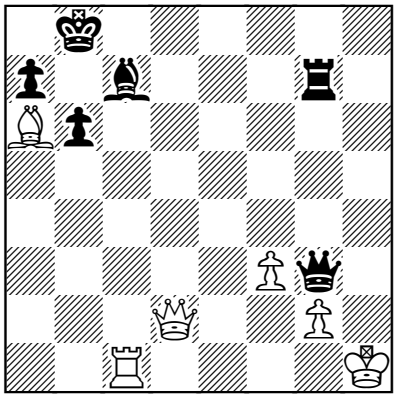


Diagram 28

28) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

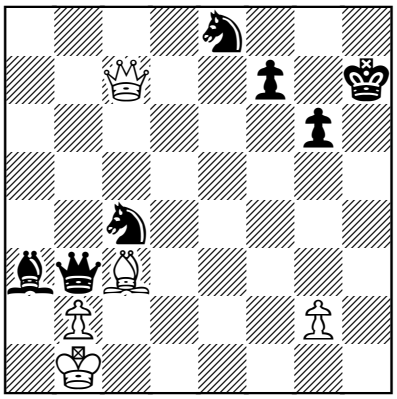


Diagram 29

29) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

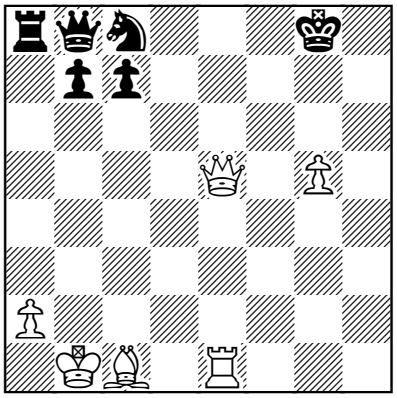


Diagram 30

30) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

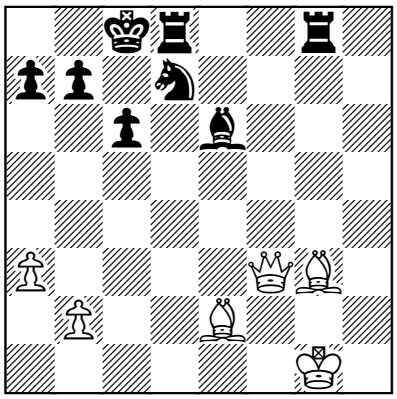


Diagram 31

31) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

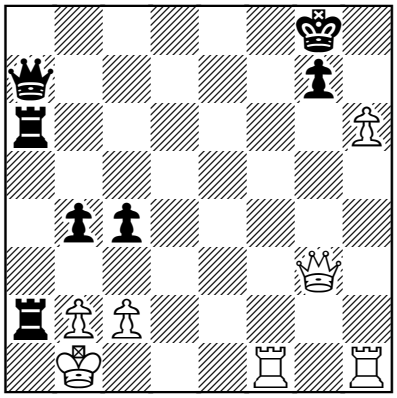


Diagram 32

32) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

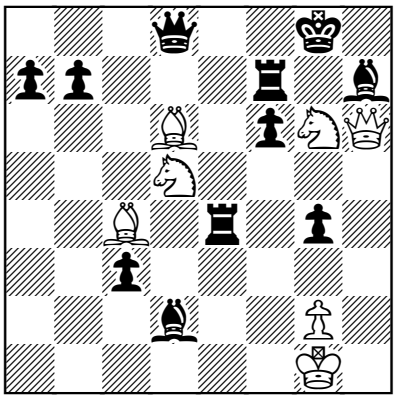


Diagram 33

33) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

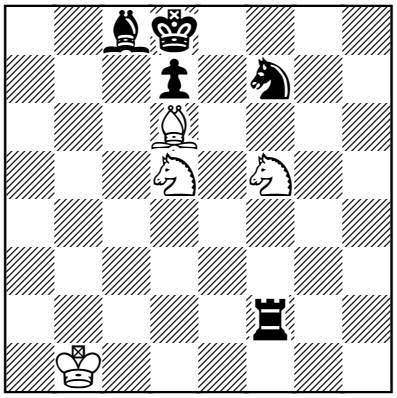


Diagram 34

34) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

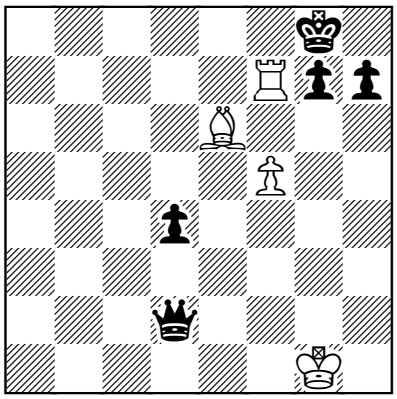


Diagram 35

35) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

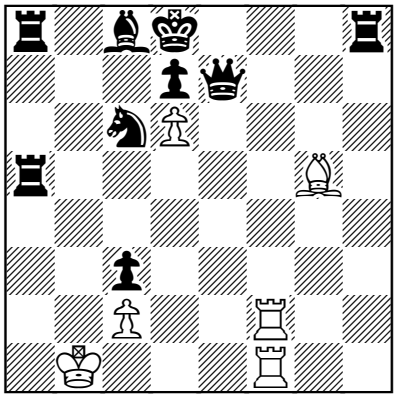


Diagram 36

36) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

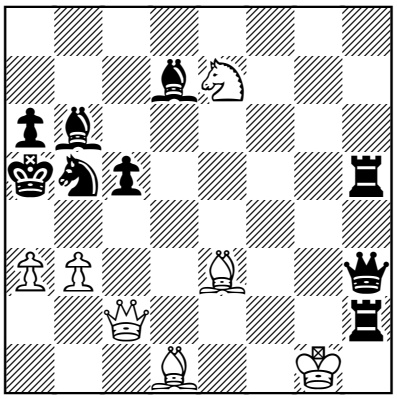


Diagram 37

37) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

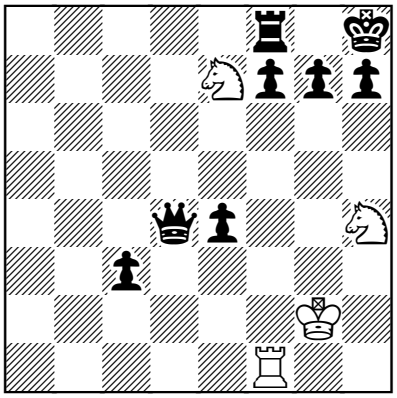


Diagram 38

38) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

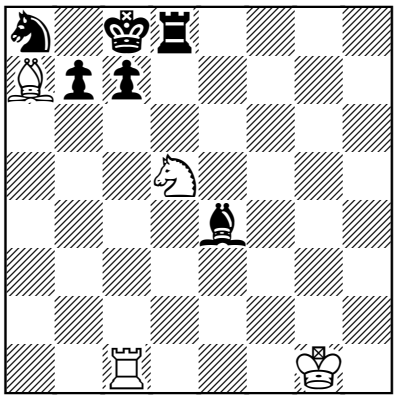


Diagram 39

39) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

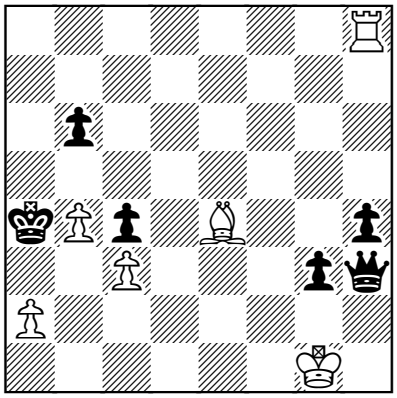


Diagram 40

40) White to play and force checkmate in two moves.

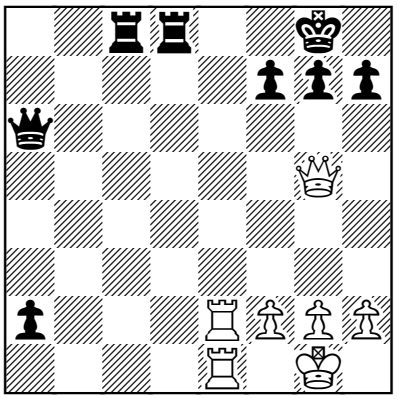


Diagram 41

41) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

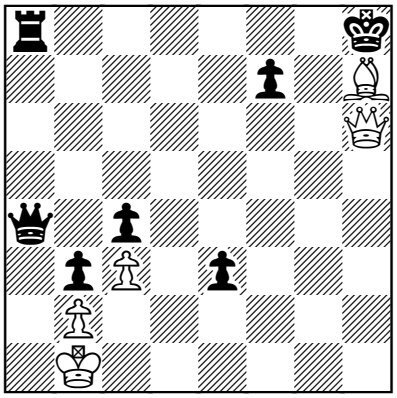


Diagram 42

42) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

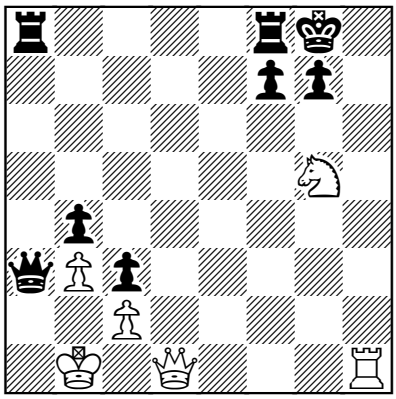


Diagram 43

43) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

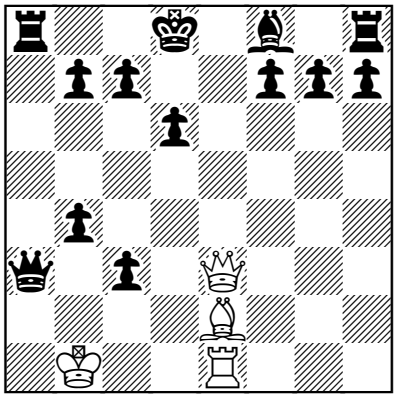


Diagram 44

44) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

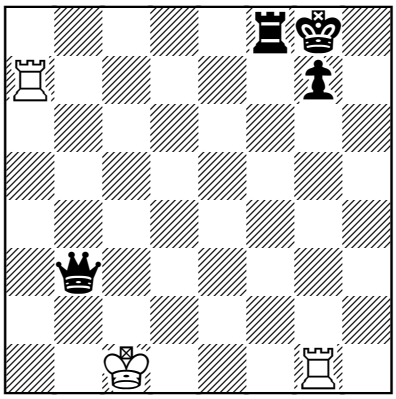


Diagram 45

45) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

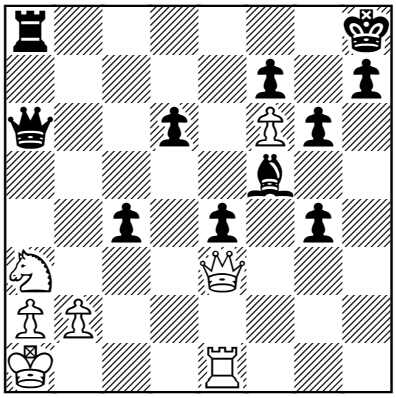


Diagram 46

46) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

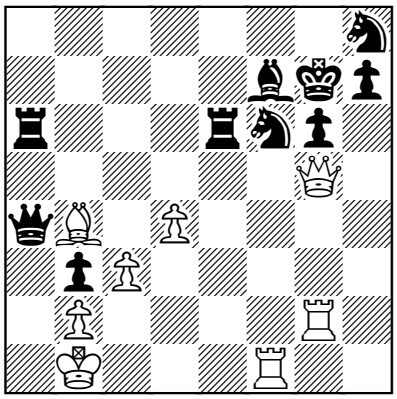


Diagram 47

47) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

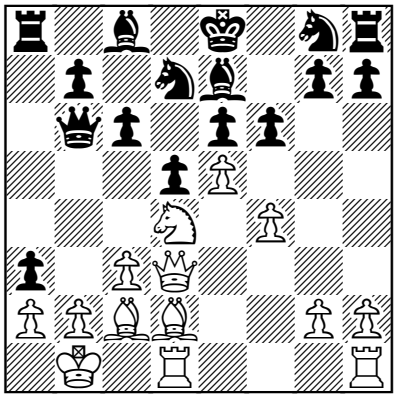


Diagram 48

48) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

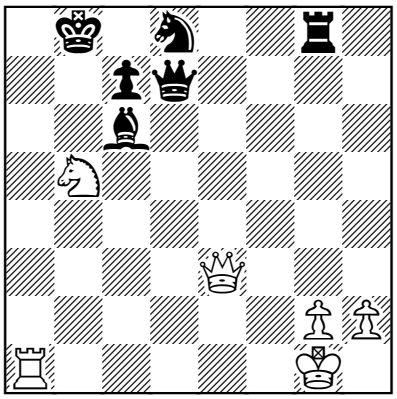


Diagram 49

49) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

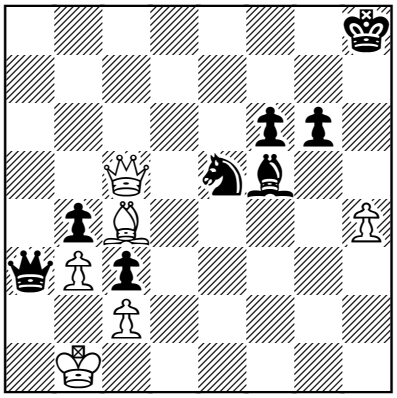


Diagram 50

50) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

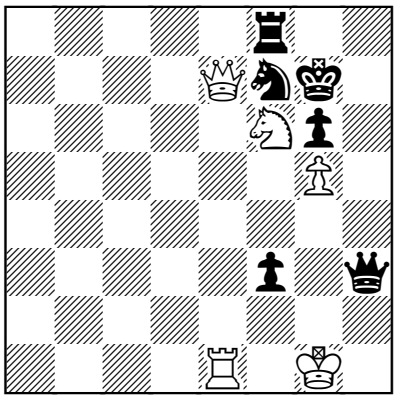


Diagram 51

51) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

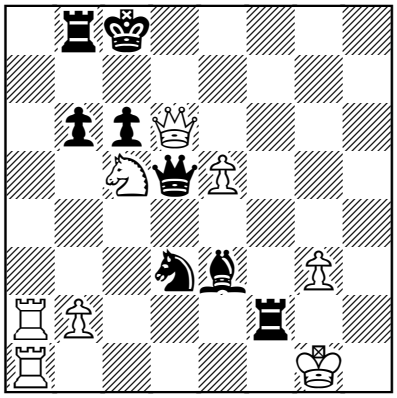


Diagram 52

52) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

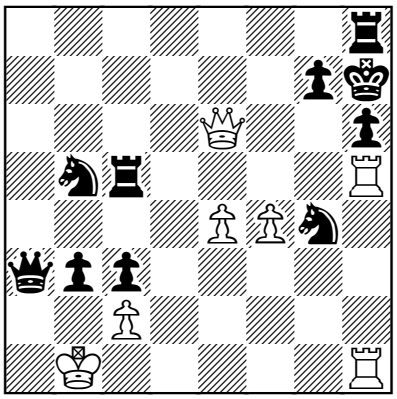


Diagram 53

53) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

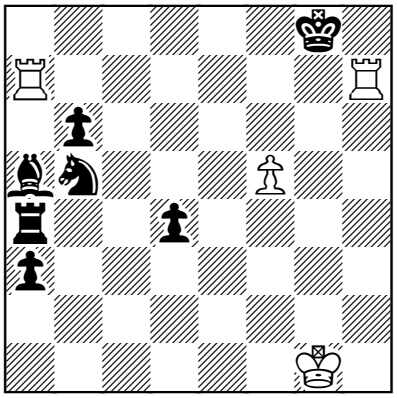


Diagram 54

54) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

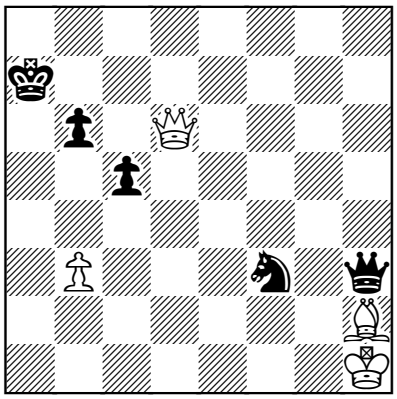


Diagram 55

55) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

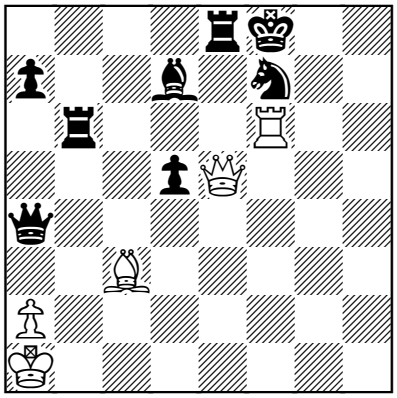


Diagram 56

56) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

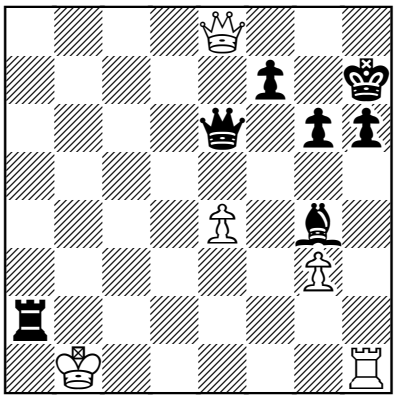


Diagram 57

57) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

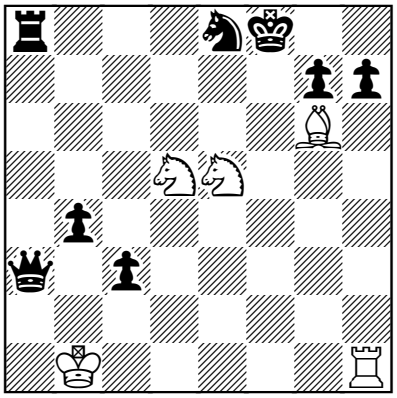


Diagram 58

58) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

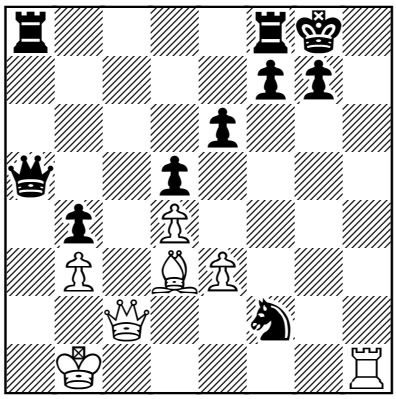


Diagram 59

59) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

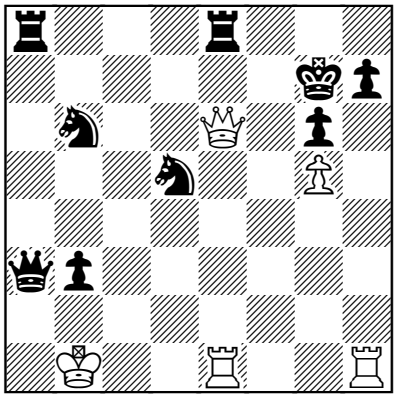


Diagram 60

60) White to play and force checkmate in three moves.

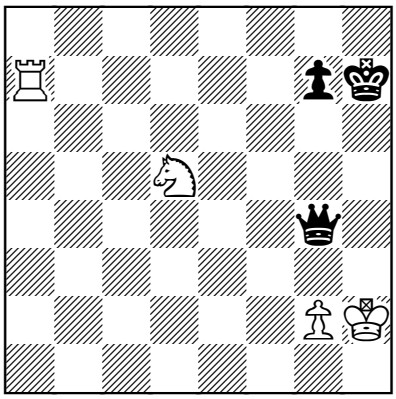


Diagram 61

61) White to play and win material.

