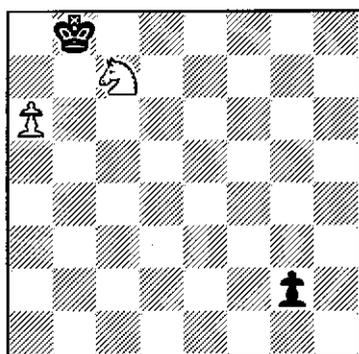


The genesis of a study

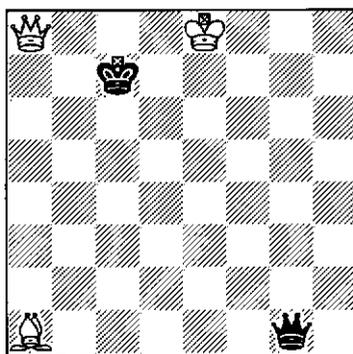
by Adam Sobey

This workshop note describes the way in which a particular study of mine came into being. It shows how an idea was developed, both forwards to the intended denouement and backwards to the initial position of the published study. I do not pretend that my story is necessarily helpful to anyone wanting to try their hand as study composition because any creative activity is strictly personal : no two composers will go about things the same way. In particular, there will be a vastly different attitude regarding the way in which time influences events. As it happens, I believe there is a great benefit in interrupting work and allowing things to be tossed around in the mind. This has a clarifying effect, which is well known to those whose work is analytical, for every time we get stuck and cannot make progress a change in activity generally proves beneficial. We all know that from the crossword world, and Edward de Bono has given it an authoritative ring. In the following I will write the note as though there were no "helpful" suspensions of effort, but from start to finish, the study was evolving over several composing sessions.



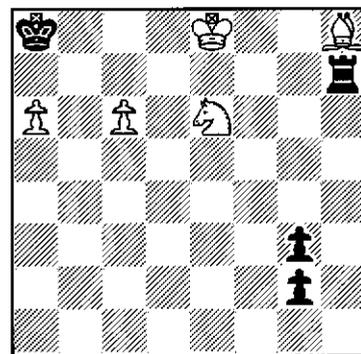
1 - win

to be added: wK, wQB,
black unit on g-file



2 - after 2...g1Q

to be added: black unit
on g-file



3 - win

We begin with an idea (Diagram 1). Without some such starting point we have as much chance of creating something worthwhile simply by shifting men around on the board as the monkeys on the island of Laputa. Now it is white to move and win. There are three men to be added: a white king somewhere, a white bishop which in one move can control the diagonal a7-g1 (and in the diagram does not control c7), and a further black piece, probably a pawn, and very likely blocking the g-file. We have two plausible starting moves: (a) wB moves to control a7-g1, and (b) a7+. One line is to succeed, one to fail. Try (a): 1 wB controls a7-g1, Kxc7. Now white has the "wrong" bishop and the a-pawn cannot queen. So (a) fails and (b) must win: 1 a7+ and if 1...Kxa7 then 2 B--+ Kb7 and wN can move away from c7; or 1...Kxc7 2 a8Q g1Q. Now we have a six man ending, Q+B against Q+?, and this is to be a win.

At this point we have to think of the locations of the white king and black's other piece. If, now, we put the white king on e7 or e8, we could continue with 3 Qd8+.

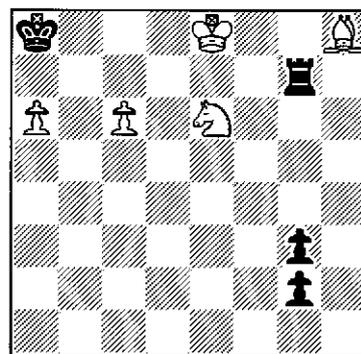
Although Q+B/Q is in the database, we are expecting to win using a line in which the black extra man is relevant. This means that further progress in the study depends on analysis. We shall have to try to find a placement of pieces which gives us play with a point, a try or two, and isn't too "obvious". Suppose the white bishop is on the long diagonal a1-h8 (Diagram 2). Then after 3 Qd8+ black has a choice 3...Kc6 and 3...Kb7. Now running away seems a good idea, but if 3...Kc6 then 4 Qd7+ wins the queen either with a skewer (4...Kc5 5 Qa7+) or a fork (4...Kb6 5 Bd4+). So 3...Kb7 is forced. Nice. So put the white king on e8, not e7 as we don't want it to control d6. Now, after 3 Qd8+ Kb7, 4 Bd4 serves two ends: building a net round the black king for mating, and forcing the black queen to move. As long as any checks are at worst neutral for white all is well. Put a black pawn on the g-file, tentatively on g3. Check the try 1 Be5?, setting up a battery that cannot be fired effectively.

We now have a forward section which is satisfactory. Stop and check everything, making sure that black's freedom to move the queen can be countered in every line. OK. Now we must see what can be done to make the study less obvious, and with a bit more meat on the bone. We notice that the knight on c7 can come with check if we put the black king on a8, for if black goes to a7, Bd4+ will win without the a-pawn. So can we find a way to bring the N from outside the NW quadrant to c7? It could capture a black piece, but adding another black man is only justified if there is more than 1 Nxc7 involved. At this point I see that a pawn on c6 threatening to queen by c7 would force black to capture. So put a black rook on the 7th rank, provisionally on h7. Now put the white bishop on h8 (Diagram 3). If 1 c7 then 1...Rxh8+ is possible, but if the white knight is on e6 we have 2 Nf8. Good, this gives Rh7 and Ne6 a further purpose. 1 c7 Rxc7 (1...Rxh8+?) 2 Nxc7+ Kb8 (2...Ka7?) has added two full moves to the study and drawn some attention away from the NW quadrant.

At this point I could have sent it off to an editor, but I like to be sure that there isn't still something left. What about moving the rook to g7? All the intended play works, of course, but now we have to deal with the sucker move 1 Bxg7?. This must not work. More analysis ... yes, that black pawn must be on g3, when we have two nice stalemates refuting the try: 1 Bxg7? gQ 2 c7 Qc1. Now white must reinforce c7 with (a) 3 Kd7 or (b) 3 Kd8. In either case 3...g2 4 Bd4 (to "prevent" g1Q) g1Q! 5 Bxg1 and now either (a) 5...Qc6+ or (b) 5...Qg5+. The kamikaze queen ensures the draw. That's it, rook on g7, and the final construction (Diagram 4) is ready for a thorough testing. There it is, as published in *diagrammes* 1-3/95.

That is how one study came into being. Were I to have described another study, the work plan could have been entirely different : that's composition!

The study received a good response from the solvers of diagrammes. Some played 4 Bd4, overlooking the "wrong bishop" draw, and "Problème astucieux" and "Voilà une étude amusante et pas trop difficile à résoudre!" came from those who got it right - JDB.



4 - win (final version)
 1 c7 Rxc7 2 Nxc7+ Kb8
 3 a7+ Kxc7 4 a8Q g1Q
 5 Qd8+ Kb7 6 Bd4 etc.