



The KING'S ENEMIES.

A STORY OF A CHESS PROBLEM AND OF
A MILITARY ONE.

By RAYMUND ALLEN.

Illustrated by Dudley Tennant.



R. MARLEY laid down his little folding chessboard, and rose from his seat to greet the visitor in khaki who had just entered the room.

"Captain Bent will stay to dinner," he said, addressing the servant. "You will, of course?"

"You're sure it isn't inconvenient?"

"Inconvenient, my dear chap! My wife is away and there's nothing I hate more than a solitary dinner. You're a perfect godsend."

"In that case I shall be delighted," Bent answered, "if you don't mind extending your hospitality to Hogan. I'll guarantee that he'll behave well in the kitchen, and make them laugh."

"Hogan being the chauffeur, I suppose? I'll tell them to look after him. But I thought your fellow was called Tim."

"So he is," Bent answered, "but Hogan chauffees for the colonel, and I borrowed the great Rolls-Royce that he commandeered the other day. It's a real flyer."

He settled himself in a chair and picked up the chessboard.

"One of your chess puzzles, I suppose?"

Marley took the board out of his hands and shut it up. "You mustn't look at that yet, or I sha'n't get any news out of you. You're my 'usually reliable source,' as the newspapers call it, and I want to know when the war is going to end, and when we may expect the Zeppelins about here again, and all about the spies."

"The war is going to end when we have got the Germans finally beaten; I can't fix the date any closer than that. As for the Zepps and the spies—" He paused with an air of caution.

"About them I mustn't ask indiscreet questions," the doctor filled in.

"You may ask anything you like, my dear chap, only I mustn't be indiscreet in answering. I am not at liberty to tell you much, and I can't give you my 'reliable sources,' but my belief is that the spies are particularly busy about here just now, and that the Zeppels will be shortly."

"You seriously think we are likely to have another raid about here soon?" Marley asked.

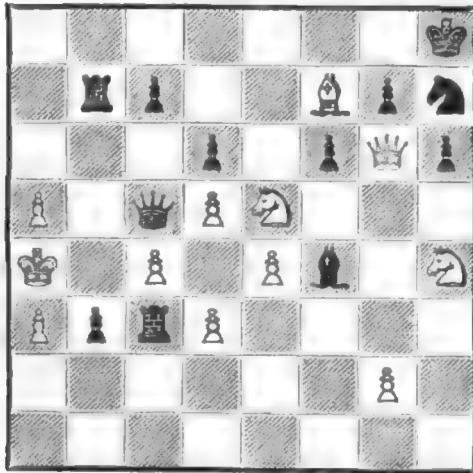
"Yes; seriously I do," Bent replied, "and I think each night about now becomes more likely than the one before it."

Marley showed his interest by emitting a low whistle, and his face asked questions that he refrained from putting into words.

"Look here," Bent continued, "I mustn't talk, but a bit later to-night I am going to buzz round with the car for certain purposes. If you like to come you may. I can't promise that you will see anything, of course, but there is the chance, if it would interest you to take it, and if you haven't got to stay in for patients."

"Rather!" Marley assented, with enthusiasm. "I have handed over my patients to old Charles, in expectation of my summons from the R.A.M.C., and, until that comes, I have nothing better to do than to invent chess problems." He opened the chessboard again. "And now, as we mayn't talk spies and Zeppelins, you may have a try at my latest, if you like. White to play and draw the game. I have a particular reason for wanting to know whether it will take you more than a few minutes to solve. I am going to time you."

BLACK.



White to play and draw the game.

"I don't see why White can't win right

off in half-a-dozen ways, but I suppose he can't," Bent remarked, after a preliminary survey of the position. He applied himself more seriously to the study of it, but he had not yet found the right move for White when dinner was announced.

Marley looked at his watch as they sat down to table. "You have had thirty-five minutes already without being able to find any light on that puzzle. Now see if you can help me with a secondary puzzle connected with it, that I confess absolutely beats me. It has the advantage that it does not require any chessboard, so you can consider it while we are at dinner."

"If there is any kind of chess problem that you can't solve, I certainly sha'n't be able to, but I don't mind trying. What is it?"

"The problem can be very simply stated. It is just this: By what means was Hardston able to find the key-move of my end-game in less than ten seconds?"

"Ten seconds!" Bent exclaimed. "It is a sheer impossibility. Blackburne himself couldn't have done it!"

"I give you my word of honour that Hardston did. He was passing in his car this afternoon and looked in for a few minutes to ask if I could go to his place on Friday. Just before he left I happened to pick up a newspaper that I had left lying over the open chessboard. He glanced at the position for, as I say, less than ten seconds. 'That's the first move,' he said, and played the right one, and then rushed off in a hurry."