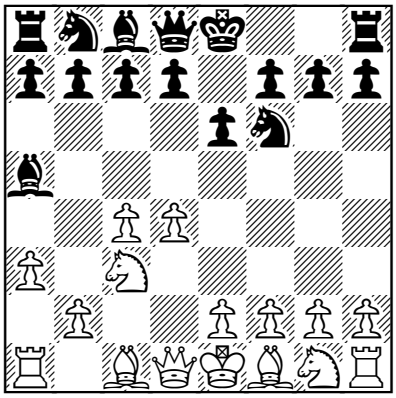


Diagram 62

62) White to play and win material.

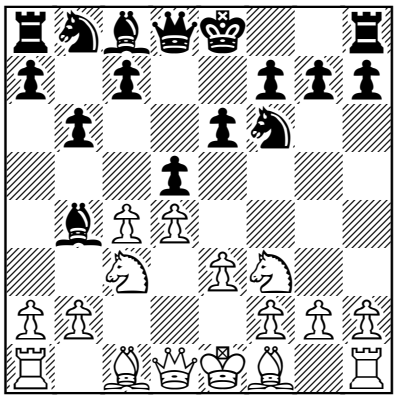


Diagram 63

63) White to play and win material.

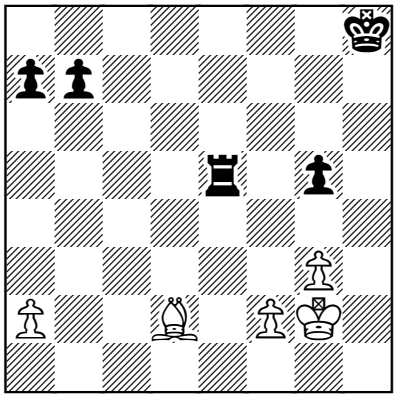


Diagram 64

64) White to play and win material.

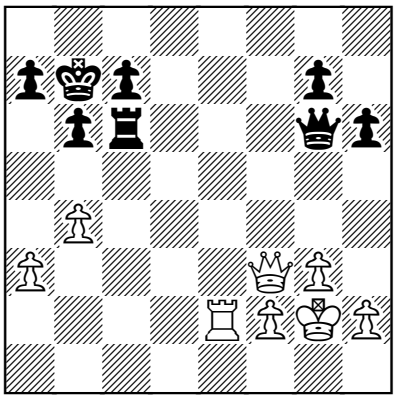


Diagram 65

65) White to play and win material.

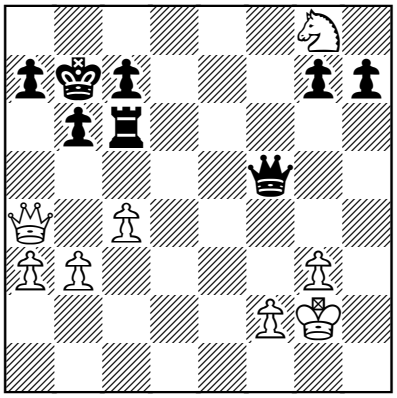


Diagram 66

66) White to play and win material.

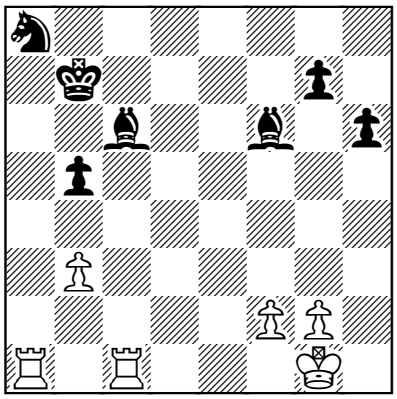


Diagram 67

67) White to play and win material.

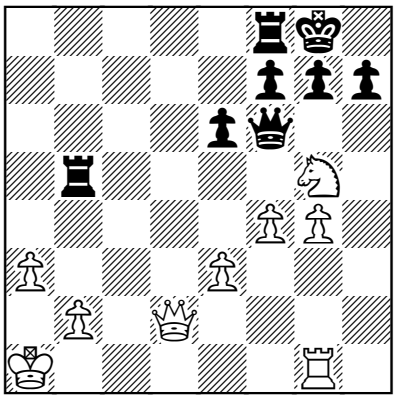


Diagram 69

69) White to play and win material.

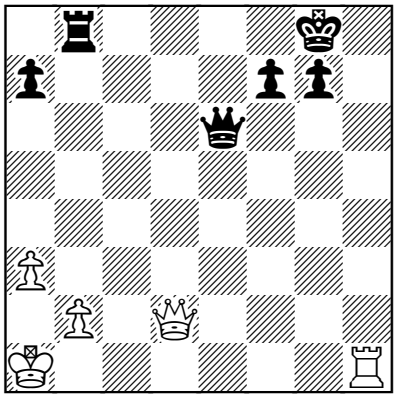


Diagram 68

68) White to play and win material.

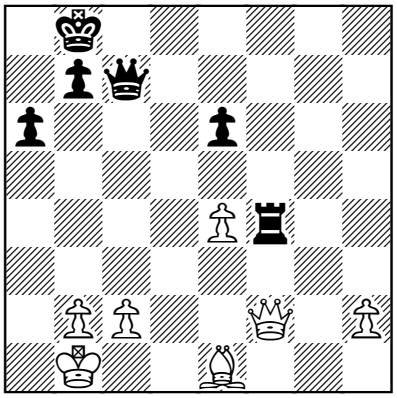


Diagram 70

70) White to play and win material.

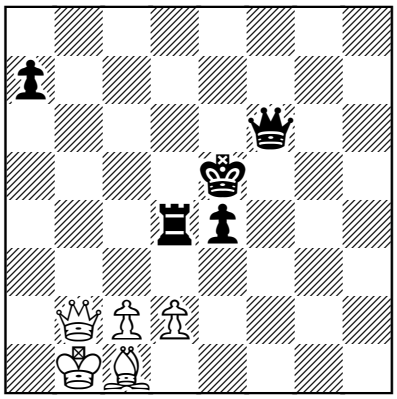


Diagram 71

71) White to play and win material.

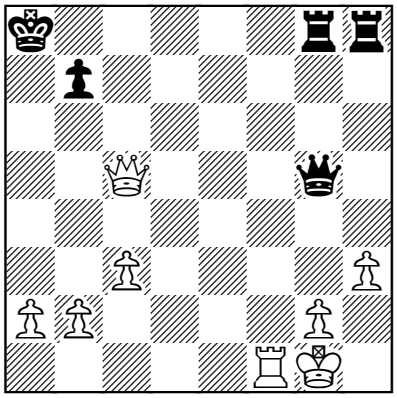


Diagram 72

72) White to play and win material.

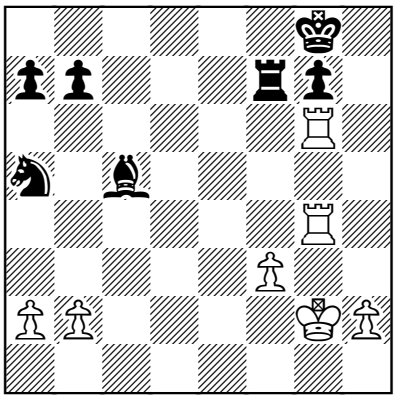


Diagram 73

73) White to play and win material.

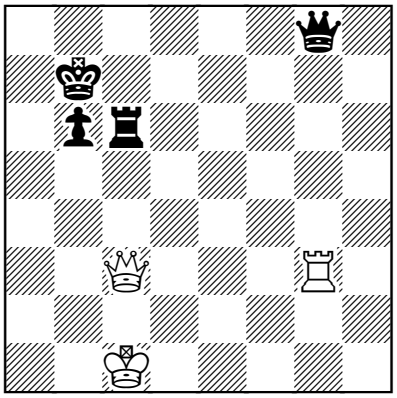


Diagram 74

74) White to play and win material.

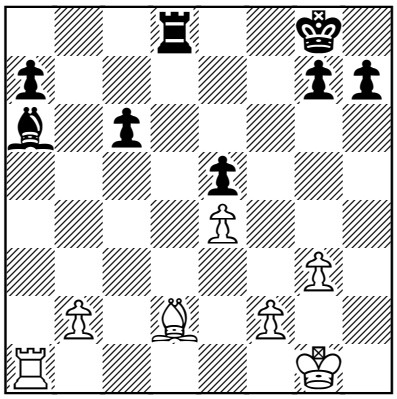


Diagram 75

75) White to play and win material.

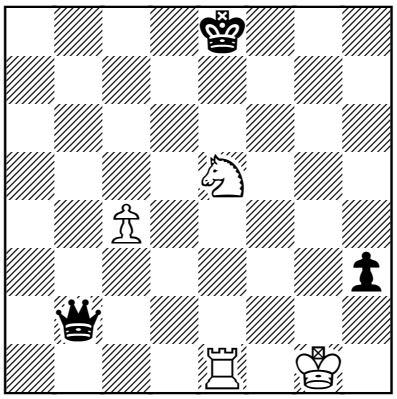


Diagram 77

77) White to play and win material.

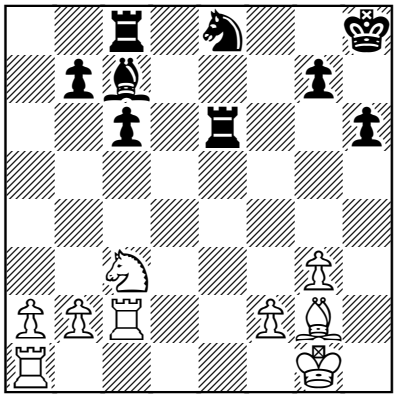


Diagram 76

76) White to play and win material.

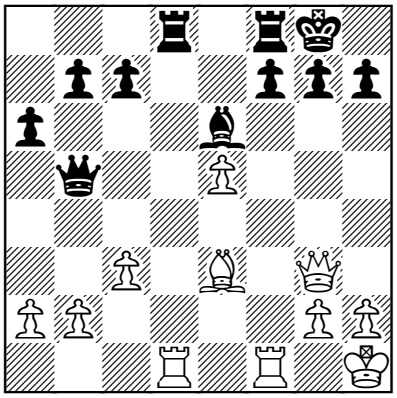


Diagram 78

78) White to play and win material.

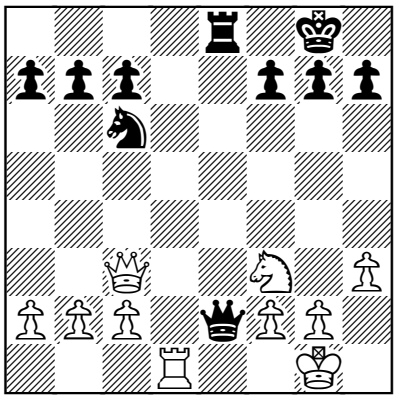


Diagram 79

79) White to play and win material.

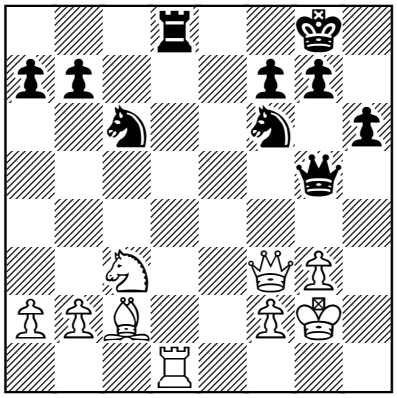


Diagram 80

80) White to play and win material.

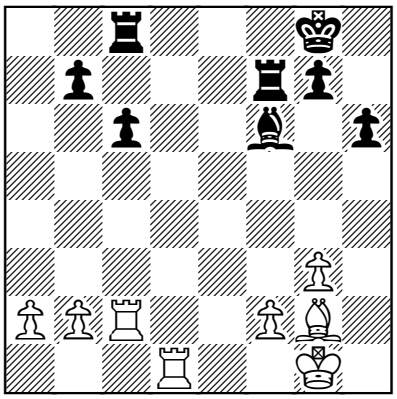


Diagram 81

81) What is White's best move?

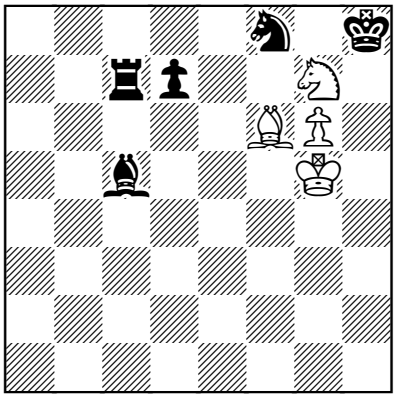


Diagram 82

82) What is White's best move?

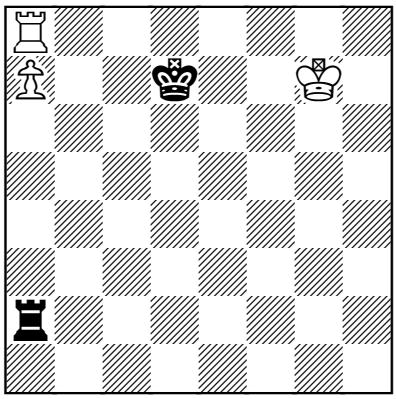


Diagram 83

83) What is White's best move?

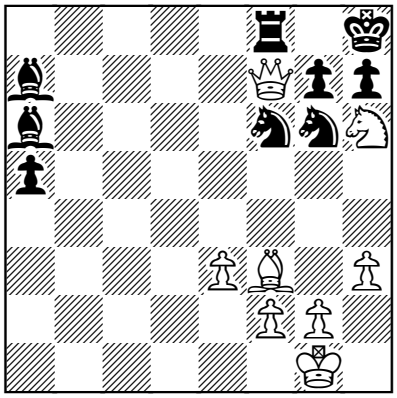


Diagram 84

84) What is White's best move?

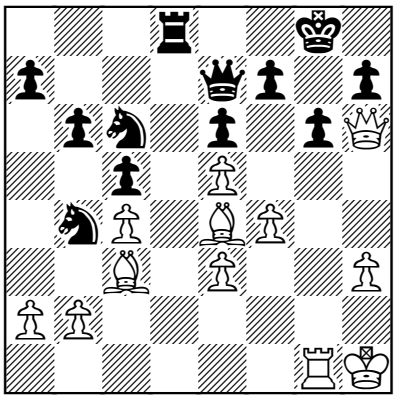


Diagram 85

85) What is White's best move?

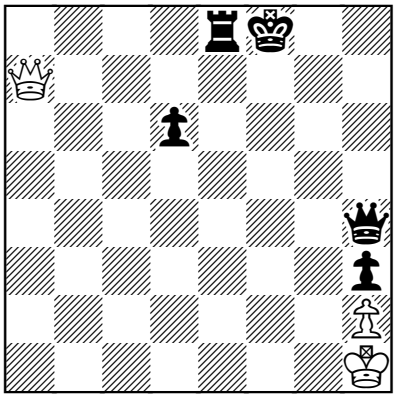


Diagram 86

86) What is White's best move?

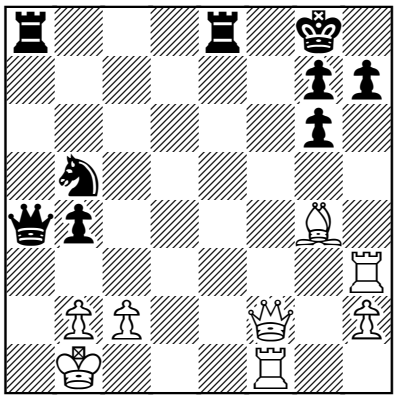


Diagram 87

87) What is White's best move?

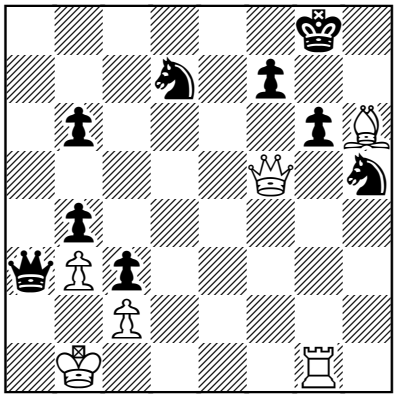


Diagram 88

88) What is White's best move?

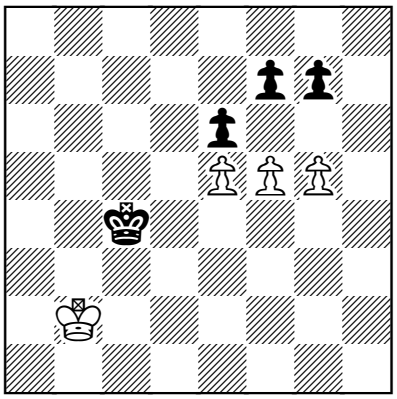


Diagram 89

89) What is White's best move?

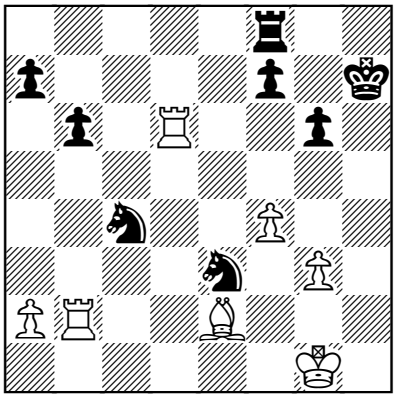


Diagram 90

90) What is White's best move?

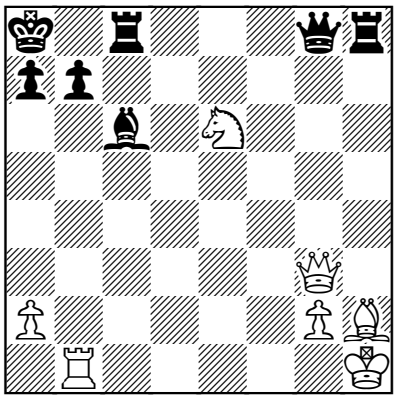


Diagram 91

91) What is White's best move?

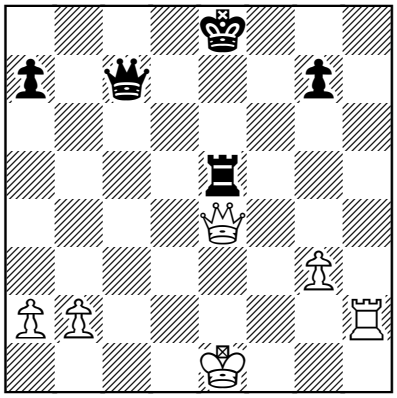


Diagram 92

92) What is White's best move?

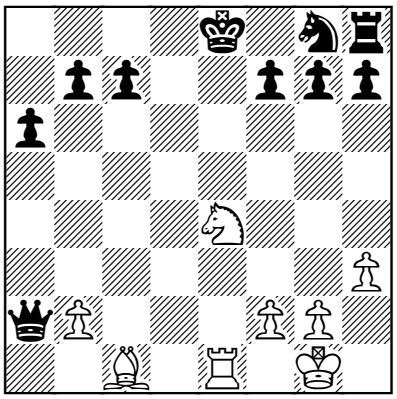


Diagram 93

93) What is White's best move?

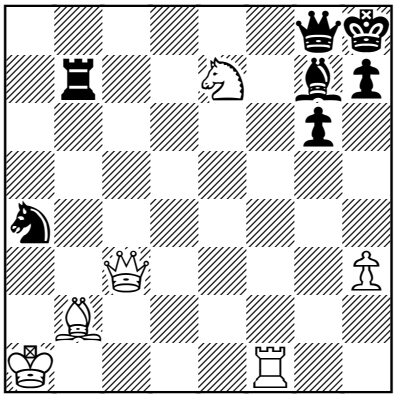


Diagram 94

94) What is White's best move?

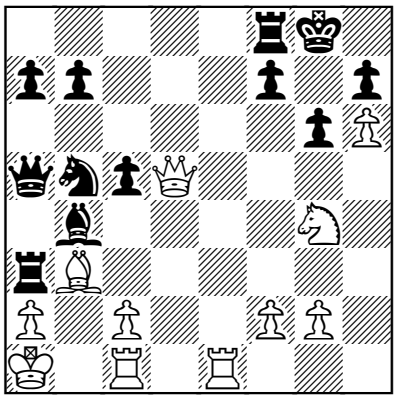


Diagram 95

95) What is White's best move?

