

# THE LITTLE MAN WHO WAS THERE

by BRUCE HAYDEN

YOU will find him around the clubs and the chess centers of the big cities. More so, in these days of troubles growing bigger in a world growing smaller. He is a little, excitable man, maybe, speaking his own brand of colorful, excitable English. He has lived in many countries and seen much of the troubles of the world before reaching his present stopping place. But, wherever he has been, and whatever he has been through, he has remained a lover of the beautiful in chess, and he has rarely missed a chance of watching the leading international masters or to collect anecdotes and reminiscences of the great and the unknown, as you will discover if you sit down and talk to him over the chessboard. He is the eternal, international refugee and the eternal, international kibitzer.



BRUCE HAYDEN

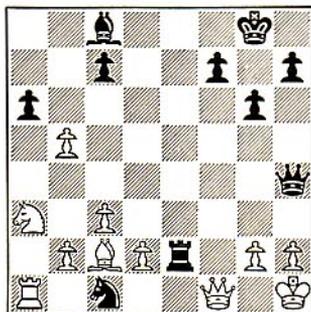
I know such a little man and, whenever I have a spare hour, I head for where he is watching and wait for the game to finish. I know that, if I take him over to a spare board, he will sit down and spill over it a series of composed studies and game-endings and problems from a host of positions which he has carefully recorded in a little notebook in his inside pocket.

Sometimes, after he has taken out his spectacles and adjusted them, he will leave the notebook awhile and carefully set up an ending which he won in some game recently. By this time, a small group of those who know what is to come will be waiting around the board. The little man will go through the moves of his brilliancy; but, alas! at the end of it, someone will gently suggest a better defensive move farther back. Yes, there always seems to be a flaw in his combination. Again, it was not quite sound, but the idea was good as we all are quick to agree. His face falls a little but some day, perhaps, he will produce himself a gem to add to his collection. And he feels for his notebook and starts setting up another position.

A FEW DAYS AGO, I wandered in and spent one of these sessions with the little man, and he really excelled himself.

The first position which he put up was the finale of a Ruy Lopez.

Don't ask him who the players were, or who are the authors of his compositions. He doesn't record that. To him it is the play that matters.

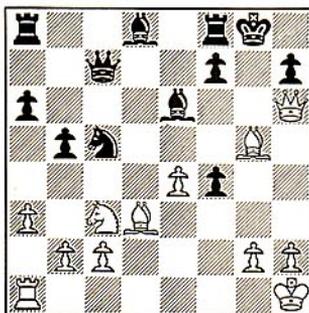


White to Move and Win

Black is a Pawn down, and his position appears to be hanging, with a piece about to go. But it is White who is going to hang! The end is crisp.\*

- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| 1 . . . . | RxP   |
| 2 QxR     | Q-K8† |
| 3 Q-N1    | B-N2‡ |

IN ANOTHER ENDING, White wins.



White to Move and Win

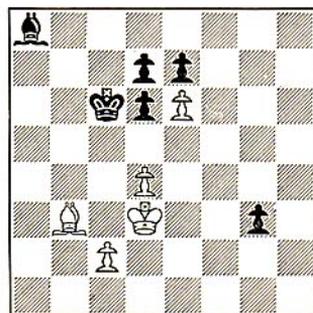
\* Of course, 1 . . . R-K8 also wins for Black but hardly so crisply after 2 RxN, RxQ† 3 RxR, etc.—B. H.

White has sacrificed the Exchange to tear a hole in the Black King-side. Again, the play is crisp, and instructive, too, in showing how to attack a weakened King-side with minor pieces and Queen.

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 1 B-B6! | BxB     |
| 2 P-K5! | . . . . |

Black was forced to accept the Bishop of course. Now White threatens not only QxRP mate but also PxB. The Bishop has been decoyed to its KB3 so that its fall leaves a mate threat at N7 which cannot be stopped. (Black can only prolong his agony: e.g., 2 . . . NxB 3 PxB, N-B7† 4 K-N1, N-R6‡ 5 K-B1, Q-B5† 4 N-Q2.)