"You must have shown him the position before and forgotten," Bent suggested.

"I couldn't have. I never saw the position before to-day myself. Last night I was trying to work out an idea on the board, and I only succeeded finally in getting it right after lunch to-day; about half an hour before Hardston came."

"Isn't it possible that some other problem composer might have evolved your end-game independently, anticipating you without your being aware of it? 'Pereant qui ante nos have invented our chess problems.'"

"I believe that has happened before now in the case of problems involving only a few pieces, but, in this case, the odds against such an event must amount as nearly as possible to a mathematical certainty."

"Then I can only suggest the operation of some occult agency."

Marley snorted contemptuously. "I entirely refuse to turn spookjack. When spooks fly in through the window, reason walks out by the door. There must be some rational

explanation, only I am bothered if I can think what it is."

Towards the end of dinner Marley reverted to the subject.

"I have been trying to imagine some conceivable way in which I could have given the solution away."

"Can you think of any?" Bent asked.

"Only the very barest possibility, and it seems too ridiculously remote. You know the absurd way that anything to do with chess has of fixing itself in my memory, while I forget hosts of much more important matters. Well, it comes back to me that years ago an idea occurred to me to compose an end-game, of which the key-move should have a certain peculiarity. I won't say what the peculiarity is, or it would tell you the solution. I didn't do anything with it at the time, and it was only last night, when the idea happened to recur to my mind, that I tried to work it out, and only to-day that I arrived, for the first time, at the actual position on the board."

"And I suppose you had told somebody of your intention of composing a puzzle with that particular kind of first move?"

"Exactly, but it must have been twelve years ago, and it was not even in this country. It was when I was studying medicine in Berlin. I used to frequent a little obscure *café*, and the person to whom I mentioned the idea—and I am sure he was the only person I ever did mention it to—was a German whom I used to meet there casually, and sometimes played chess with. I shall remember his name directly. It was Hart something—Hartmuth, Hartstoff—"

"Hartstein, perhaps," Bent exclaimed.

"Yes—by Jove! that was it—Hartstein," Marley assented.

Bent looked at him significantly.

"It is an odd coincidence, if it is not something else. Hartstein, literally translated, becomes Hardstone, or Hardston, in English. Hartstein plays chess. So does Hardston. You mention a chess idea to Hartstein, and to no one else, and Hardston solves an end-game founded on that very idea, with unaccountable rapidity. Did Hartstein speak English?"

"Yes, remarkably well. I think he was rather fond of showing off his proficiency, and I was glad to have someone to talk to who could speak English, because my German was not of much account at that time. But Hardston does not know any German."

"How do you know that?" Bent asked.

"Well, I suppose I don't know it for certain," Marley admitted, "but he told me so

himself. It was one day when he picked up a book of Bernhardi's from my table and said he envied me my power of reading it in the original. Of course, that would not go for much, if you suspect him of—"

"Quite so," Bent interrupted. "He might well have reasons for concealing the knowledge of his native tongue, and I imagine he must have had some sufficient reason for not taking the precaution of a more complete change of name. But how do Hartstein and Hardston compare in personal appearance?"

Marley sounded his memory for points of resemblance or discrimination.

"I don't remember Hartstein at all well in his externals. I should say he was about the same height, but he had a beard and moustache, and this man is clean-shaven. I couldn't say what colour his eyes were, but I don't remember that he had any scar like the one on Hardston's left cheek."

"He might have got that since, just as naturally, if not as painlessly, as cutting off his beard," Bent observed. "You say he seemed vain of his English. Perhaps that trait of vanity affords another little link. Hardston's behaviour to-day would be in character. When he sees your end-game position, he recalls, by one of those freaks of a chess-player's memory that you described just now, your old suggestion for a key-move, and the sudden temptation to score as a lightning solver is too great for his vanity. When he has played the first move, he sees by your surprise that he has guessed right, and he hurries off before you shall have found out that he doesn't know how to go on after the first move."

Marley looked dubious.

"All the same, I feel it hard to believe that a man who has been living here for years past as an English country gentleman and a J.P. can really be a German, and if a German in disguise, then presumably a spy."

"If you knew some of the things that I do, you wouldn't have the least difficulty in believing it. No shot is too long for a German, and no off-chance too small to be taken. Only now and then their conceit undoes their cunning, as when they elected to ignore the contemptible little British Army and lost the battle of the Marne. But come back to your secondary chess problem. It interests me more than perhaps you imagine." He fixed his eyes upon the doctor in the manner of a disputant who puts an argumentative poser from which there is no escape. "If Hardston is *not* the same person as Hartstein, then how did he solve your end-game in less than ten seconds?"