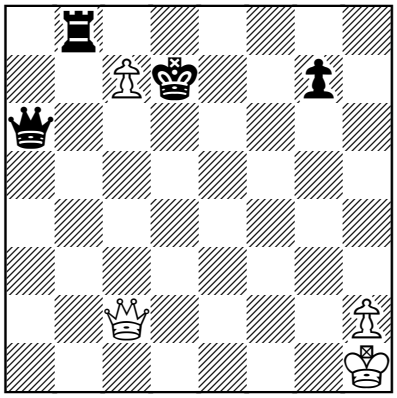


Diagram 96

96) What is White's best move?

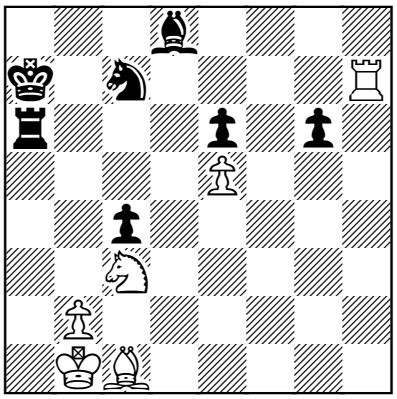


Diagram 97

97) What is White's best move?

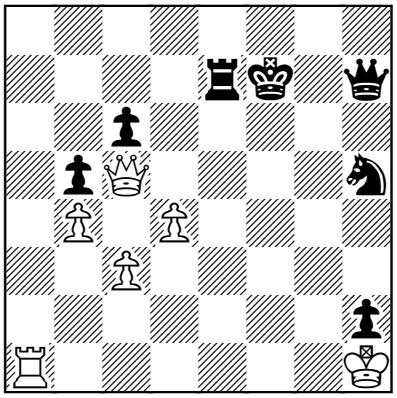


Diagram 98

98) What is White's best move?

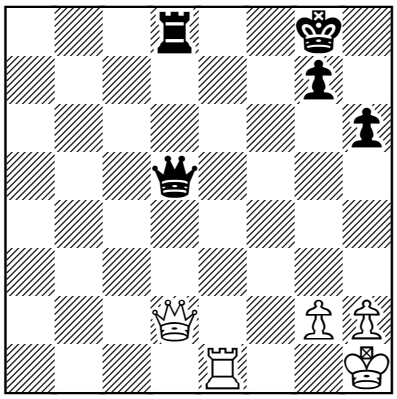


Diagram 99

99) What is White's best move?

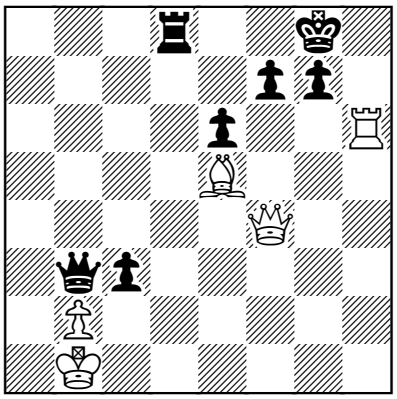


Diagram 100

100) What is White's best move?

Chapter Six

Solutions to Exercises

Chapter One: Solutions

Exercise 1

I hope you were able to envisage a chess board in your mind. Attempting to do so, and then thinking ahead, is excellent training and will help you when it comes to analysing combinations and contemplating tactical sequences.

a) Each of the eight pawns has two options available, whilst the knights could come out to a3, c3, f3 or h3. In total, then, White could start off in 20 different ways, although only a handful of those could be considered as a good way to begin the game.

b) Juniors typically get confused with the definition of stalemate. In practice a key element is the king not being able to move, and this does tend to happen more when his majesty is all that the defender has left. However, the true definition refers to no legal moves being available, and that goes for any other remaining pieces too. As each side has plenty of other pieces to move, it is not remotely close to stalemate!

Exercise 2

a) The arrows on the board (see Diagram 1) should make it clear that the rook, bishop and knight each have two checks available, the pawn one check, and the white queen no less than six. That makes a total of 13 with 1 Qc6+?? being the most unlucky. It would of course concede her majesty for nothing.

b) Only five checks are available in Diagram 2. 1 b5+? would give up the pawn for nothing. Currently White is a rook up, but after 1 Ra6+?? Kb7 (or Kb5), the black king would escape check by attacking the rook, whilst simultaneously giving a discovered check with his own rook. So that would be even worse!

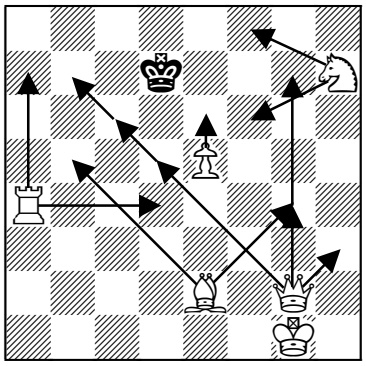


Diagram 1 (W)

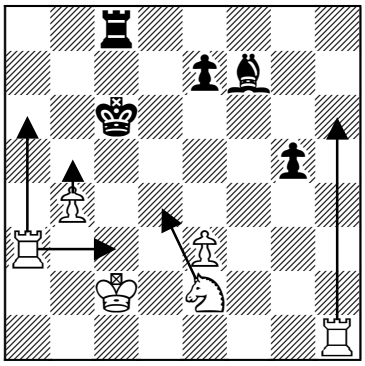


Diagram 2 (W)

There is nothing particularly remarkable about these positions and, as I mentioned in the introduction, that is the case for the vast majority. Nevertheless, it is a good habit to get into to look out for checks, even if giving one isn't the best way to go.

Exercise 3

a) 1 Bxc3! is of course best, as the seemingly hidden away bishop on h8 demonstrates why it is a long range piece.



WARNING: It is said that backward bishop moves are the toughest moves to spot. I'm sure that you didn't miss this one though!

b) Currently the white king is in check, but the rook is also attacked by the offending black queen. It sounds grim but on inspection it becomes clear that **1 Re2!** escapes the check (and fork) whilst simultaneously setting up a pin on the e-file.

It is *not* possible that it is Black's move in either case, as that means that he either failed to get out of, or placed himself in check last turn. Whichever, it would have been an illegal move that wouldn't have been allowed to stand.

Exercise 4

a) Two checks are on offer from each of the rook, bishop and knight, and no less than six from the white queen. Only 1 Qc7 is mate though and, yes, cutting through all the options, it's still basically getting the queen parked next to the enemy king with some support from a friendly piece.

b) 1 c7, 1 Qxa7, 1 Qxb7, 1 Qc7, 1 Qd8, 1 Be5, 1 Na6 and 1 Rh8 are all check – hence eight in total, but only the last one is mate. Note that when the rook zooms to

Black's back rank, the bishop can't interpose because it is pinned.

Exercise 5

I really must warn against these answers as each position must be considered on its own merit. However...

a) R+B+N=11 which is more than Q+P=10.

b) Remember a minor piece is a bishop or a knight. Three of them are 3x3 plus a rook (5) totals 14 points, which is more than the 9+4=13 of a queen and four pawns.

Exercise 6

As bishop takes either knight would just be a trade of equal value pieces, they could not be classified as 'sacrifices'. Neither 1 Bxb4 nor 1 Bxh6 would be any good anyway because, instead of recapturing, Black could flick in a killer ...Ra8+. Upon 1 Qxh6+ (a queen sacrifice) 1...gxh6 2 Rxh6, the black king could escape to g7, but **1 Rxh6+! gxh6 2 Qxh6** is checkmate (as depicted in Diagram 3). All in all we could say that this will have been a very successful 'exchange sacrifice', though strictly speaking, as well as mate, White had a pawn into the bargain too!

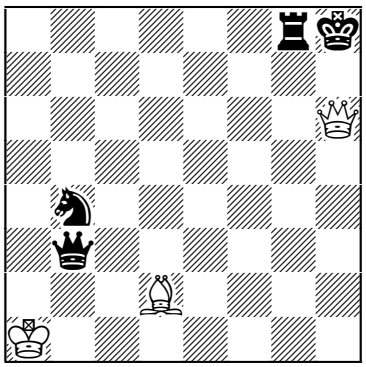


Diagram 3

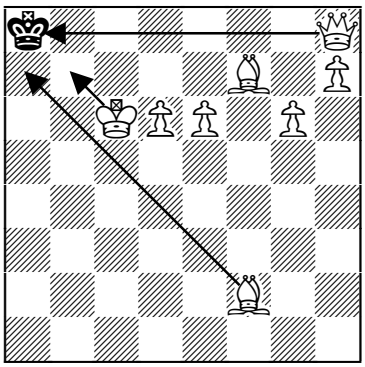


Diagram 4

Exercise 7

a) 1 Qa1+ isn't mate because the black king can nudge to b8. Black is living on borrowed time though, because so long as White doesn't blunder and allow a stalemate, there will be numerous different ways to deliver the killer blow.

b) 1 Bf7+ is a discovered check and, as shown in Diagram 4, is the checkmate that I was after.

c) Both 1 Qb2?? and 1 Kc7?? would leave the only remaining black piece, his king, with no legal moves to hand. When ahead so much material one should be looking for the checks, and of course any mates, but this exercise shows that stalemates are always lurking in the shadows and are definitely worth avoiding!

Exercise 8

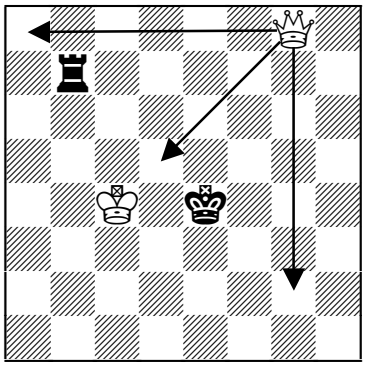


Diagram 5 (W)

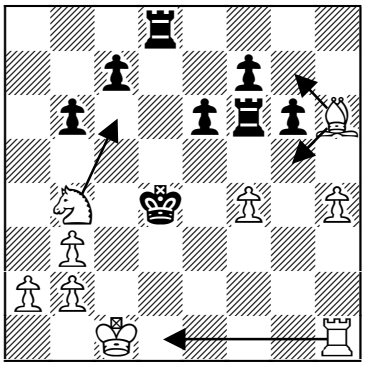


Diagram 6 (W)

The illustrative arrows in Diagrams 5 and 6 should tell the story:

a) The key is the h1-a8 diagonal. **1 Qd5+** forks the black king and rook, **1 Qa8** pins (and wins!) the rook to the king, and **1 Qg2+** is a tasty skewer.

b) 1 Nc6+ is a knight fork netting the rook on d8. **1 Rd1+** skewers the black king and rook. The bishop can secure a rook in two different ways. **1 Bg7** is the pin I was hoping that you would find, but **1 Bg5** would be equally impressive.

Exercise 9

When trying to answer this question, at first people get confused with what a queen can do that no other piece can. As a queen is such a powerful piece, of course there is plenty it can do but what it can't do, which other pieces can, is far more of a brain teaser!

The answer is to be the initiator in a discovered check. Yes, there is no way in which a queen can move away to uncover a check from another piece, because having already been along the same rank, file or diagonal as that piece would mean that the queen was already giving check. It can not possibly be that side to move, as the opponent must then have made an illegal move the turn before. If you are having trouble getting your head around this, by all means set up some pieces and try it.

Exercise 10

a) First up it should be observed that the double checks, 1 Nc7+ and 1 Nb6+, come to very little. White could take the pawn on e7, unleashing a check from the bishop, or utilize that same discovered check to go after Black's h-pawn via 1 Nf6+. By far the best option, though, is **1 Nc3+!**. In Diagram 7 Black must get out of check, and when he does, the knight can grab the rook on b1.

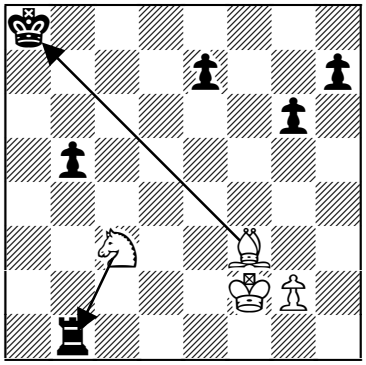


Diagram 7 (B)

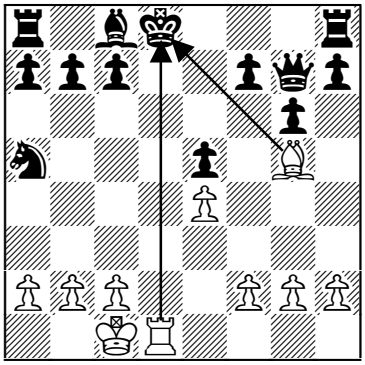


Diagram 8 (B)

b) I feel a bit mean with this question, but I think I have been pretty kind with all the others! White could take the offside knight for free, unleashing a check with the rook, or far better still, play 1 Bh6+ guaranteeing the win of the black queen. However, both of those options would leave White still well behind in material.

Instead, a nifty sequence starts with **1 Bg5+!**. This double check (illustrated in Diagram 8) leaves Black with no choice but to play 1...Ke8. Then White's two remaining pieces continue to combine superbly with 2 Rd8 mate. Nice work if you can get it!

Chapter Two: Solutions

Exercise 1

a) 1 Qxa8! Rxa8 2 Re8+ (reaching Diagram 9) is an excellent combination, which will end in a back rank mate in White's favour.

b) The black king's escape square on h7 isn't available here because it is covered by the white bishop on b1. I would have to say that 1 Qxa8 Rxa8 2 Rc8+ isn't a bad idea, particularly if he swaps rooks there! Instead, 2...Qd8 is best when, after taking the queen, White will have liquidated some pieces and be involved in a favourable endgame (he would be a pawn up with a bishop for knight advantage).

Even stronger, though, is **1 Qe4!** (see Diagram 10), effectively forking the loose black knight on b4 and the concept of mate on h7.

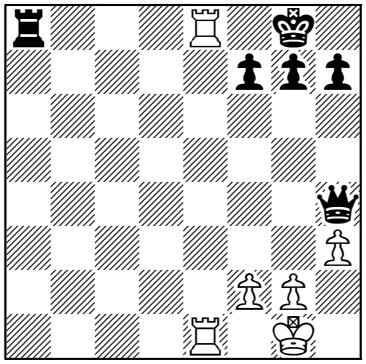


Diagram 9 (B)

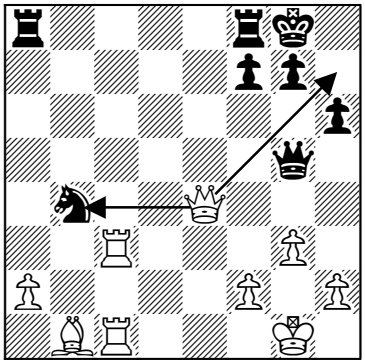


Diagram 10 (B)

Exercise 2

It's definitely clear that Black's pawns are dangerous but, on the move, White can have his say first. **1 Ra7!** is a great place to start (1 Rb7 would have been good too) when, as seen in Diagram 11, there would be nothing (aside from a stalling rook sacrifice) that Black could do to deal with the threats of mate lawnmower style by either 2 Ra8 or 2 Rh8.

Quite simply, rooks are fantastic when doubled on the seventh rank.

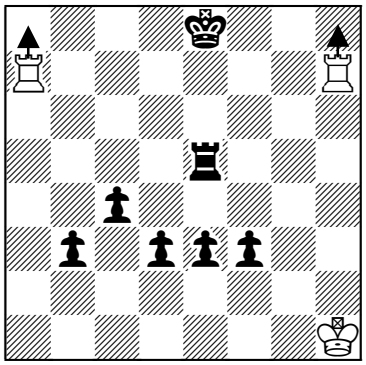


Diagram 11 (B)

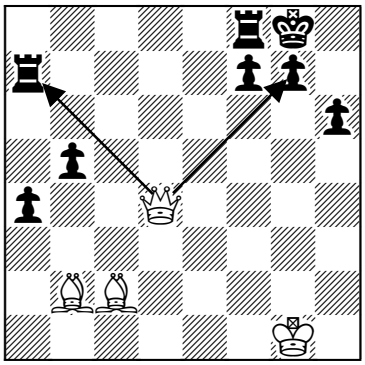


Diagram 12 (B)

Exercise 3

White can threaten mate on h7 by aligning his queen and light-squared bishop. Indeed, 1 Qd3 also hits the unguarded b5-pawn. 1 Qg2 threatens mate on g7, as do 1 Qc3 and 1 Qd4. Of course White is not compelled to play any of those, but I like the simple **1 Qd4!** (Diagram 12) as, by hitting the rook on a7 as well, it guarantees a material gain that will make White's job of winning the game that much easier!

Exercise 4

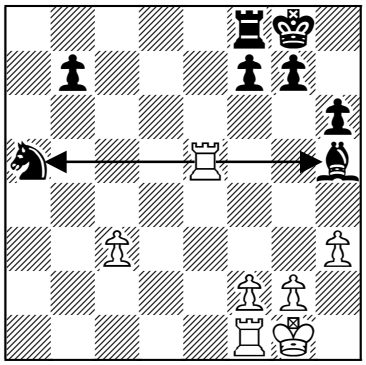


Diagram 13 (B)

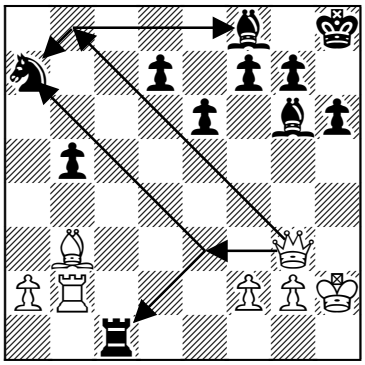


Diagram 14 (W)

a) 1 Re5! (illustrated in Diagram 13) is a simple fork of the two currently unprotected black minor pieces.

b) In this position each of the pawn on d7, the rook on c1, the knight on a7 and the bishop on f8 are without protection. As the arrows in Diagram 14 indicate, White could try to exploit this situation (as one should always be on the look-out to do) with 1 Qe3, forking the knight and rook. However, Black then could retreat one to defend the other via 1...Rc7. Instead **1 Qb8!**, forking the knight and bishop, guarantees netting one of those two minor pieces.

Exercise 5

A direct assault along the h-file via an alignment of the queen and rook will get White nowhere, as the black king can sidestep the check on g8 and, if required, run away via f7. The knight is also on hand to help in defence, but even that proves to be of little use after **1 Qf7!** (see Diagram 15). Whilst I have told you always to look out for checks, remember that doesn't mean you should necessarily play one! Here this subtle alternative pins the black bishop and prevents any black king return from the edge back to the g-file. Now the h-file rook check will now be devastating, as I'm sure **1...Nf5 2 Rh1+ Nh6 3 Rxh6 mate** demonstrates!

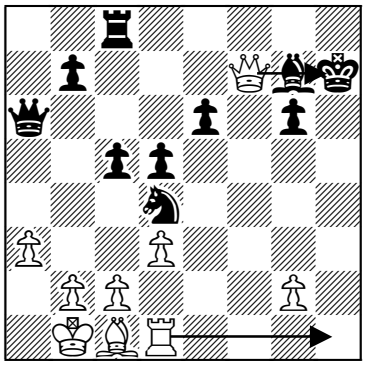


Diagram 15 (B)

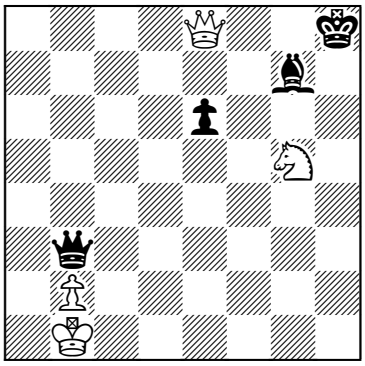


Diagram 16 (B)

Exercise 6

I like to think that you will have noticed that, although 1 Nxe6?? would threaten mate on g7, not only would it allow a perpetual check via ...Qd1-a4-d1 etc (hence not really a winning attempt), but that 1...Qxb2 mate would have put a bit of a dampener on things too!