THIS COMPOSITION gave the onlookers some trouble, but we solved it in the end.



White to Move and Win

It has a neat twist.

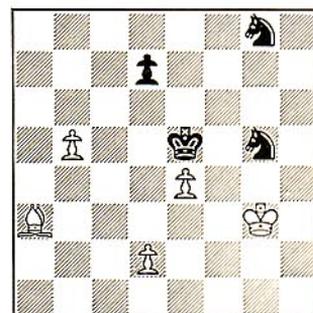
- |          |     |
|----------|-----|
| 1 B-Q5†! | KxB |
|----------|-----|

Naturally, Black must capture. If instead, 1 . . . K-B2 2 BxB, PxP, threatening to queen after 3 . . . P-K4, White has just time for the saving 3 B-N2.

- |            |         |
|------------|---------|
| 2 PxP      | P-N7    |
| 3 P-K8(N)! | . . . . |

And now White wins; for, whether Black promotes to a Queen or not, he cannot prevent 4 P-B4 mate.

HERE is a gem.



White to Move and Win

True, Black is a Knight up for two Pawns, and, true too, if White advances his passed Pawn at once, Black can stop it with 1 . . . NxP†, followed by 2 . . . N-Q3 (on 3 BxN, KxB, Black's King can capture White's advanced Pawn).

- |          |      |
|----------|------|
| 1 P-Q4†! | K-K3 |
|----------|------|

Black's King must be able to protect the defending Knight when it arrives at his Q3.

† = check; ‡ = dbl. check; § = dis. ch.

2 P-Q5† K-K4  
 3 P-N6! NxP†  
 4 K-R4! . . . .

White's King has a part to play, too.

4 . . . . N-Q3  
 5 BxN KxB  
 6 K-N5!! . . . .

A lovely blockading move with the last piece gone!

6 . . . . N-K2  
 7 P-N7! N-B3

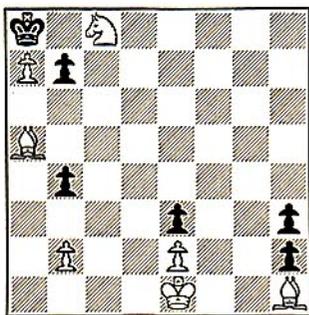
Or 7 . . . K-B2 8 P-Q6† and one of the Pawns will queen.

8 PxN K-B2  
 9 PxP . . . .

And one Pawn must queen.

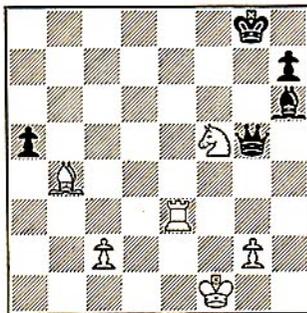
HERE is a mate in four. The key move is difficult—but easy when you have found the right idea. If you can't find mate in four, then look for mate in five. This is difficult but easier. Anyway, it will give you the idea.

Solutions at end of article



White to Move and Mate in 4

THE NEXT STUDY contains a psychological twist. You play the logical first move to win, but then to win you do not play the logical continuation.



White to Move and Win

This one is a tease.

1 R-KN3 . . . .

What's this? Such obvious moves as pinning and winning the Queen are never the key moves in the best of compositions.

As well as threatening, if the Black King moves, 2 RxQ, followed by 3 BxP, White's key move also threatens 2 Nx B†. I watched many strong players try a lot of fancy checks, starting with 1 R-K8† only to give up.

1 . . . . QxR  
 2 NxB†! . . . .

We don't capture the Queen after playing to win it?! This is the twist. Again,

a number of strong players tried 2 NxQ and, after 2 . . . PxB, struggled vainly to find a way to win the drawn Pawn ending.

2 . . . . K-R1

Or 2 . . . K-N2? 3 N-B5†, and White does win after picking off the Queen.