Marley smiled at his eagerness.

"Why are you so keen on making him out to be the same?"

"Because, if he is the same," Bent answered, with a peculiar emphasis, "when he gave the key to your chess puzzle, he gave the key, at the same time, to another puzzle that has been bothering the military authorities in this neighbourhood a good bit. The evidence is not conclusive, but it is good enough to make me alter my plans for to-night—and to start an hour earlier, if you don't mind having the order passed along to Hogan."

After dinner Bent's mind was too much engrossed with the possibilities arising out of the chess puzzle to pay more than perfunctory attention to the puzzle itself, and Marley had finally to show him the solution. They glanced rather frequently at the clock as the time for the car to be at the door drew near, and both felt some relief to the tension of their minds when they had actually started and the cool night air blew strong in their faces as the car rushed swiftly down the road.

Twenty minutes brought them to a point where the private avenue of a country house joined the public road. Bent ran the car a few yards beyond the avenue gate and stopped.

"Now, the question is whether our friend of the doubtful identity is at home and, if so, whether he intends to take his car out to-night." He passed through the avenue gate on foot and went a few paces up the drive, inspecting the gravel with an electric torch.

"The ground is soft enough to show fresh tracks, if he had come out within the last few hours, but I should like to make sure. A shortage of petrol might serve as a pretext."

He turned to the chauffeur. "Go up and find the garage, Hogan, and notice if the car is there. Find the chauffeur, if you can, and ask him to sell you a tin of petrol as a favour, and you needn't haggle about the price. If the car is out, come back as quickly as you can; if not, you can stay and gossip a bit."

Hogan saluted and started off on his diplomatic mission with a grin of intelligence. It was about twenty minutes before he returned with the superfluous tin of petrol and a satisfactory report. The car was in and Mr. Hardston would be taking it out himself a little later. It was a sixteen horse-power, and could do about fifty miles an hour if pressed. He had gleaned some other less relevant information as to the defects and qualities of Mr. Hardston as a "boss" and the reasons why his chauffeur had not enlisted.

Bent backed the car a little way up a side

lane and switched off the electric lights with which it was provided, leaving the engine purring gently. He mounted guard himself within view of the exit from the avenue.

He had to wait nearly an hour before the beam of a motor-car appeared among the shrubs of the avenue. He could see by its light that a man held the gate open for the car and turned back up the avenue when it had passed out. Whatever his errand, Hardston was setting out on it alone. For the first few miles the car ran at moderate speed, with lights duly screened in accordance with the police regulations of the time, and with Bent's car following at a discreet distance. Then it gradually slackened to a mere crawl, and, at last, stopped altogether, at the crest of a long slope, where the road topped a low ridge of hill.

"Now what?" Bent asked. "Is he suspicious of us, or is he waiting for something quite different?"

There was a long wait. Bent was at the wheel, with Marley sitting beside him and Hogan in the back seat. The air was chill and, under the faint light of a dying moon, a thin mist was gathering into patches of white fog over the lower-lying meadows.

"If I could trust the blighter to allow us another five minutes we might have some hot coffee out of the thermos," Bent remarked. "I would give a lot to know what chance *he* thinks there is of seeing anything to-night and why he thinks so."

"I would give something to know all *you* think, if it were permissible," Marley answered.

"It is permissible, at any rate, to put together the facts that you know yourself. The favourable weather conditions and the quarters of the moon are public property. You know that, if a raid should come, it might naturally be expected from the east, and the east coast lies a few miles behind us. You know that if the objective is anywhere about here, it can hardly be anything else than the town, with its munition factory, that lies west, just about seven miles in front of us, or the camp beyond." He lowered his voice confidentially. "I think I may venture to add this little bit of information. We are making in that factory certain apparatus which it would be even more in the interest of the enemy to destroy than shells or guns, to say nothing of babies. As to whether our friend in front has any connection with these matters, you have your own chess clue and the fact that, at this moment, he is loitering with his car on this particular road."

Hogan leant forward from the back seat.



"AS IT IGNITED HE TOSSSED IT ON TO THE GROUND, AND THE GROUP WAS SUDDENLY TRANSFORMED IN THE DAZZLE OF A BRILLIANT GREEN LIGHT."

"I think I hear a car coming up behind, sir." His ears were farther from the noise of their own engine and were the first to catch the sound. Bent listened for a few moments

and then uttered the single, pregnant word, "Aircraft!"