Trading queens is futile, as providing Black is careful he will be able to concede his bishop for White's remaining pawn (straight away, for example!), thus drawing without problems.

After 1 Qh7+ Kf8, White has no more useful checks to hand, so that just leaves **1 Qf7+! Kh8 2 Qe8+** (see Diagram 16) **2...Bf8 3 Qxf8 mate** and **1 Qe8+! Bf8 2 Qf7+ Kh8 3 Qxf8 mate**, which are both just what the Doctor ordered! The correct answer then is (b) and (c).

Exercise 7

White has h- and f-pawns that are just itching to attack Black's g6-shield (to ultimately open things up for the major pieces), but those advances do take time. Indeed, planning action (and preferably a mate!) on the b-file, Black has the likes of ...a5-a4 and ...Nc5 in the pipeline.

One must always try to remain alert throughout a game of chess. If I had asked you what winning sacrifice White had available here then I'm sure that you would have got it immediately. You won't have such advice in a real game, though, so I was doing you a favour!

By far the strongest move sees White taking advantage of the fact that the f7-pawn is pinned: **1 Rxg6+!! hxg6** (or 1...Kh8 2 Rh6 f5 3 Qd4+ which leads to mate using the diagonals rather than the files) **2 Qxg6+** (see Diagram 17) **2...Kh8 3 Qh6+ Kg8 4 Rg1+** and mate next go.

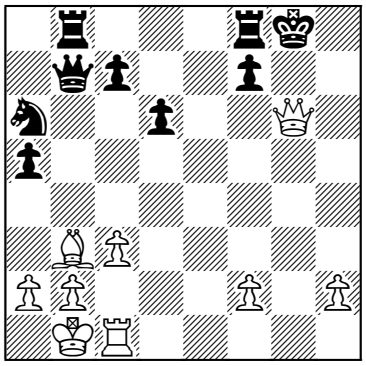


Diagram 17 (B)

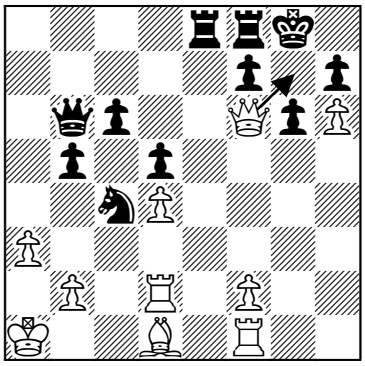


Diagram 18 (B)

Exercise 8

Although in other situations each of the suggestions would have their merits, undoubtedly the most applicable continuation here is (c).

Given time Black could net material or generate a serious attack; for example the defensive ...Qd8 (intending a transference to the kingside) is only one move away. However, there is no time for any of that after the forcing **1 h6! g6 2 Qf6**. As pictured in Diagram 18, there is no remotely satisfactory defence to Qg7 mate.

Exercise 9

There sure is! Certainly, preventing Black's mates is far too tall an order, but as it happens, the only moves available to keep the game alive will lead to victory: **1 Rh8+! Kxh8 2 Rh1+ Kg8 3 Rh8+! Kxh8 4 Qh1+ Kg8 5 Qh7 mate**. Illustrated in Diagram 19, for essentially the price of two rooks, the white queen bought a lift to a far superior post. Definitely worth the investment!

Exercise 10

The answer is 'no', but the key is looking for checks throughout the whole of an analysed sequence. At first it appears that Black can net a pawn, as he has three pieces attacking d4 compared to two defending it. However, the white queen is also on the defensive case and can be unleashed thanks to a check. After **1...Nfxd4?** then play might continue **2 Ncxd4 Nxd4 3 Nxd4**. If he sees the error of his ways then Black should bale out now and accept that he has blundered a piece for a pawn. Instead **3...Qxd4??** compounds things, with **4 Bb5+** initiating a discovered attack. In Diagram 20 Black must escape check and then the white queen can pounce on its opposite number.

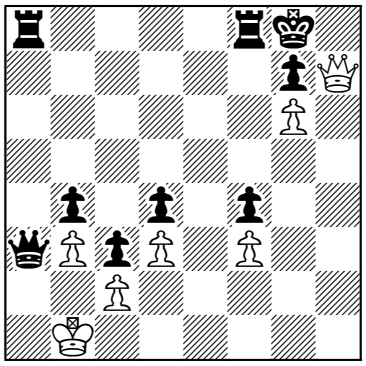


Diagram 19

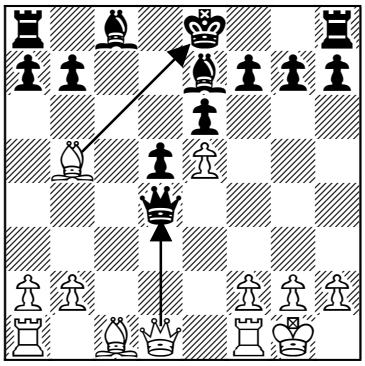


Diagram 20 (B)

Chapter Three: Solutions

Exercise 1

Black is two pawns up with a well-placed rook on the seventh rank. Barring any tactics against him, he would have excellent winning chances. Unfortunately White should observe that the black king can be stretched by **1 Rh7+!**. In Diagram 21 the black king must get out of check, but to accept the kamikaze rook would leave his queen unguarded. After **1...Kxh7 2 Qxf6** Black will lose a pawn or two fairly quickly, and even sooner in the event of the delayed queen loss 1...Kh6 2 Rh6+! (see Diagram 22) 2...Kxh6 3 Qxf6+.

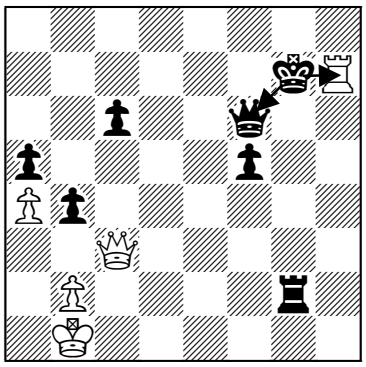


Diagram 21 (B)

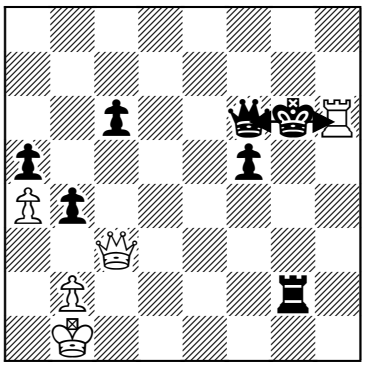


Diagram 22 (B)

Exercise 2

There is certainly no compulsion for White to immediately take back the pawn that he obviously conceded on e4. However, it seems to me to be a good idea. The white knight would be putting itself *en prise*, but after **1 Nxe4! Nxe4 2 Qh5+ Kd7** (or of course 2...g6 3 Qxg6+, i.e. taking a pawn and forking the king and knight) White can exploit the undefended black knight and the exposed king via **3 Qf5+**. The fork depicted in Diagram 23 ensures that White will re-establish material equality. With a lead in development and his opponent having a dubiously placed king, White will enter the middlegame with confidence.

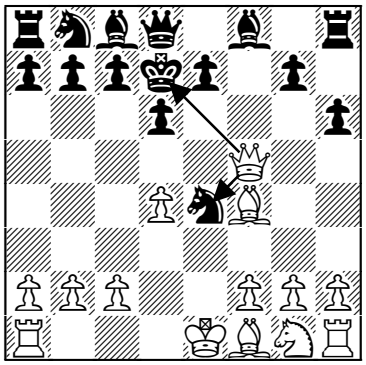


Diagram 23 (B)

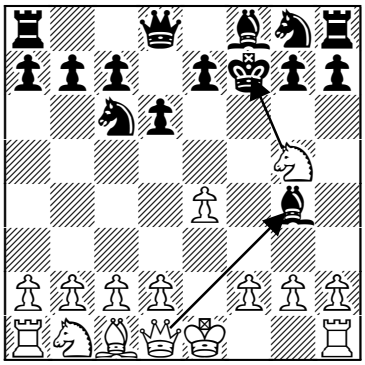


Diagram 24 (B)

Exercise 3

There is certainly nothing wrong with putting the question to the bishop via 1 h3, but a straightforward combination, which I had hoped you would have taken on board, is **1 Bxf7+! Kxf7 2 Ng5+** (see Diagram 24). It won't force checkmate but White will have netted a free pawn. Furthermore, he will have available the chance to exploit the resulting weak squares around the black king that, incidentally, will no longer be able to castle.

Instead, 1 Ng5 Bxd1 2 Bxf7+ Kd7 3 Be6+ Ke8 4 Bf7+ is visual, but, alas, the best that White has is a draw by perpetual check – and he had better take it before it goes away!

Exercise 4

From our starting position the inclusion of an earlier ...a7-a6 was clearly of little relevance. With a lead in development, White's position is preferable, but nevertheless the fact is that neither sacrifice works. Taking them in turn we have:

a) **1 Bxf7+? Kxf7 2 Ng5+** and now, rather than moving the king and allowing

White to take the undefended bishop on g4, Black can justifiably throw his own queen into the firing line with **2...Qxg5!**. Diagram 25 reminds us that now both queens are attacked, and after the simple trade **3 Bxg5 Bxd1**, even on **4 Rxd1** White will find himself a piece for a pawn down.

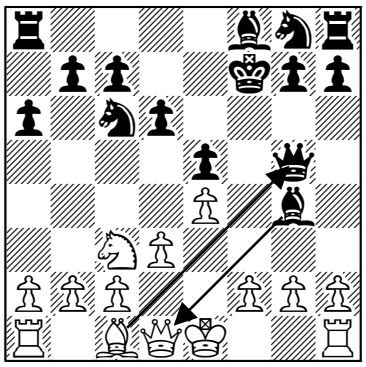


Diagram 25 (W)

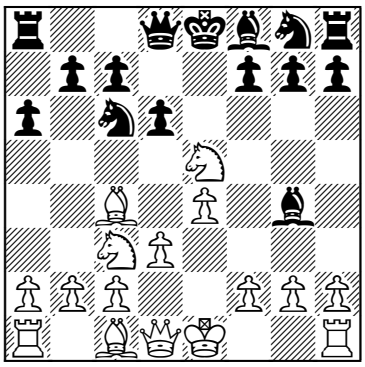


Diagram 26 (B)

b) **1 Nxe5** (illustrated in Diagram 26) would prove stunning in the event of 1...Bxd1? 2 Bxf7+ Ke7 3 Nd5 mate. Unfortunately, Black can easily spoil the party, as **1...Nxe5!** more than adequately prevents the Legall's Mate. Note that the black knight on e5 would protect the bishop on g4.

Exercise 5

I'm really not very keen on the move **1 Bg5** as that is a good bishop. White shouldn't be particularly interested in trading it, either for the black knight on f6 or the 'bad' bishop on e7. No useful pin has been set up and far more beneficial might be planning to create a half-open file, possibly with the immediate 'pawn break' 1 f4. Sooner (preferably) or later White is going to have to activate a rook or two, and with no knight on f3 obstructing such a move, it is definitely something that White should be considering.

All the same, I don't think this is an instance where Black could punish such an inaccuracy (we're back to talking about 1 Bg5). Upon **1...Nxe4?** clearly 2 Nxe4? Bxg5 3 Nxg5 Qxg5 would leave him a pawn to the good, but the critical continuation is **2 Bxe7**. Black can't just recapture on e7 as he will end up a piece for a pawn down and, indeed, for such reasons **2...Nxc3 3 Bxd8 Nxd1 4 Bxc7 Nxb2** looks like a forced continuation, i.e. with White never wanting to simplify things (being a pawn down) and Black obviously not wishing to emerge a piece (for a pawn) behind. Black kind of gets his way, only after **5 Bb3!** things are certainly not that simple. White is a pawn down but, currently attacking d6, he looks set to be able

to retrieve the behind-enemy-lines bishop. In contrast, as illustrated in Diagram 27, the black knight that has done so much work suddenly seems trapped and may be easily rounded up by a white rook or even, ironically, by White's dark-squared bishop on its return journey!

There is no use hoping things might work out or trusting to luck. When contemplating 1...Nxe4, Black would have to calculate the whole variation, and in this instance he should conclude that its employment is not desirable.

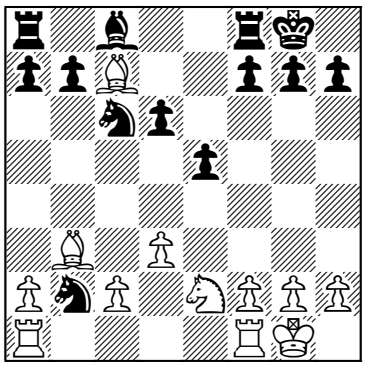


Diagram 27 (B)

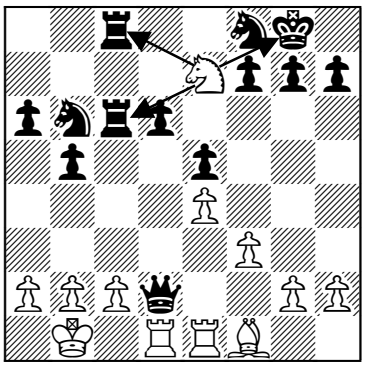


Diagram 28 (B)

Exercise 6

After **1 Nd5! Qxd2** White has the handy intermezzo **2 Ne7+!**, as seen in Diagram 28. Then **2...Kh8** is forced, when **3 Rxd2** will have seen White regain the queen, but with his knight on a vastly improved post. Yes, the black rooks are forked!

Exercise 7

I'm not going to list all the checks, but I will tell you that **1 Qd4!** (mate!) is the one that terminates the game here and now. Illustrated in Diagram 29, the queen can't be taken by the king because it is protected by the bishop on b2. His majesty can't run backwards as the f6-rook controls the sixth rank and, most key of all, the black e4-rook and b5-knight are powerless to help out as they are pinned.

Exercise 8

Doubling up on the seventh rank (starting with 1 Rb7) or attacking the knight directly (via 1 Rc1) doesn't quite cut it here, as Black can advance his king to d6, thus offering support from the h7-rook. On the other hand, **1 Rxc7+! Kxc7 2 Ra7+** (as seen in Diagram 30) is just the ticket. What was a pin is now a skewer and the win of material will be decisive.

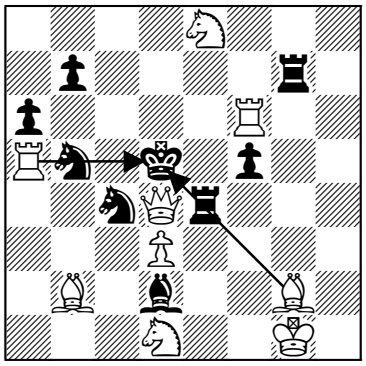


Diagram 29

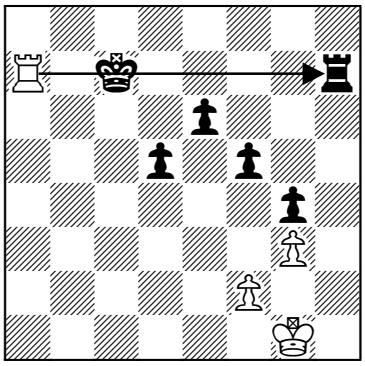


Diagram 30 (B)

Exercise 9

After 1 Qh7+? Kf8 2 Rf1, the pin on the f-file is not the be all and end all, but 2...Ra1 mate is! In fact that square would still prove to be a serious problem for White after a queen trade, but that's all irrelevant as, instead, he has available a stunning alternative. Yes, after **1 Rh8+!!** (depicted in Diagram 31), as the bishop is pinned it can't capture the sacrificial rook. Hence 1...Kxh8 2 Qh7 mate. Talk about a successful rook decoy!

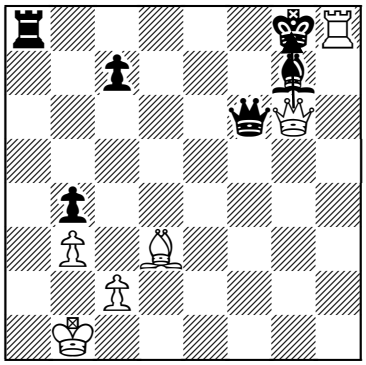


Diagram 31 (B)

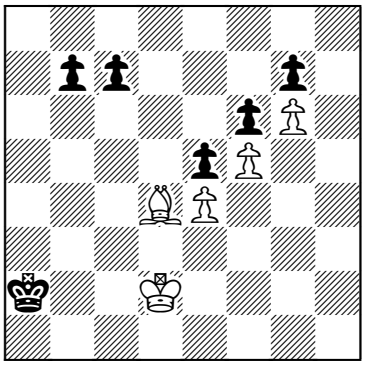


Diagram 32 (B)

Exercise 10

Admittedly, those black passed pawns are a daunting prospect and, to have any chance, White must create a passed pawn of his own. The black king would not be

in a position to help prevent a white promotion, although where it is at present makes a manoeuvre of the white bishop to f8 extremely difficult. With the b7-pawn itching to get out of the blocks a manoeuvre of Bc1, K moves and then Bh6 would be too slow, but White can get straight on the case with **1 Bxd4!!**. As illustrated in Diagram 32, this one is fun for you to play around with. The idea is that, after **1...exd4 2 e5! fxe5 3 f6 gxf6 4 g7**, it is the white pawn which is by far the most valuable of all the ones on the board, as a new queen will be imminent.

Black isn't compelled to take the bishop, but the intention is to keep working its way through that black pawn chain, e.g. 1...b5 2 Bxe5! b4 3 Bxf6 gxf6 4 g7 b3 5 g8Q.

Chapter Four: Solutions

Exercise 1

The 'overload' theme comes into play here, as both the white queen and king find themselves with too much on their plate. In the game Merriman-Ward, Isle of Man 1994, after **28 Kxa4** I could simply have stretched the white queen with 28...Nxb2+ 29 Qxb2 Qxd3, and as Black emerges a clear pawn to the good, I suppose I should accept that as your answer. Nevertheless, stronger still, and definitely more enjoyable, was the **28...Qxd3!** (depicted in Diagram 33), which in fact prompted my opponent to resign. The point is that, after 29 Qxd3, a tasty knight fork would arrive via 29...Nxb2+. In that instance White would soon find himself a pawn and a piece down.

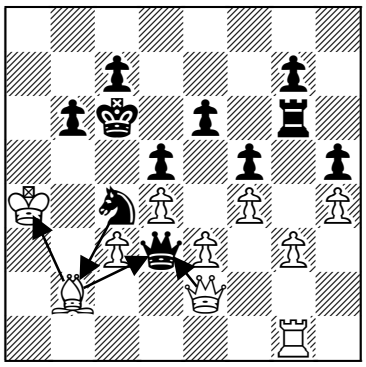


Diagram 33 (W)

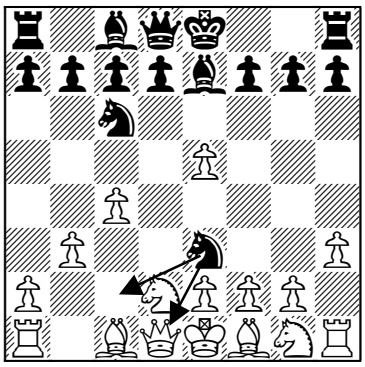


Diagram 34 (W)

Exercise 2

Although 1...Nxf2? 2 Kxf2 Bh4+ 3 g3 comes to nothing, if you considered that pos-

sibility then you were along the right lines. The fact that the white king is so smothered by its own army could lead one to believe that something juicy is in the air, and indeed **1...Ne3!** (see Diagram 34) is right on the button. Here the white queen also effectively finds itself smothered, as the only escape route at c2 is also monitored by the knight. Yep, Black will win a significant amount of material or, in the event of **2 fxe3 Bh4+**, will deliver mate next move.

Exercise 3

The arrows in Diagram 35 show what appealed to me about **27 Nf6?**. White would be threatening h7 with three different pieces, and after 27...Rxd3??, for example, the Arabian mate 28 Rxh7 would be a delightful way to end the game. Upon 27...Bxf6 I would have the simple 28 Qxf3 netting me the exchange and leaving the f6-bishop pinned.