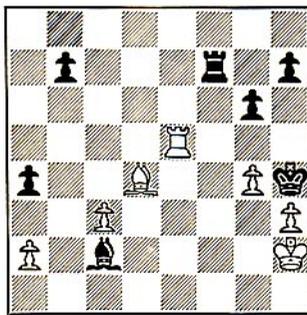
3 B-Q6! . . . .

The sockdolager move all right. Now the Black Queen is threatened by the White Bishop and, if she captures it, she goes lost to the Knight by the check on B7. If she floats around to keep an eye on the Bishop mate on K5, she still is lost to the Knight check when she captures the Bishop.

A FEW WEEKS before this chess session, I had been playing quick games for stakes with a regular opponent, a lively, birdlike little man with a quick brilliant style.

We had contra'd and recontra'd the stakes so often that, as one humorist remarked, whatever the result of the game, the stakes had risen so high that one of us was doomed to walk home, unless the winner gave the other a lift in his cab!

As I was the last to redouble, I had to win. A draw was equivalent to a loss as I should then have to forfeit the stake money.



White to Move

This was the finish.

1 B-N6 . . . .

Threatening mate by B-Q8†, etc.

1 K-N2 would win the Exchange but, after 2 B-B2†, RxB 3 KxR, Black would pick up the King Rook Pawn.

Against the tempting mate-on-the-move threat of 1 B-K3, my wily opponent was ready with the defensive trap of 1 . . . P-R3; for, if 2 BxP, there follows 2 . . . R-B7† 3 K-N1, R-B6, and Black has turned the tables.

Still intent on his defensive idea, Black now played:

1 . . . . P-R3?

And White mentioned the mate by 2 R-KR5†, PxR 3 B-Q8†, R-B3 4 BxR mate.

To the delight of the kibitzers and my own, as the mazuma chinked across the board.

Well, it seems that, after we left, my little pal set up the position and went to work on it, and he was all set and ready for me at this session.

It had seemed that Black had a likely defense with

1 . . . . P-KN4  
 But my little pal turned up:  
 2 B-K3! P-R3  
 The Black Rook is well and truly "angled and anchored" to the file. 2 . . . R-N2 allows mate by 3 B-B2.  
 3 R-K6 P-R4  
 4 R-KR6 . . . .

And White wins.  
 A better defense appeared to lie in

1 . . . . R-B1  
 But my little pal had:  
 2 B-B5 R-B2  
 3 B-K7† . . . .

After which White wins the Exchange and starts picking up Pawns. (The pretty 3 R-K7 works all right if Black obligingly replies 3 . . . RxB; for 4 BxR†, P-KN4 5 B-B5 forces mate. But Black could play, say, 3 . . . R-B6, and there is still a lot of play left.)

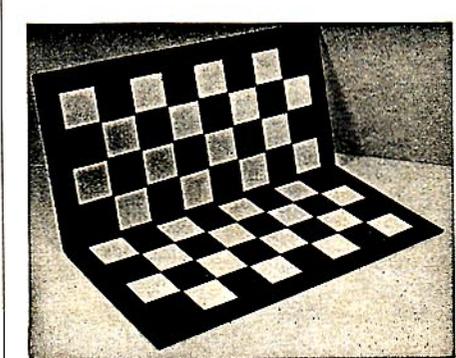
I thanked him for all this. The little man made me feel good.

I hope that it will not be long now before he produces that ending of his own. So that, after we have failed to detect any flaw, he can proudly add it to his collection.

Solutions to Problem

- Mate in five runs: 1 K-B1, P-N6 2 B-KB3 (or B-K4 or B-Q5), P-R3(Q)† 3 BxQ, P-R7 4 K-N2, P-N3 (or P-N4) 5 K away, discovers mate.
- Therefore the mate in four runs: 1 K-Q1! P-N6 2 B-Q2! PxB 3 P-K4, P-N3 (or P-N4) 4 P-K5, discovers mate.

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