Marley's eager eyes searched the sky, but Bent's were fixed on a fresh phenomenon in

front, as he set the car going again. Hardston's car had begun to move on and was now sending up a shaft of light that reached upwards and onward, well defined in the thin haze. As they topped the rise, the pillar of light was gliding swiftly down the farther slope. Bent put on the pace, and it became obvious to Marley that, if it came to racing, the leading car stood no chance against their forty horse-power. But racing did not appear to be Bent's immediate intention, for he was content to close up to within a few yards, and, for a couple of miles or so, to follow without attempting to pass. The thrumming of the aircraft's engines was insistent, and, as he glanced backwards over his shoulder, Marley caught his first glimpse of a Zeppelin out for murder.

A shout from Bent to hold tight made him withdraw his eyes from the sky. The great car leapt forward, as Bent let the engine out to full power, and they shot past the other car, taking a narrow risk between it and the hedge. As soon as he had got in front Bent began to slow down, at the same time swerving from side to side of the road in a manner that justified his warning to sit tight, and compelled the other car to slow down likewise in conformity with the manœuvre. Finally, he turned his car lengthwise across the road and brought it to a stop. He had sprung out before the car had come to an actual standstill, and before either of his companions could follow him he was standing by Hardston, holding a revolver to his head. Without parley or apology, the revolver was handed to Hogan, with orders to shoot if Hardston should attempt to escape.

"This is an outrage!" Hardston began to bluster. But Bent was engaged in striking a match and did not attend to him. The lighted match was applied to something, of about the size and shape of a cricket ball, that he held in his other hand. As it ignited he tossed it on to the ground a few yards away, and the group was suddenly transformed in the dazzle of a brilliant green light.

"Pretty firework, wasn't it?" Bent inquired, as the flare died out, leaving on Marley's mental retina the vivid image of a fantastic study in green—of Hogan, with a green, sardonic grin, pointing the revolver at the scared green face of Hardston.

"We shall see fireworks of a different sort directly, or I am much mistaken," Bent added.

From the high ground on which they were standing they would, by daylight, have com-

manded a view of a stretch of lower-lying country. As it was they could see, about half a mile ahead, clearly defined on the lower level, rows of street lights, with others shining here and there in less regular pattern.

"I told you so," Bent remarked, coolly, as amongst the lights there showed the great flash of an exploding bomb, followed almost as the first report reached their ears by seven other flashes in quick succession.

"Good Lord!" Marley exclaimed, in horror. "Right in the thick of them. They'll need all the doctors they can get. I must go down there at once. But why, in Heaven's name, did they leave all those lights blazing?"

"It does rather look like asking for it," Bent answered, in an unperturbed voice. "But you need not distress yourself, my good doctor; your services are not required down yonder. Those are the lights of the town that our electricians have christened 'Spoofham-Chorley,' a town that you couldn't find by daylight, with no houses and no inhabitants, except possibly a stray sheep or two. But if our problem-solving customer behind there had been able to show his green light a couple of miles farther on, as he no doubt intended, you might have had a night's work before you."

As the whirr of the departing Zeppelins died away in the distance, he turned at last to deal with the captive, whom Hogan was still faithfully guarding, and turned the light of the electric torch on to his face.

"I am going to search your car, and I shall expect to find some green flares."

"You will no doubt find whatever you have placed there, Captain Bent, but let me tell you that I shall demand a full investigation into this monstrous outrage. I will answer any question, but you know quite well that I am Hardston of Morford House."

"On the contrary," Bent rejoined, "I have reason to believe that you are Hartstein of Berlin. But I will ask you one question, and a good deal may turn on your ability to answer it. This afternoon you played the first move for White in a chess puzzle. Tell me this: If White were to play the bishop instead, how ought Black to reply?"

For some moments Hartstein's face was blank of comprehension. Gradually the relevance of Bent's question dawned upon his mind, and he realized that he had played that afternoon the worst, at the same time as the best, possible move. To-night his own game was up. It was checkmate.

(The solution of the end-game in this story will be given next month.)

"THE KING'S ENEMIES": SOLUTION OF THE END-GAME IN LAST MONTH'S CHESS STORY.

THE following is the solution: 1. Q to Kt 5 (if 1. Kt to B sq., White draws by perpetual check, and if 1. Kt takes Q, White mates in three moves with the knights), Q takes P (at R 3), ch.; 2. K takes Q, P to Kt 7, dis. ch.; 3. K to R 4, R to R 6, ch.; 4. K takes R, P to Kt 8, becoming a Kt, ch., and drawing by perpetual check. If White plays for his first move any of the following: B to Kt 8, B to K 6, Kt to B 5, Q to R 5, B 5, Kt 4, or Kt 3, then Black plays the variation just given, with the difference that he can now mate with B to B 8, instead of only drawing by perpetual check.

The peculiarity of the key-move, mentioned in the story, is that White plays his unsupported queen to a square where it is attacked by several of the Black pieces