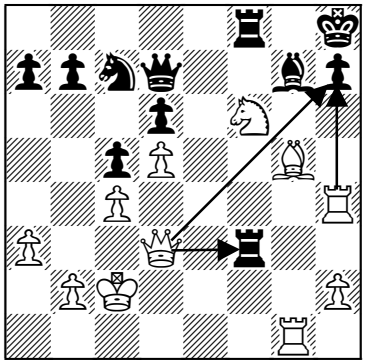


Diagram 35 (B)

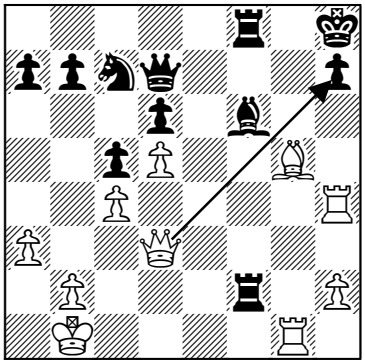


Diagram 36 (W)

I wouldn't say that I was that close to launching my knight but I was certainly encouraged by the idea, until I remembered my own simple advice about looking out for checks. Alas, the whole concept is refuted by the simple **27...Rf2+! 28 Kb1 Bxf6**. As illustrated in Diagram 36, the point is that Black's rook is no longer *en prise* and his last move has enabled the queen to guard h7.

Exercise 4

This was a fairly straightforward question which I'm sure you would have had little trouble with. The two different forced mates are:

a) 1 Qh8+! Bxh8 2 Rxh8+ Kg7 3 Bf6 mate (as illustrated in Diagram 37)

b) 1 Qxg7+! Kxg7 2 Bf6+ Kg8 3 Rh8 mate.

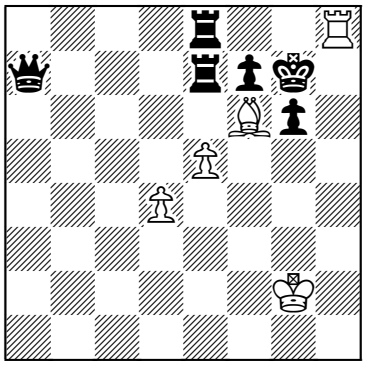


Diagram 37

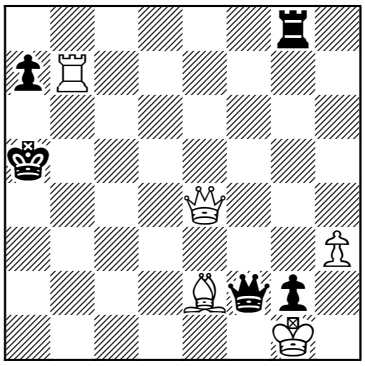


Diagram 38 (W)

Exercise 5

As I mentioned Chapter 4, a typically useful hiding place is indeed behind an enemy pawn. Nevertheless, one always needs to be careful, and here Black can tease his opponent's king out into the open with **1...Qf2+!!**. In Diagram 38, moving the king to h2 would allow a promotion to a queen which would be double check and mate. Hence **2 Kxf2**, when **2...g1Q+ 3 Kf3 Qg3 mate** is the result of a handy queen sacrifice.

Exercise 6

Taking the options one at a time, we have:

a) 1 exf6? (not particularly impressive and demonstrating no awareness whatsoever!) **1...Rh1 mate**.

b) 1 Qd8+? Qxd8 and that's the end of that!

c) 1 Qxa7+!! (clearly the correct answer!) **1...Kxa7 2 Nb6+ Kb8 3 Ra8+ Kc7 4 Rc8 mate** as shown in Diagram 39.

d) 1 Nb6+ immediately is less accurate in view of **1...Qxb6!**. Black is happy to offload his own queen because he still has a mate on h1 lined up.

Exercise 7

If there was a black pawn on h7 then White could mate his opponent instantly by withdrawing the rook anywhere along the g-file. As there isn't, such an idea would be foolish because the black king could escape his cage by running down the h-file.

The key to finding the right answer here is noticing that after **1 Rxf7+ Kg8 2 Rg7+ Kh8 3 Rxe7+ Kg8 4 Rg7+ Kh8 5 Rxc7+? Kg8**, as seen in Diagram 40, White will have

overplayed his hand. He can no longer seesaw back to g7 because the black queen will have that square within its sights. The correct answer is (d), but providing the checks keep coming, White can take his time doing it!

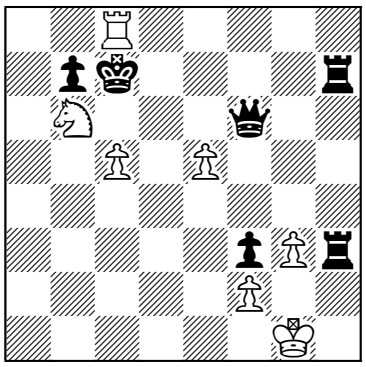


Diagram 39

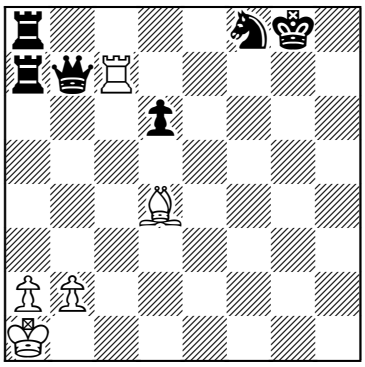


Diagram 40 (W)

Exercise 8

For some reason the finishing combination seen in the game **O.Romanishin-V.Ivanchuk**, Russian Championship 1986, has stuck in my mind over the years. One may be forgiven for thinking the position isn't that critical and that active piece play tenders White reasonable compensation for the pawn. That view is wrong, though, as **18 Nb5!** (seen in Diagram 41) proves to be a crushing blow.

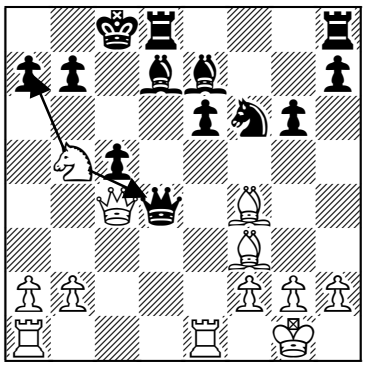


Diagram 41 (B)

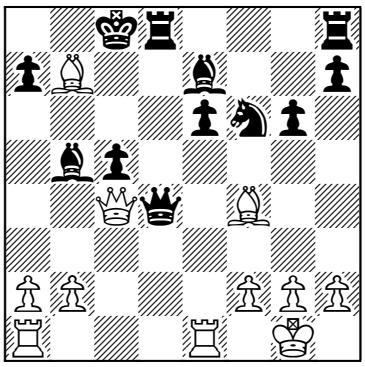


Diagram 42 (B)

The knight attacks the queen, but also carries with it the threat of Nxa7 mate. I'm

sure that the restricted options for the black king didn't escape your attention, and the lack of available defenders also becomes clear after the continuation **18...Bxb5 19 Bxb7+!**. In Diagram 42 Black actually resigned, as **19...Kxb7 20 Qxb5+** will force mate next go with 21 Qc6.

Exercise 9

This position was taken from a recent game of my own – specifically **A.Zaremba-C.Ward**, Reykjavik Open 2006 – in which, after **36...exf3!**, White understood that if his g-pawn had to recapture on f3, then Black's major pieces would pounce on h3. Hence my opponent accepted my rook sacrifice with **37 Kxg3** as seen in Diagram 43.

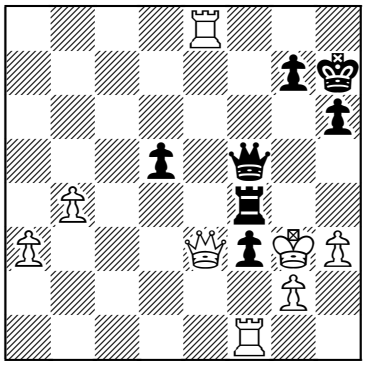


Diagram 43 (B)

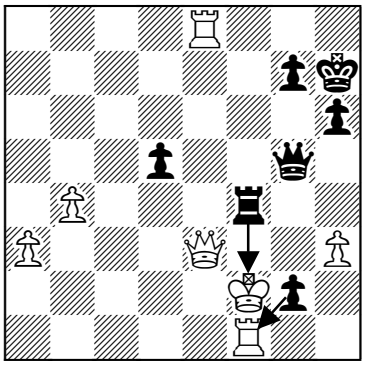


Diagram 44 (W)

I was, of course, ready for this and thus **37...Qg5+ 38 Kf2** followed (note 38 Kh2 Qxg2 mate), when the next key move was the discovered check **38...fxg2+!** as seen in Diagram 44. The point was that there would be no mate after 38...Qxg2+ 39 Ke1, so White would have been a rook for a pawn up.

With Black on the verge of getting a second queen, **39 Qxf4** was forced, when just a little care was required. Upon 39...Qxf4+? 40 Kxg2, seeing as White doesn't appear to be losing the loose e8-rook to a forking check, he will be well in the game! However, the simple **39...gxf1Q+!** (getting the move order right!) prompted a white resignation, as after 40 Kxf1 Qxf4+ Black would emerge a queen for a rook to the good.

Exercise 10

Of course you are, now what are you waiting for! Chess is obviously a mental game of ability and stamina. If you still think your skills need some sharpening, please try the quick-fire puzzles in Chapter Five. Otherwise, here's Grandmaster Chris Ward signing off and wishing you the very best of luck.

Bye for now!

Chapter Seven

Solutions to Quick-fire Puzzles

1) 1 Qg7 mate (Diagram 1).

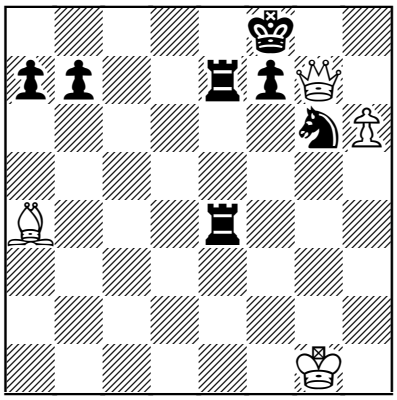


Diagram 1

2) 1 a7 mate (Diagram 2).

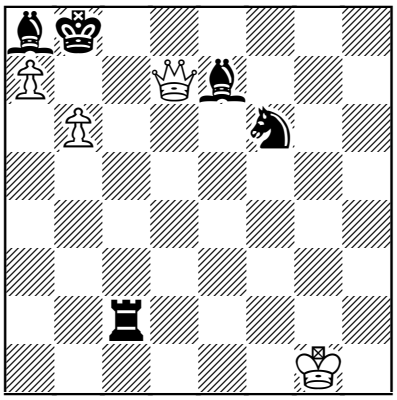


Diagram 2

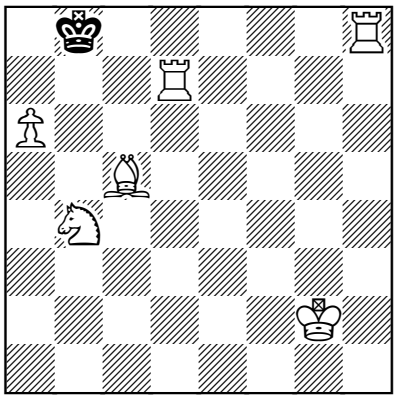


Diagram 3

3) 1 Rh8 mate (Diagram 3).

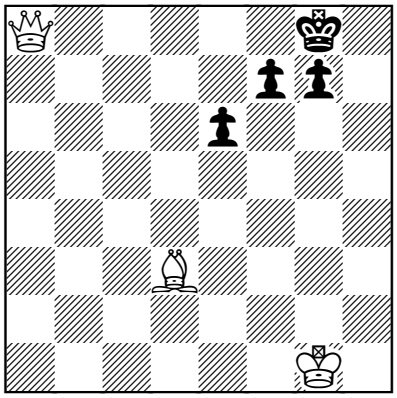


Diagram 4

4) 1 Qa8 mate (Diagram 4).

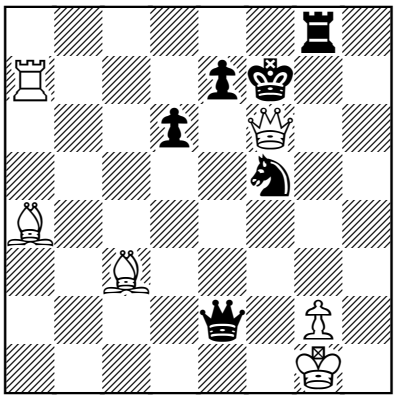


Diagram 5

5) 1 Qxf6 mate (Diagram 5). Note that Black's e-pawn is pinned.

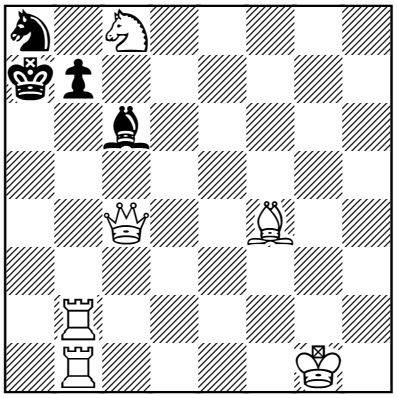


Diagram 6

6) 1 Nc8 mate (Diagram 6). Of course White's position was overwhelming, but this is the only mate in one.

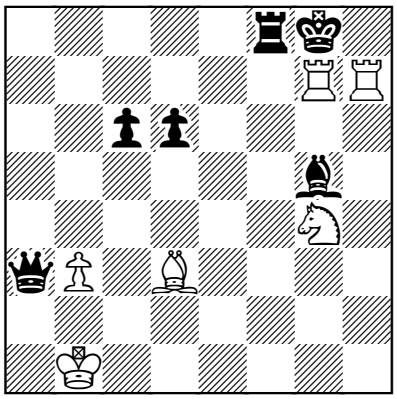


Diagram 7

7) 1 Rcg7 mate (Diagram 7).

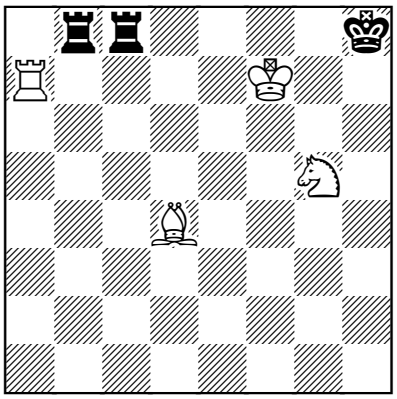


Diagram 9

9) 1 Kf7 mate (Diagram 9).

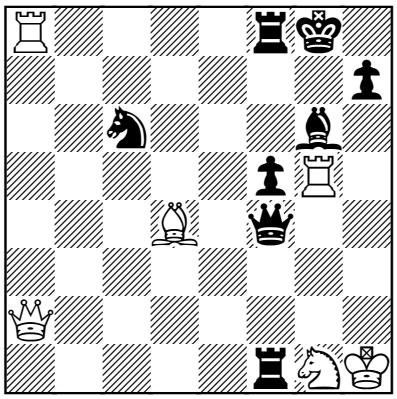


Diagram 8

8) 1 Qa2 mate (Diagram 8).

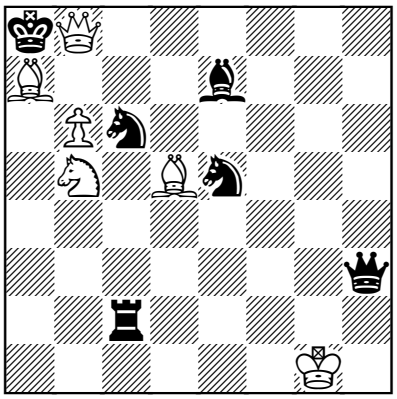


Diagram 10

10) 1 Qb8 mate (Diagram 10). The c6-knight is pinned to the king.

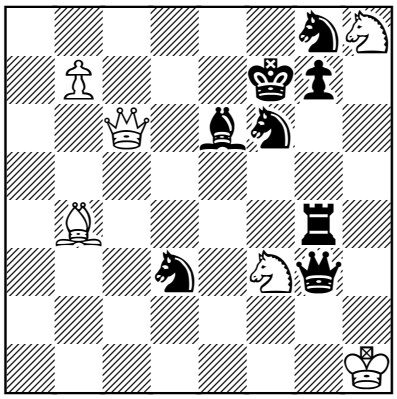


Diagram 11

11) 1 h8N mate (Diagram 11). A very effective under-promotion.

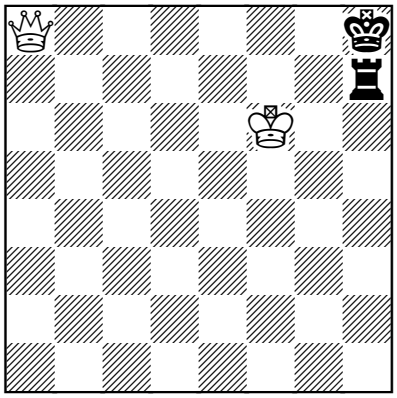


Diagram 12

12) 1 Qa8 mate (Diagram 12).

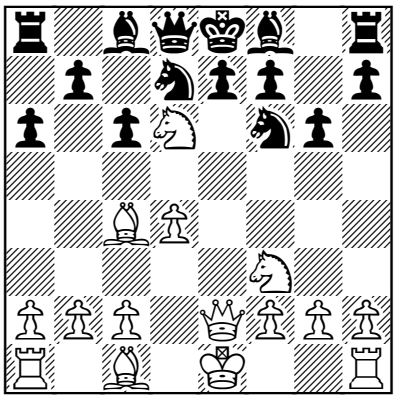


Diagram 13

13) 1 Nd6 mate (Diagram 13). Yes, the e7-pawn is of course pinned.

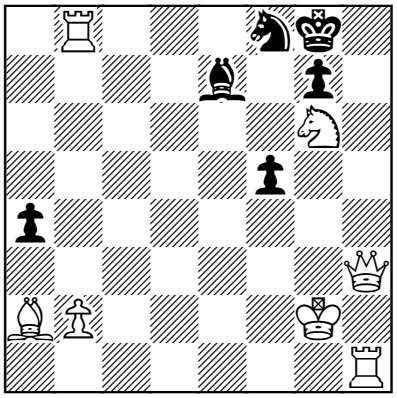


Diagram 14

14) 1 Ba2 mate (Diagram 14). White's position was crushing, but this is the only mate in one.

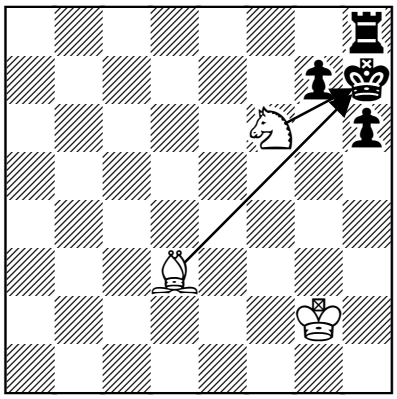


Diagram 15

15) 1 Nf6 mate (Diagram 15). Double check and mate.

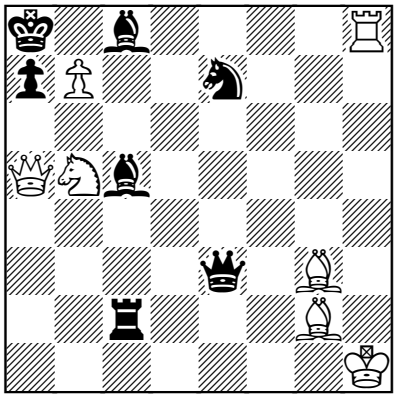


Diagram 16

16) 1 cxb7 mate (Diagram 16). There were other ways to win but this is the quickest.

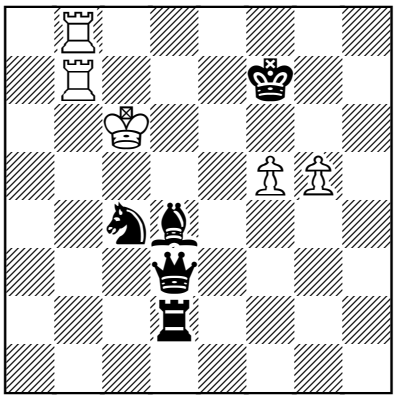


Diagram 17

17) 1 Kc6 mate (Diagram 17).

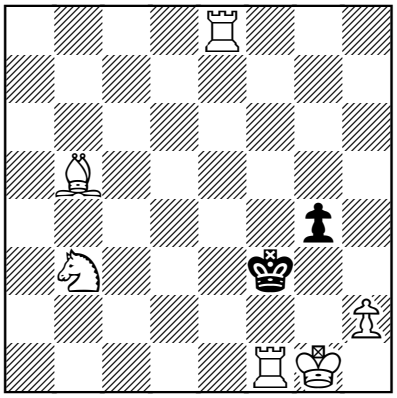


Diagram 18

18) 1 0-0 mate (Diagram 18). If I had told you that it was still legal for White to castle, then I would surely have given the game away!

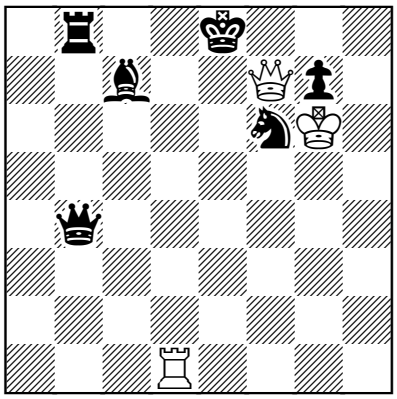


Diagram 19

19) 1 Qf7 mate (Diagram 19).

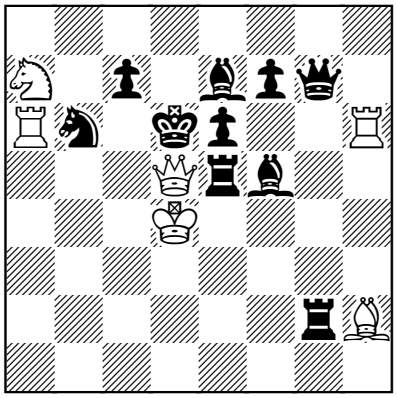


Diagram 20

20) 1 Qd5 mate (Diagram 20). Without this terminal check, taking advantage of plenty of pinned black pieces, White would be in serious trouble.

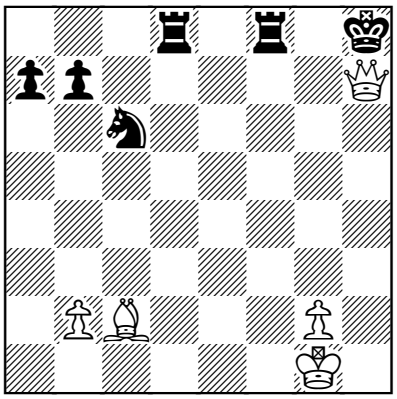


Diagram 21

21) 1 Qg6+ Kh8 2 Qh7 mate (Diagram 21). Well railroaded!

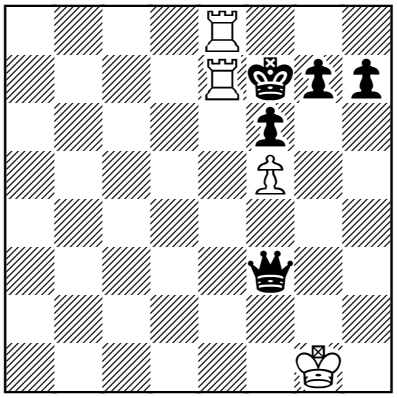


Diagram 22

22) 1 Re8+ Kf7 2 R1e7 mate (Diagram 22). Crucially, the f5-pawn controls the g6-square.

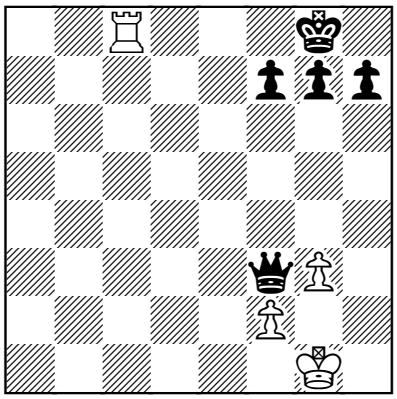


Diagram 23

23) 1 Qc8+ Bxc8 2 Rxc8 mate (Diagram 23). Essentially, a simple back rank mate.

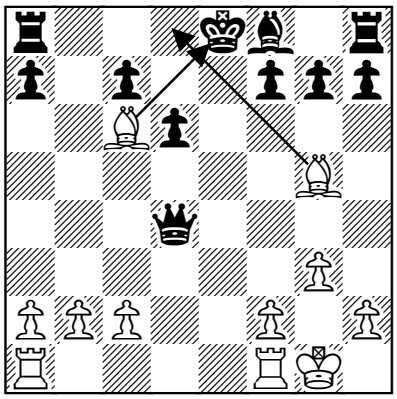


Diagram 24

24) 1 Qxc6+! bxc6 2 Bxc6 mate (Diagram 24). White's bishops combine beautifully.

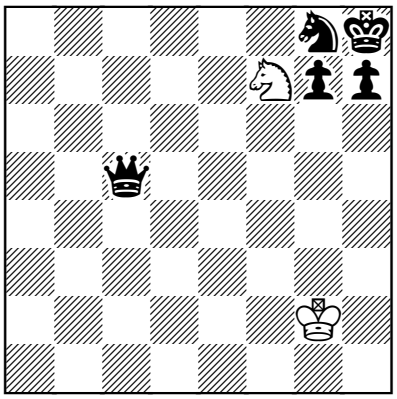


Diagram 25

25) 1 Qg8+! Nxg8 2 Nf7 mate (Diagram 25). A variant on the famous smothered mate theme.

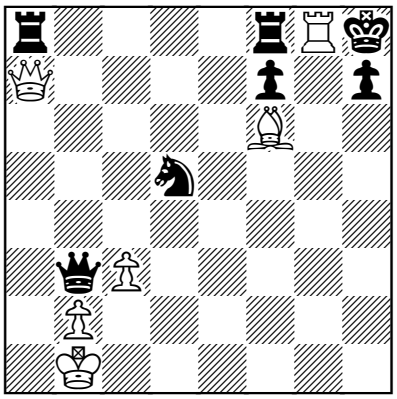


Diagram 26 (B)

26) 1 Rg8+! (Diagram 26) 1...Kxg8 2 Qg1 mate. A cute mating combination, and necessary in view of Black's own threats.

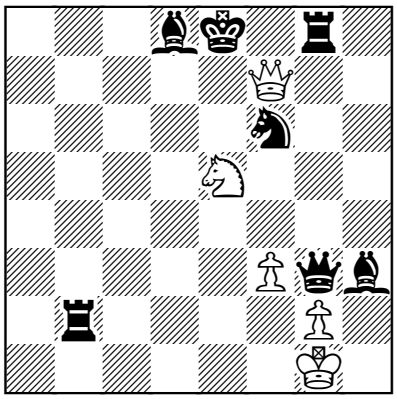


Diagram 27

27) 1 Rd8+! Bxd8 2 Qf7 mate (Diagram 27). Again essential in view of Black's overwhelming threats.

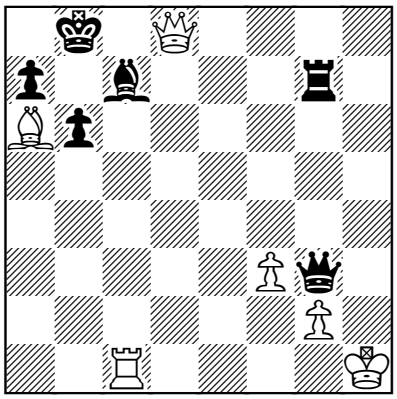


Diagram 28 (B)

28) 1 Qd8+! (Diagram 28). Luring away the black bishop. **1...Bxd8 2 Rc8 mate**.

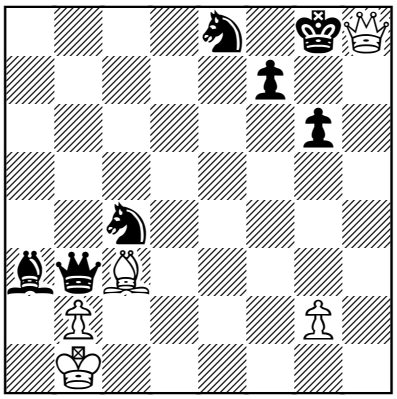


Diagram 29

29) 1 Qh2+ Kg8 2 Qh8 mate (Diagram 29).

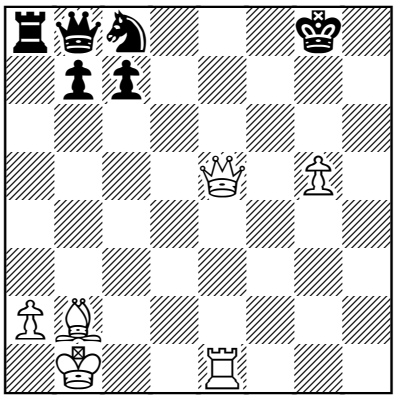


Diagram 30 (B)

30) 1 Bb2 (Diagram 30). White had several good moves and a few mates in three. This is the only way to force it in two, though. **1...Kf7 2 Qg7 mate**.

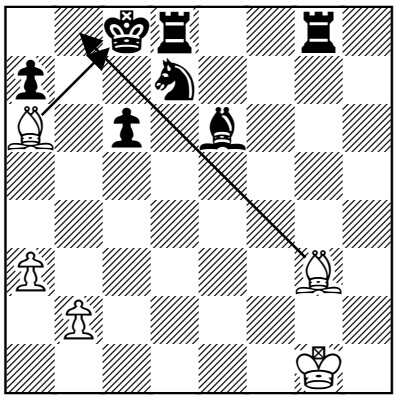


Diagram 31

31) 1 Qxc6+!! bxc6 2 Ba6 mate (Diagram 31).

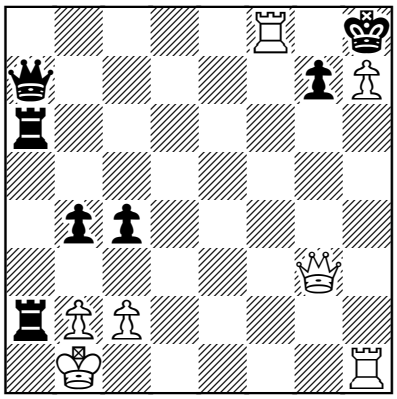


Diagram 32

32) 1 h7+ Kh8 2 Rf8 mate (Diagram 32).

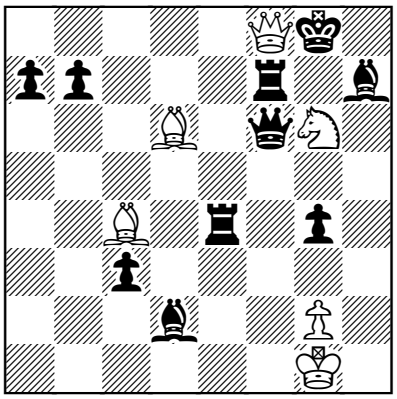


Diagram 33

33) 1 Nxf6+! Qxf6 (forced, as the f7-rook is pinned) **2 Qf8 mate (Diagram 33)**.

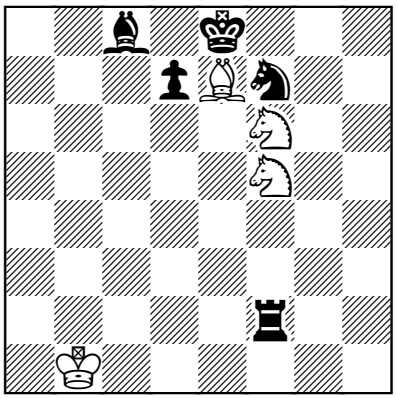


Diagram 34

34) 1 Be7+ Ke8 2 Nf6 mate (Diagram 34).

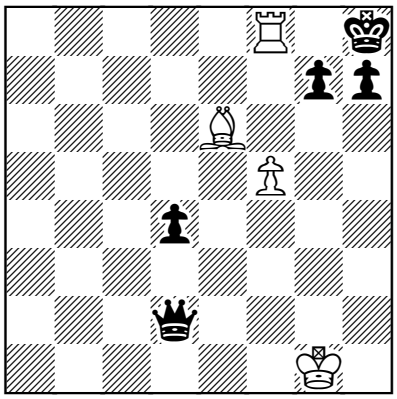


Diagram 35

35) 1 Rf6+ Kh8 2 Rf8 mate (Diagram 35).

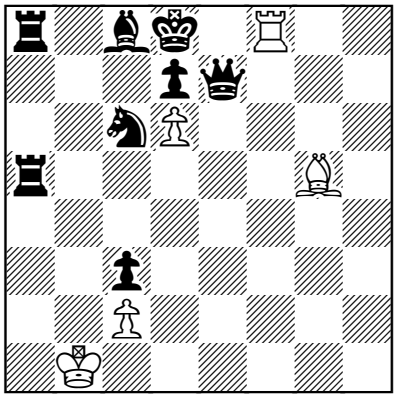


Diagram 36

36) 1 Rf8+ (1 Bxe7+ followed by this check would have been mate in three but anything else would have been winning for Black) **1...Rxf8 2 Rxf8 mate (Diagram 36)**.

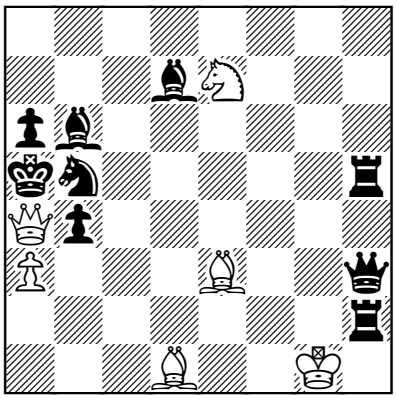


Diagram 37

37) 1 b4+! cxb4 2 Qa4 mate (Diagram 37).

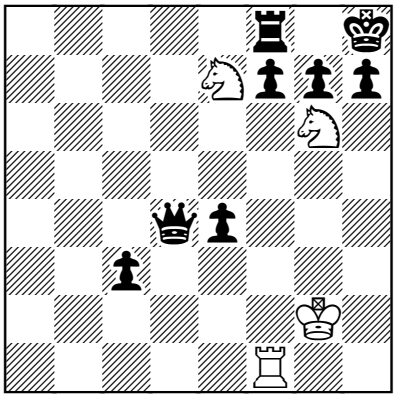


Diagram 38 (B)

38) 1 Nhg6+! (Diagram 38) 1...hxg6 (or 1...fxg6 2 Rxf8 mate) **2 Rh1 mate**.

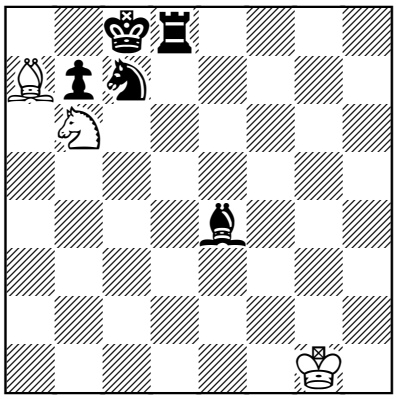


Diagram 39

39) 1 Rxc7+! Nxc7 2 Nb6 mate (Diagram 39).

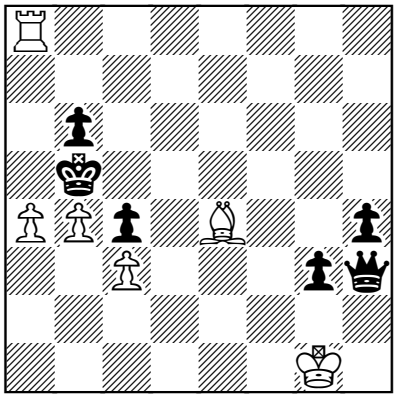


Diagram 40

40) 1 Ra8+ Kb5 2 a4 mate (Diagram 40).

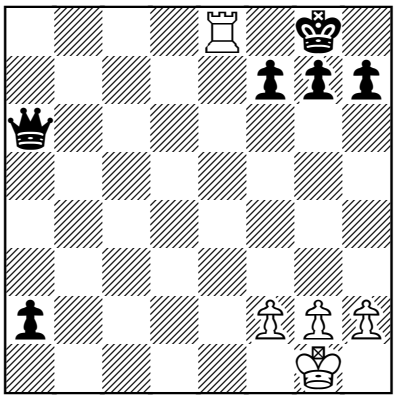


Diagram 41

41) 1 Qxd8+! Rxd8 2 Re8+ Rxe8 3 Rxe8 mate (Diagram 41).

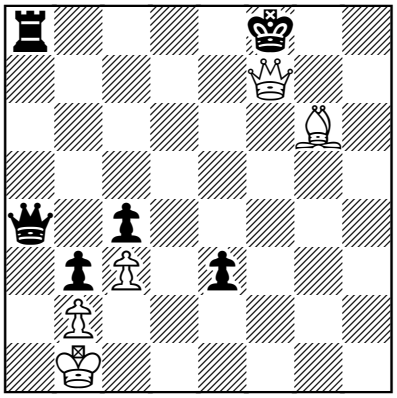


Diagram 42

42) 1 Bg6+! Kg8 2 Qh7+ Kf8 3 Qxf7 mate (Diagram 42).

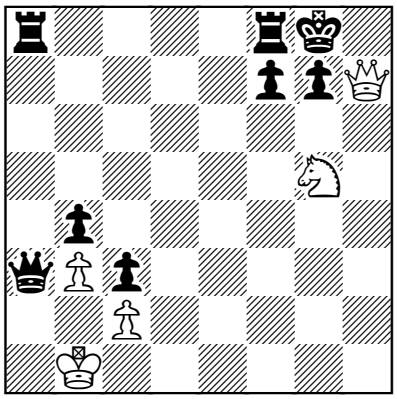


Diagram 43

43) 1 Rh8+! Kxh8 2 Qh5+ (2 Qh1+ is just as good) **2...Kg8 3 Qh7 mate (Diagram 43)**.

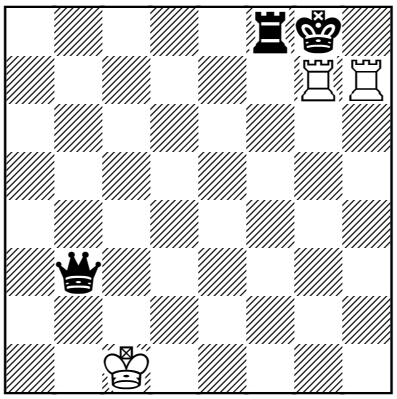


Diagram 45

45) 1 Rgxg7+ Kh8 2 Rh7+ Kg8 3 Rag7 mate (Diagram 45).

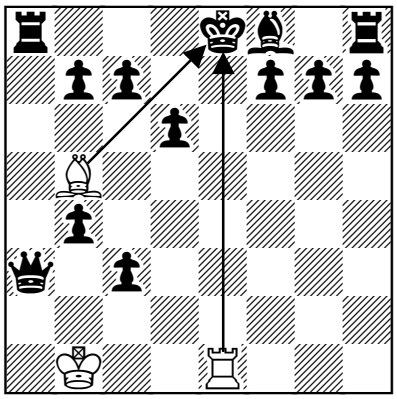


Diagram 44 (B)

44) 1 Qe8+!! Kxe8 2 Bb5+! (Diagram 44) 2...Kd8 3 Re8 mate.

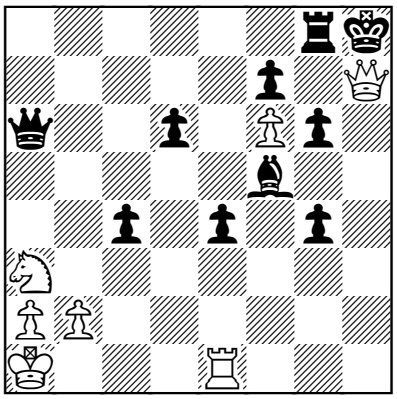


Diagram 46 (B)

46) 1 Qh6 Rg8 2 Qxh7+!! (Diagram 46) 2...Kxh7 3 Rh1 mate.

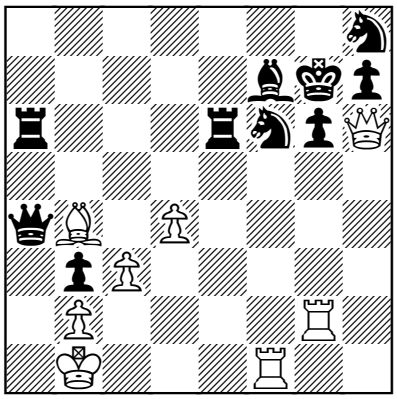


Diagram 47 (B)

47) 1 Qh6+!! (Diagram 47) 1...Kxh6 (or 1...Kg8 2 Qf8 mate) **2 Bf8+ Kh5 3 Rh1 mate**.

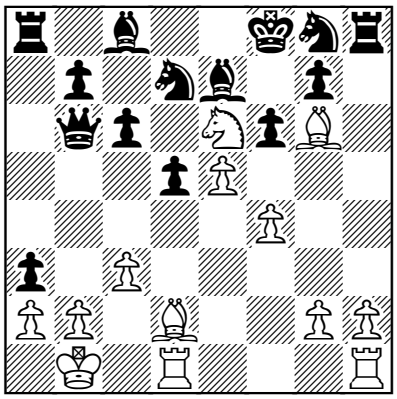


Diagram 48

48) 1 Qg6+!! hxg6 2 Bxg6+ Kf8 (2...Kd8 3 Nxe6 is also mate) **3 Nxe6 mate (Diagram 48)**.

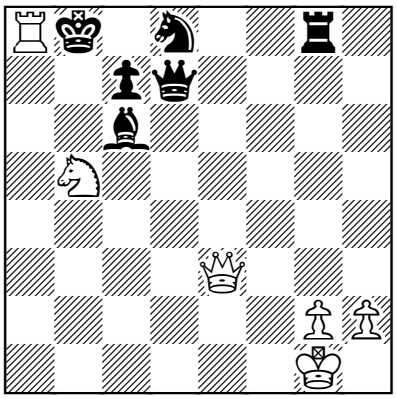


Diagram 49 (B)

49) 1 Ra8+! (Diagram 49) 1...Bxa8 (or 1...Kxa8 2 Qa7 mate; 1...Kb7 2 Qa7 mate) **2 Qa7+ Kc8 3 Qxa8 mate**.

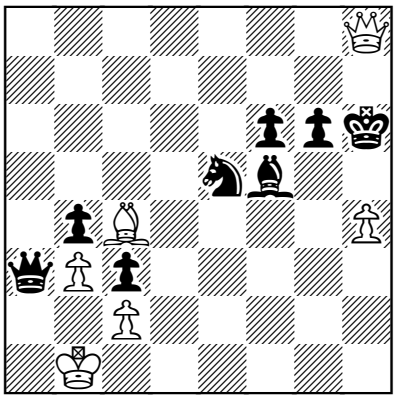


Diagram 50

50) 1 Qf8+ Kh7 2 Qg8+ Kh6 3 Qh8 mate (Diagram 50).

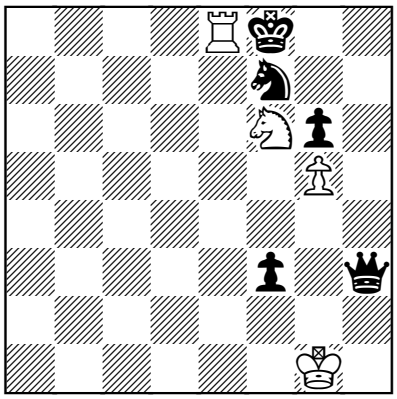


Diagram 51 (B)

51) 1 Qxf8+! Kxf8 2 Re8+ (Diagram 51) 2...Kg7 3 Rg8 mate.

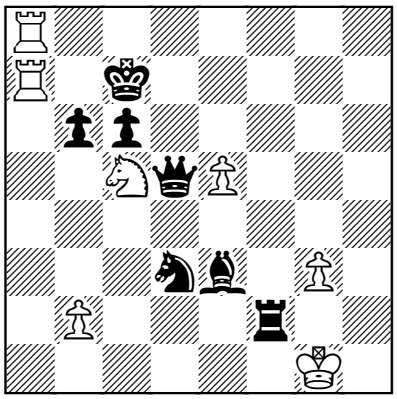


Diagram 52

52) 1 Qxb8+! Kxb8 2 Ra8+ Kc7 3 R1a7 mate (Diagram 52).

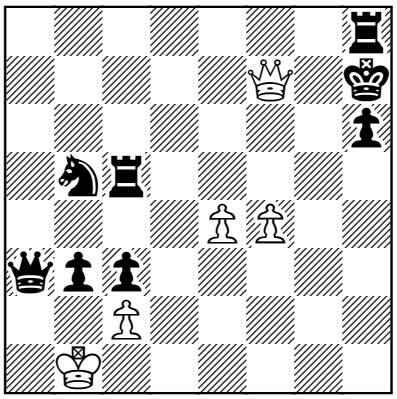


Diagram 53

53) 1 Rxh6+! Nxh6 (or, of course, 1...gxh6 2 Qf7 mate) **2 Rxh6+! gxh6 3 Qf7 mate (Diagram 53)**.

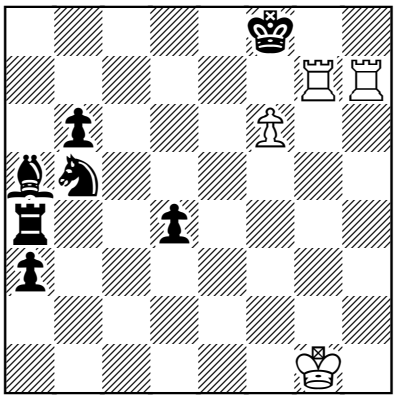


Diagram 54 (B)

54) 1 Rag7+ Kf8 2 f6 (Diagram 54) and there is no defence to 3 Rh8 mate.

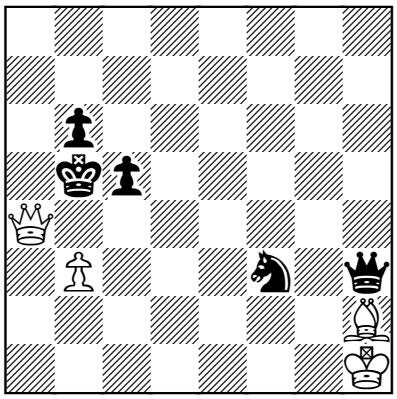


Diagram 55

55) 1 Qb8+ Ka6 2 Qa8+ Kb5 3 Qa4 mate (Diagram 55).

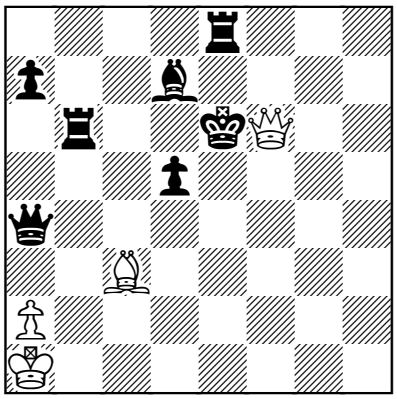


Diagram 56

56) 1 Rxf7+! Kxf7 2 Qg7+ Ke6 3 Qf6 mate (Diagram 56).

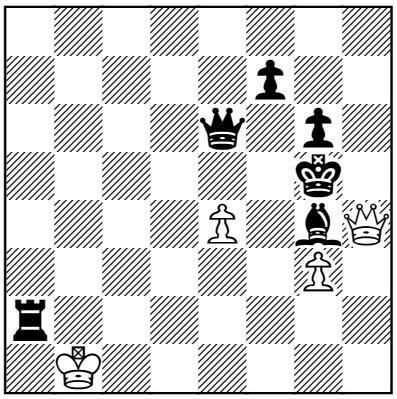


Diagram 57

57) 1 Rxh6+! Kxh6 (or 1...Kg7 2 Qh8 mate) **2 Qh8+ Kg5 3 Qh4 mate (Diagram 57)**.

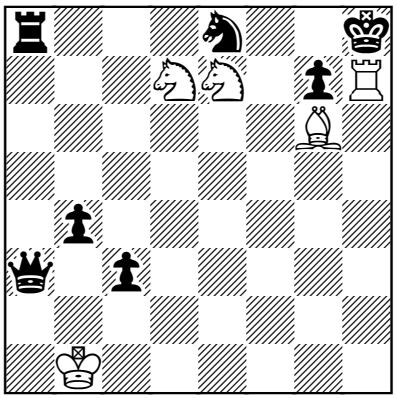


Diagram 58

58) 1 Nd7+ Kg8 2 Ne7+ Kh8 3 Rxh7 mate (Diagram 58).

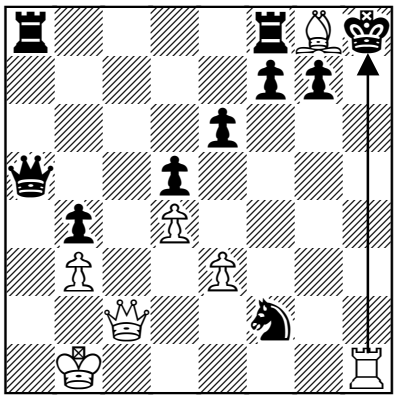


Diagram 59 (B)

59) 1 Bh7+ Kh8 2 Bg8+!! (Diagram 59) 2...Nxh1 (or 2...Kxg8 3 Qh7 mate) **3 Qh7 mate**.

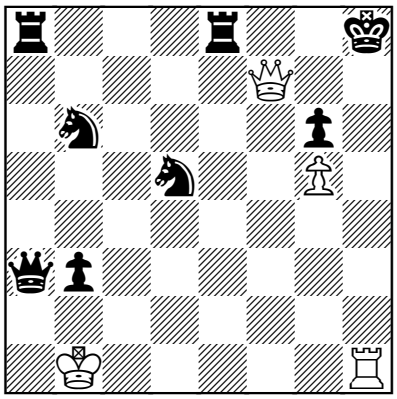


Diagram 60 (B)

60) 1 Rxh7+! Kxh7 2 Qf7+ Kh8 3 Rh1 mate (Diagram 60).

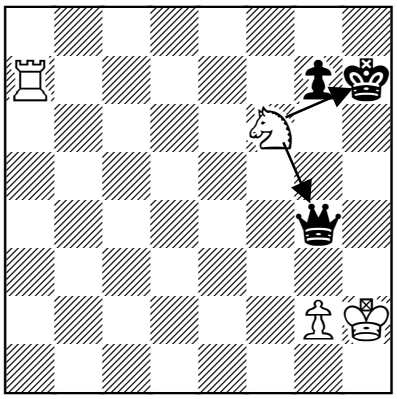


Diagram 61 (B)

61) 1 Nf6+ (Diagram 61) is a queen-winning fork, as the g-pawn is pinned.

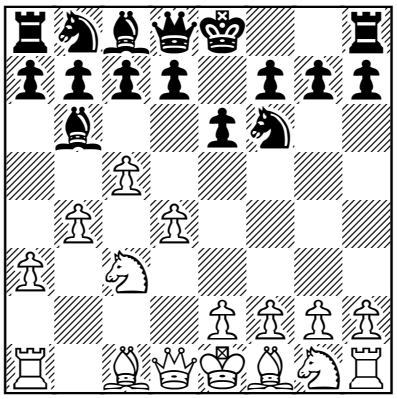


Diagram 62 (B)

62) 1 b4 Bb6 2 c5 (Diagram 62). The bishop has been hunted down and is now trapped.

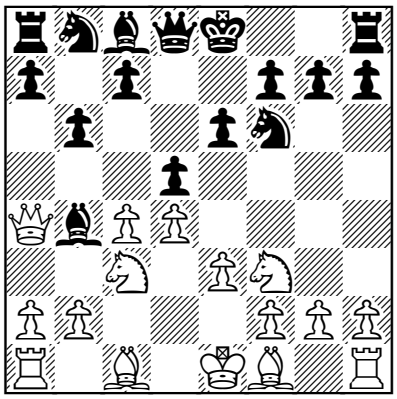


Diagram 63 (B)

63) 1 Qa4+ (Diagram 63). Watch out for checks! This one hits the undefended bishop.

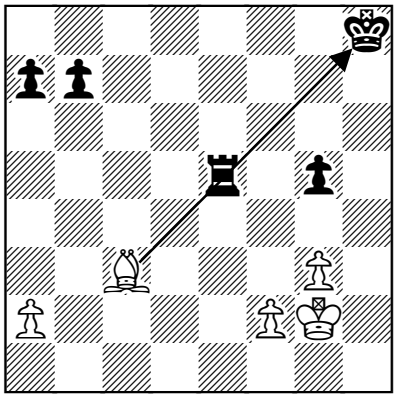


Diagram 64 (B)

64) 1 Bc3 (Diagram 64) is a simple pin. The black rook can't move and is lost.

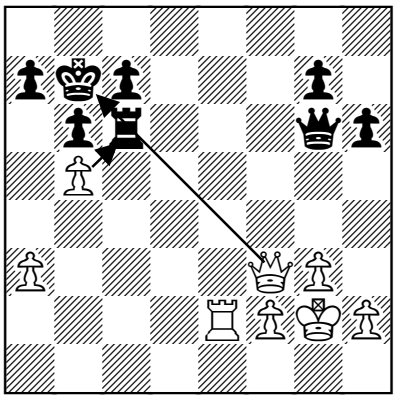


Diagram 65 (B)

65) Black's rook is pinned to its king and thus it cannot move. The pawn advance 1 b5 **(Diagram 65)** ensures that White will net it for a mere pawn.

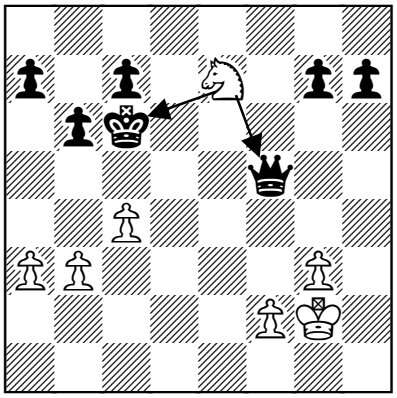


Diagram 66 (B)

66) 1 Qxc6+! (but not 1 Ne7? Qe4+ when it is Black who wins material!) **1...Kxc6 2 Ne7+ (Diagram 66)**. Hence a sacrifice that ultimately gains material.

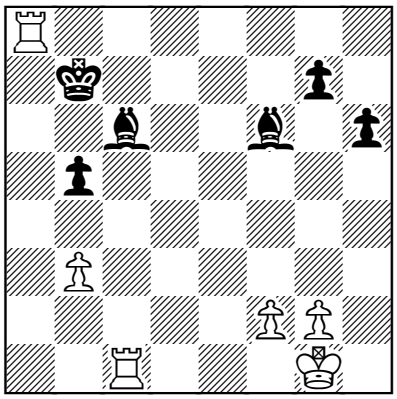


Diagram 67 (B)

67) After **1 Rxa8! (Diagram 67)**, the king finds itself overworked. Following **1...Kxa8 2 Rxc6**, rather than being involved in the complex imbalance of two rooks versus three minor pieces, White is simply the exchange up.

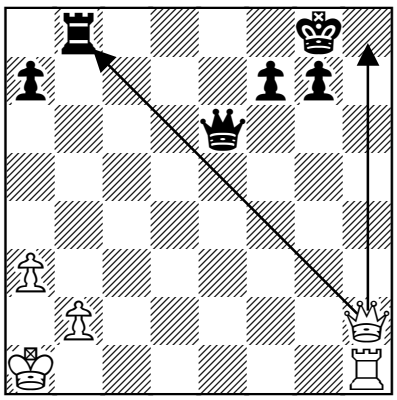


Diagram 68 (B)

68) 1 Qh2! (Diagram 68) attacks the black rook but also threatens mate on h8.

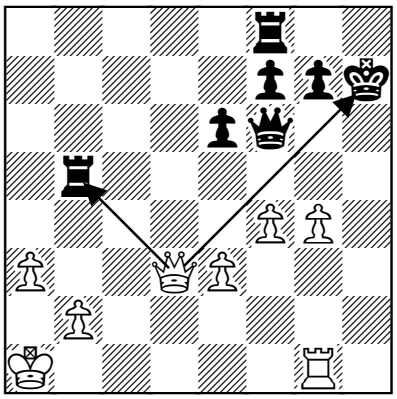


Diagram 69 (B)

69) 1 Nxh7! (forking the black queen and rook) **1...Kxh7 2 Qd3+ (Diagram 69)**, forking the black king and rook!

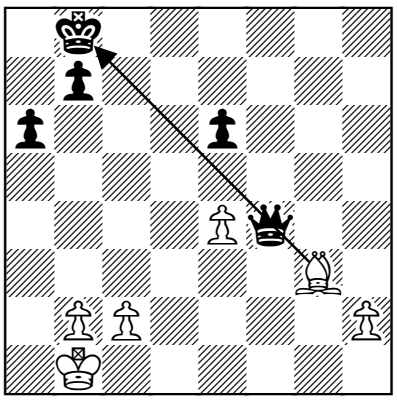


Diagram 70 (B)

70) 1 Qxf4! Qxf4 2 Bg3 (Diagram 70). Ultimately White's queen 'sacrifice' nets the exchange and leads to a winning king and pawn ending.

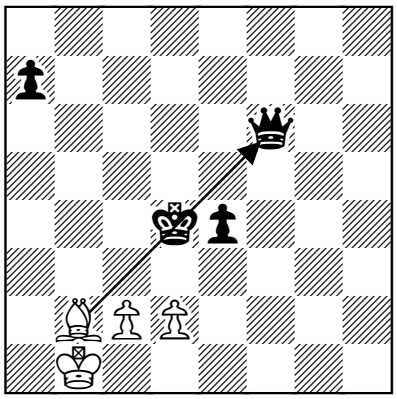


Diagram 71 (B)

71) 1 Qxd4+! Kxd4 2 Bb2+ (Diagram 71). A neat combination, regaining the queen with a skewer.

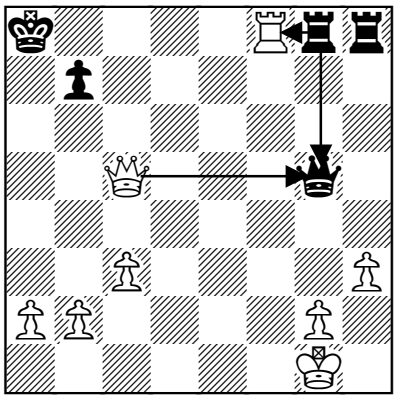


Diagram 72 (B)

72) 1 Rf8+! (Diagram 72) overworks the black rook and gains material after **1...Rxf8 2 Qxg5**.

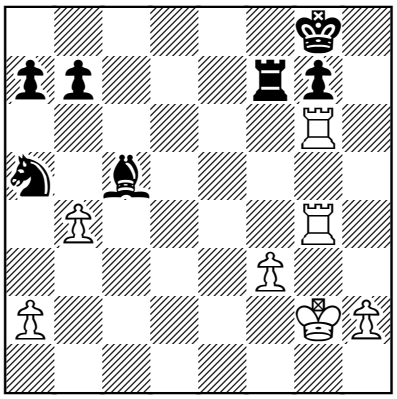


Diagram 73 (B)

73) 1 b4 (Diagram 73). Nothing flashy, just a simple pawn fork.

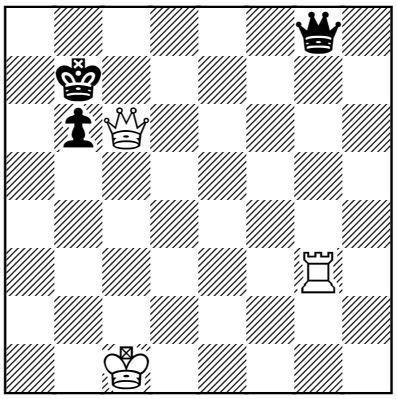


Diagram 74 (B)

74) 1 Qxc6+! (Diagram 74) 1...Kxc6 2 Rxg8 and White emerges a rook (for a pawn) up.

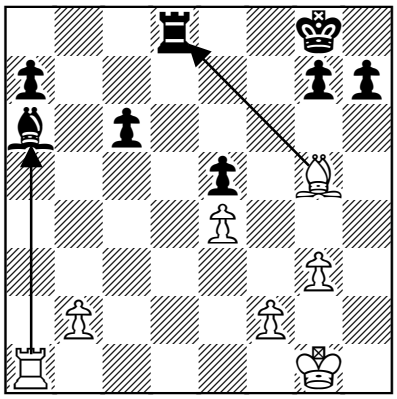


Diagram 75 (B)

75) 1 Bg5! (Diagram 75), moving the attacked bishop to hit the rook, should ultimately leave White a piece up. This is much stronger than trading with 1 Rxa6 Rxd2, which leads to a drawish rook ending.

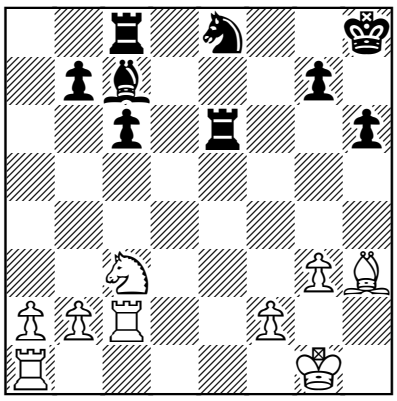


Diagram 76 (B)

76) 1 Bh3 (Diagram 76) is a simple skewer, netting a rook.

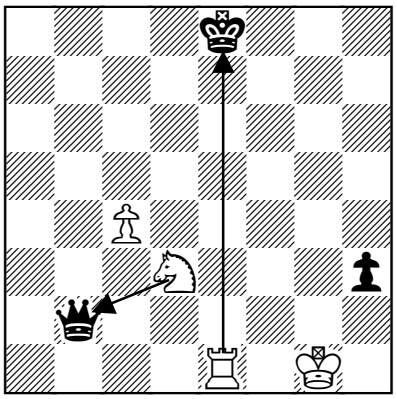


Diagram 77 (B)

77) 1 Nd3+ (Diagram 77) uses a discovered check to net the black queen.

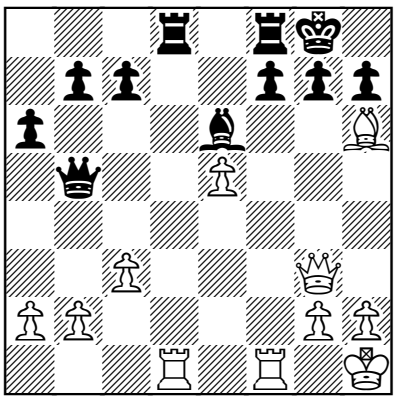


Diagram 78 (B)

78) 1 Bh6! (Diagram 78) utilizes the pin on the g-pawn to threaten mate on g7. After **1...g6 2 Bxf8** White bags the exchange.

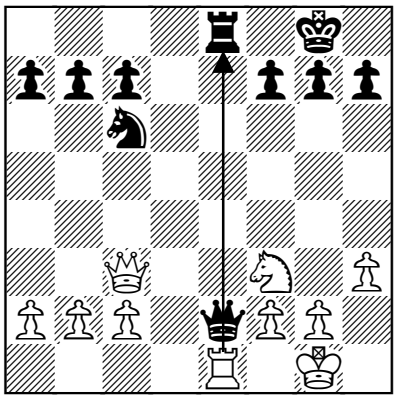


Diagram 79 (B)

79) 1 Re1 (Diagram 79). Fairly straightforward: as the rook on e8 is undefended, this wins a queen for a rook.

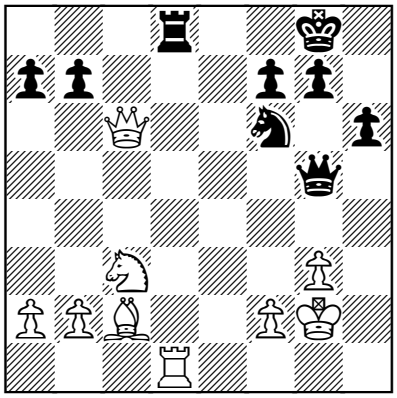


Diagram 80 (B)

80) 1 Qxc6! (Diagram 80) exposes Black's back rank vulnerability. White nets significant material in view of **1...bxc6** (or 1...Rxd1 2 Qc8+!) **2 Rxd8+ Ne8 3 Rxe8 mate**.

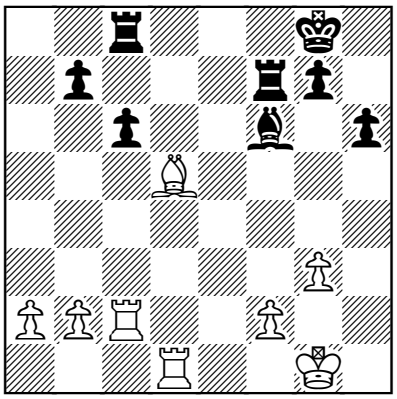


Diagram 81 (B)

81) 1 Bd5! (Diagram 81). The c-pawn is pinned and the text pins and wins the f7-rook.

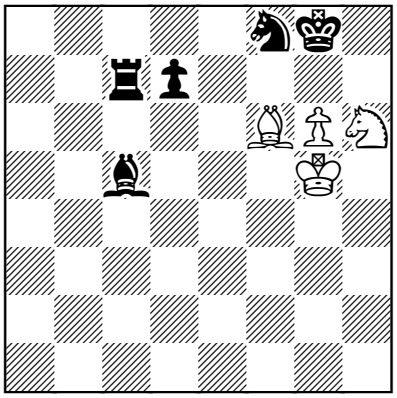


Diagram 82 (B)

82) Instead of netting a rook with 1 Ne6+ (or 1 Ne8+) 1...Kg8 2 Nxc7 White can force mate via **1 Nf5+ Kg8 2 Nh6 mate (Diagram 82)**.

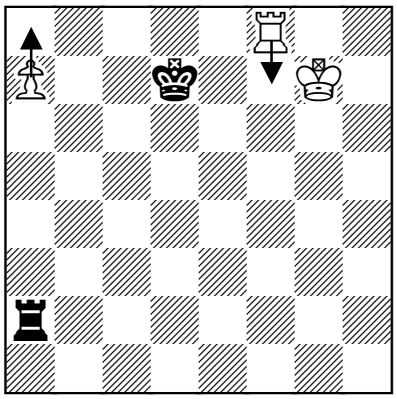


Diagram 83 (B)

83) 1 Rf8! (Diagram 83). Now Black gains nothing from checking, whilst **1...Rxa7** runs into the skewer **2 Rf7+**.

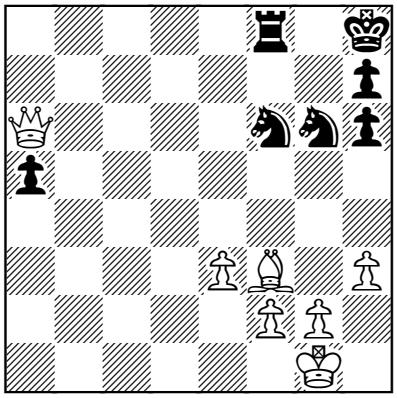


Diagram 84 (B)

84) 1 Qxa7 (the attempt at smothered mate 1 Qg8+?? fails to 1...Nxg8!) **1...gxh6 2 Qxa6 (Diagram 84)** and White should comfortably convert his material advantage.

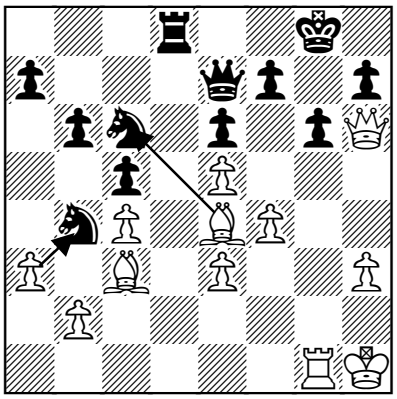


Diagram 85 (B)

85) 1 Rg4, preparing Rh4, and Be1, intending Bh4, are serious candidates. However, with the sacrifice on g6 not coming to anything here, **1 a3!**, netting a knight, is the most straightforward.

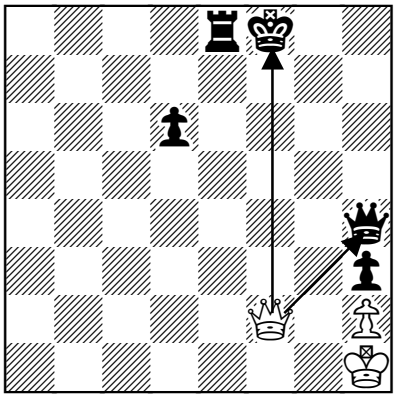


Diagram 86 (B)

86) 1 Qf2+!! (Diagram 86) 1...Qxf2 stalemate! Yes, from a seemingly hopeless position, White salvages a draw.

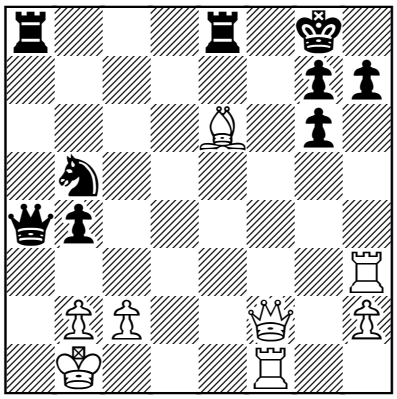


Diagram 87 (B)

87) 1 Be6+! (Diagram 87) is clearly best as now mate is forced, e.g. **1...Rxe6** (or 1...Kh8 2 Rxh7+! Kxh7 3 Qh4 mate) **2 Qf7+ Kh8 3 Qf8+ Rxf8 4 Rxf8 mate**.

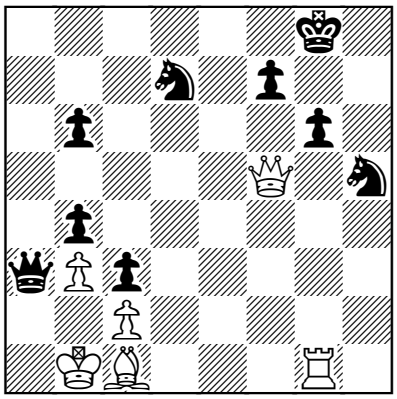


Diagram 88 (B)

88) 1 Bc1! (Diagram 88) prevents the mate on b2 and hits the black queen. Upon its retreat, White's own queen can pick up one of the knights. Note that the sacrifice 1 Rxg6+ fxg6 2 Qxg6+ Kh8 doesn't come to anything.

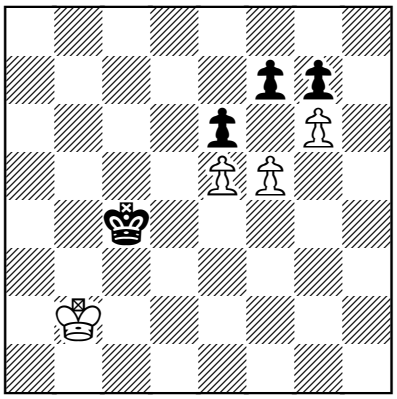


Diagram 89 (B)

89) 1 g6! (Diagram 89) guarantees promotion, e.g. **1...fxg6 2 fxe6** (or for that matter 2 f6) **2...g5 3 e7** and White touches down next.

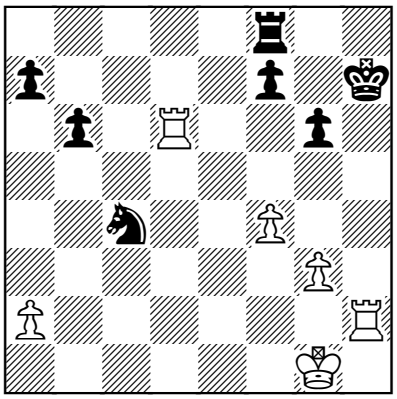


Diagram 90 (B)

90) 1 Bxc4 is best because after **1...Nxc4** White has the check **2 Rh2+ (Diagram 90)** to escape the knight fork. This way White can preserve his material advantage.

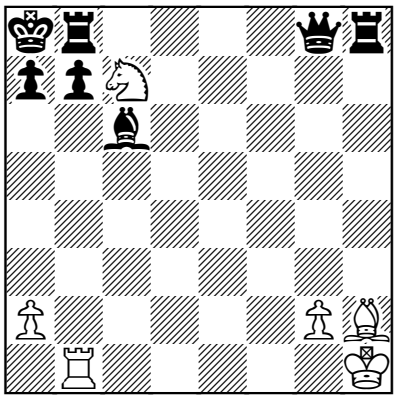


Diagram 91

91) 1 Qb8+ Rxb8 2 Nc7 mate (Diagram 91) is clearly the best option; smothered mates are cool!

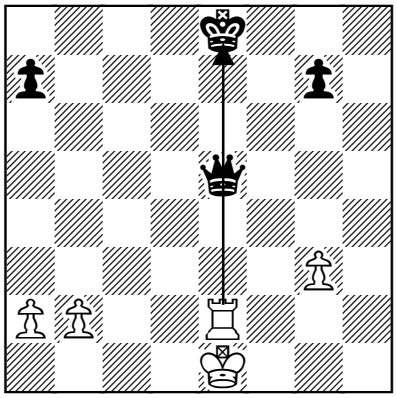


Diagram 92 (B)

92) 1 Qxe5+! Qxe5+ 2 Re2 (Diagram 92) and now it is Black's queen that is pinned. Overall, instead of simply losing a queen for a rook, White will enter a king and pawn endgame a pawn up.

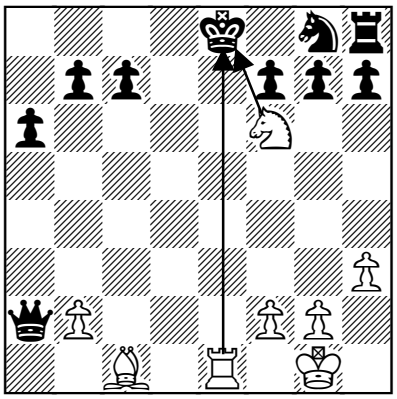


Diagram 93 (B)

93) 1 Nf6+! (Diagram 93) forces mate after **1...Kd8** (or 1...Kf8 2 Re8 mate) **2 Re8 mate**. Note that 1 Nc3+ Qe6 2 Rxe6+ fxe6 still leaves White a significant amount of material behind.

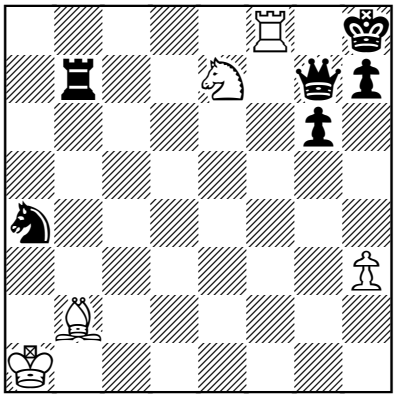


Diagram 94

94) 1 Qxg7+ forces mate after **1...Qxg7 2 Rf8 mate (Diagram 94)**.

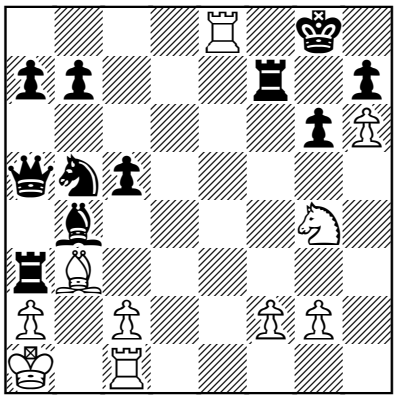


Diagram 95

95) 1 Qxf7+!! (1 Qe5, threatening mate on g7, is met by 1...Bc3+) **1...Rxf7 2 Re8 mate (Diagram 95)**. There is little excuse for failing to solve this given its similarity to the previous question!

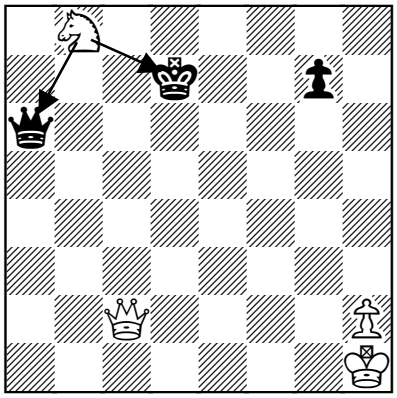


Diagram 96 (B)

96) 1 cxb8N+! (Diagram 96). Clearly this under-promotion, forking Black's king and queen, is White's best continuation. Promoting to a queen would be a disaster in view of 1...Qf1 mate.

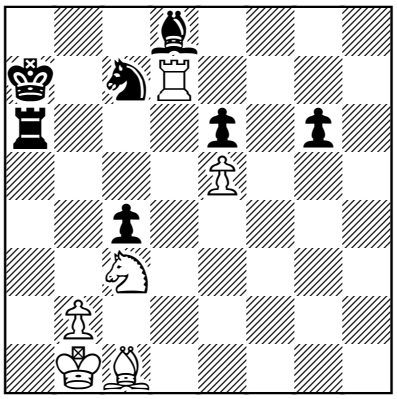


Diagram 97 (B)

97) 1 Rd7! (Diagram 97). Very simple chess: the rook hits the bishop which can't be protected and can't move away while still guarding the knight.

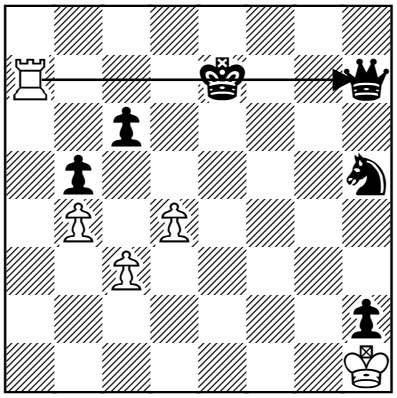


Diagram 98 (B)

98) 1 Qxe7+! (1 Rf1+ Nf6 doesn't come to anything) **1...Kxe7 2 Ra7+ (Diagram 98)** and a nifty skewer leaves White the exchange up.

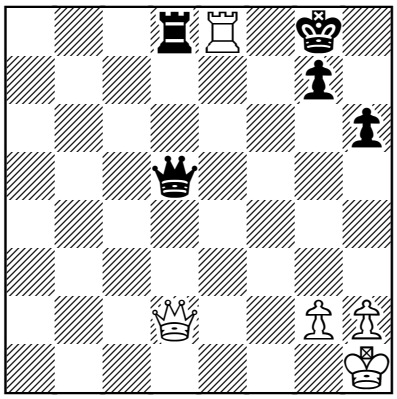


Diagram 99 (B)

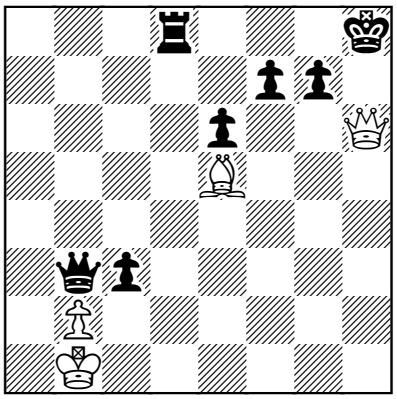


Diagram 100 (B)

99) 1 Re8+! (Diagram 99) 1...Rxe8 (or 1...Kf7 2 Rxd8, leaving White a whole rook up) **2 Qxd5+** and, as it is check, Black has no time to get in a back-rank mate.

100) Black has some threats of his own but White gets his strike in first: **1 Rh8+! Kxh8 2 Qh6+ (Diagram 100)** and, because the bishop pins the g7-pawn, the game finishes **2...Kg8 3 Qxg7 mate**.